

BLACK CRUSADE™

THE TOME OF BLOOD™



A SOURCEBOOK FOR
FOLLOWERS OF KHORNE

WARHAMMER®
40,000
ROLEPLAY

BLACK CRUSADE™

THE TOME OF BLOOD™



ROLEPLAYING IN THE GRIM DARKNESS
OF THE 41ST MILLENNIUM

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INTRODUCTION

*"Your schemes and sorcery are worthless. This ends simply.
My Axe. Your Blood. Another Skull for the Throne."*

—Darjok, Reaver of the Rankine Straits

Blood can mean different things; for most it is merely a biological fluid, part of organic life. Those who see beyond the mundane know it is much, much more. Blood is energy, and rage, and endless fury, but above all blood is a source of power. To hear blood pumping as a foe is cut in two is to know life and death. To feel blood churning with the fury of combat is to touch upon something that was impossibly ancient before humanity walked upright. To see blood spilling from the bite of an axe is to offer sacrament to perhaps the first god to form in the impossible maelstroms of the Warp, for wherever there is conflict and violence, there is Khorne.

Khorne is the god of crimson ferocity, of murderous carnage, and of martial clashes of arms and shouted battle cries. In his name, untold millions are slain each day, their blood and skulls offered up in sacrifice. For his glory, battles without end wage across the galaxy. Even those who fight and kill with no knowledge of the Blood God serve him, some even through his myriad aspects throughout mortal lands. His followers lead armies of rage and ruin that leave nothing but corpses and destruction in their paths. Khorne is also the god of martial prowess, and prizes combat excellence in all, even in his foes. Should his champions fall in worthy battle, his final blessing is to place their skulls high atop his Skull Throne, there to bear witness to the wars without end that fuel his terrible might.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

THE TOME OF BLOOD is the second of four books delving into the darkest secrets of the four Chaos powers and their role in the **BLACK CRUSADE** roleplaying game. It is devoted to Khorne, the Lord of Skulls, perhaps mightiest of the Chaos Gods, and his powerful minions who carry his blood-drenched banner across the worlds of the Screaming Vortex. Within its pages, Heretics gain terrible new armaments and weapons to wage war, new devices to carry their wrath across the battlefield, and more to aid them in their struggles against the hated Imperium.

CHAPTER I: KHORNE

The Chaos God Khorne is the subject of this chapter, and here players find revelations concerning the nature of the Blood God. His demesne within the Realms of Chaos is a land of terrible violence and constant battle, and from his Throne of Skulls his rage and hatred drives a universe of conflict and bloodshed. His minions, both Daemonic and mortal, fight in his name across the stars, waging endless wars against their foes and even each other, for Khorne cares little for causes, as long as blood is shed and skulls are taken.

CHAPTER II: THE BLOOD-SOAKED WARRIORS

Players gain four new Player Archetypes in this chapter: Khorne Berzerker, Night Lords Chaos Space Marine, Xurunt Frost Father, and Chem-Hunter of Messia. All are powerful fighters, worthy to spill blood either knowingly or unknowingly for the Lord of Rage. It also includes new armoury items including bikes and mounts, rules for creating powerful Legacy Weapons, and expanded Rites and Rituals for calling on the Blood God's favour.

CHAPTER III: MASTERS OF DESTRUCTION

Chapter III includes expanded rules for Hordes and Massed Combat, so that Heretics can fight truly epic battles in their Path to Glory. Players will also learn more of areas within the Screaming Vortex reflecting the Blood God's nature of violence and conflict, such as the dread War Moons of Talax, the blood-soaked plains of Xurunt, the gladiator pits of Kurse, and more.

CHAPTER IV: RED DAWN RISING

The adventure within this chapter takes place on the rocky world of Messia, where the Heretics have learned of a potent Daemon Weapon that was lost to the mutant hordes that roam the planet. They must overcome the forces of powerful drill-barons to claim this axe for themselves, for should dawn's light fall on the shambling mutant currently possessing the weapon, he will realise its strength and take over the world himself. The Heretics find that possession of such a weapon is not enough, though, and only through true mastery can they contain the beast within.

NPC WEAPON TRAINING AND WEAPON DAMAGE

In the cases of all NPC profiles, the GM should assume that they are proficient in any weapon they are equipped with and, in general, any weapon an adversary possesses is one he's prepared to use. In addition, all NPC weapon profiles have any damage bonuses from Talents, Strength Bonus, cybernetics, or other augmentations included.

INFAMY FOR NPCs

Certain dangerous and powerful NPCs possess Infamy, representing their particularly potent abilities and dread reputations. An NPC with Infamy has Infamy Points equal to his Infamy Bonus, and may be used as if they were Infamy Points at CP Level 2 (21-60 Corruption Points).



KHORNE

BLOOD AND SKULLS
•
WARS WITHOUT END
•
THE REALM OF
BRASS AND BLOOD
•
SERVANTS OF
SLAUGHTER
•
OF RAGE AND WAR
•
KHORNE AND
THE LONG WAR



CHAPTER I: KHORNE

"Time is at an end for your people. Isolation may have kept you safe for thousands of years, hidden from the view of watchful and bloodthirsty eyes, but it has left you stagnant and unprepared for our arrival. It has not, however, left you without purpose. Through me you shall know your ultimate destiny. Your skulls will rest for all eternity at the feet of my master. Your purpose is to give glory to Khorne!"

—Lord Argustus, Champion of Khorne,
before the Slaughter of Philost

The Dark Gods of Chaos are beings of incalculable power and insidious influence who reside in the nightmare dimension known as the Realm of Chaos. It is a place where the impossible is routine and insanity is the norm.

From within this twisted hellscape, the Ruinous Powers reach into the world of mortals, offering a portion of their power to the living in exchange for their loyalty and obedience. Khorne's price for strength and power is simply that his followers engage in constant acts of both violence and rage. The Blood God demands death and destruction, mayhem and warfare. He would see his enemies drained of blood and their skulls harvested in brutal conflict, a galaxy aflame with endless war.

BLOOD AND SKULLS

All across the universe, in every galaxy, on every planet, and in every passing moment of time, conflict has steered the course of events. It is conflict that has propelled one species into a position of dominance over another and consigned one man to oblivion while another has triumphed.

There are as many sources of conflict as there are beings in the universe. Jealousy, rage, sport, hunger, political advantage, territory, possessions, or even the simple, innate thirst for domination all breed and foster conflict. It is inescapable. There has never been a time or a place free from it. Even those races claiming to be enlightened and peaceful cannot escape the basic truth that without conflict, their progress would come to a halt, with challenging new ideas being left unconsidered.

The victims and beneficiaries of conflict are not limited to emerging only from simple personal struggles. In the grandest scales, systems of government, even entire cultures and civilisations, are destroyed by stronger ones, often as easily as a Chaos Space Marine reaches out with a power first and crushes the frail frame of a Grot. It is through conflict that the mighty rise and the weak fall. At its most basic level, conflict is the survival of one thing at the expense of another.

Khorne is conflict embodied to its most violent extreme, and thus Khorne is eternal and omnipresent. In all places and throughout every era, Khorne's influence has been felt by all. His attentions have had a hand in determining the outcome of seemingly every antagonistic confrontation, from a disagreement

between two angry scribes, to the galaxy-crushing wars of the Horus Heresy. Reaching out from his Skull Throne, beyond the illusion of reality in which mortal beings live and die, he touches the greatest conflicts. He pushes them forward, encouraging their growth. Driving men to take from their rivals that which they have not the strength to retain, Khorne stokes the fires of their hostility. Where expanding civilisations lay competing claims to new-found resources, he fans the flames of discord. As a brother grows jealous of his sibling's position, he heats the blood to the boiling point. Conflict is embraced as possessions are claimed, resources are seized, and brothers are slain. Through it all, blood flows to Khorne and he laughs as his power grows.

BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD

The fundamental conflicts that drive mortal life forward sustain Khorne on a base level, much as bread and water might sustain a creature of flesh. But just as a mortal body craves more substantial food, so too does Khorne desire greater conflicts. He is not content to lurk in the background, inciting petty squabbles or drinking in the joys of a remote border dispute. Khorne is not some mere beast or other lowly temporal being. He is a god, and the appetite of a god is terrible and insatiable.

The worship of Khorne takes many forms. Primitive human cultures have followed Khorne since the time they first were able to hunt game and make war upon their neighbours. Many of them are not even aware that the god they venerate is the Blood God himself. Some do not even think of him as a god. To them he is a force of nature to be appeased or a spirit to be persuaded. A common representation of Khorne in these cultures is that of a great beast, such as a shadowy mastiff, eyes ablaze as it seeks prey. Enlisting the aid of such a spirit can ensure a productive hunt or bloody victory in a battle with another clan.

Humans are not alone in following this blood-soaked path. Khorne's favour can also come to the brutal Orks, despite their own gods Gork and Mork. Fierce Nekulli mercenaries, bloodthirsty Rak'Gol hunters, or indeed any warrior from any species can serve the purpose of the Lord of Skulls. They need only pledge blood and skulls to their master to receive his strength in their arms and his rage in their hearts.

Even deep within Imperial space, there are those who would unwittingly turn to the worship of Khorne. On hive worlds, gangs fight one another for territory and supplies. Sometimes they recruit a deadly assassin to eliminate a particularly powerful opposing gang leader. Such an assassin, at the direction of his temple's leadership, may seek a divine hand to guide his dagger's stroke over the throat of his target. In praying for help to commit such a murder, the assassin runs the risk of attracting the notice of Khorne, the Lord of Murder. The assassin's masters may or may not know that they end up serving Khorne. They may think they are offering sacrifices to some other deity, or could simply not care to whom the blood of the kill is consecrated as long as the temple gains power and influence. Regardless, Khorne offers his help and claims the blood in payment.

Regardless of the need that pushes someone to him, no matter the circumstance, or indeed even the name or form by which he is known, one constant binds all to him—blood.



Above all, Khorne seeks the spilling of blood. Through murder, slaughter, and war, servants of the Blood God rip apart the flesh of their enemies, staining the soil on thousands of worlds with crimson gore, all in the name of Khorne. Nothing pleases Khorne more than the free flow of sanguine life force. It gives him his power, sustains him, and eases the spreading of his influence. Those who worship Khorne must ensure that the supply of blood never ceases, for Khorne cares not from where the blood flows, only that it does. A follower who displeases Khorne by failing to provide sufficient blood sacrifices will likely find himself as the next offering, his blood drunk, his soul consumed, and his skull tossed upon the vast mountain of such bones that surrounds the Throne of Skulls.

WARS WITHOUT END

"There is no peace. There is only time wasted between battles."

—Ergathon of the Skulltakers, Champion of Khorne

Though Khorne's influence is a steady, constant tide of aggression pushing the world of mortals to acts of brutality, murder, and bloodshed, this is not enough to satiate the thirst of the Lord of Battle. Minor, isolated, or subtle acts cannot keep the rivers of his realm flowing with blood or elevate his throne ever higher upon a mound of skulls. They cannot fuel the fires of the boundless rage

that exists at the very core of his being. Khorne demands slaughter on a planetary scale, the murder of entire species, and, most of all, unending battle. Warfare—constant, epic, and merciless warfare—is required to reap the blood and skulls required to feed the cravings of a god.

All races wage war upon their rivals, even those that claim to seek unity and enlightenment. Those that do not willingly submit to the cause of another's greater good are brought to heel through armed force. For reluctant soldiers, war is a duty performed in service to a higher cause. It serves its purpose as a means to an end of peace. Many, though, find the means of carnage to become an end in itself.

To those who serve Khorne, war needs no justification or purpose beyond the glorious act itself. Splitting a head with a chainaxe and feeling the blood strike the flesh of the hand that wields it is its own reward. It becomes a compulsion. Killing begets killing. Blood demands blood. Devotion to Khorne is a life, no matter how brief or long, filled with days of brutal destruction, broken up only by the need to gather strength until the assault can be launched anew.

A single rage-fuelled man can kill a handful of people before he falls, but when hundreds or thousands of such individuals gather together, cities, planets, and even galaxies shake in fear. Armies of Khorne's devoted worshippers descend upon a planet with a single purpose—to reap skulls and spill blood for their master. Huge Daemon Engines of war, weapons of incalculable destructive power, are granted to the armies that show the greatest devotion and total the largest body counts. As the Doom Mortars of these chosen forces rain gravedigger

THE FACE OF A GOD

There is no way to know the true face of a Chaos God, for no mortal or machine mind can grasp the unfathomable nature of Chaos. The Four Powers are manifestations of the various aspects of this pure Chaos, and thus they, too, can only be described in limited mortal terms, using words and images that must ultimately fail to perfectly represent the god's actual form.

Despite the inability of crude language to properly describe Khorne's appearance, there are some common points that make it into most accounts. He is described as a gargantuan, imposing warrior with the head of a dog. He wears armour of brass and wields an impossibly massive sword. Red and brass, symbolising blood and warfare, are his chosen colours and feature strongly in the imagery of gibbering artists who render his appearance in devotional tomes. This is the most common image of Khorne, as depicted in blasphemous works, painted upon the unholy war banners of his legions, and burned into the minds of psykers that have peered too deeply into the Warp. It is not the only representation, however. Many accounts are drawn from the last remaining copy of Addrastian's *Knowledge Most Foul*. The writings of this mad remembrancer come from interviews he conducted and from transmissions he either intercepted or accessed by other means. Several Administratum scribes have been purged under suspicion of lending aid to Addrastian in his quest to collect knowledge that would be best left buried and forgotten.

shells down upon the heads of a terrified populace, ranks of frenzied warriors tear into a planet as if it were itself a living thing. Orbital defences are smashed, cities are razed, and enemy war machines are obliterated, clearing the way for the killing to begin in earnest. Destruction inflicted from guns is a start, but true martial achievement can only be realised in close quarters. Each kill committed fuels the greater slaughter. There are no captives taken, no lives spared; Khorne does not abide mercy. As streets become rivers of blood and bones shatter beneath advancing boots, the armies of Khorne push themselves to greater and greater feats of carnage.

At first, pistols are holstered in favour of chainswords and power axes. The blades bite deeply into the chests and necks of terrified enemy soldiers, the resistance of the flesh generating a feeling of grim satisfaction for the wielder. Soon even this sensation is not gratifying enough. The warriors of Khorne need to feel the heat of freshly spilled blood as it pumps out of hearts directly onto their skin. They need to revel in the snapping of arms and ripping of flesh that the jagged bone protrusions cause. In these moments, Khorne and his followers reach a level of communion that gives the Blood God the closest thing he gets to a feeling of being satiated. This feeling, however, is fleeting. As soon as it subsides, Khorne bellows in rage and pushes his followers to regroup and prepare to assault their next target. The warfare never ends.

Even in Khorne's own realm, where enemies only rarely present themselves, there is war. The generals of Khorne's daemonic armies, the mighty Bloodthirsters, lead legions of Bloodletters, Flesh Hounds, and other Daemons into battle against one another. They hone their brutal skills, even as they dull their blade edges against the armour of other Daemons. Axes cut into unnatural flesh in a constant orgy of destruction. Limbs are severed, chests are impaled on horns, faces are ripped apart by teeth and claws. When a battle ends, the wrecked bodies of the fallen are crushed under foot or tossed into great bottomless chasms. The battlefield remains idle for only as long as it takes for fresh legions to mass. Then the battle cries are heard once more and war begins anew. The only respite from the conflict is reserved for the furnace-Daemons who work the forges, creating weapons for the legions to wield in their next battle, be it within Khorne's realm or in the material world.

THE REALM OF BRASS AND BLOOD

"I saw constant battle. Man fought Daemon. Lightning fought volcano. Geysers of molten brass fought lakes of steaming blood. There was no respite, no peace. That which emerged victorious was immediately set upon by another foe even more terrible. It was blood, spraying and jetting, and skulls adding to a throne that pierced the red skies. It was endless screams of rage and fury made incarnate. It was... glorious."

—Desark Slet, vision-geist of the Encrusted Blade

Though the Daemon-filled battlefields of Khorne's realm are many, and each is vast beyond reckoning, there is more to this blasted land than just blood-soaked plains populated with warring Daemons. Violence and despair are constant travelling companions for any unfortunate soul cursed to briefly wander there. Each foreboding hellscape leads to another, more grim than the last. At the heart of it all, Khorne watches from his throne, surveying his lands and pitting his forces against any convenient foe, be they fellow Daemons or foolhardy invaders who seek to wage a doomed war on the Lord of Battle.

It is a realm unlike any other. Storms rage perpetually across crimson skies, sending gale-force blasts seemingly composed of pure rage whipping across the plains and mountains. These angry winds tear into the land itself and rip up great chunks of stone and blood-drenched earth, tossing them violently back down hundreds of leagues away in explosions of raw destruction.

The land, for its part, fights back against the brutal assault of the heavens. Earthquakes send gouts of molten brass skyward, burning up the storm clouds, temporarily ending their rage until the winds re-gather to begin their assaults anew. New mountains erupt from flat land in an instant, some thrusting into the sky like gigantic living swords, others acting as shields against the advance of the storms.



Rivers of boiling blood criss-cross the hellish landscape, dividing the realm into territories over which rival Bloodthirsters wage war. The blood-flows are not content to allow the conquered lands to rest idle. From deep below the ground, new rivers strike through the surface, splitting the lands as easily as an axe opens the bloated gut of a lazy bureaucrat. Each crimson flow sucks down all that once occupied the space, including any Daemon legions that might have been marching there. As with its war against the sky, the land retaliates, pushing the banks of the rivers to close in upon themselves. The brass-spewing volcanoes send liquid metal into the rivers, evaporating the blood within and sealing the wounds with burning fury.

Each piece of the realm of battle constantly fights to obliterate the others. Each acts like a living servant of Khorne, wanting to prove to the master of the land that it is the most worthy of his rewards. A visitor to this nightmare realm would surely be driven mad, knowing that every rock, every breeze, and every drop of what should be water is an enemy, looking to kill him with just as much purpose, desire, and violence as the multitudinous Daemons of the Blood God inhabiting the land. To witness the carnage of the realm of Khorne is to know that conflict is a living, breathing thing and not just a curse that troubles the worlds of men, machines, and aliens. It is to know an eternal truth and, thus, to know despair.

KHORNE'S RAGE

At the outermost edge of this domain there lies a ring of volcanoes that scholars of the profane have come to call Khorne's Rage. Reaching hundreds of miles into air, they belch their thick black smoke and molten brass skyward, creating an impenetrable border that can neither be seen through nor navigated. Darkness and ash hang there, lit ominously from beneath by gouts of flame that incinerate the loose debris along the sides of the volcanoes. Within the ash clouds, blood storms roil. Red lightning dances across the clouds as thunder cracks and rolls, like the snap of a Bloodthirster's whip followed with the sound of the hooves of a thousand charging Juggernauts.

These peaks stand as a bastion against invaders, their toxic ash and scorching brass flows enough to deter all but the most determined of forces. Those who are arrogant, or foolish, enough to make the attempt to cross the torturous border are met with more than barriers of heat and jagged rock. The very rock and brass of Khorne's Rage itself rises up to crush the attackers. Pieces of the rock break away from the side of the mountains, brass flowing into them in a hellish semblance of life blood. Daemons of stone and liquid metal take form, born of rage and defiance. With mindless fury and unadulterated violence, they bludgeon and scorch their foes. Once their grim task is complete, they fall back into lifeless piles, waiting for the call to reform and defend the borders of their master's realm.

THE DAEMON FORGES

At the base of the volcanoes are the forges of the lesser furnace-Daemons. In these sweltering workshops, weapons of war are crafted. All manner of axes, swords, hammers, and armour are created to supply the Blood God's eternal wars. Here, too, the components of Khorne's Daemon Engines are made. Assembly of these huge constructs of war is conducted elsewhere, but the cogs, blades, housings, and armaments all have their beginning here, at the foot of Khorne's Rage. It is a dangerous place to reside, even by the standards of the rest of the realm. At any moment a volcano could erupt, flooding the forge with molten brass. It is of no concern to Khorne if a few Daemons are incinerated in such mishaps; others rise from the Blood Pits to take their place, and the forges continue.

Despite the risks, the furnace-Daemons are able to take advantage of the dangers of Khorne's Rage. Across the plains of battle, it is almost exclusively Khorne's own minions that do battle and perish. At the fringes of the realm, however, other warriors die agonising, terrible, bloody deaths. Using tools of fiendish design and rites that even the most depraved Chaos Sorcerers would dare not undertake, the masters of the hell-forges enslave the souls of those mortals who would dare invade the Blood God's realm and fuse them with the anvils of Khorne. The tormented screams of those thus eternally imprisoned blend with the ringing and clanging of each falling hammer that strikes the forge. When white-hot metal is placed on the anvil and pounded into form, the bound soul feels the scorching heat. Thus, as each new weapon or piece of armour is crafted in the Daemon Forges, it is born to the sounds of Khorne's enemies suffering his everlasting wrath.

THE BLOOD PITS

Warp energy, the raw stuff of Chaos, constantly swirls across the realms of all of the Greater Powers. Its currents and eddies shift and meander seemingly at random, causing mutation within the very land itself and everyone and everything they touch. In most cases, this power does not linger in any one place for long. There are, however, locations throughout the Blood God's treacherous domain where the power of the Warp collects and stirs. When this happens, great craters are often gouged into the blasted plains. None can say if it takes moments or millennia for these pits to form, for time is meaningless within the Realm of Chaos.

Eventually, the Warpstorms break apart, sometimes seeping into the very pits they created. When this happens, Khorne commands his minions to intensify their efforts to harvest blood from the mortal world, using the most violent, destructive, and devastating methods they can possibly bring to bear. The souls that perish in such a campaign give their blood to a special, dark cause. Their crimson essence is collected in the pit, where it is mixed with molten brass and a measure of Khorne's own murderous bile. The resultant lake is a new Blood Pit.

It is from the Blood Pits that new Daemons of Khorne arise. Bloodletters, furnace-Daemons, and many lesser fiends steadily emerge from the Warp and bile infused blood, ready to do their master's bidding. The soldiers that vomit forth from that pit will be charged from the day of their creation until the day they fail their master in combat with claiming more blood to refill their pit. Eventually a pit goes dry, but without fail, soon after it does a new storm begins to brew, restarting the cycle of bloodshed.

Log-scrap entries found amidst ruins on forge world Kellin IV:

Day 8: The promethium shipment was delayed again. I may only be a lower resource control tech-adept, but even I can compute that our forge strains to produce the required number of hellfire missiles to arm the Ordinatus for its upcoming holy purging of the cultists on Iocanthos. Still, by the will of the Omnissiah, we will not falter.

Day 17: The promethium resupply has yet to arrive, and I calculate we do not have enough to produce all the missiles. Lower cant-messages stream that Magos Krannak of Forge Sigma has received his shipment. Surely we must be next, for anything else would not be correct. If this is a test from the Omnissiah, we shall pass it.

Day 22: A message came from Forge Sigma today: "Your forge has slipped behind our own in producing the righteous armaments that our cause requires. Does your faith not see you through a trial so insignificant as a delay in shipments? Perhaps you should pray to the Machine God for guidance. Do not let the Ordinatus fail due to your weakness." This behaviour is not proper. I would wish to see what they would do if the situation were reversed. Would the Omnissiah favour them then?

Day 23: An idea came to me as I contemplated the present problem last night. Forge Sigma has an overabundance of promethium, while our own forge has a shortage. Surely there must be a way to transfer some from one to the other. Maybe then Sigma's arrogance will fade.



THE RIVERS OF BLOOD

Dividing one region of Khorne's realm from another like jagged crimson scars on the scorched land are the rivers of blood. These miles-wide flows are filled with the blood of those who have fallen in service to Khorne, be they victims or followers. Nearly all blood that is shed on his behalf finds its way to these sanguine canals. The blood itself is hot to the point of boiling. Steam made of vaporised blood hangs in the air all along the length of the rivers, creating a palpable red cast to the regions through which they run. Gigantic bubbles rise to the surface, carrying with them occasional remains of something that was unfortunate enough to have fallen into the river. As the bubbles burst, globules of steaming hot blood launch hundreds of feet into the air, coming back to the ground and landing on the shores in splatter patterns that often resemble the spray of an opened artery.



FROM THE FINAL LOG ENTRIES OF IMPERIAL NAVY CAPTAIN JAAN WERVEGARTEN:

We cannot hope to defeat the forces arrayed against us. A lifetime lost in service to a Corpse God! I turn now to my true master, my true god of blood and skulls. I dedicated myself to him this night by killing the prisoners. The other officers objected at first, but their expression of weakness let me know what I needed to do next. Let their doubt be washed away with their blood as it paints the bridge red tomorrow.

I have seen my lord's glorious plan. He came to me in a vision as I slumbered two nights ago. At first he appeared in the guise of the Emperor. He reached his arms out to me, tilted his head back and opened his mouth. As his lips stretched apart, blood vomited upward like a fountain, raining back down to cover his face and body. The blood collected in his upturned palms and began to take solid form. As I watched, in horror at first, the blood in his right hand took the shape of a huge sword. In his left hand, a planet coalesced. The Emperor's head tipped forward, and as it did so his skin took on a brassy shine. His eyes went black and his body was surrounded by a crimson glow. This was no longer the Emperor, yet I did not fear. I watched as the god before me swung the blood sword down upon the planet—a planet I now recognized as Corrania. The planet exploded in a shower of gore. Despite the blood in his mouth choking the words, I heard my soon-to-be-master command: "Serve me, or share their end." When I awoke, I knew that a new, greater fate waited for me if I would but seize it.

Tomorrow the engines of the fleet will sputter out, drenched in the blood of 12 billion Corranians once the battle is joined. I will not die in service to a long-dead false god. I will serve Khorne, as will all those aboard my ship who are willing. Even those who do not join us will ultimately serve the Blood God, as their spilled life essence will slake his thirst, if only for a moment.

THE LAKE OF SLAUGHTER

Thousands of blood rivers cut through the land and end up emptying over a bleak precipice miles high, plunging downward in waterfalls of gore. The lake that forms at the base of the wall is larger than any ocean in the mortal realm and populated with creatures that cannot be. Leviathans of brass and bone swim through the lake, devouring all as they pass. Soaring above the lake, Bloodthirsters fight with dragons of pure, solid blood. Those that stray too close to the surface of the lake risk being snatched out of the air by the very lake itself, so hungry is it for carnage. Rising waves on the surface take the shape of warriors and do battle, crashing violently into each other and falling back to the surface in a rain of scattered blood.

THE BRASS FORTRESS

On the far shore of the Lake of Slaughter, the ground is littered with skulls, so many, in fact, that whatever foundation may lie beneath them cannot be touched. For miles these skulls stretch away from the shore, and in the distance there rises a great black wall. This is the outer wall of Khorne's brass citadel. Upon the wall stand guardian Daemons, with eyes as sharp as their fangs and swords. They watch for any intruder, ready to defend their master to the last. Within the walls there are thousands of Flesh Hounds patrolling the skull-yard, sniffing out the blood scent of any who would dare attempt incursion. In the skies, flying between the outer walls and the inner keep, elite Bloodthirsters listen for sounds of invasion on the wind. It is rare that any force musters the strength to assault the Brass Fortress, its guardians deterring all but the most foolish or daring of Khorne's rivals from even trying.

When the attempt is made, the might of the Blood God's personal host is brought to bear with a fury and rage that threatens to rip a hole between realms. While Khorne's brother gods could gain much power should they defeat him in his fortress, the risk of counter invasion is too great for such wars to be waged without dire cause. It is said that if Khorne himself should rouse from his throne and personally go to war against the other gods, his favoured blade would end them all in one mighty sweep, but that such an act would have calamitous results that not even Tzeentch could predict. Because of this, an uneasy state of balance exists. When Khorne does obliterate the invading armies of his brother gods, they do not exact retribution directly. When the threat is ended, neither does Khorne press the advantage, but rather turns back toward his inner sanctum and reclaims his place atop the Throne of Skulls.

THE THRONE OF SKULLS

In the very centre of the brass citadel, beyond the Bastion Stair and the eight Iron Pillars, Khorne watches over all his minions from his seat on the Throne of Skulls. From there he commands his legions to bring war to the distant corners of the galaxy. Every victory he witnesses leaves him thirsting for more blood. With every defeat, he takes the blood of a failed champion and adds it to the rivers of his realm. Blood will be his; if he must harvest it from his own minions, so be it.

Surrounding the Throne on all sides is a mound of skulls that holds Khorne aloft on his perch. Champions and fallen enemies alike contribute to the mass of bone. Could these skulls speak, some would tell tales from before the great war against the Corpse God, when Angron had yet to swear his oath to the Blood God. Others would speak of grave mistakes that caused their entire race to fall to the axes of legions of Berzerkers. The skulls closest to him, those of his favoured champions who have perished in service to their lord after hundreds of violent campaigns, would call out across eternity, once more bellowing their war cry: "Blood for the Blood God!"

SERVANTS OF SLAUGHTER

"Prepare the Dreadclaws and unchain the Mad Ones! Glorious battle awaits us today, for the world below has refused to surrender! Let us descend upon them with fury and rage, giving no quarter and sparing only those warriors who fight well enough to earn a place amongst us. As to the rest, their lives and possessions are ours, but their skulls are for Khorne!"

—Captain Korgin, the World-Reaver

Daemons and mortals both wish to spill blood in their master's name, but their methods for so doing can vary greatly. As long as they never cease the harvest, though, the Blood God is pleased. Murder in the dead of night, ritual sacrifice of conquered peoples, or decapitations of rival Daemons on the field of battle are all satisfying to Khorne. All forms of slaughter serve his hunger, and the manners in which his followers act to slake his thirst are as varied as they themselves are.

DAEMONS

For there to be war, there must be warriors, and the daemonic soldiers swelling the ranks of the Lord of War are the most brutal, destructive, and violent killing machines any opposition could ever fear to face. Mortals can spend their entire lives training to kill. Races can pass knowledge of weapons and warfare down through time. Civilisations can spend the resources and lives of hundreds of generations on nothing other than total devotion to breeding better warriors, or creating more destructive weapons of destruction. Yet, what killers can any of these produce that can compare to beings whose essential nature, whose very existence, is formed from conflict made manifest in Daemon flesh?

What skills of murder can be learned that will be more deadly than those innately possessed by creatures who dine on death and slake their thirst with the blood of the slain? How can any amount of time spent training or fighting forge a soldier finer than a bloodthirsty fiend that is the physical embodiment of the all-conquering will of the Blood God?

The daemonic legions of Khorne are a weapon in his hands, slicing through his enemies just as would his own blade, reaping a brutal harvest of death, blood, and skulls. They spend eternity honing themselves into razor-sharp tools of deadly perfection, fighting each other and the armies of the other Ruinous Powers within the Realm of Chaos until their master has need of them. When called upon, they are dispatched through points where the barriers between the Daemon and mortal worlds are weakest, places such as the Inner Ring of the Screaming Vortex and other Warp-born tears in the fabric of reality.

Let loose to wreak havoc, the daemonic legions of Khorne shatter worlds, staining stars with the blood of their systems' inhabitants. No living thing escapes them as they rip and tear their way through all they encounter, bleeding out solitary travellers and armies thousands strong alike. The blood these minions shed flows back to Khorne, and the skulls they claim elevate him ever higher upon his Throne.

BLOODTHIRSTERS

Khorne's Rage Incarnate, Lords of Skulls, Fists of Khorne

Of all the ways in which Khorne's nature is reflected in the forms and actions of his daemonic minions, perhaps the truest aspect of the core essence of the Blood God is that of the supreme warrior. There are many ways to come to know Khorne and show him devotion. None earn his approval more than striding boldly onto the field of battle, bellowing a rage-filled challenge to any who would meet it, and cutting down the opponent with the relentless fury and all-conquering battle-skills of a true warrior.

There is but one Daemon among the Lord of Battle's servants that perfectly exemplifies the warrior essence of Khorne. Unleashed upon a quaking universe to bring certain, complete, and final defeat to the enemies of Khorne, Bloodthirsters are his ultimate emissaries. They spread his word with sword, axe, and whip, bringing swift and total destruction with each weapon stroke. Their blood-drenched brass armour protects red flesh that is nearly as impervious to damage as those metal plates that adorn it. Born aloft by enormous leathery bat-wings and currents of air heated by the fires of their own rage, they soar through the skies above those soon to perish. Below them, terror saps the resolve of those who are engulfed by their passing shadows. The eyes of a Bloodthirster are malicious smouldering embers that see others only as either cowards to be culled or challengers to be defeated.





When these baleful orbs pick out an opposing warrior capable of putting up at least a semblance of a fight, the Greater Daemon of Khorne lets loose a soul-destroying roar and dives toward the foe. With a skull-splitting crack, the hooves of the beast impact the ground, sending chunks of debris flying in all directions. Waves of destruction radiate from the crater, tossing all nearby to the ground, stunned, deafened, and bloodied. If the intended foe of the Bloodthirster survives this initial onslaught, the Slayer of Khorne cracks its whip and points its axe toward him. For many, this grim sight is enough to send them fleeing for their lives, preferring cowardice and a slim chance to escape over certain annihilation. Those who remain steadfast in the face of terror earn the first grudging hint of respect from the massive Daemon. A Bloodthirster is more than capable of defeating an entire army on its own, but the moment its challenge is accepted, there is only one other figure on the battlefield. Warriors that stand their ground against fury manifest rarely survive beyond the Bloodthirster's first stroke, so perfect are the martial skills of Khorne's Daemon generals. Any who do are granted the briefest moment of silent respect before their bodies are sliced, smashed, eviscerated, lashed, or otherwise reduced to small unidentifiable chunks of flesh, entrails, and bone. It is preferably only the skull of such a fighter that survives intact, so that it might be added to the mound around Khorne's Skull Throne.

DAEMON PRINCES

Favoured of the Blood God, Blood Princes, Bone Lords

Not all of the Blood God's Daemon servants began their existence as beings of everlasting Chaos. There are those who once strode across the material universe as living creatures of weak, frail, and limited flesh but who sought to be more. These courageous souls seek to offer themselves in service to Khorne in exchange for unparalleled strength and limitless power. Embarking on the path of glory, such a mortal knows full well that each footfall upon it could be the last he takes. Service to the capricious Blood God is fraught with constant hazards. Twists and turns of fate cause many champions to displease their master and end their relatively sane days as they are suddenly transformed into a mindless spawn of Chaos.

There are, however, rare instances where the champion, over time and through victory in thousands of battles, catches the more favourable eye of his master. For these few, the life of a mortal is gladly exchanged for elevation into the ranks of Daemonhood as a powerful Daemon Prince.

Those the Chaos Gods favour in this way are always rewarded because they were unwavering in their devotion and, just as importantly, unfailingly achieved all that their lord demanded of them. Of all the Chaos Gods, discerning what Khorne requires of his champions is the easiest and least complicated: kill. Ensure that the flow of blood is constant. Make war upon all things. These straightforward tenets speak to the basic nature of all creatures, giving their inner need for conflict a path for expression. Khorne cares not if his champions began as hive scum or as Space Marines. As long as they give him an unending flow of blood, they can earn the rewards he has to bestow, and elevation to Daemonhood is the greatest reward of all.

Day 27: Still no promethium. Production has slowed, but this has given me time to solve the problem. I will sneak into the data vaults and release bits of scrapcode that will work their way from our forge to Sigma. When received, the machine-spirits of their forge and ours will commune and resolve our shortage by sharing. Magos Krannak might not approve of such actions, but who is he to argue with the spirit of his forge?

Day 29: Forge Sigma still refuses to release the promethium, despite the scrapcode I released. Tests showed it should have worked. Perhaps a different version of the code is required, but I am uncertain as to how to modify it to force things through. It must work. I need it to work. I will make it work.

Day 30: Inspiration came to me last night. I prayed to the Omnissiah for guidance, but received none. As I left the temple, I stumbled, cutting my remaining flesh-hand on a bit of jagged rock. A drop of blood fell from my wound into a holy oil canister. I watched the blood spread out and then become absorbed into the oil. The flame being fed by the oil flared briefly as the blood was burned away. After that, the flame appeared to have changed colour, taking on a slightly more reddish hue. I have my answer: Blood. The scrapcode demands sacrifice. Through blood offerings shall we prevail.

HERALDS OF KHORNE

Exalted of Khorne, Battlelords, Skulltakers

Heralds of Khorne are amongst the most terrible of Khorne's creations, elevated and chosen to lead his daemonic rank and file into battle. When set loose to go about the bloody business of slaughter, they are unfettered by thoughts of restraint, seeking the most violent ways to sever limbs, cleave heads from torsos, and fill the rivers of blood with the drained essence of Khorne's enemies. Their blades cease to swing only when nothing remains for them to destroy or they themselves are banished back to the Warp.

Each Herald was once a Lesser Daemon, who Khorne favoured with greater power in response to especially horrific killings across endless battles and countless centuries. Though they are, in many ways, less stable than the Daemons they command, the elevating touch of their master's blessing enables a Herald to direct the savagery of lesser kin toward greater purpose.

BLOODLETTERS

Chosen of Khorne, Slaughter-kin, Crimson Death

The most numerous troops among the daemonic hosts of the Blood God are the scarlet-scaled blademasters, the Bloodletters of Khorne. Though they are roughly humanoid in shape, that is where the similarities to Men, Eldar, or Orks end. Their iron-muscled frames are the hue of their master's favoured red. Black horns thrust out from the flesh of their heads, acting as cruel-edged weapons in their own right. Their fingers end in wicked claws, sharp enough to make a mockery of armour as easily as flesh. Ebon tongues flick across teeth that have dined on the hearts of a thousand warriors from a thousand worlds, the taste of each lingering in the memories of the fiend.

A soldier who locks eyes with a Bloodletter is often frozen stiff with fear, unable to look away as the beast's soulless, black orbs guide the strokes of its vicious black hellblade through the neck or guts of his victim. Wherever these Daemons exist, blood is sure to flow and headless corpses stack upon the wet earth like trees after a tremendous storm. Only the most skilled of warriors would have any possibility of surviving battle with a Bloodletter, but the furious battle itself only serves to bring them one step closer to following the Lord of Skulls.

FLESH HOUNDS

The Relentless Hunters, Khorne's Endless Fury, Beasts of Blood

The enemies of Khorne are many, and not all have the honour and courage to stand in battle against his minions. Some flee before the daemonic onslaught, an affront to the Blood God for it means that blood and skulls he has claimed could be denied him. From his place on the Throne of Skulls, he tracks those enemies who dare to run. With a thunderous bellow of rage, he unshackles his scale-covered Flesh Hounds, inescapable hunting beasts twice the size of any mortal canine.



With the heavy chains disconnected from their brass collars, they begin the hunt. Powerful sinew drives razor-edged claws into the ground as the Hounds cover huge distances with every stride. Their keen blood-sense directs them unerringly toward the kill. No distance is too great for these beasts to traverse in search of their prey. No amount of time can pass that sees them give up the chase. As they close on the cowards they have been sent to rend, their blood pumps harder, giving them renewed vigour and lust for the kill. Their mouths fill with Daemon-spittle as they taste death in the air. When they set upon the doomed enemies of Khorne, the bodies of their prey explode into a shower of bone, organs, and blood. The beasts hit with such force and ferocity, biting and ripping flesh with tooth and nail, that the victims scarcely have time to realise what has happened to them. When the orgy of carnage ends, the Flesh Hounds lap up all the blood and swallow the skulls of the dead. They then return to their master and regurgitate that which Khorne has claimed as his own. With the hunt completed, the Hounds are once more bound in chains and commanded to heel at their master's side, where they wait to be unleashed again.

Khorne also uses his Flesh Hounds in more direct conflicts. They are often sent ahead of the main lines of a daemonic assault, ploughing into the enemy's main lines in a tide of claws and fangs. The psychic abilities of their foes have little effect, as the Collars that Khorne blesses each beast with burn away such cowardly attacks. The havoc they create allows the trailing forces of Bloodletters to seize upon disorder and confusion and smash apart formations with greater ease. The sight of this terrifying combination of Daemon hounds and merciless horned fiends approaching an army is sometimes enough to cause entire regiments to flee without a fight. At times such as these, the Flesh Hounds are sent into an uncontrollable lust for destruction, for they know they need not wait for the command of their master. They know what his desire will be—the blood and skulls of the fleeing cowards belong to the Master of the Hunt, and the Hounds are eager to please their god.

JUGGERNAUTS

Brass Behemoths, Khorne's Unstoppable Rage, Bloodpounders

The many martial aspects of Khorne are represented in his minions in different ways. His Bloodletters embody his lust for wanton killing and frenzied destruction. His Flesh Hounds are physical extensions of his tenacity and disdain for cowardice. When it comes to raw strength and unstoppable, crushing might, however, no Daemon in his legions can match the Juggernaut.

Like a miniature Daemon Engine, each Juggernaut, or Jugger as they are also known, is a blend of Daemon and hellforged machine, vaguely resembling a hulking, armoured bull. According to legend, each beast begins its existence in the furnaces at the base of Khorne's Rage. Brass-armoured plates, metal cogs, and other fabricated components are fused with Daemon flesh, sinew, and bone that has been dredged from the bottoms of blood lakes and rivers. At this point, the construct is inanimate, a form with no will or desire. It is then that the furnace-Daemons begin the binding rites to infuse the rune-encrusted assemblage with a daemonic essence and the last plates of armour are hammered out on the screaming Daemon Forges, the torment of those bound within seeping into the animated metal. As the final pieces are bolted into place on the Jugger's head, eyes filled with endless rage light with hellish fires and the newly born Juggernaut roars with Khorne's fury.

When a Juggernaut is set loose upon the enemies of Khorne, it charges headlong into them, its feet rising and falling with a force that rivals that of a Warhound Titan's legs. It often seeks the largest, most imposing foe it can find, bringing the target down with a display of brute force that the beast hopes will please its master.

Bloodletters are often mounted atop Juggernauts, the resulting daemonic cavalry adding a new weapon to Khorne's arsenal. These troops are called Bloodcrushers, a name that suits them perfectly. They rush headlong into the thickest part of a battle, scattering opposition as pounding hooves pulverise those not quick enough to avoid the charge. Stunned enemies are relieved of the burden of their heads as the rider's black hellblade comes crashing down through their necks. The resultant spray of arterial blood rains down into the crushed forms that lie beneath the Jugger's feet, creating rings of carnage that leave behind a battlefield dotted with crimson circles of suffering.

It is not just Bloodletters that find themselves riding a Juggernaut into battle. In very rare cases, a mortal champion that has proven himself to the Blood God in innumerable conflicts may receive a Juggernaut as a gift from his patron god. Such a reward carries a heavy burden for the champion, for he knows that he must push himself to even greater acts of bloodshed as thanks to his master. Where once the champion could have temporarily pleased Khorne with the mere killing of a small regiment of Imperial Guardsmen, he must now wipe out a battalion, saturate the field of honour with their blood, and claim each of their skulls for the glory of his god. From his newly elevated position atop the brass behemoth, the champion gladly accepts his new burden, eager to continually prove his worthiness of such a magnificent killing machine.

MORTALS

It is the nature of all Daemons that they exist to serve their creator-lord. Though they may have ambitions to prove themselves and earn a position of dominance over others of their wicked kind, they cannot change their nature. Mortals, however, are a different matter entirely. Life for a flesh-bound soul is the same everywhere in the galaxy, from the lawless reaches of the Koronus Expanse to the ossified offices of the Adeptus Administratum—brutal, treacherous, and miserable. Seclusion, enlightened thought, or long life spans do nothing to ease the suffering. War, ambition, disease, and the quest for power always find ways to put races, societies, and individuals in conflict with one another. This is the nature of life, and these conflicts give the Ruinous Powers all they need to corrupt, control, and consume mortal souls.

These are precious commodities, these mortal souls. Where a Daemon's existence begins and ends serving its god, a mortal must choose to bind himself to a Lord of Chaos. For followers of the Blood God, devotion can be born from noble ideals. The power to defend his homeland from invaders, or to right wrongs that have been committed against his loved ones, can be granted to a worshipper of the Blood God. These easy paths are enticing but all too often more dangerous than they seem at first. Power is addictive and, once it is gained, it is not easily given up. Defeating one invader only means that others are likely to come. Punishing those who have done things worthy of vengeance naturally leads to wanting to prevent those things from happening again. A servant of Khorne who gets and uses power inevitably wants more, and greater power requires greater acts of devotion to the Blood God.

Day 31: The new code is ready. The brass cogs are anointed in blood, ready to infuse the code with its strength as they turn to generate the data-stream code. In addition to a portion of my own blood, the crimson fluid of four Servitors has been exsanguinated to fully lubricate the holy machines. The modifications will give it the strength to strike down any resistance offered by Sigma's spirit. The promethium will be ours and nothing will stand in our way. Even the cogwheels seem to glow brightly as the scrapcode is sent.

Day 34: The promethium has arrived. We can resume full production of the hellfire missiles. I hear that Magos Krannak's formerly unwavering canting has become faltering. His weakness will become our strength!

Day 35: An explosion in Forge Sigma has killed hundreds, including many who were apparently trying to eliminate my scrapcode. Krannak sent the following to all forges: "Sigma's machine-spirits have become erratic, violently disrupting engines in ruin. We request immediate aid, in the name of the Omnissiah!" Let him suffer. Where was his aid when our forge was depleted? Only through force did we survive. If his adepts had been strong enough, he would have seen the attack and defeated it. He does not deserve to be saved. What god would want such a weak servant? It is a question with an answer that cannot be calculated.



CHAOS SPACE MARINES

Even the greatest fighting force the galaxy has seen is not immune to the corrupting, some would say liberating, influence of Chaos. What expectation of resistance can others have when fully half of all the Space Marine Legions, once proudly and unswervingly loyal to the Corpse God of Man, cast aside the old bonds of servitude to their Emperor and embraced a greater existence as soldiers of the Chaos Gods?

When the Horus Heresy plunged the galaxy into the greatest war in the history of humanity, a war that still rages today, untold thousands of Space Marines turned on their brothers and declared their new allegiances. The mighty Angron, Primarch of the World Eaters, committed his service, and that of his Legion, to Khorne. He was not alone. Space Marines are warriors, and when Chaos offered them the power to avenge the perceived wrongs they had suffered at the hands of the Emperor, many naturally chose to serve a master who recognised and rewarded their martial skill.

The events of the Horus Heresy resulted in the single greatest mass defection to Chaos, but that was not the last time it would happen. It is rare, but to this day the lure of Chaos can pull wayward Space Marines down the path of damnation with individuals, companies, and entire Chapters falling to the Blood God. When a warrior such as a Space Marine, devoted to battle and war, gives himself over to the powers, his violent nature often leads him to kneel to the Lord of Battle. Other Space Marines might fall for other reasons, some beyond even their control or despite their loyalty to the Emperor.

The 8th Company of the Emperor's Wolves, for example, sought to end the heretical Red Prophet and the pillar of gushing blood he preached from, only to fall to Khorne themselves after killing him and becoming tainted with the geysering blood. Now known as the Blood Disciples, they raid the Segmentum Obscurus in acts of depravity their ex-brethren cannot imagine.

Worse is what befell the Crimson Sabres, once a renowned Chapter until they purged the ghastly Balethu butcher-cults in a fury of genocide. Haunted from their deeds and the even worse acts of the Balethu that began torturing their souls, their Chapter Master purged a neighbouring system with even more killing to drown out the visions and cries of death. Thus began an unending series of carnage as the Chapter, renamed the Crimson Slaughter, carved a swath of blood across the stars in their new master's name.

WARBANDS

The field of battle is a savage, desperate place to be. One moment a soldier is surrounded by a company of men who have been his companions for years. The next, a hail of enemy fire can leave him the only one standing in a sea of spurting jugular veins, punctured lungs, and severed limbs. The sudden and violent loss can push a man over the edge. Seeking revenge, perhaps feeling abandoned by the commanders who threw away the lives of his squadmates, he may turn to Khorne and offer his service for the power to exact revenge. If his plea is heard, his first commandment from his new master is to kill. If he survives the battle, the next task that is set before him is to kill again.

If more enemies are close at hand, the bloody work can continue. If not, the new supplicant goes in search of new skulls to reap. The strength of one can accomplish many things, but it has its limits. The strength of many can do so much more, especially when Chaos Space Marines join them. Warbands of Khorne's followers travel together, gather resources together, and wage bloody war together. Worlds across the Imperium and beyond have fallen to the blood-rites of the Encrusted Blade, the serrated axes of the Reaver-Kithe, the fury-pandemics of the Red Cadavers, and countless other warbands.

It is always an uneasy alliance, however. Should the warband fail to find new settlements to raid and new foes to slaughter, they often turn on each other. Each member of the warband knows one of the great truths of Khorne: he cares not from where the blood flows, only that it does. It is better to bring the axe down on a companion than to feel its steel opening up ones' own gut.

BLOOD CULTS

While warbands practice their worship of the Lord of Skulls openly, Cultists gather in backrooms and secret slaughter tunnels beneath crowded streets, plotting murder and bloodshed in Khorne's name. Given the terrible nature of many Imperial worlds, however, locals often barely notice increases in violent crimes, missing persons, and gory dismemberments, allowing Blood Cults of Khorne to flourish below the rot of society.

The members of these cults have many different reasons for joining together. Some have seen a friend die in a bar fight. Others have lost their families in Adeptus Arbites raids. There are even those who fight for sport because they enjoy the feeling of fists shattering jawbones. All these reasons and more can set a man on the path toward Khorne. Vengeance and combat are intoxicating to those predisposed to revel in them. This feeling drives individuals to want more, to be strong enough to topple greater foes, and to seek the power necessary to do so. No matter the reason that brings them together, when these individuals find each other, they are united by a common desire. They wish to kill, offering blood and skulls in exchange for power and retribution, and Khorne has much to offer them in the bargain.



MUTANTS

Not all who are touched by Chaos sought the attention willingly. The raw stuff of Chaos permeates the fabric of reality, warping and twisting it on a whim. Inquisitors and others who deliver Imperial justice hunt down and kill mutants as part of their duty to keep the foul taint of Chaos from destroying all that their God-Emperor has built. Even being a loyal citizen does not spare these mutated people from the purging fires of judgment. This can easily be seen as a betrayal to the mutants. With nowhere else to turn, they will seek each other out and devote themselves to the Dark Gods.

Khorne's forces have perhaps more mutants than those of any of his brothers, for many find it an easy path to channel their hate into battlefield fury. Many of their twisted mutations lend themselves to combat as well. Razor claws replace hands, muscles triple in mass, acid blood seeps from wounds, and more. All these blessed improvements find favour with the Lord of Skulls, as all are valuable traits for the battlefield. A mutant with such blessings and a heart full of rage is a tool Khorne can use, but even one without such useful mutations is welcome as long as the fire within the altered form burns for blood and skulls. The Blood God offers mutants the power to exact vengeance on the minions of the Corpse God that turned their backs on them, and this power is eagerly accepted.

A CONVERSATION WITH THE PRIME HUNTER OF THE BRASS FANGS (FERAL HUMAN TRIBE):

Addasian: "What is it you prepare to do?"

Prime Hunter: "We go to hunt and kill the blood sacrifice for our master."

Addasian: "Why do you do this?"

Prime Hunter: "We will hunt for food for our tribe, but if we do not attend to our master first, our hunt will fail."

Addasian: "Oh, your master. You mean your chief. You must give the first meat to your chief. I see."

Prime Hunter: "No! Our chief will eat with the tribe. Our master demands first blood."

Addasian: "Who is this master? And what do you mean 'first blood'?"

Prime Hunter: "Our master dwells in a place of fire and skulls. His rivers are blood and his forests are bones. He hunts at the head of the pack, his fangs of brass ripping flesh from his kills and freeing their blood. We offer him the blood of our enemy and then take what he allows."

Addasian: "The blood of your enemy? What animal is your enemy?"

Prime Hunter: "No animal. Our enemy is through the woods, in the Sky Plain tribe. We will kill their Prime Hunter and offer his blood to He Who Hunts at the Head of the Pack."

OF RAGE AND WAR

"I was about to slip into oblivion, furious that I had not killed more before falling, when red words branded themselves into my brain. Rise! Rage! Destroy! Suddenly, I found myself filled with anger over my weakness. I willed myself to rise. My rage filled my heart and gave me strength. I was reborn to bring death to the enemies of he who had spoken to me and given me power. That they were once my squad mates were of no consequence. Khorne was my master now, and I was eager to serve."

—Tervin the Reaver, once Sgt. Karl Greveoux of the Brontian Longknives, after the Battle of Torvin

The Adeptus Ministorum works constantly to shield Mankind from the temptations of the Ruinous Powers, and furiously preach of the dangers of falling away from the Emperor's Grace and into the pits of disease, turmoil, self-destruction, and slaughter. Heretics know better, for in avoiding the Dark Gods they deny men a chance to grow, achieve, and overcome—to be more than they are. For every disease Nurgle visits upon a population, after all, its people have the chance to see the wisdom of treasuring each day while accepting the inevitable. Each empire that collapses due to Tzeentch's manipulations can give rise to a new and stronger regime. When a disciple of Slaanesh pushes a pleasure too far, he teaches others the limits of their own flesh. A man who accepts the power offered by Khorne and kills those who stand in opposition becomes a symbol of strength and determination to those around him and, for his own part, learns the virtue of self-reliance.

Perversely, the lies of the Imperium please the Ruinous Powers and often work to benefit their ends. In their desperation to keep men from walking down the path toward Chaos, the servants of the Corpse God would keep Mankind in a state of perpetual ignorance. Without the knowledge of the elevation that devotion to Chaos can bring, Heretics see Mankind as a race that impotently flails about without purpose or aim, floundering in a sea of dogmatic corruption. As their race languishes, the strongest, most cunning, and most resolute individuals reject the Imperium in search of power beyond the constraints imposed on them. Some explode in storms of violence, lashing out in rage and fury against any who would stand against them, even if for seemingly benign reasons such as protecting their homelands. The most spectacular eruptions catch the attention of Khorne, and he offers these men the power they cry for. Few refuse the Blood God's blessing and yoke, becoming consumed with his unending desire for blood and skulls. These reborn servants of Khorne were often once exemplars of the very best of Mankind, and it is the lies of the Ecclesiarchy and others that drive them into the arms of the very force these organisations oppose. The defection of each newly enlightened disciple diminishes the ability of the Imperium to forestall total collapse, and thus hastens the inevitable triumph of Chaos.



AN UNEASY BROTHERHOOD

Men give themselves over to the Chaos Gods for many reasons and in many ways. The governor of a plague-stricken city might pray for a cure so that his people will be saved and not turn on him, never realising he was beseeching Nurgle's aid. That same governor might harbour an ambition for a position greater than the leader of his city, and perhaps seek out forbidden texts to call upon Tzeentch's favour. Perhaps he comes to believe that he is not fully enjoying the benefits of his station, and his depraved retinues lead him to indulge in Slaanesh's name. Knowingly or unknowingly, such mortals call on the Chaos Gods for power. Should that governor turn towards a more martial path for power, however, he would never need fear that his sick people would turn on him, that his rivals would prevent his advancement, or that anything or anyone he wishes to claim could escape his grasp. Blessed by the Blood God, he would let the weak among his people die and arm himself to put down any revolt the citizenry might undertake. He would murder competing politicians in their sleep or shoot them from the sky as they travelled to some inane society function. With strength and determination, he would sweep aside those who possessed that which he sought.

Khorne has no interest in subtle manipulations, grand schemes, or wistful indulgences. To the Blood God, there is no goal that cannot be achieved through direct action, with enough bloodshed, or with the proper application of unflinching will. Let his brothers dabble in the affairs of mortals, for they are weak compared to the Master of Skulls. Nurgle cannot muster the strength to raise enough rusty swords against him. Tzeentch cannot summon the courage to challenge him directly and can only make petty schemes. These two brothers he vies with for dominance over the Realm of Chaos and that of mortal men. Though he is their superior in every way that matters, he acknowledges their power and has what might be called a certain respect for their place in the pantheon of the Chaos Gods.

For his youngest brother, Slaanesh, he holds nothing but contempt. The self-absorbed, undisciplined child-god is a petulant, arrogant, and petty waste of power. To the Prince of Delight, battle is simply another pleasure to be experienced. The feeling of blood spilling from an enemy's gut onto the bare hand of the warrior holding the blade is nothing more than a momentary thrill to him. In the hate-filled eyes of Khorne, Slaanesh is a gross perversion of what it means to be a god. His rage is barely kept in check when it comes to dealings with his brother. It is said that if Khorne is ever to lift his great sword and risk possible oblivion for all that exists by striking down one of the other Ruinous Powers, it will be Slaanesh who pushes him to do it. There may come a time when Khorne's fury with Slaanesh can no longer be kept in check. Until that time, Khorne vents his murderous desires by growing his legions, sending them out to wage war across the galaxy, and drowning those they conquer in a deluge of blood.

Day 37: Seven other forges have suffered the same fate as Sigma. Each reports that their machine-spirit seems to have been destroyed from within. Ours is the last forge standing. Refugees from the other forges approach us to demand aid. Scans indicate they intend to take it by force if necessary, but we are strong. We must defend ourselves, but they are many and our weapons are not meant to repel such hordes. We have only the holy missiles. They seem to grow in my optical receptors each time I view them.

Day 38: The Tech-Priests and their Skitarii from the other forges have assaulted us. Peace among brothers is an illusion, dispelled at the first hint of strife. I prayed to the Omnissiah, seeking direction. I was answered with silence. Then I heard a new voice. It was deep, and filled with anger. Every nerve in my body caught fire with each syllable. Searing pain wracked my brain and scorched my receptors with each guttural word. The very engrammic brands lacing my cerebrum with the holy guidance of the Omnissiah seemed to writhe and twist like overloaded power lines. My augmetics seemed to curdle as they tried to decipher the message, and I ceased operation for several moments. When I returned to full functionality, I saw the words "Let them burn in hellfire" written in red, the letters dripping down the bulkhead. My hand was slick with a similar fluid.

Day 39: They are all dead now. The eight hellfire missiles, all that we could produce, have destroyed Krannak and the other traitors who sought to drive us from our forge. I was strong. Now we are strong.

THE DREAMS OF A BLOODTHIRSTY DEITY

The Lord of Battle dreams of one day wrapping his scarlet fingers around Slaanesh's soft, delicate neck and crushing it until the younger god's depraved screams of pleasure become shrieks of agony and then finally go silent with a satisfying snapping of godly bone. This is not his only dream.

Khorne is eternal. As long as man has murdered his brother, wolf has hunted prey, and planets have been consumed by the death spasms of their stars, Khorne has existed. Until such time as all these things cease, he remains. It is impossible to vanquish Khorne completely, since the very act of fighting against him gives him strength.

Only through complete apathy can sentient races hope to even so much as lessen the power of the Blood God. Khorne knows this. While his power would remain unfathomably great even if half of the universe's civilisations found lasting peace and serenity, it would still be diminished, and Khorne is a jealous god who does not suffer loss well. This need to keep his power, and to grow it, motivates his actions. Each skull taken, and each drop of blood that fills the rivers and lakes of his realm, is a physical testament to the power of Khorne. With grim satisfaction, the Blood God can cast his gaze about his realm and know that his strength is undeniable.

He can also literally watch as his power waxes and wanes. When the tides of blood retreat from the shores of the blasted realm, Khorne's rage becomes nearly uncontrollable. At these times, the galaxy trembles in fear. Long dormant Warp storms blaze with hellish light, churning and spitting raw Chaos into space. Nearby planets are cracked in two from tendrils of malice that reach out from the void and strike them like a Bloodthirster's whip. The astral forms of Farseers travelling the webway are vaporised in rushing currents of searing rage.

These are the times when the Lord of War pushes his warriors beyond their limits, sending them into new battles to kill, annihilate, and shed blood in his name. It is during these crusades that peaceful planets are at most risk. Wars already rage constantly across the galaxy, so fanning the flames of those conflicts would have only slight increase on the flow of blood. Instead, the armies of Khorne descend upon worlds that know relative harmony and have grown complacent. Here, armies dwindle and soldiers become weak. Such peaceful worlds are ripe for plucking and soon become mountains of skulls and lakes of blood.

So, in this way, even peace can serve the needs of the God of War. Truly, there is nothing that can ever be done to deny Khorne his final victory, as all struggles for existence ultimately work in his favour. If Khorne's goal is to see the universe drowned in the blood of its inhabitants, and its worlds burned up by their stars, then he will certainly achieve it. Nothing can stop conflict, and thus nothing can stop Khorne.

CHAMPIONS OF THE GOD OF WAR

The inevitability of Khorne's triumph does not cool the fire that blazes within his heart. Khorne is a god of battles and destruction, not a god of patience and reserve. His nature compels him to take an active role in the demise of the universe. The primary instruments of his devastating purpose are his armies. Vast are these forces, and limitless in number are his soldiers. Daemons pour from his realm to bring death and carnage to his enemies, Daemon and mortal alike. Across the galaxy, planets are drenched with blood

by Berzerkers who do not rest until all life is torn away from these worlds. Warmasters command fleets of Desolator battleships, Acheron heavy cruisers, and Iconoclast destroyers to set enemy fleets ablaze. From within the ranks of these Daemon hordes, Chaos Space Marine Legions, and other armies of the Blood God, champions inevitably emerge.

These superior warriors demonstrate their devotion through the most extreme acts. A Champion of Khorne might, for example, leap into a boarding torpedo and fire himself at a Tyranid ship, assaulting the beast from within on his own, cutting through hordes of Genestealers and eventually working his way to the living ship's heart. Once

THE BLOOD COLLECTORS' TALE

For three weeks Garrit and his partner Dogbreath had been capturing people in the city above and taking them down to be killed in the forgotten tunnels that now served as their makeshift temple. Sixty-three taken, sixty-three killed. Each time they ended the life of their captive in a new way and used a bowl-like device to collect the blood. It was an amazing piece of technology, found when they were digging out an extension to the forgotten tunnels they lived in. Inscribed with mysterious runes, skulls, and other symbols, it radiated a dark, unmistakable power. One man would hold the device near the soon-to-be victim while the other would inflict the wound. Even before the blow was struck, the device would begin to glow, as if in anticipation of the violent act to come. When the wound would open, the blood would rush out of the body and into the bowl, as if it wanted to flee the flesh and join the device. Every single drop would end up in the bowl, though it would never overflow.

Along with the device itself, the two men had recovered a brass skull. According to legend, the two objects worked together. Trial and error eventually taught Garrit and Dogbreath to place the skull in the bowl after the draining had been completed. Each time they did this, the blood would begin to steam, then boil. The jaw of the skull would open up and the blood would disappear into the skull. After all the blood disappeared, the skull's jaw would close... and nothing else. There should have been more. The legends they heard of in hushed whispers within decrepit taverns spoke of more, of power bestowed that would let them crush the spurning city above.

Dogbreath had convinced Garrit they were missing one vital item, though, and led him to the ancient slab of rough stone they had found with the bowl and skull. He pointed to a subtle mark at one end, alone amidst the other, heavier carved runes, and Garrit leaned over on the bench to study it more closely. Dogbreath was careful to hide two heavy objects from view behind his back.

"This is dumb, Dogbreath. There's nothing new to see here," said an irritated Garrit.

"Oh, I'm not so sure, my friend. This time, I think I have it figured out." There was a rustle behind him, and Garrit turned to see Dogbreath in one swift motion raise the heavy skull high, then slam it down onto his forehead. Garrit barely had time to utter a brief "No!" before the sickening thud of brass on bone silenced him.

Blood began to rush from the wound in Garrit's skull. It flowed down the side of his head and onto the stone, which started to darken in colour. The change in the rock revealed previously unseen channels, in which the blood collected. Dogbreath watched to see where the blood was headed. It moved quickly down the side, threatening to spill onto the floor. He hurriedly placed the bowl into position to receive the blood. The moment he did so, the thick liquid leapt from the stone and began collecting in the bowl. Within moments, the device had done its job. Garrit was completely drained. Dogbreath kicked the now lifeless corpse to the side and placed the bowl on the slab, which now seemed to pulse with a low, throbbing crimson glow.

"Should have been more patient, old friend. I told you I had it figured out. You were lucky number 64. All we needed was one last murder, committed right here on the altar."

Dogbreath picked up the brass skull and lowered it into the bowl. As he did so he smiled widely, revealing teeth that began to stretch in anticipation of greater deeds, and said "I'm ready to serve you now, master." His gums now wept with crimson fluid. "Blood for the Blood God."

KHORNE AND THE LONG WAR

None of the Gods of Chaos benefit as much from the continued conflict generated by the Long War as Khorne does. Many of his champions were forged in the flames of the battles of the Horus Heresy, and while some have been elevated to the ranks of Daemon Princes, and others have fallen in battle, many of those champions live and fight to this day. They remember with furious anger the great betrayal by the Corpse God and his followers. This anger still smoulders in their hearts, ready at any time to fully reignite and burst through the plates of their Chaos armour, consuming their one-time brothers in flames of undying hatred.

These are veterans of hundreds, even thousands, of campaigns. Their bases on Daemon Worlds deep with Warpstorms, such as the Screaming Vortex, exist outside of the normal strictures of time. The disparity between what might be thought of as real-time and time as they experience it allows them to wage endless wars and accumulate the experiences of many lifetimes, giving them an enormous advantage over their weaker loyalist brothers. It also gives them a perspective unique among Khorne's champions and other minions. Because they begin as mortals but taste immortality, they develop what vaguely resembles patience. Khorne may not have patience of his own, but he knows the value of it in these champions. He allows them to bide their time and hone their skills on the battlefields of the Daemon Worlds, waiting for opportunities to unleash them upon the Imperial weaklings who refused to embrace Khorne's blessings. When these crusades are launched, the inhabitants of the galaxy are almost never prepared. There is no warning. No scouts or Astropaths are able to adequately pierce the veil that obscures the activities of these forsaken domains and, even if they could, the distortion of time and vagaries of the Warp would make any knowledge gained nearly useless. Reports of assaults being launched could easily be delayed by hundreds of years, reaching panicked ears after they have already been in the grave for generations.

there he would raise his chainaxe high above his head and bring it down again and again on the beast's vital organ. A geyser of alien blood would thus be freed from its flesh-prison and dedicated to the Blood God.

These are the warriors that Khorne most prizes. Souls that not only pledge themselves to his service, but have the strength and skill to be his merciless and unwavering tools of war throughout the galaxy. These champions are often given command over others, leading them into the thickest parts of a fight and emerging victorious time and again. Should the champion prove himself in this way often enough, and send enough blood and skulls to his master, he may even be given the ultimate reward and be transformed into a Daemon Prince. The journey from mere worshipper to Daemon Prince is a long one, and the price is the champion's soul. It is a price he is willing to pay in exchange for power and immortality. Khorne, for his part, is pleased to grant the reward, for the soul he receives in the bargain will be more precious and valuable than the souls of thousands of lesser followers. It is truly a deal that has no losing side.

DAY 40:

NR. THIS DAY I. MY FIRST DAY. A NEW TIME.

THE WEAK MACHINE GOD HAS DEPARTED FROM THIS PLACE. SERVICE TO HIM WAS A LIE FROM THE START. A SILENT GOD THAT DOES NOT ANSWER THE PRAYERS OF HIS FOLLOWERS IS NO GOD AT ALL. I KNOW NOW WHERE MY DEVOTION SHOULD BE DIRECTED. A WOUND BORN FROM AN ACCIDENT REVEALED THE TRUTH TO ME. IT IS A TRUTH THAT HAS BEEN WITH ME SINCE I WAS FORMED. MY BLOOD HAS A PURPOSE GREATER THAN THE BODY THAT HOUSES IT. EACH DROP HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF EVENTS. THIS KNOWLEDGE GIVES ME STRENGTH AND RESOLVE. I NOW KNOW HIS NAME. I GIVE THANKS TO THE BLOOD GOD FOR SHOWING ME THE TRUTH AND PLEDGE MYSELF TO HIS SERVICE. GLORY TO KHORNE!

Log entries end.

War to reclaim Kellin IV ongoing.

I: KHORNE

Thus the continuance of the Long War gives the Blood God an unmatched and incredibly useful capability. Sitting upon the Throne of Skulls, Khorne can see new worlds ready to burn, civilisations ripe for conquest, populations ready to be bled into his rivers, or warzones where fighting is abating. In his Chaos Space Marines, he has warriors ready to eagerly serve him and feed the flames of conflict. With hearts full of hate, they strike without warning to unleash devastation upon the enemies of Khorne. The galaxy is but a parched, sun-baked field to them, and they, the flamer ready to ignite. All the Blood God has to do is pull the trigger and let the galaxy burn.

INTERROGATION SESSION OF AN IMPERIAL CITIZEN WHO CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN CAPTURED BY AN ENCLAVE OF FOUL SLAVERS:

He just kept shrieking "I won't go back! I won't go back! You can't make me!" It was really quite unsettling. Every few moments he would reach out with that disgusting stump, as if trying to grasp at something with a hand that was no longer there. Sometimes he would focus his eyes on mine, but I could tell he was not seeing me, or rather, not seeing the man actually before him. He was... elsewhere. He would ask, "Mine... can I have it back? Please?" I had no idea what he was talking about at first.

Clearly this was tormenting him, as he then began to break down in tears. Pathetic, really. Sobbing, he moaned "Nooooo. No, no, no, no, nooooo. Why is it gone? Why can't I have it again? I did what you said." I had to back away from him more than once to prevent him from getting his drool and other less savoury filth on my person.

As I spoke with him I pieced together what happened, or at least what he believes happened. It seems he and his family were taken from a Rogue Trader's vessel, upon which they had booked passage across the Drusus Marches. The captain of the ship appears to be engaging in foul trade with a group of debased slavers, and his human cargo was quickly removed to the slaver's vessel.

How much time passed after he was turned over to the renegades, I can't determine, but he was separated from his family and chained to something like a platform or altar. Once there, his captors sliced his hand off and bled him into a trough of some sort. He likely would have died then and there, but from what I can gather, he awoke later to find his arm cauterised. His captors then returned to him and chopped off the end of his arm again, a bit higher up, bleeding him into the trough as before. He recalls looking around the room and seeing a brass statue of some tall, angry figure with a skull for a head. The blood trough was running toward the feet of the statue. From what I can surmise, this must be their blasphemous god, some sort of vile blood spirit. How he escaped from them I cannot ascertain, though part of me feels he is still in their blood-soaked chains.

BATTLEFIELDS WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

The most glorious and bloody wars tear apart worlds, send civilisations into oblivion, and devastate entire star systems. These conflicts are waged on battlefields as large as entire star systems. Wars themselves are not won or lost by single actions on such grand scales, however. For any chapter of hated Space Marines to be wiped from the pages of history, all traces of their existence must be erased line by line, battle by battle, over time. Many veteran Chaos Space Marines have fought the Long War since its inception. The siege guns of the Iron Legion, the tactical genius of the Alpha Legion, and the seething rage of the World Eaters are among the weapons that have struck down hated loyalists for thousands of years. These soldiers and legions fight the Long War against the Imperium using these weapons in addition to plasma cannons, boltguns, and power swords. The war will be won by the Blood God, for time itself is a battlefield shaped to benefit the Chaos Legions. While Khorne never allows his enemies to simply fade from existence, he knows that time is yet another powerful weapon, and he uses it along side all his others.

Not all battles are waged in blasted city streets, across blood-soaked plains, or in the cold void of space. Some begin with a flicker of pride or jealousy within the mind, and are fought on stranger battlefields. While these conflicts are rarely studied in the war colleges of the Imperium, they contribute to Khorne's eventual victory in the Long War just like the more overt ones. It is a poor general indeed who thinks that all battles are won and lost on the strength of a lasgun alone. Khorne knows this and seeks to plant the seeds of conflict in even the most mundane facets of existence. The Blood God wages war wherever he can, knowing that even seemingly minor disputes can speed the downfall of an otherwise strong Chapter of Space Marines or other deluded Imperial forces.





THE BLOOD- SOAKED WARRIORS

SLAUGHTER
AND HERESY

•

NEW PLAYER
ARCHETYPES

•

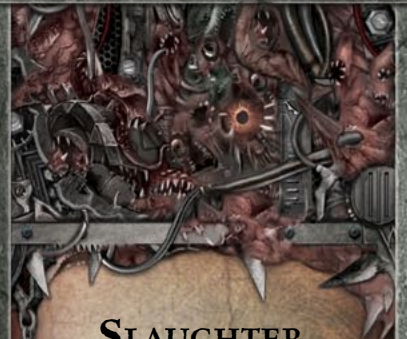
BLADES OF BLOOD

•

LEGACY WEAPONS

•

EXPANDED RITES
AND RITUALS



CHAPTER II: THE BLOOD- SOAKED WARRIORS

"Kill! Maim! Burn! Kill! Maim! Burn! Kill! Maim! Burn!"

—Khârn the Betrayer, Champion of Khorne

Violence and conflict define the life of a devotee of Khorne. Whether warriors of peerless martial pride and prowess or killers who willingly succumb to their bloodlust and berserk fury, each is quick to partake in acts of slaughter and aggression. Such warriors fuel the Blood God's power and frequently become worthy of his attention and gifts, either through worship or by spilling blood with blade and axe. Khorne's most devoted followers have little patience for diplomacy, their desire for combat instead steering them towards direct confrontation. Morality is of no consequence; instead, only bloodshed and the glory of combat decide the actions of the Blood God's followers.

The path of devotion to Khorne is fraught with honourable intentions, often stemming from a desire to defend homes, livelihoods, and loved ones against those who threaten them. Regardless of the circumstances, once this path is started, each step becomes easier, the use of direct force an ever more enticing method of dealing with conflict. Increasingly, this desire evolves into bloodlust as the rush and fury of combat becomes all-consuming and intoxicating. Such actions and victories venerate Khorne until ultimately the warrior's own blood is added to the thick crimson moat surrounding the god's Brass Citadel.

This chapter of **THE TOME OF BLOOD** introduces players to the histories of the World Eaters and Night Lords Chaos Space Marine Legions, as well as four new character Archetypes and additional weapons and rituals to help Khorne's followers shed blood in the Blood God's name.

- **Khorne Berzerker:** A ferocious and fanatical warrior dedicated to close combat.
- **Night Lords Chaos Space Marine:** A skilled Chaos Space Marine who delights in merciless violence and terrorising his victims.
- **Xurunt Frost Father:** A strong and daring leader of men from the primitive planet of Xurunt.
- **Chem-Hunter of Messia:** A dangerous mercenary from Messia with a predilection for drug use.
- **Expanded Armoury:** New weapons, armour, and gear to help the followers of the Lord of Slaughter in their quest for violence and death.
- **Legacy Weapons:** Rules for the wielding and crafting of powerful signature weapons.
- **Expanded Rites and Rituals:** New methods to channel the Blood God's power and beseech the aid of the Chaos Gods.



A NOTE TO GMs

These Archetypes are designed for more advanced players and represent powerful veterans of Chaos. GMs are encouraged to take this information into account before allowing players to use these Archetypes, and players should be aware that GMs may decide to limit the use of these characters. Also, due to the relatively high level of these Archetypes, it's recommended that GMs not grant additional starting experience to players using these characters, lest they have little room to develop outside of character creation.

Included are illustrations for ways a player can portray each in **BLACK CRUSADE**. Of course these should be considered guidelines and suggestions, not directives or canon. If a player comes up with his own backstory and character personalities, he should feel free to work with the GM to explore them to make for a better game.

The Chaos Space Marine veterans introduced in this chapter are roughly equivalent to a beginning Chaos Space Marine character with an additional 3600 experience points. The Human characters are both roughly equivalent to a beginning Human Disciple of Chaos with an additional 4600 experience points. See pages 48 and 50 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook for starting abilities for Chaos Space Marines and Human Heretics.

SLAUGHTER AND HERESY

"Let the Galaxy burn. Let the Heavens bleed."

—Warmaster Horus, prior to the Siege of Terra

Long ago, before the Horus Heresy split the Imperium asunder and set brother against brother, the seeds of betrayal had already taken root throughout the Great Crusade. Many who claimed to be loyal secretly voiced discontent, while every sign of weakness by the Emperor was viewed with quiet disdain. Slowly, some of the Legions began to doubt their father's perfection.

When Horus led nine Space Marine Legions in rebellion, some were quick to fight by the Warmaster's side. The history of two such Legions, the Night Lords and the World Eaters, is fraught with warnings about the paths they would eventually take, all of which were heeded too late. Since their fall, both Legions now rank amongst the most dangerous and terrifying enemies the Imperium now faces.

THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD EATERS

The early life of Angron, Primarch of the World Eaters, is an incomplete and shrouded history. What is known is that, after being spirited away from Terra, the Primarch came to rest on a nameless planet whose location remains lost to history. Here, a caste of wealthy elite ruled over the technologically advanced planet's inhabitants, living in lavish comfort while the rest of the populace subsisted in squalor and filth. To pacify their lowly subjects, the aristocracy frequently used cybernetically enhanced slaves in bloody gladiatorial contests.

By chance, a travelling slaver discovered young Angron grievously wounded and surrounded with xenos corpses. However, the boy was still alive, and the slaver, realising that it was the young child who had killed these attackers and sensing in him a valuable fighter, rescued him and nursed him back to health. During his recovery, bio-neural implants that heightened aggression and strength were surgically grafted to the Primarch's cerebral cortex, a standard practice for all gladiators. The slaver then took his young captive to the planet's capital, where he was bought by the city's largest fighting arena.

Here, Angron developed a strong sense of martial honour, fighting ferociously and with great skill. He killed hundreds but frequently spared those whom he believed fought well. The Primarch also instructed and drilled the other gladiators, earning their respect and loyalty in the process.

Angron was a rebellious and troublesome slave, always attempting to escape from the arena's dungeons. Such attempts always came to nought, however, as they were heavily guarded at all times. Nevertheless, with the planet's largest matches approaching, the other gladiators agreed to help him in his most daring escape attempt yet.

As part of these matches, Angron staged a massive battle involving all of his fellow gladiators in an impressive display of bloodshed and death. At the height of the display, Angron and his followers turned on their guards, butchering them and fighting their way to freedom. For years, the planetary rulers sent armies after Angron and his warriors to no avail. However, attrition and hunger gradually wore down Angron's forces until he was finally surrounded by a vastly superior force.

Unbeknownst to anyone, the Emperor had for some time been secretly observing from orbit Angron's escape from the arena and the skill with which he led his army. He descended to the planet and offered his long lost son a place at his side and the leadership of the Space Marine Legion which carried his genetic legacy. However, the Primarch refused the offer, choosing instead to die in battle with his fellow gladiators.

The Emperor knew his son would not survive the coming battle and teleported the Primarch to safety aboard his flagship. Angron could only watch helplessly in fury as his abandoned followers, lost and demoralised without their leader, were slaughtered to a man. He eventually took command of his Legion, but he never forgave the Emperor for this horrible betrayal and unforgivable stain on his honour.

Angron quickly began reshaping his warriors in his own image, and the renamed World Eaters soon became known for favouring close combat over ranged engagements. He also directed the Legion's Techmarines to begin replicating the surgeries and procedures within his own brain and implanting them into his progeny. These implants were relics of the Dark Age of Technology and the art of their construction had long ago been lost; many early attempts at replicating them triggered uncontrolled psychotic episodes or worse in the recipients. However, the Techmarines eventually created functional implants and incorporated them into entire companies of World Eaters, creating the first Berzerkers.

Initially, these augmented Space Marines proved a resounding success and quickly gained a fearsome reputation as brutal shock troops. They were nearly unstoppable killers and offered no mercy to their foes, only death at the end of a chainaxe. It is rumoured that the mere threat of a World Eater intervention was often enough to quell entire systems rather than face the Legion's wrath. However, the use of such enhancements soon became widely known and, after the ruthless scouring of Ghenna in a single night, the Emperor forbade the continued use of such procedures. Angron ignored his father's command, however, and continued the practice; soon nearly every World Eaters Space Marine had received these enhancements.

The Legion also continued its practices of brutality and slaughter, with Battle-Brothers often competing among themselves in barbaric blood rites and the taking of enemy skulls. As more and more Primarchs voiced their concern over these practices, the Emperor finally dispatched Horus, his most trusted son, to convince Angron to abandon his ways. However, the Dark Gods had already corrupted Horus, and the Warmaster instead fed Angron's bitterness and resentment towards his father. When Horus's other followers rebelled against the Imperium, the World Eaters eagerly followed suit, now openly calling themselves Khorne Berzerkers.

II: THE BLOOD-
SOAKED WARRIORS

The fallen Legion now visited their legendary rage and brutality on the forces of the Emperor, fighting at the forefront of nearly every battle during the Horus Heresy and abandoning any semblance of mercy or restraint. When the Warmaster's forces attacked the Emperor's Palace on Terra, Angron and the World Eaters led the assault, killing and taking skulls in the name of their new patron: Khorne. However, with Horus's death at the Emperor's hands, the Legions fell back in disarray into the Eye of Terror, and several began forming their own Khorne Berzerkers from those sufficiently devoted to the Blood God. Angron himself ascended to become a Daemon Prince, but his Legion was forever scattered.

Within the Eye of Terror, on the Daemon World of Skalathrax, the World Eaters Legion was irreparably splintered. Here the World Eaters and the Emperor's Children clashed in bloody combat until nightfall brought lethal ice storms and cold. Among the World Eaters sheltering from the torrent stalked the champion Khârn, who howled his frustration at being denied battle. When his comrades refused to fight, he turned on them with flamer and chainaxe, slaughtering friend and foe alike in an unparalleled display of carnage and fury. At this, the Legion's organisation broke down as its members turned on each other and the Emperor's Children in what become known as the Night of Madness. Through this destruction and bloodshed raged Khârn, a living avatar of the Blood God's might that screamed with unbound rage at the heavens and carved a bloody path through everything in his wake. The legion was shattered into countless Berzerker warbands, who now roam the galaxy in search of blood and skulls for their master.



MOTIVATIONS AND THEMES OF THE WORLD EATERS

The actions of Khârn, and the ensuing millennia of unending slaughter across the galaxy, have completely shattered any trace of unity the World Eaters once possessed. Now the once-proud Legion consists of scattered Berzerker warbands and individual champions who desire only battle and death. These remnants still observe their past blood rites and practices, which are now essential to their worship of Khorne.

In battle, the World Eaters furiously attack their enemies, all thoughts of tactics or strategy forgotten in their desire to kill and slaughter. They appear as frothing madmen as they howl and roar, butchering all who stand before them. This rampage continues until every foe lies broken and slain, or the Berzerker's own life is offered up to slake the Blood God's thirst.

THE HISTORY OF THE NIGHT LORDS

Konrad Curze's life on the planet Nostramo began with his decent as a fiery ball of light to the planet's gloomy surface. Within the city of Nostramo Quintus, the infant Primarch smashed through the hive's infrastructure and the planet's crust, leaving a permanent scar in the almost impenetrable adamantium strata. The child then crawled back through the jagged wound his arrival left and emerged into his new, permanently darkened world.

Nostramo's atmosphere was so polluted from the ceaseless refining of adamantium that barely any sunlight reached its inhabitants. As a result, the people of Nostramo developed jet black eyes capable of seeing in the perpetually dim light. Only the rich could afford what passed for illumination on Nostramo, and the vast majority of the planet's inhabitants lived in abject poverty and darkness. There was no law on Nostramo. Crime, extortion, theft, and murder were rife within its cities, while the corrupt aristocracy enforced their will through gangs of hired thugs.

Curze was forced to fend for himself during his childhood in the dingy, noxious city, but his physical stature and will to live eventually carried him to the top of the hierarchy. He was also cursed with visions, premonitions of dark possible futures that were said to cause Curze great pain and suffering throughout his life.

He began to prey on the corrupt and criminal elements of Nostramo Quintus, butchering his victims and displaying their corpses for all to see. Soon the crime rate fell to nothing and fearful residents established a self-imposed curfew. The city's once bustling nightlife was extinguished, and mothers warned their children not to misbehave lest the terrible Night Haunter come for them.

Curze soon realised that his successful crusade had left only one source of hate and fear on the planet: himself. He accepted this burden in the name of his planet's salvation, becoming Nostramo's first monarch in a rule of wisdom backed with direct, personal vengeance against all injustice. Those who followed his path lived in conformity and obedience, but lived. Those who strayed were hunted down and mutilated in horrific killings designed to terrify any who would dare oppose his rule. Under his reign, Nostramo Quintus and the planet's other cities became productive and prosperous, though quiet and fearful.

The first meeting of the Emperor and his long lost son has become an oft-repeated tale amongst the denizens of the Screaming Vortex. Upon meeting his father, Curze was racked with a vision that toppled him to his knees. However, the Emperor stepped forward and, laying his hands on Curze's head, said, "Konrad Curze, be at peace. I have arrived and I intend to take you home."

"That is not my name father," replied the Primarch. "I am Night Haunter, and I know full well what you intend for me."



The Night Hunter left his world to command his newly named Night Lords Legion, and quickly learned the doctrines of the Adeptus Astartes. He seemed to possess a highly unusual grasp of military strategy, however; ideas of negotiation and parley seemed completely alien to him. It simply did not occur to him to use anything other than complete and decisive force against his enemies. The Primarch believed that such tactics not only destroyed the transgressor, but made sure that his confederates would remain obedient due to fear of reprisal.

The Night Lords used any means available to crush their foes, and killed without a second thought. They were utterly ruthless and without pity or remorse, often razing entire continents to defeat their opponents. The Night Hunter even encouraged his sons to adorn their armour with portents of death and violence, including winged skulls, death masks, and the shrunk heads of their victims.

As it became necessary to recruit additional Space Marines, new members were brought from Nostramo to fill the gaps in the Legion's ranks. However, the planet had fallen back into its corrupt ways soon after the Night Hunter's departure, and only the strongest and most ruthless criminals were now fit to join the Night Lords. Amoral and vicious, they served only to further poison the Legion and push it to increasing levels of cruelty that made his fellow Primarchs grow uneasy.

Curze continued to be plagued with visions of his own death and of his Legion fighting brother Adeptus Astartes. As his mental anguish grew, so did his Legion's dark reputation.

Following a violent confrontation with Rogal Dorn of the Imperial Fists, who took exception to the Night Hunter's beliefs and practices, he fled with his Legion to Nostramo. Once in orbit, the Primarch's fleet targeted the crater which his arrival had made decades before, and destroyed the shrouded world in a brilliant ball of light.

After this atrocity, he and his Legion began a trail of violence and atrocity across the sectors they conquered. They now killed merely for the sake of causing pain and suffering, while spreading fear and death in their wake. The Night Hunter also began to change, denouncing the Emperor as a weakling and hypocrite, and transforming into a hunched and terrible predator. Many believe it was during this period that the Primarch began to heed the whispered temptations of Chaos.

Curze was ready to pledge his allegiance when the Warmaster called for it, and the Night Lords embarked on a crusade of terror the likes of which have not been witnessed since those dark days. The Legion attacked world after world, carving a bloody path through the Imperium, and not even the defeat of Horus at Terra was enough to halt the Night Hunter's campaign. Eventually, the Imperium sent a cadre of elite Callidus assassins to kill the Night Hunter and disband the Legion once and for all.

Legend has it that a lone agent, named M'Shen, was purposely allowed to infiltrate the Legion's lair and confront the fallen Primarch, now a naked and hunched monster. He told the assassin that his death would be irrelevant and be the vindication of all that he has ever claimed. The final remembrance of Konrad Curze is of mad, black eyes and a cruel, lip-less smile, aware that his horrific visions had all come to pass.

MOTIVATIONS AND THEMES OF THE NIGHT LORDS

Following the loss of Konrad Curze, the Night Lords Legion fragmented into separate and autonomous warbands. These have utterly embraced their Primarch's teachings, and each thrives on their ability to create fear and confusion among their enemies before launching the final attack. Such tactics often involve stealth terror raids against protected leaders, silencing of communications networks, or worse, using them to broadcast hideous cries and mocking laughter, and even seeding a planet's atmosphere to create perpetual night. The Night Lords then leisurely slaughter the target's inhabitants, intentionally toying with their victims, stalking them, and killing seemingly at random. Always the end result is the same: scores of butchered and mutilated corpses, rictuses of terror etched onto their faces. These methods allow the Night Lords to weaken their opponents and provide them with an overwhelming tactical advantage. In fact, it is quite rare for the Legion to engage strong resistance, preferring instead to attack weak and frightened targets.

The Night Lords delight in murder and cruelty, frequently attacking with no clear military rationale other than only to kill. Any cries of mercy from their victims are ignored, and survivors are rare. Their attacks leave only grisly displays of the Legion's cruelty and desolation, as the marauders depart with whatever material gains they desire and the gruesome trophies of their atrocities.

KHORNE BERZERKER

"Your death shall slake my axe's thirst!"

—Avaras of the World Eaters Legion, Skull Taker of Khorne

The Screaming Vortex is a realm of brutality and bloodshed, where mighty warriors dwell and clash in their quests for power and glory, and the danger of violent death lurks on every world. It is no surprise then that Khorne Berzerkers of the dreaded World Eaters and other Chaos Space Marine Legions are among the many Traitor Space Marines that journey to the sector.

These blood-stained warriors are drawn from across the galaxy and are highly prized and dangerous members of any Black Crusade. Some are lured by the promise of battle and carnage on the realm's many Chaos-tainted worlds, while others seek to join a warband that will provide them with ample opportunities to collect skulls for their chosen patron. Whatever the reason, the remnants of this feared Legion are among the most vicious and bloodthirsty of Khorne's followers in the Vortex. They desire nothing more than to rend their victims in berserk orgies of combat and destruction, and have earned a formidable reputation for their relentless bloodlust and unbridled fury.

PLAYING A KHORNE BERZERKER

Khorne Berzerkers are commonly veterans of the Long War, purified through centuries of warfare to become utterly dedicated to close combat. Most are of the World Eaters, but other Chaos Space Marines have also become such devoted followers of the Blood God as to gain this title. They are known for being savage, reckless, bloodthirsty, brutal, and direct in all aspects, and are always eager to kill in the Blood God's name. Their existence exemplifies the path of war and violence that marks a true disciple of Khorne, and each is completely defined by his devotion. These Space Marines have little desire to avoid conflict or violence, instead seeking out and relishing any opportunity to accumulate skulls for Khorne's throne.

A Khorne Berzerker is a barely contained font of rage and fury, never backing down from a challenge and quick to resort to violence at the slightest provocation. Few can be considered sane due to the Legion's prolific use of psycho-surgeries and cranial implants. These exponentially heighten the recipient's aggression and combat ability, turning him into a fearless and frenzied killer. Any remaining restraint is eroded through a life of perpetual conflict and brutal violence, until one and all are utterly ruthless killers and servants of the Lord of Rage.

Berzerkers view weakness and cowardice with contempt, while caution, sadistic acts, and trickery are seen as needless wastes of time unbecoming of Khorne's true servants. Also, in accordance with their patron's will, a Berzerker rarely tolerates psykers and witches, viewing them only as cowardly but particularly favourable offerings to the Blood God.

In battle, Berzerkers work themselves into howling frenzies of insane fury and bloodlust, before charging straight into the heart of their enemy's ranks where they can quickly bring their melee weapons to bear. The danger of such suicidal tactics is of no consequence to these traitor Space Marines, and they willingly brave all manner of enemy fire and hazards to come to grips with their foes.

Most tend to favour axes as their weapon of choice; the adamantium-bladed chainaxe, in particular, is seen as the preferred weapon of the Blood God. However, since bloodshed is the goal, swords, knives, pistol butts, rocks, and even bare hands are all acceptable methods of wreaking carnage on the battlefield. By contrast, they almost completely eschew ranged combat save for their pistols, and even these are often only an afterthought. To a Berzerker, personal combat is the goal and the only true way to offer a kill to the Lord of Slaughter.

Once a Berzerker reaches his enemies, he is a high-unstoppable force, fighting with a terrible strength and boundless ferocity rarely seen in mortals. They are heedless of pain, injury, or death, and yield only in physical collapse when no longer capable of holding their blood-stained blades.

When not in battle, this desire to rend flesh is only barely contained, continuously erupting in shouts and temperamental outbursts at the slightest delay or irritant. The smallest excuse is all it takes to provoke their wrath, and they are known to turn on their allies if not provided with enough skulls to harvest.



KHORNE BERZERKER

A Khorne Berzerker must be a Chaos Space Marine.

Characteristic Bonus: The Berzerker gains +5 Weapon Skill and Strength, 15 Corruption Points, and +9 Infamy.

Starting Skills: Athletics +10, Common Lore (War), Common Lore (Choose One) *or* Survival, Forbidden Lore (Pirates) *or* (Daemonology), Intimidate, Intimidate +10 *or* Command, Parry +10.

Starting Talents: Ancient Warrior *or* Betrayer and Enemy (Inquisition), Berserk Charge, Cold Hearted, Disarm *or* Sure Strike, Flesh Render, Fearless, Frenzy, Furious Assault, Lightning Reflexes, Pity the Weak.

Starting Gear: Legion chainaxe *or* Legion chainsword, bolt pistol *or* second Legion chainaxe, 2 Legion frag grenades, 2 Legion krak grenades.

Wounds: 16+1d5

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Avatars of Slaughter: Such is a Khorne Berzerker's legendary ferocity that the mere sight of one of these fearsome warriors on the battlefield is enough to unnerve many opponents. Once per combat, after taking a Full Action Move Action, the Berzerker may spend an Infamy Point to force any opponents with a line of sight to the character to make a **Difficult (-10) Willpower Test**. If they fail, they suffer a -20 penalty to target the Berzerker on their next turn. This penalty stacks with any other penalties and modifiers.

Unstoppable Wrath: The depth of rage of these warriors is terrible to behold, even before the psychosurgeries that many gain, and often leads them to feats rarely equalled in battle. During combat, a Berzerker may spend an Infamy Point to either make an Opposed Strength Test to ignore a successful Parry made against one of his attacks or make a single **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** to ignore the effects of Injury, Stunning, Fatigue, or even Death for a single Round. This Trait may only be used to ignore a Critical Result of Death once per combat encounter.

Khorne Berzerkers begin play allied to Khorne and permanently lose the above special abilities along with 8 points from each Characteristic if they change that alignment

A Berzerker does not fear death; he embraces it. Death is the trade of the Blood God. A safe and long life is a failed life, while dying by the hand of a worthy foe is the greatest honour one can achieve. Ultimately, each knows that to offer up his own life to Khorne is as worthy a sacrifice as the life of an adversary, for Khorne cares little for where the offered blood comes from.

Khorne Berzerkers have no desire for power, glory, or plunder, only to slaughter in the name of the Lord of Skulls. As each willingly fights under anyone who can provide him with the battle he so desperately craves. However, any allies must be perpetually on their guard around this dangerous individual, lest they themselves become an offering to the Blood God.

KHORNE BERZERKERS IN THE VORTEX

The countless warbands and raiders within the Screaming Vortex offer abundant opportunities for a World Eater to slake his thirst for violence. Some may take up arms to raid nearby Imperial holdings, while others spread death among the denizens of the Vortex itself. Ultimately, where these warriors exact their bloody toll is irrelevant to Khorne so long as the blood flows.

The following are some example motivations that coincide with the lifestyle of perpetual combat a Khorne Berzerker could pursue.

Brass Gladiator: Many forms of gladiatorial combat exist within the realm of the Screaming Vortex, and the Berzerker is well-suited for such crimson endeavours in the pits of Kurse and similar arenas on other worlds. This warrior finds meaning and purpose in fighting pits and arenas, his life a perpetual cycle of bloodshed worthy of a true warrior. However, like the Primarch that created the original Berzerkers, eventually they may chafe beneath servitude and become unsatisfied with lulls in fighting. Such warriors require only the promise of greater conflict to entice them to exact their opponent's fate on their holders before moving on to greater things.

Herald of the Gore-Soaked Horde: All Berzerkers worship Khorne through killing, but some are able to also serve an even greater purpose. In offering souls to the Blood God, they hope to summon his daemonic minions into this realm and lead them to battle. The potential rewards for such conflicts are great, and these individuals constantly seek grander and more terrible ways to offer up victims as sacrifices to their cause.

Red Fury: Every Berzerker is always eager to rend and murder to gain Khorne's favour. However, there are some who lost the capacity for such justification long ago, and who now kill, not for their god or to assuage their anger, but merely because they can. Allies and enemies alike are all potential victims to this depraved individual and he will stop at nothing to slay anyone in his sight. The more fearless warlords often find use for these warriors, not so much as followers to be commanded, but as weapons to be aimed and unleashed.

NIGHT LORDS CHAOS SPACE MARINE

*"Do you hear their cries? Can you taste their fear, their agony?
Know this mortal: we are coming for you!"*

—Salvaged vox transmission from the
dead colony Nux Haven, Travonth VI

There are many dread creatures that dwell in the swirling eddies of the Screaming Vortex. Terrible Daemons and horrific monsters vie with cruel pirates and vile xenos to spread death and destruction throughout the realm and nearby Imperial holdings. Yet few among these are as feared as the Night Lords Chaos Space Marines. Since before the Horus Heresy, this Legion has perfected the craft of sowing terror, discord, and confusion among its victims and they have become even more sadistic and depraved as the centuries have passed.

These Chaos Space Marines are a welcome addition to the myriad warriors within the Screaming Vortex, and many use this realm as a base of operations from which to harass Imperial forces. From here, they join with other raiders, picking and choosing targets that most appeal to their sadistic tendencies. However, the Night Lords harbour no true allegiance to any of the Chaos Powers nor to the mightiest Warlord. Their path is their own, and woe to any who assume otherwise.

PLAYING A NIGHT LORDS CHAOS SPACE MARINE

The Night Lords are sadistic killers who delight in terrorising their foes before slaughtering them without mercy or restraint. They are cruel, ruthless, and opportunistic, frequently striking at vulnerable targets and toying with their unfortunate victims. When they kill, they kill violently and slowly, savouring the pain and horror on their victim's faces as the last moments of life leave them. Such acts are not undertaken in honour of the Chaos Gods; rather, a Night Lords Chaos Space Marine kills because he can. Certainly there may be other motives behind his actions, but more often than not that motive is only to wet his gauntlets in the blood of his victims.

The Night Lords are veterans of countless campaigns of terror and conquest. Each is highly trained and proficient in the use of terror tactics, psychological warfare, and lightning raids and ambushes intended to leave their opponents completely demoralised and easy targets for the depraved Legion. They employ deception, flank attacks, night raids, and stealth operations in order to keep the enemy's forces off guard and at their mercy. In particular, the Night Lords frequently favour jump packs, which allow them to quickly and unexpectedly strike from the sky before disappearing back into the darkness.

When attacking, this Chaos Space Marine will do everything he can to sow fear among his opponents. Such tactics include perpetrating grisly displays of murder and carnage, assassinating seemingly protected leaders, conducting random attacks upon civilian gatherings, adorning their armour with highly visible symbols of death, and broadcasting transmissions designed to instil terror in those who hear them. However, these practices are merely a means to ensure that the Night Lords are able to satisfy a far more gruesome craving.

Above all, they desire to kill, taking great pleasure in slaying their victims and gunning down the defenceless and helpless. The thrill of battle does not concern them as they often bypass able foes, instead attacking prey too weak to resist and ruthlessly hunting down all before them. Afterwards, the Night Lords mutilate and butcher their victims, thereby providing grisly examples of what fate awaits those who fall prey to the Legion.

A Night Lords Chaos Space Marine frequently operates as a mercenary for warbands and pirate raiders, selling his skills to the highest bidder in return for plunder and the chance to kill helpless defenders. A few will even undertake raids on their own if it suits their needs, their abilities and tactics more than making up for any discrepancy in fighting strength. Indeed, there are tales of lone members terrorising entire hives and bringing these mighty cities to their knees in sprees of bloodshed and fear. However, the Night Lords have no concept of honour and may change sides during a battle, or treacherously attack their erstwhile allies in order to suit their own needs.



NIGHT LORDS CHAOS SPACE MARINE

A member of the Night Lords Legion must be a Chaos Space Marine.

Characteristic Bonus: The Night Lord gains +5 Strength and Willpower, 15 Corruption Points, and +9 Infamy.

Starting Skills: Acrobatics, Awareness +10, Commerce *or* Survival, Common Lore (War and one other), Deceive, Dodge +10 *or* Parry +10, Forbidden Lore (Heresy) *or* (Pirates), Intimidate, Intimidate +10 *or* Scrutiny, Operate (Aeronautica), Security *or* Stealth, Tech-Use.

Traits: Dark Sight.

Starting Talents: Ancient Warrior, Cold Hearted, Counter-Attack *or* Furious Assault *or* Two-Weapon Wielder, Jaded, Lightning Reflexes, Paranoia, Raptor *or* Takedown, Sure Strike *or* Deadeye Shot.

Starting Gear: Legion chainsword *or* Legion power sword, 2 Legion frag grenades, 2 Legion krak grenades *or* 2 demolition charges *or* one melta-bomb.

Wounds: 15+1d5

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Spectral Haunter: The Night Lords are renowned for their ability to utilise the cover of darkness and other adverse conditions to harass their prey. Penalties for attacking a Night Lords Chaos Space Marine and bonuses to any Stealth Checks that Combat Circumstances grant based on visual hindrances are increased by 20.

Terror Tactics: Night Lords Chaos Space Marines are among the most dreaded enemies of the Imperium of Man. They specialise in terrifying their foes with horrendous displays of carnage and psychological warfare that drives even the most hardened fighters into paroxysms of fear. A Night Lord may spend Infamy Points to grant himself and his allies the Fear Trait (to a maximum of 4) for the remainder of a session. Each rank in Fear awarded requires the expenditure of two Infamy Points, then two days of preparation and a successful **Hard (-20) Intimidate Test**. The GM may modify the difficulty based on the Night Lord's actions and also require additional Skill Checks depending on the situation.

Night Lords Chaos Space Marines begin play as Unaligned.

The Legion holds no allegiance to any one of the four Chaos Powers and views all religious devotion as a form of weakness. Instead of faith, it is their love of killing, especially of terrified, defenceless prey, that unites the Legion. Though they do not serve a single Chaos God, the Night Lords regularly ally with other more devoted followers of Chaos.

Despite his sadistic nature, a Night Lords Chaos Space Marine is a highly valued member of any compact. His skills allow him to aid his allies in quickly dispatching opposition forces while earning a reputation for cruelty and savagery. However, a leader must always be on guard, for he may never know when he would better serve as an example of the Night Lords' malice.

NIGHT LORDS IN THE VORTEX

Many of the Night Lords travel to the Screaming Vortex both to reequip and rearm for additional forays into Imperial space, and to ally with other heretics and raiders in order to terrorise nearby worlds. Others see the Screaming Vortex as a new hunting ground, with each world a unique and challenging environment to test their depraved skills. Whatever the reason, a Night Lord Chaos Space Marine is entirely within his element here, and rightly feared by those around him.

The following are some example motivations that coincide with the piratical and cruel existence of a Night Lords Chaos Space Marine in the Screaming Vortex.

Sacgrave Stalker: The desolate ruins of Sacgrave are home to many pirates and treasure seekers, who both use the ruins as a hideout and hope to discover some of the planet's legendary wealth. Among these are members of the Night Lords Legion who have arrived to take advantage of the planet's distinct strategic qualities and scavenge the ruins for artefacts. These Sacgrave Stalkers dwell within the planet's dreaded lower vaults and use the tunnels to launch surprise raids and travel without detection. Meanwhile, the Night Lords Chaos Space Marines rely on their murderous tactics and the whispers of monsters in the darkness to keep their rivals in a state of perpetual fear.

Raider of the Baleful Eye: Amongst the many marauders within the Screaming Vortex, one group in particular has recently risen to prominence. Known as the Baleful Eye, these piratical raiders are known for ambushing their prey and preferring rapid and brutal boarding actions. Their ships are adorned with cruel spikes and trophies of past conquests, while the red and midnight blue hull prominently displays images of a great glaring yellow eye. The raiders never leave any survivors and their victims' corpses are said to have looks of stark terror on their faces. What they witnessed can only be speculated as every video log, pic-catcher, and eyeball is removed from the target vessel.

Night Terror: Throughout the Vortex there are many terrible creatures and Daemons that stalk the darkness. These monsters are notorious for leaving their victims torn to shreds, cruelly impaled, or disembowelled, and with looks of horror etched permanently into their screaming faces. The presence of such a threat within a city can drive the populace into ever greater states of agitation and fear as panic, looting, and desperate appeals for salvation and appeasement run rampant in the streets. The few survivors of such attacks often recall unblinking, solid black eyes, and cruel laughter echoing over the screams of the dying.

XURUNT FROST FATHER

"Last season I killed an Onir twenty spans long without taking more than three cuts. I do not believe you will cause one."

—Garvisna, Frost Father of the Hoturnsn

The nomads of Xurunt, known as the Xur, continually migrate across the vast prairies of the planet's surface, seeking only to enslave and conquer any other tribes they encounter. It is a brutal existence, beginning when each is taught to ride a Xurunsh from the earliest possible age. This planet-wide struggle for dominance continues until winter, when the Xur focus instead on surviving the harsh conditions or ritually honouring their bloody god Baphtar at one of his towering idols.

Sometimes, a leader of truly remarkable prowess will arise and garner support amongst the tribes for a campaign during this normally peaceful time. These individuals are known as "Sacanta," or "Frost Fathers," among the Xur and are revered and respected leaders. They are driven and dangerous opponents, and many warlords seek to recruit such warriors with promises of skulls and glory.

PLAYING A XURUNT FROST FATHER

Xurunt Frost Fathers are experienced fighters who have mastered the warlike way of life on Xurunt. Through skill, determination, and daring each has risen to a position of leadership among his tribe, and earned the right to lead his warriors into battle during the winter season. They are stubborn, wilful, and belligerent warriors, difficult to command but fearless in battle. A Frost Father may also be a woman for, though the title is masculine, the Xur respect ability regardless of gender.

The honour of becoming a Frost Father is reserved only for those Baphtar chooses to prove themselves during this dangerous time. These warriors are said to receive visions of death and battle from this deity that relentlessly drive them to butcher and kill; there are even tales of Frost Fathers going insane from failing to heed this incessant desire for slaughter.

The honour of a winter campaign is not undertaken lightly, for the winter is a dangerous time, and to raid in these months is counted amongst the greatest of Baphtar's tests. Any that survive such a campaign are regarded as deadly and respected warriors, while the warrior who leads them is believed to gain great favour with the Xur's terrible patron.

A Frost Father has known battle from an early age. To survive to adulthood means being a skilled and seasoned fighter, regularly tested in martial combat in the style of warfare employed on Xurunt. A flanking attack preceding a quick flurry of arrows and a vicious and decisive melee is the custom of such battles, and every Frost Father relishes close combat as the true test of his abilities. Some even earn their warrior status before Baphtar himself in the winter trials, a sure sign of skill and potential for a young warrior.

Frost Fathers are very skilled at riding the fabled Xurunsh, massive grox-like beasts that all of the Xur tribes revere. These scaled creatures are the preferred mount of any Xur warrior and serve as living battering-rams of powerful muscle and stabbing horns in battle. The care and upkeep of a Xurunsh is among a Frost Father's highest priorities and most of the gold, jewels, or armour they scavenge adorns their pampered and lauded mounts. A Frost Father views his Xurunsh as a legend in the making, which his actions help forge and live on.

A Frost Father regards martial ability and daring as the signs of a worthy warrior and inspirational leader. As a result, they often attempt to outperform those around him in so called "boasts" of bravery and skill. These attempts are often extremely reckless, and Frost Fathers are always eager for new opportunities to prove themselves.

The hard life on the plains of Xurunt has instilled into every Frost Father an air of practicality and resourcefulness. Most shun ornamentation and heavy armour, with the exception of the polished skulls of vanquished enemies that the Xur value more than any currency. They are also always on the lookout for equipment to scavenge, preferring strong and sturdy melee weapons to ranged ones.

Frost Fathers do not tolerate failure and look upon cowards and weaklings as worthless wretches fit only for slave labour, which the Xur use for mining and other non-combat related tasks deemed beneath a true warrior's attention. These leaders also view sorcerers and witches with distrust and contempt, shunning them completely unless absolutely necessary.

Frost Fathers are accustomed to command and do not take well to the leadership of others unless they prove themselves or are one of Baphtar's fabled "Iron Hosts." If a warlord is deemed worthy, then he will find in the Frost Father a skilled and deadly warrior willing to leave his people and planet for the promise of greater glory and battle. However, should the opportunity arise, a Frost Father will readily attempt to seize back command.



XURUNT FROST FATHER

A Xurunt Frost Father must be a Human.

Characteristic Bonus: The Xurunt Frost Father gains +5 Strength, +5 Weapon Skill, +3 Willpower, +3 Fellowship, 15 Corruption Points, and +9 Infamy.

Starting Skills: Athletics, Athletics +10 *or* Acrobatics, Awareness, Awareness +10 *or* Intimidate +10, Command, Command +10, Common Lore (Xurunt), Dodge, Dodge +10 *or* Parry +10, Intimidate, Linguistics (Xurish), Navigate (Surface), Parry, Scholastic Lore (Occult), Stealth, Survival, Survival +10.

Starting Talents: Air of Authority, Battle Rage *or* Swift Attack, Berserk Charge, Catfall *or* Combat Sense, Combat Master, Double Team *or* Disarm *or* Takedown, Frenzy, Furious Assault, Greater Minion of Chaos (must be a Xurunsh, see page 108), Sure Strike, Hardy *or* Nerves of Steel *or* Unshakeable Will, Jaded, Lightning Reflexes, Peer (Xur), Pity the Weak, Quick Draw, Resistance (Cold, Fear), Weapon Training (Primary, SP).

Starting Gear: Good Craftsmanship great weapon with the Mono upgrade *or* Best Craftsmanship axe *or* Best Craftsmanship sword with the Mono upgrade, Good Craftsmanship lance-goad, Good Craftsmanship bow and 30 arrows with the Mono Quality, Best Craftsmanship knife with the Mono Quality, beast fur armour, 1d5+3 trophy skulls.

Wounds: 11+1d5

SPECIAL ABILITIES

A Great Boast: On Xurunt, flamboyant displays of skill and bravery in the face of the enemy are viewed with the utmost respect and integral to a warrior's standing within his tribe. Frost Fathers regularly use such displays to cement their place as leader and inspire their forces to victory. When a Frost Father succeeds on at least a **Hard (-20) Test** involving Strength or Agility, or a Willpower Check of at least **Very Hard (-30)** to resist Fear during combat, he gains +10 to all Command Tests for the duration of the combat phase. If he accomplishes this without spending an Infamy Point, the Frost Father gains an Infamy Point that expires at the end of the Encounter.

Visions of Death: Baphtar's divine visions are both a blessing and a curse that gradually wears away the sanity of the afflicted. A Frost Father may spend an Infamy Point to go into Frenzy as a Free Action and in addition gain a +5 bonus to Weapon Skill, Strength, Toughness, and Willpower.

However, every two days that pass without killing a worthy adversary requires passing a **Routine (+20) Willpower Check** to avoid a cumulative -5 penalty to Intelligence, Perception, and Fellowship until the Frost Father makes a suitable kill. A worthy adversary has a Weapon Skill equal to at least half the Frost Father's, and each additional day beyond the first two increases the Willpower Check difficulty by one level.

A Xurunt Frost Father begins play allied to Khorne.

XURUNT FROST FATHERS IN THE VORTEX

A Frost Father who leaves Xurunt quickly feels at home amongst the denizens of the Screaming Vortex. Some of the weapons and devices the servants of Chaos employ may be foreign, but the core beliefs such as that of the strong ruling the weak is infinitely familiar. A Frost Father is skilled at dominating those around him, no matter what cowardly powers might be used against him, from the countless battles and years of rule over their tribes. Those who manage to fully adapt to the wildness of the Vortex become highly dangerous if eccentric warriors, relying more on their own muscle than unreliable technologies, and have little trouble accumulating exotic new skulls for their collection. Baphtar in all his guises surely watches over his loyal sons no matter what strange lands he walks upon.

The following are examples of backgrounds which may bring a Frost Father to the attention of Baphtar and the Dark Gods.

Chosen of Baphtar: During the winter months, the warlords of the most powerful tribes that retain the honour of encamping around one of Baphtar's idols preform ritual combats, rites, and sacrifices to seek their god's favour. By spring, the few remaining warriors are rightly feared by the other Xur for their legendary fury and the dark gifts they frequently exhibit. However, along with other blessings, Baphtar is said to grant a special boon to the leader of these chosen.

The Unchained: Beneath Xurunt is a maze of caverns and tunnels where small humanoids called Svartlings dwell. These creatures are responsible for the dreaded Onir, and frequently take prisoners to work as slaves or as sacrifices to power their arcane creations. Escaping from these creatures and clawing back up to Xurunt's desolate surface is a daunting boast for any warrior who finds himself imprisoned below.

City-Dweller: The Xur view the decayed ruins of ancient cities that dot the plains of their planet with superstitious fear. However, there are warriors who begin their adulthood by undertaking a boast of inhabiting these crumbling structures for no less than one season. What actually caused the destruction of so many cities is as much a mystery as the horrors that await a young warrior on this undertaking.

CHEM-HUNTER OF MESSIA

"The unaltered human body is a frail thing. Rest assured that under such circumstances, and without physical augmentations, death will occur within 15 cycles."

—Magos Biologis Gormal Vincal, approximately 32 standard cycles before his death at the hands of an unknown assailant

The inhabitants of Messia live in a world blighted with pollution and utterly inhospitable to human life; yet human life persists and has taken root within the twin cities at the planet's poles. Life in these cities is hard and heavily dependent on expeditions that continuously scour Messia's blasted wastelands to secure precious promethium. Such expeditions are made up of the hardest of Messia's inhabitants and it is from these that the Chem-Hunters arise.

Chem-Hunters are veterans of the unforgiving wilderness of Messia and offer their invaluable services as raiders and escorts to the drill-barons. They are consummate riders and skirmishers, frequently seen operating attack bike escorts or clinging to the rigs watching for roaming mutant hordes. The majority of Messia's population view them as daredevils at best and suicidal at worst. However, there is no denying that they are accomplished survivalists and valued additions to any warband.

PLAYING A CHEM-HUNTER OF MESSIA

Chem-Hunters are skilled and deadly killers who are used to surviving in spite of desperate odds. They tend towards wild and reckless behaviour, seeming to care little about the potential pitfalls of their actions. These nomads operate as mercenaries and guides that sell their services to the highest bidder, which on Messia usually means working for the notorious drill-barons. They are also proficient mechanics, most having to salvage and repair their vehicles under rather frantic circumstances.

Despite the many extreme dangers, life on an expedition offers a great degree of freedom from the constant degradations of Messia's cities. Chem-Hunters enjoy open spaces and the feeling of autonomy granted by their positions in the convoys, often viewing the dangers as just part of the job. Such a life attracts both male and female Messians out into the wastes with promises of fortune and independence.

Chem-Hunters are constantly exposed to all manner of pollutants and toxins in the scorched

wastelands, and, should they survive, become naturally resistant to such chemicals. However, these individuals also suffer from a unique poisoning that makes them dependent on the very compounds that afflict their bodies. The exact nature of this toxin is unknown; some, however, speculate that it may be related to the phenomenon that spawns the planet's roving mutant hordes. This particular concoction enhances the subject's vital functions with each dose, leading to increased aggression and muscle function. Unfortunately, this hyper-state eventually takes its toll, with excessive use inevitably risking heart-failure and death. However, Chem-Hunters are often willing to take that chance in order to gain an edge in battle.

The constant hazards of a Chem-Hunter's occupation also promote the use of various combat drugs and stimulants, which they view as a perfectly natural way to increase their fighting potential. However, a Chem-Hunter's altered physiology means he has an unusually high tolerance for such drugs and often requires inordinate doses for them to take effect. This means many regularly suffer intense bouts of suicidal rage, mental instability, delusions, loss of self-restraint and control, and other negative effects of long-term systemic drug use.

A Chem-Hunter finds solace from his afflictions in combat, the adrenaline rush of danger and frequent perils of mercenary life often serving as a sufficient distraction from any emotional or mental issues. In fact, many Chem-Hunters embrace their ensuing mental instability, and use it to fight even more ferociously by giving in to their base urges. To these mercenaries caution is a waste of time since life is short and they are all as good as dead anyway.

Yet even without these drugs, Chem-Hunters are cruel and heartless killers. Growing up on Messia has bred the belief that only the strong survive and the weak exist only to burden the strong, serve the strong, or provide plunder and sport. Life in the wastes is a continuous struggle for existence defined by conflict with the environment, mutants, and other expeditions. Killing ensures survival and, in the case of raiding other caravans, often brings material rewards as well.

Chem-Hunters are pragmatic in their approach to combat, favouring the application of direct confrontation or simple, brutal manoeuvres to overcome their foes. They are opportunists, scavengers, and cutthroats, and are not above utilising underhanded tactics if it grants them an edge in combat. Honour is useless to a Chem-Hunter as dead is dead no matter how honourably it happens.

Chem-Hunters are quick to join up with warbands who offer them passage off of their hellish planet. Some believe they may even find a cure for their condition or a stimulant that will take all their cares away, while others seek only to raid. Regardless, the warlord taking on a Chem-Hunter gains an accomplished raider and an unquestioning killer to add to his retinue.



CHEM-HUNTER OF MESSIA

A Chem-Hunter of Messia must be a Human.

Characteristic Bonus: The Chem-Hunters gains +5 Ballistic Skill *or* +5 Weapon Skill, +5 Strength *or* Toughness, and +5 Perception, 15 Corruption Points, and +9 Infamy.

Starting Skills: Acrobatics *or* Athletics +10, Athletics, Awareness, Awareness +10, Commerce *or* Scrutiny, Common Lore (Messia, Tech), Dodge, Forbidden Lore (Mutants, Archeotech) *or* (Pirates), Linguistics (Messian), Navigation (Surface), Operate (Surface), Operate (Surface) +10, Parry, Intimidate, Dodge +10 *or* Parry +10, Security *or* Stealth, Survival, Survival +10 *or* Tech-Use +10, Tech Use.

Starting Talents: Berserk Charge *or* Street Fighting *or* Unarmed Warrior, Cold Hearted, Counter-Attack *or* Furious Assault *or* Hardy *or* Nerves of Steel, Hatred (Mutants), Jaded, Lightning Reflexes, Light Sleeper, Quick Draw, Rapid Reload, Resistance (Poisons), Weapon Training (Chain, Las, Primary, SP), Sure Strike *or* Deadeye Shot *or* Marksman, Disarm *or* Takedown, Technical Knock.

Starting Gear: A Good Craftsmanship autogun *or* lasgun, Good Craftsmanship stub automatic *or* Best Craftsmanship stub revolver, Good Craftsmanship chainsword *or* chainaxe, Good Craftsmanship knife, magnoculars, injector, Common Craftsmanship respirator/gas mask, 2 magazines for each weapon.

Wounds: 12+1d5

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Habitual User: Chem-Hunters encounter toxins so often that their bodies have become quite resilient. When administering a dose of a drug or stimulant, a Chem-Hunter can choose to add +10 to any Skill Test Bonuses gained, +1 to any Characteristic Bonuses gained, or an extra die roll to the Duration of a drug's effects. However, the required dose is so large that he suffers a -10 penalty to the Willpower Test to resist addiction. When determining Availability, treat the dose of the drug as standard size.

Taste of Home: Chem-Hunters are permanently addicted to a unique combination of pollutants that they have learned to combine or synthesize through necessity and trial and error. A dose of these chemicals is treated as Common for the purposes of Acquisition Tests and require one hour for the Heretic to combine and manufacture. Once administered, each dose of the drug grants the Chem-Hunter the Unnatural Strength (+1) and Unnatural Toughness (+1) Traits for 2d10 minutes. Two doses at once also grants the Frenzy Talent but requires a **Routine (+20) Toughness Check** to avoid taking 1d10 E Damage. Each subsequent dose imposes a cumulative -10 Penalty to this Check. This drug is dangerous to others and causes 2d10 Energy Damage with the Toxic (3) Quality if they consume it. *A Chem-Hunter of Messia begins play as Unaligned.*

CHEM-HUNTERS OF MESSIA IN THE VORTEX

Once off of Messia, a Chem-Hunter is easily able to take his place among the many bands of raiders and pirates scattered throughout the Vortex. Most eagerly join up to obtain some of the amenities rarely found on Messia, and the promise of exotic new stimulants, weapons, and other luxury items is often enough to retain their loyalty. Regardless of their motivations, all Chem-Hunters are highly sought after for their talents and unique chemically-enhanced abilities.

The following are some example backgrounds that lead individuals of Messia to embrace the Chem-Hunter lifestyle.

Mekonta Worthy: Slaves skilled enough to survive Mekonta's arenas are granted the opportunity to join one of the city's many mining expeditions and potentially earn citizenship within the city itself. However, many who embark on these journeys find the life outside Mekonta liberating and choose to return whenever possible. The hardest often become Chem-Hunters after years of traveling the wastes, paying a steep price for their yearning for freedom.

Stranded: It is not uncommon for ships lost in the Warp to emerge far from their destination within the Screaming Vortex, and some are unlucky enough to crash onto the barren planet of Messia. Those who survive the impact itself are quickly forced to deal with the numerous challenges of Messia's unforgiving wastes, often resorting to cannibalism, murder, and other extreme tactics to survive. Any that manage to reach civilisation become highly respected and quickly find their skills in great demand, with their experience surviving the wastelands leading to Chem-Hunter livelihoods.

Wasteland Raider: The wastes of Messia are home to many drill clans who survive either by looting other expeditions or selling their plunder and promethium to the highest bidder. When two drill clans meet, their rigs clashing like titanic beasts, the resulting confrontation often ends with one clan scattered and deprived of their all-important rig. These remnants often take to raiding other rigs, finding it easier to take what they want from their erstwhile competitors than to start their expeditions anew. These raiding parties can become infamous to the drill-barons, who fear their next expedition could fall to such marauders.

BLADES OF BLOOD

"Chainswords and axes! Rend them limb from limb!"

—Mithros, Bloodslayer Lord

As the god of war and patron of endless slaughter, Khorne revels in man's ability to endlessly create new and more violent methods of killing one another. A simple club, a blade tipped with whirring teeth, an axe alight with Warfire, a weapon that can sever a man's head with a whisper or burn his skin to a cinder—all of these simply act as fuel for Khorne's power. In a realm as brutal and hellish as the Screaming Vortex, there is certainly no shortage of weapons or ways to kill, and Khorne is well pleased and well fed.

This section covers a score of ferocious technologies and unholy artefacts that can be found within the Screaming Vortex. Most of the weapons and wargear found within these pages are related in some way to the Chaos God Khorne—the God of Blood—as well as the worlds within the Vortex where Khorne holds the most sway. Many are exceptionally rare or virtually unique to the Vortex, and Heretics that seek to walk in Khorne's blood-drenched wake would do well to seek out these treasures of slaughter however they can.

RANGED WEAPONS

"Target sighted. Three hundred metres. Khorne guide my shot. Blood for the Blood God!"

—Aeserrin Yath, Bloodsworn Assassin

Shunning the cowardly art of sorcery, the followers of Khorne must rely on more base implements of destruction to destroy their enemies at range. Khorne may prefer that his followers fight and die in heat and madness of close combat, but in the end any skull claimed in the Blood God's name is worthy of his attention.

BOILER CANNON

A simple design found on many low-tech worlds across the Vortex, the boiler cannon consists of a large tank and power supply plus a crude channelling tube that projects a torrent of white-hot, toxic steam. It scalds skin quickly, but also burns lungs with foul mixtures of pressurised poisons.

COMBI-WEAPONS

Combi-weapons usually consist of a bolter and another basic weapon with limited ammunition. The secondary weapon has a profile identical to a regular version of that weapon, except its Clip is reduced to 1. The wielder may fire the bolter or the secondary weapon during his Turn, but not both at the same time.

Combi-Flamer

These versatile devices are the most common combi-weapon within the Screaming Vortex, allowing the firer to deal with massed hordes of lightly armoured infantry when the rate of fire from the bolter would be insufficient.



Combi-Melta

Combi-meltas give their owners a single-shot blast of super-heated gas that can melt virtually any armour in an instant. It suffers from extremely limited ammunition of all combi-weapons, but for a Heretic can be the difference between life and death when something large and armoured is rushing towards them.

Combi-Plasma

Capable of nothing more than a short burst of intense energy, the usual downsides of most combi-weapons actually work in the combi-plasma's favour as it usually runs out of ammo before the weapon can overheat and kill the user.

Legion Combi-Weapons

Legion Combi-Weapons are of a much higher quality and lethality than those designed for mere humans. These count as Legion weapons (and thus follow all the rules concerning non-Space Marines wielding Legion weapons), and are compatible with Legion Terminator Armour.

Mk.IV "THRESHER" SUPPORT GUN

Ostensibly a locally produced variant of the Echon-Pattern assault stubber, the Mk.IV Thresher Support Gun is most often seen among the drilling expeditions on Messia. Affixed to the sides of Drill-Rigs as well as some of their lighter outrider vehicles, it makes for an excellent crowd control weapon and has kept the drill crews safe for generations. Threshers are designed to make use of local ammunition sources on Messia. Its shells are not likely to penetrate armour, but are lethal enough against foes such as the mutants that stalk Messia's surface.

The Thresher is designed to be used with a backpack or vehicle-mounted ammo supply. They typically fire scavenged and irregular slugs commonly used on Messia, and enough shells to fill a backpack ammo supply can be procured with the same Acquisition Roll used to obtain the Thresher itself.

TABLE 2-1: RANGED WEAPONS

Name	Class	Range	RoF	Dam	Pen	Clip	Rld	Special	Wt.	Availability
Boiler Cannon	Heavy	20m	S/-/-	3d10 E	0	10	3Full	Primitive (7), Overheats, Spray, Toxic (3)	30kg†	Common
Combi-Weapon††	Basic	100m	S/3/-	1d10+5 X	4	24	Full	Tearing	18kg	Extremely Rare
Legion Combi-Weapon††	Basic	100m	S/3/-	1d10+9 X	4	24	Full	Tearing	25kg	Extremely Rare
Thresher Support Gun	Heavy	120m	-/-/6	1d10+5 R	0	200	2Full	Crippling (2), Primitive (8), Tearing	23kg†	Scarce

†Includes the weight of the backpack ammo/fuel supply.

††Profile is for the primary bolter. Secondary weapon has RoF: S/-/- and Clip: 1, with all other statistics as per the combi-weapon's secondary weapon entry (Flamer, Plasma Gun, or Melta Gun).

MELEE WEAPONS

"You fool! Do you truly believe that crude axe can best the finest weapons of the Hollows?"

—Blade-Master Sanatha, moments before his decapitation

Khorne cares not from where the blood flows, and it often flows easiest when his followers make use of the endless multitude of melee weapons that fill every corner of the Screaming Vortex. From improvised daggers to massive double-handed chainswords, there are more varieties of close combat weapon within the Vortex than there are worlds trapped in its grasp.

The weapons listed below all require one hand to use unless specified otherwise.

BONECRUSHER MACE

A titanic weapon of awesome destructive potential, the Bonecrusher Mace is longer than most men are tall. The head of the mace crackles with a low-intensity energy field that builds as the weapon is swung, unleashing its power with a concussive shockwave that can send adversaries flying.

A Heretic wielding a Bonecrusher Mace can attempt to attack everyone within two meters with a single All-Out Attack Action. The usual +30 bonus granted from that action is reduced to +10, and the Heretic must make a Weapon Skill Test for each target he is attempting to hit. It requires two hands to use, although Heretics wearing Terminator Armour (human or Legion) can use it with one hand.

CASTIR-PATTERN CHAIN GREATAXE

Huge in size and weight, only unnaturally strong or fanatical heretics commonly brandish this weapon. Most feature a double-sided chassis housing two independently mounted chain assemblies, designed to be swung in wide swathes. Such is the power of this fearsome weapon that little can stand against it, and enemies fall apart like kindling when struck. This is a two-handed melee weapon and requires a Strength Bonus of 4 before it can be used.

CHAIN HAMMER

Few but the massive pit brutes of Kurse can lift this weapon, let alone use it in combat. It combines the heavy striking power of a great hammer with the terrible ripping action of a chain weapon, using multiple rows of spinning metal teeth projecting from the club-like head to tear apart flesh pulped in the smashing impact. This is a two-handed melee weapon and requires a Strength Bonus of 4 before it can be used.

CHAIN SPEAR

Chain spears combine reach with lethality. The end of each has a length of whirring serrated teeth, sometimes actually made from the sharpened teeth of the user's past victims, which are enough to cause even the slightest hit to become a spray of blood and torn flesh. This is a two-handed melee weapon.

IRONFANG CHAINWORD

Designed to allow mere humans to approximate the deadly blows of a Legion warrior, the Ironfang features a thick, bladed area with chained teeth nearly twice as wide as other chainswords. The power from the backpack-mounted supply provides greater tearing strength, and the weighted nose of the sword allows the user to strike with heavy slashing blows. The weight of the backpack power supply is included in the weapon's overall weight.

KURSIA PIT WEAPONS

Kurse is a brutal world with a proud and bloody tradition of gladiatorial fighting. Within the pits, mutants, brutes and other miscreants fight for dominance and a small amount of fleeting fame. Over time, many different fighting methods have been developed, leading to a class of weapons that exist only on Kurse. The influence of the insidious Dark Eldar can be found here as well, as the cruel alien race has a keen interest in blood sport, and can be found occasionally watching and even participating in the occasional bout.

To use any Kursian pit weapon the Heretic must have Exotic Weapon Training (Kursian Pit Weapons). This training covers all the types of weapons listed below, as pit fighters are expected to master many different styles of combat to better impress the crowds.

TABLE 2-2: MELEE WEAPONS

Name	Range	Dam	Pen	Special	Wt.	Availability
Bonecrusher Mace	2m	1d10+12 I	4	Concussive (2), Power Field, Unwieldy	16kg	Extremely Rare
Castir Greataxe	—	2d10+5 R	3	Felling (2), Tearing, Unwieldy	18kg	Very Rare
Chain Hammer	—	2d10+6 R	4	Concussive (2), Tearing, Unwieldy	20kg	Very Rare
Chain Spear	—	1d10+3 R	3	Tearing	7kg	Scarce
Ironfang Chainsword	—	1d10+3 R	3	Concussive (0), Tearing, Unbalanced	12kg	Extremely Rare
Bladehands	—	1d10 R	0	Primitive (7), Tearing	3kg	Very Rare
Kursian Heavy Shield	—	1d10 I	0	Primitive (6), Unwieldy	12kg	Very Rare
Kursian Trident	3m	1d10+1 R	1	Primitive (8), Balanced	7kg	Very Rare
Slivernet	6m	1d5 R	0	Crippling (2), Flexible, Inaccurate, Snare (3)†, Unwieldy	4kg	Rare
Sickle Sword	—	1d10 R	2	Balanced	2kg	Extremely Rare
Lance Goad	3m	1d10+2 R	1	Primitive (7), Shocking, Unbalanced	4kg	Common
Pit Net	3m	1d5 R	0	Flexible, Snare (2)†	3kg	Common
Rune shield	—	1d10 I	0	Defensive, Tainted, Tearing	7kg	Near Unique
Rune sword	—	1d10 R	2	Balanced, Tainted, Tearing	3kg	Near Unique
Wailing Axe	—	1d10+2 R	0	Primitive (8), Unwieldy	3kg	Common

†Only when thrown.

Bladehands

Those Eldar known for their cruelty and enthusiasm for inflicting pain make infrequent appearances as both spectators and participants within the Kursian Pits. The superiority of their weapons has led to several low-quality mimics of their designs such as the “Bladehand.” Similar to the hydra gauntlet in many ways, bladehands are crude weapons wielded almost exclusively in pairs. Their rudimentary edges can cause considerable damage, but are of little use against armour.

Kursian Heavy Shield

There are many different types of shields manufactured on Kurse, from simple leather bucklers to grand tower shields made of the rarest ceramite. The Kursian Heavy Shield, given only to the most promising pit fighters, allows the user to keep attacking even when their entire torso is hidden behind the shield. It provides unparalleled protection in one-on-one duels, something quite desirable in a place where proper armour is extremely limited.

Heavy shields provide +3AP to the body as well as the arm to which it is attached, as well as +3AP to the legs and head when the Heretic is making use of the Defensive Stance Action. The user can maintain an active Defensive Stance each Round by expending a Half Action, and can also make Standard Attack Actions without ending or cancelling their Defensive Stance.



Kursian Trident

Difficult to use but allowing the user to attack enemies farther away, the Kursian Trident is often paired with a slivernet in pit combats. By itself, the Kursian trident is an effective duelling weapon in the hands of an expert, and the best users can often fight multiple opponents at once.

Best Quality Kursian tridents have small power generators that add extra punch to each hit and grant the Shocking Quality.

Slivernet

A weapon of malicious design, slivernet makers intentionally choose the lowest quality metal—the rustier the better. Heavy and hard to use, a slivernet's poor construction method is actually what makes it so dangerous, as spurs of rusted metal break off in the victim's skin, causing excruciating pain and even potential infections to hinder the fighter in future bouts, should he survive.

Sickle Sword

There are many basic swords and other blades within the fighting pits of Kurse, but none have the same reputation as the sickle sword. Extremely well made (by Kurse standards), sickle swords feature a sharp hook at the end that a properly trained fighter can use to easily turn aside incoming blows and disarm a careless opponent.

Sickle swords grant +10 to all Parry Tests, which is cumulative with the Balanced Quality. Additionally, if the Heretic obtains 3 or more Degrees of Success on his Parry Test he can, as a Free Action, attempt to Disarm his opponent of the weapon they have successfully Parried (see the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 122, for the Disarm rules). Best Quality sickle swords often bear runes of power across their surface, granting the Tainted Quality.

LANCE-GOAD

This three metre-long weapon serves to control the massive, reptilian Xurunsh that dominate the surface of Xurant. Every Xur warrior becomes proficient in using it when riding as well as while fighting as cavalry. The tips of these spear-like weapons are made of a rare natural glass that absorbs emotional energy from the anger of their wielder. When they strike, they also emit a blast of rage, enough to stun their victims or further goad the Xurush.

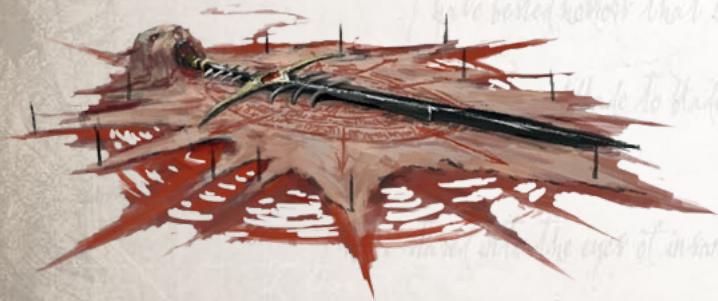
PIT NET

A simple weapon commonly used in gladiator fighting across the Vortex, the pit net uses a large web of heavy plasteel mesh to ensnare foes or entangle their weapons. It can be thrown or used in a whip-like fashion, and is often combined with a bladed weapon that is used to finish off the helpless enemy.

RUNE SHIELD

On rare occasions a Daemon may be ensnared within an object not intended to kill, such as a shield. Daemons trapped in this manner are driven mad as the very vessel they inhabit curtails their need to destroy. Every waking moment the Daemon within seeks to free itself, and if it does, the Daemon usually destroys its former home with a kind of vindictive cruelty reserved only for its most hated enemies. On rare occasions the shield is left behind—scarred black by the very fires of the Warp—and often some level of malice is retained, as if the Daemon's caged fury is imprinted upon the shield.

A rune shield provides +1AP to the body as well as the arm that it is attached to, plus additional points of AP equal to the Heretic's Corruption Bonus (e.g., if the Heretic has a Corruption Bonus of 4, a runeshield provides +5AP).



RUNE SWORD

Rune swords are basic blades once said to have been the prison for mighty daemonic entities. How they survived the violent expulsion of their former inhabitant is unknown, but each weapon retains something of the Daemon that once gave it its power. Even these small fragments of daemonic essence though are enough to make each sword a weapon worthy of the mighty warlords of the Screaming Vortex.

RUNE WEAPONS

When a Daemon is freed from a Daemon Weapon there is often little left to salvage. Some cults scrape fragments together to use in rituals or to forge into some new weapon or icon, but in most cases the Daemon's fury annihilates the weapon as it escapes its former prison. In some very rare instances the weapon remains untouched—its blade as sharp or internal mechanisms as functional as the day it was first constructed. The weapon left behind can be dangerous in the hands of those steeped in the power of Chaos.

RUNE WEAPON RULES

Rune Weapons function in the same manner as regular weapons, keeping their Class, Rate of Fire, Damage, Penetration, and so on, as well as any Weapon Qualities a standard weapon of that type would have (for example, a Rune bolter would have the Tearing Quality). However, Rune Weapons all gain the Tainted and Tearing Qualities, are immune to the effects of the Power Field Quality, and lose the Primitive Quality if the weapon has it normally.

CREATING A RUNE WEAPON

A Daemon Weapon automatically becomes a Rune Weapon once the daemonic entity within it has been released (see *Unleash the Beast Within*, page 41). This is the only way to create Rune Weapons, although the GM is free to include Rune Weapons in his campaign where appropriate. Rune Weapons lose any and all Daemon Weapon Attributes, as well as any other rules or special abilities they might have had when they were a Daemon Weapon. For example, if the Daemon within a Dreadaxe breaks free and the weapon was not destroyed, the Dreadaxe ceases to be a Daemon Weapon and loses the Howling and Impossibly Sharp attributes as well as the Sanctified Quality. It becomes a Rune Weapon (a Rune Axe in this case), and reverts to a Primary Weapon with the Rune Weapon rules.

WAILING AXE

Mounted Xur warriors use this both as a weapon and a way of intimidating opponents. The weapon is strapped to the user's wrist by a small loop of tough Xurunsh hide, allowing it to be swung in a constant circle to build momentum as the warrior rides into battle. As the axe is swung around, air rushes through irregular hollow channels that run through the weapon's long haft and into runic grooves cut into the blade itself, creating a distinctive, high-pitched wailing. These unnatural noises sound like the cries of dying men, and are unnerving to the unblooded.

A Heretic with a wailing axe can swing the axe as a Half Action to produce the wailing noise. Whilst the Heretic swings the wailing axe he gains the Fear (1) Trait, or increases the level of Fear caused by a character that already has a Fear rating by one. As long as the Heretic is swinging the axe he adds twice his base Strength Bonus to the Damage, and attempts to Parry a wailing axe becomes one level harder.

DAEMON WEAPONS

"Embrace me mortal, and together we will split the very stars!"

—Greater Daemon Shazhn'oegtol,
found trapped within a small dagger

Those who wield a Daemon Weapon hold devices of terrible power and unbridled destruction, but also of desperately restrained fury. No matter its form or function, each holds within it a vengeful caged beast both desperate to free itself, yet at the same time relishing each death it brings. Most Daemon Weapons no longer serve their original creators, with some passing hands each time the Daemon grows tired of its former master and engineers his fall. All the weapons below follow the rules and attributes for Daemon Weapons (see pages 194–199 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook), and unless otherwise stated all require one hand to use and are of an Availability of Near Unique.

BERZERKER GLAIVE

Often made from a single strut of gleaming brass upon which symbols of the Blood God are carefully etched, the Berzerker Glaive is one of the mightiest Daemon Weapons created in Khorne's name. The red curved blade glows with the fury of the Bloodletter caged within, and it screams into the mind of its wielder for greater and more profane acts of vengeance and slaughter. The Glaive protects its wielder, but at the same time leaves him almost incapable of controlling his own actions—the mad entity within soon drowning out the desperate cries of its victims.

The Berzerker Glaive is a Daemon Weapon with a Willpower of 40 and a Binding Strength of 1. It has the Bloodlust, Impervious, and Thirsting attributes. The Willpower Test to resist entering Frenzy is always treated as **Difficult (–10)** or, if the Heretic already has the Frenzy Talent, **Very Hard (–30)**. The Berzerker Glaive requires two hands to use and only those that possess the Mark of Khorne can use it.

BLOODFEEDER

Those that attempt to wield and master Daemon Weapons always do so at great risk, as Daemons are capricious and vengeful entities that do not like being imprisoned. However, there are some Daemon Weapons where the risk is even greater than normal, but so too is the reward. The Bloodfeeder is one of these weapons. A twisted and heavily mutated sword adorned with barbs, jagged edges and jutting spikes, the Daemon within is crazed and hungers for release. The blade becomes more potent with each new kill, but at the same time each death emboldens the creature within, breaking down the very bonds that hold it in place.

The Bloodfeeder is a Daemon Weapon (Willpower of 75 and beginning Binding Strength of 5), and has the Accursed and Rampage attributes. Each time the wielder slays an adversary with the Bloodfeeder, the Daemon Weapon's Binding Strength is reduced by 1, and the weapon gains a new Attribute rolled randomly by the GM on either the Unaligned or Khorne Weapon Attribute sections of **Table 5–19: Daemon Weapon Attributes** (see the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 197). If the Binding Strength ever reaches 0, the Daemon trapped within the Bloodfeeder attempts to break free as per the

Unleash the Beast Within sidebar on page 41. If these rules are not in use, the Bloodfeeder is treated as having Overheated unless the user can pass a **Challenging (+0) Mastery Test**. If the Daemon within the Bloodfeeder fails to break free, or fails to defeat its wielder in the Mastery Test, then its Binding Strength returns to 5 and all the Attributes that it gained are lost. Only those dedicated to Khorne can use a Bloodfeeder, and the wielder can attempt a Mastery Test at any time to restore the Binding Strength to 5, not just when it reaches 0.

DREADAXE

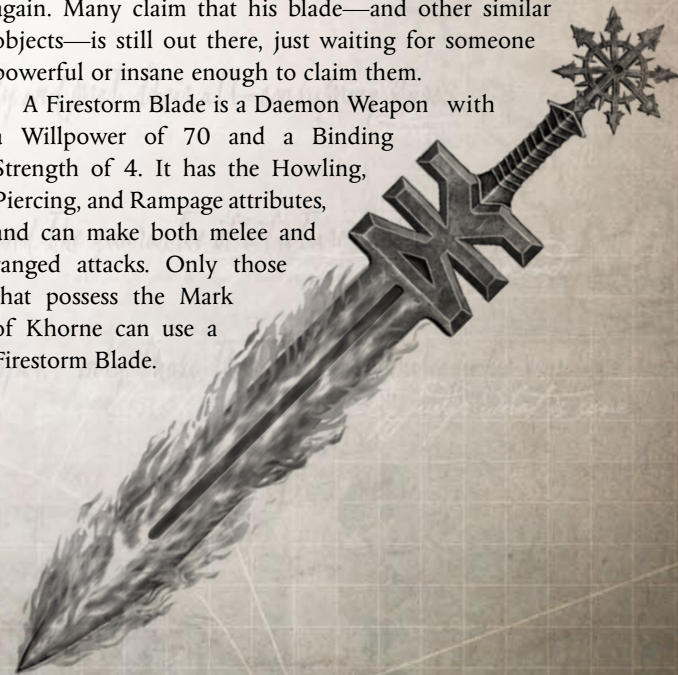
Dreadaxes are frightening weapons that contain bitter, resentful Daemons. They hunger for the chance to destroy not only mortal souls, but also the essences of other daemonic beings. In combat, they sap the energy from any Daemon they strike, drawing the power into themselves in the hope that they might one day be able to escape and gain their vengeance without the need for mortal hands.

The Dreadaxe is a Daemon Weapon with a Willpower of 30 and a Binding Strength of 1. It has the Howling and Impossibly Sharp attributes. In addition, it also has the Sanctified Quality to represent the Daemon Weapon's unnatural ability to destroy other Daemons. Finally, if the **Unleash the Beast Within** rules are in use, the Daemon trapped within a Dreadaxe is always hostile to everyone nearby, and never attempts to ally with or aid the Heretics as it wants to kill everything around it. Only unaligned characters can use a Dreadaxe.

FIRESTORM BLADE

A mighty greatsword sometimes seen in the hands of Khorne's most favoured Bloodthirsters, the Firestorm Blade is a massive straight sword engulfed in an impossibly bright nimbus of white fire. At the whim of its wielder, the blade can discharge great gouts of flame at targets within a considerable distance, burning its victims with overwhelming Warpfire. Only one Firestorm Blade has ever been seen within the Vortex, wielded by a powerful mortal champion by the name of Mithros. The man and his army descended into the Lower Vortex with dreams of conquest, and were never heard from again. Many claim that his blade—and other similar objects—is still out there, just waiting for someone powerful or insane enough to claim them.

A Firestorm Blade is a Daemon Weapon with a Willpower of 70 and a Binding Strength of 4. It has the Howling, Piercing, and Rampage attributes, and can make both melee and ranged attacks. Only those that possess the Mark of Khorne can use a Firestorm Blade.



OPTIONAL NEW RULE: UNLEASH THE BEAST WITHIN

More often than not, the Daemons encased within Daemon Weapons are trapped against their will. Enticed or tricked into the mortal plane, these entities use their bound power to escape their prisons. These caged Daemons usually whisper honeyed words into the ears of their would-be masters, promising them great power if freed, when really the Daemon sees their latest “master” as nothing more than a meal should that occur.

ESCAPING THE STEEL PRISON

If the GM wishes, the Daemons locked within any and all Daemon Weapons can attempt to break free whenever their user dies. This is done via a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**, with a –10 penalty for every point of the Daemon Weapon's Binding Strength (for example, for a Daemon Weapon with a Binding Strength of 3, the Daemon would make a **Very Hard (–30) Willpower Test**). The trapped Daemon gains +10 to the Willpower Test if the wielder had an Infamy Bonus of 4 or higher, or +20 to the Test if the wielder had an Infamy Bonus of 6 or higher (these bonuses are not cumulative). If the Daemon fails to break free, it remains within the weapon and the Daemon Weapon can be used by anyone brave (or foolish) enough to pick it up. If the Daemon succeeds on the Test, then there is a 60% chance of the weapon being destroyed as it escapes, and the GM is free to control the Daemon in whatever manner he wishes. Most retreat back to the Warp, but some might wish revenge on those nearby, or perhaps might want to strike up a bargain. Some Daemon Weapons mention a specific type of Daemon, such as a Bloodletter or Flesh Hound, that inhabits the weapon; if not, then the GM and players should determine what type of Daemon inhabits any other Daemon Weapons the Heretics encounter.

A HELPING HAND

Sometimes the Heretics might want to intentionally release a trapped Daemon. This is conducted in the same manner as above except that the Heretic releasing the Daemon must take the Willpower Test. The same modifiers that apply to the Test above also apply to this Test. If, for whatever reason, the Daemon is unwilling to be released, this becomes an **Opposed Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**, modified via Binding Strength and Infamy Bonus as above. As intentionally releasing a Daemon from within a Daemon Weapon often involves damaging the weapon in some way, there is an 80% chance of the weapon being destroyed. Once free, the Daemon may wish to help or assist those that released it, assuming it wanted to be released. On the other hand, the GM might decide that the Daemon cares nothing of those that released it, and have the Daemon attack the Heretics anyway!

AN EMPTY BLADE

If the weapon that held the Daemon was not destroyed, the weapon becomes a Rune Weapon (see page 39).

FORGEWHIP

It is a long-held belief of numerous blood-cults within the Vortex that Khorne himself created the original Forgewhip from the essence of a Flesh Hound he wished to punish for failing to catch its quarry. All those that have witnessed the power of a Forgewhip can attest to the inner fury of the weapon, and the way it seems to seek out targets of its own accord. The weapon takes the form of a long whip with many tendrils, each of which appears to be made out of fire and glows with a white-hot inner heat. The fiery cords twist and writhe, crackling with energy and burning the very air around them.

A Forgewhip is a Daemon Weapon with a Willpower of 68 and a Binding Strength of 4. It has the Bloodlust and Blood Tracker attributes, and only those dedicated to Khorne can use one.

GOREWHIP

These belts of twisted, blood red sinew are studded with sharpened chunks of broken bone. Each arching swipe of a Gorewhip creates a crack that shakes the sky and a burst of energy that can rip a man in two. They are often characterised as one of the chief weapons of Khorne's avatars—the Bloodthirsters—and any mortal lucky enough to possess one is said to have Khorne's direct favour.

A Gorewhip is a Daemon Weapon with a Willpower of 44 and a Binding Strength of 2. It has the Spiteful and Wounding attributes, and only those dedicated to Khorne can use one.

GREAT AXE OF KHORNE

Easily the most recognisable symbol of the Blood God, the Great Axe of Khorne is one of the most destructive Khornate Daemon Weapons. Enormous and frightening to behold, each is a horrific fusion of bone, brass, and blood. Its grip is wrapped in the skins of champions foolish enough to challenge the wielder, and its blade is forever slicked with the blood of every head it has taken. At the heart of each Great Axe of Khorne, trapped with the strongest Warp-binds imaginable, is the essence of a Greater Daemon of Khorne. The rage from their imprisonment knows no bounds, and their fury lends near-unlimited power to each swing and to each strike.

A Great Axe of Khorne is a Daemon Weapon with a Willpower of 88 and a Binding Strength of 5. It has the Fuelled by Slaughter, Impossibly Sharp, and Skultaker attributes, and also grants the wielder the Frenzy and Lightning Attack Talents. If the Unleash the Beast Within rules are in use, then the Bloodthirster trapped within a Great Axe of Khorne will always free itself the moment its wielder is killed; no Test is required. The Great Axe of Khorne requires two hands to use unless the wielder has a Strength Bonus of 10 or higher, and can only be used by those that possess the Mark of Khorne.

TABLE 2-3: DAEMON WEAPONS

Name	Class	Range	RoF	Dam	Pen	Clip	Rld	Special + Daemonic Attributes	Wt.
Berzerker Glaive	Melee	—	—	1d10+6 R	6	—	—	Devastating (2), Unbalanced + Bloodlust, Impervious, Thirsting	8kg
Bloodfeeder	Melee	—	—	2d10 R	4	—	—	Balanced, Felling (4) + Accursed, Rampage	4kg
Dreadaxe	Melee	—	—	1d10+3 R	—	—	—	Unbalanced, + Howling, Impossibly Sharp	5kg
Firestorm Blade (Melee)	Melee	—	—	1d10+8 E	4	—	—	Balanced, Flame, Proven (3) + Howling, Piercing, Rampage	7kg
Firestorm Blade (Ranged)	Basic	50m	S/—/—	2d10+15 E	8	—	—	Flame, Proven (3), Spray + Howling, Piercing, Rampage	7kg
Forgewhip	Melee	4m	—	1d10+8 R	12	—	—	Flame, Flexible + Bloodlust, Blood Tracker	6kg
Gorewhip	Melee	2m	—	1d10+3 R	3	—	—	Crippling (4), Felling (2), Flexible + Spiteful, Wounding	5kg
Great Axe of Khorne	Melee	—	—	3d10 R	—	—	—	Devastating (2), Proven (4), Unbalanced + Fueled by Slaughter, Impossibly Sharp, Skulltaker	8kg
Heart-Ripper	Heavy	300m	S/4/—	3d10+8 I	6	80	2 Full	Reliable, Tearing, Twin-Linked + Howling, Skull Taker, Vicious	55kg
Soulfire Lance (Melee)	Melee	—	—	1d10 I	2	—	—	Balanced + Howling, Piercing	4kg
Soulfire Lance (Ranged)	Basic	30m	S/—/—	2d10+6 I	0	—	—	Felling (2), Spray, Warp Weapon + Howling, Piercing	4kg

HEART-RIPPER

A rarity for a Daemon Weapon of Khorne, a Heart-Ripper often takes the form of a rabid, snarling reaper autocannon, the twin barrels emerging from the jagged maw of the Bloodletter or Flesh Hound bound to the gun. Each time the gun fires it howls with rage, imprinting Khorne's fury onto every Warp-enhanced shell. Unlike other ranged Daemon Weapons, the Heart-Ripper still needs to be reloaded, although whether that is to feed the ammunition hoppers or simply to feed the Daemon within remains a mystery.

A Heart-Ripper is a Daemon Weapon with a Willpower of 52 and a Binding Strength of 2. It has the Howling, Skulltaker, and Vicious attributes. Only those dedicated to Khorne can use a Heart-Ripper.

SOULFIRE LANCE

Taking the form of a twisted spinal column or collection of broken bones stretched unnaturally into a long staff, the Soulfire Lance is a gateway to the Immaterium. Each time the bearer squeezes the Lance, the Daemon within howls, unleashing a vortex of Empyrean energy that draws its victims into the Lance itself.

A Soulfire Lance is a Daemon Weapon with a Willpower of 60 and a Binding Strength of 3. It has the Howling and Piercing attributes, and can make both melee and ranged attacks. The Soulfire Lance requires two hands to use.

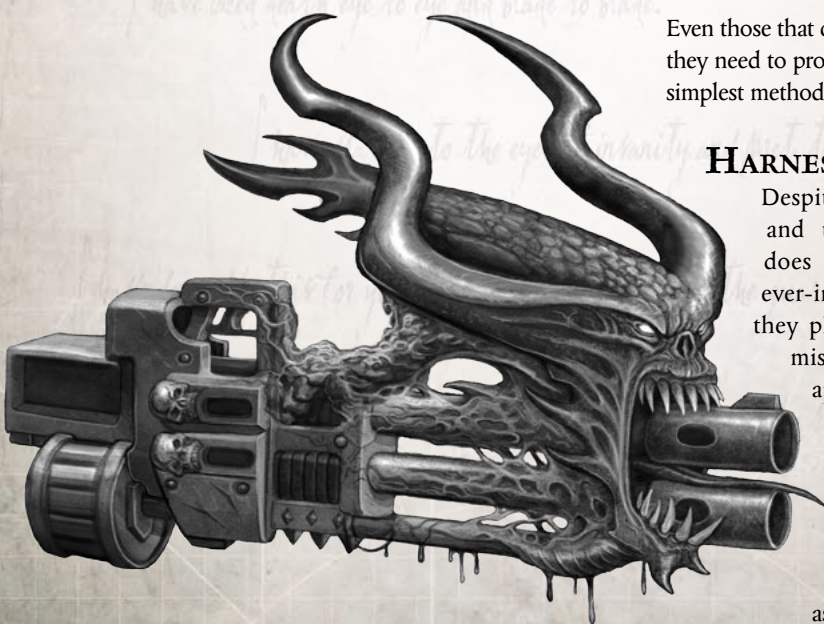
ARMOUR AND ARMOUR UPGRADES

Even those that claim to have the Blood God's favour know that they need to protect themselves from Khorne's enemies, and the simplest method of protection is with a strong suit of armour.

HARNESS OF RAGE

Despite Khorne's penchant for wanton slaughter and unrelenting devastation, the Blood God does protect his champions and grant them ever-increasing amounts of power so long as they please him. The Harness of Rage, an oddly misshapen form of heavy carapace armour, appears to reflect this type of favour, making the wearer more durable as they spill blood and take skulls in Khorne's name.

The Harness of Rage is a full suit of Heavy Carapace that has the Spikes upgrade on each of its arms. The Heretic wearing the Harness of Rage can use the Frenzy Talent as a Free Action, assuming they have that Talent.



The Harness grants the Regeneration (X) Trait, where the number in parenthesis is equal to 1 for every full 5 points of Damage the Heretic caused in the previous turn. This value automatically returns to zero at the end of combat, or if the wearer ever leaves an ongoing melee voluntarily. Only Heretics dedicated to Khorne may wear the Harness of Rage.

KHORNATE CREST (UPGRADE)

One of the most recognisable symbols of Khorne, the Khornate Crest is seen on Traitor Space Marines across the galaxy. To fellow Berzerkers it is both a symbol of brotherhood and their mutual desire for slaughter. To the lesser followers of Khorne it is a symbol of inspiration and a sign that the Blood God is with them. Finally, to Khorne's enemies it is a symbol of dread—the harbinger of their own inevitable and bloody demise.

A Khornate Crest is a type of Armour Upgrade (see page 177 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) and most often takes the form of stylised “horns” that rise from the wearer's helmet. They often mimic the upper regions of Khorne's symbol, but the possible variations and embellishments are endless. The Khornate Crest can be added to Power Armour and Terminator Armour (both human and Legion); it provides +1 AP to the Head and a +10 bonus to all Interaction Tests made with the followers of Khorne. It also counts as the Devotional Iconography customisation (page 176, **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). Only Heretics dedicated to Khorne may wear a Khornate Crest.

MANTLE OF HATE

Said to be blessed—or cursed—with Khorne's eternal rage, the Mantle of Hate is a rare pattern of Legion power armour found only in the most blood-soaked domains of the Screaming Vortex. Those that don this ashen-grey armour are often overwhelmed with feelings of unrelenting bitterness and loathing, and after a time this feeling begins to manifest itself upon the wearer's victims, as if their hatred alone were draining the very life out of their enemies.

The Mantle of Hate is a suit of Legion Power Armour with all standard abilities as well as the following sub-systems and upgrades: Enhanced Ceramite Plating, Osmatic Gill Life Sustainer, and a Sustainable Power Source. It also has Chain Bandoilers, with other customisations at the GM's discretion. In melee combat, as a Full Action the Heretic may channel his bitterness and hatred through the armour against a single target. The Heretic makes an **Opposed Difficult (–10) Willpower Test** and, if successful, the armour saps the victim's energy, reducing his foe's Weapon Skill by –20 and increasing the difficulty of any Dodge or Parry Tests his foe takes by –20 for the duration of the combat. If the Heretic has the Hatred Talent for the type of opponent he is currently facing, the difficulty of the Opposed Willpower Test changes to **Ordinary (+10)**. Such endless hatred can begin to affect the psyche of the wearer, and if the Heretic ever fails the Opposed Willpower Test by two or more Degrees of Failure he gains a Disorder (see the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 278). Only Heretics dedicated to Khorne may wear the Mantle of Hate.

TABLE 2-4: PROTECTIVE DEVICES

Armour

Name	Locations Covered	AP	Wt	Availability
Harness of Rage	All	6	22kg	Extremely Rare
Khornate Crest	Head	+1AP	2kg	Extremely Rare
Mantle of Hate	All	8†	150kg	Near Unique
Skinhidden Plate	All	††	8kg	Extremely Rare
Talax Hide Armour	All	6	6kg	Rare

† The Mantle of Hate grants AP10 to the Body

†† Additional AP determined by Heretic's Corruption Bonus

Force Field

Name	Protection Rating	Wt	Availability
Infernal Star	50	1kg	Extremely Rare
Messian Sky-Splitter	65	20kg	Extremely Rare

SKINHIDDEN PLATE (X) (UPGRADE)

Many of Khorne's most dedicated followers lead a life of endless slaughter. War and death become constant companions, and their dedication reaches a level where the armour they wear ceases to simply cover them, but becomes part of them. In the end it becomes difficult to tell where the flesh ends and the armour begins.

Part mutation and part armour modification, Skinhidden Plate melds the Heretic's armour with their own flesh, creating a second skin that adds additional AP to all locations equal to the Heretic's current Corruption Bonus. The Heretic loses 1d5 permanent Fellowship for every point of additional armour, but gains an immunity to Blood Loss. Armour upgraded in this manner cannot be removed, including helmets. Only Heretics dedicated to Khorne may wear Skinhidden Plate, and the benefits are lost should the Heretic shift their alignment away from the Blood God.

TALAX HIDE ARMOUR

The nomadic lifestyle of the Talax requires that nothing be wasted, even when crafting. The by-products of their smithing and weapon trade are put to good use in crafting a lighter form of hide armour that can turn aside most blades effectively. The waste products from this process are used to treat the skins of predatory animals from Ni'iktu, hardening the hide and changing the fatty tissue into a lightweight gel-like substance capable of diffusing the energy from a strike.

Tests made to resist the effects of the Concussive Quality gain a +10 bonus when wearing Talax Hide Armour. It is only ever sold as a complete suit, and its Availability Rating increases to Extremely Rare when attempting to obtain this armour somewhere other than the War Moons of Talax.

FORCE FIELDS

Only the most influential figures ever boast the protective qualities of a force field, a technology so rare that only a few scattered worlds across the Screaming Vortex know how to maintain them, let alone produce them.

INFERNAL STAR

A twisted parody of the Adeptus Astartes Iron Halo, this creation from the Hollow's blasphemous forges protects its user with the power of Chaos and the scarcely understood knowledge of the Dark Age of Technology. Jagged, asymmetrical, and often incorporating various skull tokens or other devotional fetishes, the Infernal Star provides a solid barrier of energy that can keep a Heretic safe from his enemies.

The Infernal Star is a force field (see page 178 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) with a rating of 50 and an overload of 01-05.



MESSIAN SKY-SPLITTER

Messia's star, Xoson, is harsh and unforgiving, and Messia's other cruel natural phenomena are often worse; only the hardiest of rig crews and the hordes of shambling mutants can survive its hellish environment. Against such conditions the people of Messia make do with what they can, but the richest and most fortunate few sometimes possess access to a unique piece of technology—the Sky-Splitter. Similar to a power field generator, the Sky-Splitter lessens the impact of Xoson's unceasing heat and creates a protective bubble to block acid rain and windstorms. Fitted to the drill rigs and outrider bikes of the wealthiest drill-barons, as well as the holdings of the elite rulers of Mekonta, these exceptionally rare items can be the difference between life and death out in the burning Messian deserts.

A Messian Sky-Splitter is a force field (see the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 178) with a rating of 65 and an overload of 01-10. The Sky-Splitter projects a field with a radius of 2m, enough to cover both the user and either a specific area of a drill-rig or smaller vehicle such as a bike. It also provides all those under its protection with the Resistance (Heat) Trait, and an immunity to Photon Flash grenades and similar items. A Sky-Splitter requires its own independent power source, such as a backpack power supply or an external source such as a bike's engine. These power units are always supplied with the Sky-Splitter, last for 10 hours of constant use, and take 5 hours to recharge.

WARGEAR AND EQUIPMENT

From the arcane to the mundane, the Screaming Vortex is an endless source of equipment and wargear, each piece a vital tool to bring about the dominance of the Dark Gods.

BLOODSKULL PENDANT

Worn around the neck on an ornate brass chain that sizzles with relentless fury, the Bloodskull Pendant is as black as night and hums with power. On command the black swells to a luminous red and a faint glow surrounds the wearer. Slowly he begins to hover as unholy energies wrack his body. The build-up of power reaches its crescendo and the wearer's arms flail outwards as a shockwave of blood-red lightning lashes at all nearby. The wearer collapses to the ground as the Bloodskull Pendant returns to its flat black colour, giving the wearer time to recover as the bones of his victims litter the ground.

A Heretic with a Bloodskull Pendant can activate it as a Full Action, even if the user is Engaged in Melee. Everyone, friend or foe, within a 4 metre radius suffers 2d10 plus the user's Corruption Bonus in Energy Damage with the Concussive (2) and Felling (4) Qualities. This Damage ignores Toughness Bonus and Armour, but is instead reduced by the victim's Willpower Bonus. The Heretic must pass a **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test** each time he uses the Pendant, however, or become Stunned for 1d5 rounds. The Bloodskull Pendant takes 1 Round to recharge between uses, and only functions when the owning character is dedicated to Khorne.

COLLAR OF KHORNE

Said to be forged from Khorne's own rage and hatred of all psykers, Collars of Khorne are gifted only to those that have given their lives to the Blood God. Each protects the wearer from cowardly sorcery or psychic powers, and once attached they can never be removed as long as the champion lives. Khorne's terrible Flesh Hounds wear them, though when slain their collars return to their furious master. On rare occasions a collar is stolen from a fallen warrior, and these unattached collars are highly desired by those who have not yet received Khorne's attention and attained one for themselves.

Wearing the Collar of Khorne grants the user the same effects as having a Null Rod (**BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 185), and force weapons never gain their regular abilities against the wearer. If a Collar is placed on a defenseless psyker the metal contracts, consigning him to an agonising, choking death that cannot be avoided except through burning 1d5 Infamy or Fate Points.

HORN OF CHAOS

Ætheric devices of unknown provenance, Horns of Chaos are usually only seen in the hands of the daemonic legions. How such arcane devices came into the hands of mortals absent their infernal masters is a mystery to most, but each horn remains a potent artefact. A Heretic can use a Horn of Chaos to control Daemons, granting him +20 to any Command Test used to directly control the denizens of the Warp. The Horn can be used during combat as a Full Action where it will force those sanctified against Chaos (such as Ecclesiarchy Priests, Grey

TABLE 2-5: WARGEAR AND EQUIPMENT

Name	Wt	Availability
Bloodskull Pendant	—	Extremely Rare
Collar of Khorne	1kg	Extremely Rare
Horn of Chaos	4kg	Extremely Rare
Icon of Endless War	8kg	Near Unique
Skull Mask of Ang'grath	2kg	Near Unique
Skull Totem	5kg	Very Rare
Talisman of Burning Blood	—	Near Unique
Venic Noose	0.5kg	Rare†

†Rare on the War Moons of Talax, Very Rare everywhere else

Knights, Sisters of Battle, etc.) to take an **Opposed Difficult (-10) Willpower Test** or suffer a Level of Fatigue. Horns of Chaos need not be actual horns, and can come in various forms, such as decaying bells for the servants of Nurgle, or great war drums for those that fight for Khorne.

ICONS OF ENDLESS WAR

The eight Icons of Endless War were a rare collection of devotional symbols and banners that spread throughout the Vortex several millennia ago. Each one is unique in some way, be it a crimson banner of flayed skin, a symbol of Khorne that constantly drips blood, or a flaming brass skull that can never be extinguished. Despite their physical differences, the Icons all act to drive minions of Khorne to greater and more brutal acts of slaughter. An Icon of Endless War is a large banner or icon and must either be carried in one hand, or affixed to a sturdy backpack. When aloft, all those dedicated to Khorne that can see the icon may enter Frenzy as a Free Action (assuming they have the required Talent) and gain +10 to their Weapon Skill and Ballistic Skill Tests as long as it is in their sight. An Icon of Endless War only functions when a character dedicated to Khorne carries it.

SKULL MASK OF ANG'GRATH

Rumoured to be modelled after the horrific visage of the Lord of all Bloodthirsters, a Skull Mask of Ang'grath is a rare and arcane device of ancient and terrible power. Hideous to behold, each appears to grant the wearer some of Ang'grath's skill in combat, turning the wearer into a veritable maelstrom of death. A Heretic with a Skull Mask of Ang'grath gains the Fear (2) Trait, or increases the level of Fear caused by a character that already has a Fear rating by one. It also grants the Battle Rage Talent and the Unnatural Weapon Skill (4) Trait. A Skull Mask of Ang'grath must rest on flesh and so cannot be worn with a helmet, and only functions when a character with the Mark of Khorne wears it.

SKULL TOTEM

Skull Totems are the works of dedicated blood-cults across the Vortex, usually created under the express instructions of a Khornate warlord or champion. They consist of skulls mounted around a thick brass rod, with each skull once belonging to an important or worthy warrior the champion slew. Runes of power are etched in blood across each skull, and the otherworldly power of the Skull Totem drives the

warlord's followers into the thickest of fighting. Most Skull Totems no longer belong to their original masters—some may have even had their own skull added to the totem—but they remain highly sought after from those looking to command Khorne's legions. A Skull Totem is an icon and must either be carried in one hand, or affixed to a suitable backpack. When held aloft, the wearer and all those dedicated to Khorne that can see the totem may add their Willpower Bonus to their Charge Move, and gain a further +10 to Weapon Skill Tests when making a Charge Action. A Skull Totem only functions when a character dedicated to Khorne carries it.

TALISMAN OF BURNING BLOOD

It is often said that Khorne cares not from where the blood flows, be it from those who stand against him or with him, and as such there are few that can be said to have gained the specific favour of the Blood God. Most servants of Khorne attempt to die gloriously in battle, claiming as many skulls in the name of their God as they can before they themselves are slain. However, those rare few who Khorne actually protects from death are sometimes granted a charm that infuses them with the raw essence of the Blood God's power. Forged from the same brass used in Khorne's throne, these so-called Talismans of Burning Blood allow the wearer to focus their aggression and the aggression of those nearby to a bloodboil, reaching levels of slaughter unknown to most mortal folk.

Once per combat at the start of his Turn, a Heretic with a Talisman of Burning Blood can attempt to channel his rage through the Talisman as a Free Action. The Heretic must pass an **Ordinary (+10) Willpower Test**, although if he wants the Talisman's effects to spread to his allies then each ally increases the difficulty of the **Willpower Test** by one level. The effects are determined by the number of Degrees of Success:

- 1: The Heretic (and allies) may re-roll Damage in Melee and gain Zealous Hatred on a 9+.
- 2: The Heretic (and allies) gains the above benefit, and may add +2 to Penetration in Melee.
- 3: As above, but the bonus Penetration is increased to +4.
- 4+: As above, but Zealous Hatred now occurs on an 8+.

The effects last for a number of Rounds equal to the Heretic's Willpower Bonus. Only a Heretic with the Mark of Khorne can use a Talisman of Burning Blood, although his allies can either be unaligned or dedicated to Khorne.

VENIC NOOSE

The Venic Noose is a simple trap the tribesmen of Talax use to ensnare Daemons and other Warp creatures within the unnatural regions of the Screaming Vortex. In its simplest form, it is a lasso woven of sacrificial human sinew and hair, soaked in a combination of the Shaman-Smith's own blood, the bone dust of a slain foe, and specially prepared briny water from Cho'unda. The stiffened cord serves as a capturing circle which, when baited with fresh blood, is almost irresistible to weaker Daemons of all types. In stronger rituals such as bindings for a Daemon Engine, the level of intricacy and complexity of the knots requires a much larger trap that require several people to carry. A Venic Noose grants +10 to any Ritual used to Summon or Bind a Daemon, but each use requires fresh blood as bait.

KHORNATE MINIONS

As an alternative to creating a standard Minion, a Heretic dedicated to Khorne may select from the following Khornate-themed Minions.

BLOODCALLER

Strength, fury, honour, martial prowess—Khorne demands these from those that would call upon his power—but above all of them is the demand for blood. The followers of Khorne do not dabble in the arts of Warp-magic and psychic trickery as the minions of the lesser Chaos Gods would. Even the most bloodthirsty champion knows though that the Warp is a psychic realm, and that his promises of skulls and endless war are not often enough to bring Khorne's legions into the mortal plane. Sometimes blood is needed, and within the Screaming Vortex this need for blood has created a slave caste of pathetic, mewling psykers called Bloodcallers, all of whom have only one purpose in life—to give their lives to Khorne.

A Heretic dedicated to Khorne with Lesser Minion of Chaos may take up to 2 Bloodcallers, or up to 4 if he has Minion of Chaos. The total amount of Bloodcallers cannot exceed the Heretic's Fellowship Bonus.

Bloodcaller (Troop)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
05	05	10	20	30	30	10	30	10	--	

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Armour: None

Skills: Forbidden Lore (Daemonology, Heresy, The Warp) (Int).

Talents: Bloodcaller†.

Traits: Psyker.

Weapons: None.

Gear: Brass Binding Chains††, gore-soaked robes.

†**Bloodcaller:** The presence of a Bloodcaller allows Khorne-dedicated Heretics or any group that lacks a psyker to make use of any Ritual that would require a character with the Psyker Trait. The Heretic enacting the Ritual still makes all the relevant Skill Tests for that Ritual, but the Bloodcaller fills any Psyker requirements. Keep in mind that Bloodcallers are always sacrificed to Khorne during these rituals, and once they have fulfilled their purpose they are treated as a minion that has been killed.

††**Brass Binding Chains:** Bloodcallers are unwilling slaves to be split open at the will of their cruel masters. To bind them in place and keep them from running, each Bloodcaller is locked in a harness of brass chains that leeches his psychic abilities. This also makes them excellent human shields when their masters need to avoid psychic attack. Whenever the Heretic takes Damage from a psychic attack, half of the Damage can be bled away to the Bloodcaller as long as the minion is within a number of metres equal to the Heretic's Willpower Bonus. This kills the Bloodcaller instantly no matter the Damage, and he is treated as a minion that has been killed.

BRASS HARBINGER

These unnatural creatures have lived in myth across the Vortex for ages unknown. They seem to be neither man nor Daemon and exist somewhere in between, displaying powers only the Warp could spawn, yet claiming to have lived long lives amongst men, fighting and slaying in the name of Khorne. Known throughout the region under many names—Brazen Herald, Steel Oracle—Brass Harbingers attach themselves to Khornate champions who are fated to gather many skulls in the Blood God's name. They move ahead of their masters calling out challenges, listing the great victories the champion has gained, and slaying any who would doubt their master's authority.

A Heretic dedicated to Khorne with an Infamy of at least 50 may take a Brass Harbinger as a Minion of Chaos.

Brass Harbinger (Elite)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
50	20	52	45	45	35	25	50	43	--	

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 15

Armour: Brass Plate Armour (All 5)

Total TB: 4

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Command (Fel) +10, Common Lore (War) (Int), Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S) +20, Parry (WS) +10, Scholastic Lore (Heraldry, Legend) (Int).

Talents: Ambidextrous, Blade Dancer, Blademaster, Challenge†, Combat Master, Disturbing Voice, Lightning Attack, Polyglot, Resistance (Psychic Powers), Step Aside, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee), Wall of Brass††, War Cry.

Traits: From Beyond, Undying, Unnatural Fellowship (3), Unnatural Strength (1).

Weapons: Hellish Blast (Basic; 15m; S/—/—; 1d10+9 E; Pen 4; Flame, Spray, Tainted†††), pair of Rune Swords (Melee; 1d10+15 R; Pen 0; Balanced, Tainted†††, Tearing).

Gear: Vox-Unit (used to amplify the Brass Harbinger's voice).

†**Challenge:** Brass Harbingers are known for proclaiming the dominance of their masters before entering the fight, but often challenge foes they see as unworthy of their master's attention. Once per combat a Brass Harbinger may issue a challenge to a single enemy within line of sight. The Brass Harbinger only attacks the challenged foe, and must move towards and engage the target as quickly and directly as possible. During the challenge the Brass Harbinger gains +10 to Weapon Skill Tests against that enemy and re-rolls any failed Dodge or Parry Tests. The target suffers a -10 penalty to Weapon Skill Tests and cannot leave combat without first passing an **Opposed Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**.

††**Wall of Brass:** Brass Harbingers do more for their master than simply call out his victories and fight his battles; they act as unrelenting bodyguards always ready to sacrifice themselves for the glory of Khorne's champions. During combat, and as long as the Brass Harbinger is within 4 metres of their master, they may either make a Parry Test as a Reaction to block an attack made against their master, or sacrifice their next turn to take all of the Damage from a single hit just suffered by their master.

†††*A Brass Harbinger is assumed to have Corruption 90 for the purposes of the Tainted Quality. The additional Damage from the Tainted Quality is included in the Damage listings above.*

MOUNTED RIDERS

"As I ride to war, the scent of death washes over me like the wind itself. All my senses come to life, and each kill becomes more exhilarating than the last!"

—Doomrider

Heretics are singular individuals, and as such many favour individual transport to carry them into battle or across wastelands in their Path to Glory. This grants them greater freedom in their movement, and allows their foes to see the faces of their death approaching. Mechanised bikes, flying xenos devices, and even daemonic beasts can all be found in the Screaming Vortex and used as mounts for riders with enough power to claim one for their own.

RIDING TO GLORY

Riding a mount requires either the Operate (Surface) Skill for bikes, or the Survival Skill for living mounts. Skill Tests are not needed for routine riding, but whenever the Heretic attempts something particularly challenging they may be required to pass a Riding Test. These Tests can be Standard or Opposed Tests, depending on the situation. Just like other forms of Skill Test, Riding Tests can be modified due to circumstances.

Most Heretics can ride any mount, as long as they are no larger than the mount's Size Trait; Heretics in Terminator Armour cannot ride due to their cumbersome armour (though they can be passengers in suitably reinforced sidecars).

MOVEMENT

Mounts travel using the Movement values listed for Structured Time. For Narrative Time when travelling long distances, bikes have a Cruising Speed listed whilst living mounts use **Table 1-5: Narrative Time Movement** from page 39 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook to derive a similar speed based on their Movement values.

Mounted Riders take Environment Tests (see **Table 1-6: Treacherous Environment Agility Modifiers** on page 40 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) with a -20 penalty. A character cannot Climb, Jump, Leap, or Swim while riding, but may attempt Horizontal Leaps of up to his current Movement if he has enough room equal to his current Movement to prepare for the feat. A rider must move at least half of the distance he moved in the preceding Round before making a course adjustment of more than 90 degrees, but can pivot more than once per Turn, provided he moves the appropriate distance each time.

A mounted rider has special Movement Actions that he can take during his Turn:

Evasive Riding

Type: Full Action

Subtype: Concentration, Movement

The rider weaves and dodges, presenting a hard target. He moves at half his Movement value and must take a **Challenging (+0) Riding Test**. For every Degree of Success, enemies take a -10 penalty on all attacks against the mounted rider until the beginning of rider's the next Turn, but the rider takes the same penalty to his own Ballistic Skill Tests.

Hit & Run

Type: Full Action

Subtype: Attack, Melee, Movement

Riders often dash past their enemies at high speed, slashing them as they move past. The attack is quick and brutal, with the operator often leaving his opponent a bloody ruin behind him. Mounted riders can make a Hit & Run Action in place of a regular Charge Action, making a Charge Move and then a **Difficult (-10) Weapon Skill Test**. If he succeeds, the rider scores a single hit with one melee weapon and then moves again up to his Charge Move value directly away from the target. No other combat actions (such as Lightning Attack) can be combined with this Action, and the victim of this attack does not gain a free attack against the rider as he moves away.

COMBAT

Mounted Riders take Actions as normal during Structured Time. Aside from the two special Actions listed above on this page, riders can use most of the standard Actions available to characters on foot unless the manoeuvre would be impossible whilst mounted (with the GM making final determination).

Attacking while Riding

Riders and passengers use normal Attack Actions with the following notes:

- Any shooting from the mount suffers a -10 if it moved its Half Move value in its previous turn, or -20 if the mount moved its Full Move value in its previous turn.
- Living mounts (and some daemonic bikes) may also attack in normal melee combat, striking as a Free Action immediately after their rider attacks.

Attacking a Mounted Rider

Successful hits against mounted characters can strike either the mount or the rider depending on the roll to hit: if the roll was doubles, the shot hits the rider or any passengers (determine who is hit randomly). Hits to the rider and/or passengers are always assumed to hit the Body. Attackers can also use the Called Shot Action to specifically target the mount, rider, or passengers.

DAMAGING MOUNTS

Bikes use Armour and Structural Integrity to track their status. Like personal body armour, bike armour has Armour Points that reduce Damage from an accident or attack. Much like a Heretic's Wounds, any Damage the bike's Armour does not absorb is subtracted from its Structural Integrity. The bike is damaged, and this loss is permanent unless repaired (see Back in the Saddle Again on page 48). Once a bike has taken an amount of Damage equal to its Structural Integrity, it is destroyed.

Beasts have Toughness Bonus and Wounds (and may have Armour too). They take Damage like any other creature, but all hits count as Body hits and they die when they suffer Damage that equals or exceeds their Wounds.



Crash and Burn

When a mount is killed or destroyed, it moves forward half of the distance it moved on its last Turn, then crashes. The rider (and any passengers) must make a **Difficult (-10) Agility Test** or suffer 1d10 Impact Damage that ignores Armour.

Back in the Saddle Again

Heretics can make a **Hard (-20) Tech-Use** or **Trade (Armourer) Test** to repair a damaged bike (restoring 1 Structural Integrity, plus 2 additional Structural Integrity per Degree of Success), although this sort of maintenance often takes hours. Destroyed bikes can be repaired as well, but the Test is **Arduous (-40)** instead; failure on this Test means the bike is fit only for the scrap heap. Bestial mounts can be healed using relevant *Medicae*, *Survival*, or *Lore* Skills, depending on the creature, but if a beast is dead then there is (usually) no recovering it.

NEW TRAITS FOR MOUNTS

Many bikes and beasts have special Traits which indicate special abilities or options for the mount.

- **Aquatic:** These mounts can only operate on the water.
- **Daemonic:** The bike has a Daemon trapped within and operates as a Daemon Weapon. Each has a Willpower and Binding Strength listed; if the bike is destroyed, the Daemon is immediately released. If they have undergone the Ritual of Breaking (see page 66 of **THE TOME OF FATE**), they do not require a Mastery Test, nor do they have a Binding Strength.

- **Jetbike (X):** These bikes speed through the air, ignoring ground terrain and granting the rider the Hoverer (X) Trait. Riders use the Operate (Aeronautica) Skill for Riding Tests. If the jetbike is destroyed, those aboard take 2d10+10 Impact Damage if they fail the Agility Test from the especially violent crash.
- **Integral Weapon:** The bike has guns built into the chassis which always count as Braced, such that the rider can fire them whilst driving as a Half Action. These can only be fired directly ahead and riders do not need specific training to fire these weapons as it is assumed that his riding expertise covers weapon use as well.
- **Legion:** This mount is not built for human Heretics and only Chaos Space Marines have both the size, strength, and skill for its operation.
- **Reinforced:** This mount ignores the first point of Damage it takes in an attack. Chaos Space Marines cannot ride mounts that lack this Trait.
- **Mutant:** The beast is a foul mutant, unique in appearance. The GM assigns it one Trait from pages 139-144 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, plus one mutation from **Table 9-1 Gifts of the Gods** on page 291 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook.
- **Sidecar (X):** The bike may take a sidecar, which if taken adds X to the bike's Structural Integrity. The rider's Initiative roll is also used for the passengers (who act immediately after the rider). Passengers can take Full Actions even if the mount moved, including to fire either personal or pintle mounted weapons (the latter have a 360 degree fire arc except where blocked from the mount or rider, and count as Braced). Sidecars decrease manoeuvrability, and all Riding Tests suffer a -10 penalty.
- **Terrain Master:** This Trait grants the rider +10 to Tests for movement in poor terrain.
- **Unruly:** Whenever this mount suffers Wounds or loss of Structural Integrity in combat, its rider must make a **Challenging (+0) Riding Test** or be thrown, suffering 1d10 Impact Damage that ignores Armour. Once it has unseated its rider, the mount flees or tries to repay the harm that it suffered in the most violent way possible, depending on its personality.

CREATING NEW MOUNTS

Players and GMs can use appropriate Daemons and other creatures as mounts for Heretics, using the original creature's characteristics as the basis for the mounted version. Some creature Traits such as Phase should be extended to the rider, but the GM should adapt or remove them based on the ongoing story and the exact creature. The rider uses his own Willpower for any such Tests the steed must make, such as for the Bestial or Stampede Traits. New Mount Traits can be added as needed, especially to create Mutant varieties. New Daemonic Trait mounts such as possessed bikes can also be created through the Daemon Weapon creation rules or, if available, the Rite of Binding on page 64 of **THE TOME OF FATE**. Finally, the Player should work with the GM to establish the backstory for how these new mounts were found, establish their Availability, how they were broken into service or summoned into being, and other aspects to flesh out their history.

MOUNT PROFILES

The following are only a smattering of the many bikes, riding beasts, and other oddities that Heretics in the Screaming Vortex use for personal transport.

Legion Combat Bike

Built upon a design that stretches back to the days of the Great Crusade, these bikes are still one of the mainstay weapons of the Chaos Space Marines. Death follows swiftly when the torturous hum of its engine is heard in the distance.

Tactical Speed: 10/20/30/60 **Cruising Speed:** 110 kph

Structural Integrity: 15 **Armour:** 14

Availability: Extremely Rare.

Traits: Integral Weapon, Legion, Reinforced, Size (Hulking).

Weapons: Integral Twin-Linked Legion Bolter (Basic; 100m; S/3/-; Dam 1d10+9 X; Pen 4; Clip 40; Reload Full; Tearing, Twin-Linked).

Options: The Integral Twin-Linked Legion Bolter can be exchanged for a single Integral Legion Plasma Gun (Basic; 100m; S/2/-; Dam 1d10+12 E; Pen 10; Clip 30; Reload 5 Full; Maximal Overheats) or an Integral Legion Meltagun (Basic; 20m; S/-/-; Dam 2d10+13 E; Pen 12; Clip 12; Reload 2 Full; Melta).

Slash and Run: Covered in blades, spikes and other devilish attachments, Legion Bikes can cut a bloody swathe through the enemy as they drive by. Whenever it makes a Hit & Run Action, targets also take 1d10+4 Rending Damage.

Pounder Beast

These huge, fleshy creatures thrive on many worlds within the Screaming Vortex, and despite their aggressive nature have become reliable beasts of burden for many Heretics.

Pounder Beast (Troop)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
25	--	52	50	21	21	33	29	06	--

Tactical Speed: 8/16/24/48

Armour: None

Skills: Awareness (Per).

Talents: None.

Traits: Amphibious, Brutal Charge (4), Natural Weapons, Reinforced, Quadruped, Size (Enormous), Stampede, Sturdy, Terrain Master, Unnatural Toughness (+4).

Weapons: Stomping Limbs (Melee; 2d10+5 I; Pen 0; Concussive [1], Primitive [6]).

Availability: Rare.

Cargo Master: Pounders can be fitted with large cargo baskets to carry up to 400kg of extra weight.

Wounds: 32

Total TB: 9

Furian Sea-Skimmer

Used for almost every task imaginable, Sea-Skimmers are a common sight among the floating villages of Furia's world-spanning oceans. Agile, easy to construct, and endlessly modular, they can tackle any task from transporting goods to warfare on the open seas.

Tactical Speed: 8/16/24/48 **Cruising Speed:** 80 kph

Structural Integrity: 10 **Armour:** 7

Availability: Rare.

Traits: Aquatic, Size (Hulking).

Sidecar Options: Sea-Skimmers are often upgraded into a variant known as the Oceanmaster, adding extra seats, a larger engine, and considerable bulk. This grants the Reinforced and Sidecar (5) Traits and increases its size to Enormous, giving it space to carry cargo, two passengers, or one passenger and a pintle-mounted harpoon launcher (Basic; 40m; S/-/-; 2d10 I; Pen 2; Clip 1; Reload 2 Full; Concussive [1], Primitive [8]).

Goredriver

A common pattern of bike amongst the followers of the Blood God, Goredriver bikes are known for their brutal appearance and speed as well as the vicious Daemons each hosts. Roaring across battlefields trailing fire and smoke, each soon becomes drenched in crimson as both rider and bike rejoice in the flowing blood.

Tactical Speed: 10/20/30/60 **Cruising Speed:** 110 kph

Structural Integrity: 13 **Armour:** 12

Availability: Extremely Rare.

Traits: Daemonic (Willpower 38, Binding Strength 1), Reinforced, Size (Enormous), Terrain Master, Unruly.

Blood Scent: The Khornate Daemons within each Goredriver are as eager as their riders to spill blood and have the Bloodlust and Blood Tracker Khorne Daemon Weapon Attributes from page 196 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook.

Messian Outrider

More of a collective term for a number of bike variants, the Outrider is one of the most common vehicles on the wastelands of Messia. Quick and nimble, these lightly armed and armoured vehicles range ahead of the mighty drill-rigs, looking for incoming mutant hordes and attacking anyone who gets too close.

Tactical Speed: 9/18/27/54 **Cruising Speed:** 100 kph

Structural Integrity: 12 **Armour:** 9

Availability: Rare.

Traits: Integral Weapon, Scratchbuilt†, Sidecar (2), Size (Hulking).

Weapons: Integral Twin-Linked Autogun (Basic; 100m; S/3/10; Dam 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip 120; Reload 3 Full; Twin-Linked), (Sidecar) Pintle-Mounted Harvester Support Gun (Heavy; 120m; -/-/6; 1d10+5 R; Pen 0; Clip 200; Reload 2 Full; Crippling [2], Primitive [8], Tearing).

†**Scratchbuilt:** Outriders are built in a haphazard manner, and are both easier to destroy yet quicker to repair. When rolling Zealous Hatred against an Outrider roll 1d10 rather than 1d5, but Tests to repair an Outrider always gain +20.

LEGACY WEAPONS

"Rejoice, my friend, for yours is a noble purpose. You shall be the ten thousandth soul to fall at my blade. Savour this moment, and feel the kiss of Voidchild."

—Serthrash the Immortal, at the fall of Hive Boethius

The servants of Chaos wield a near limitless variety of armaments, from primitive black powder rifles to sophisticated force weapons. While many Heretics continuously seek out new, more powerful weapons with which to equip themselves, some discover a kindred spirit in a particular armament. When a Heretic discovers such a weapon, he is likely to wield it in every battle from that time on, eschewing all others as he forges a bloody bond with his weapon. Some may question such a Heretic's choice to forgo more powerful or sophisticated devices in favour of his signature armament. Such doubts are put to rest once they witness such a warrior and his Legacy Weapon in battle.

Legacy Weapons often become such a signature of their wielder that they can, in fact, help to define him. Would the name of Khârn the Betrayer strike such fear in the hearts of enemy and ally alike were it not for his ancient chainaxe, Gorechild? Could Abaddon the Despoiler unite the numerous, antagonistic forces of the Eye of Terror if he did not wield the legendary Talon of Horus? The following rules for Legacy Weapons allow **BLACK CRUSADE** characters to wield weapons worthy of the reputations they forge. A Legacy Weapon grows in power along with the Heretic who wields it, surpassing other weapons of its kind so long as it is in the hands of its owner. In many ways, a Legacy Weapon becomes as integral to the Heretic as his Skills and Talents. As part of its creation, the Heretic establishes a story for the humble weapon he first wielded in the Screaming Vortex, making a name for them both as he carves a swathe across the stars and crafting a potent and uniquely personal weapon. Legacy Weapons present an opportunity for players to advance their Heretic's weapon along with their innate abilities, breaking the cycle of "trading up" for better weapons as a Heretic grows in experience. Regardless of its origins, a Legacy Weapon in the hands of its owner is far deadlier than an ordinary weapon of its type, even one of the highest quality. Forging such a bond with a weapon is no mean feat, however, and a Heretic who wields a Legacy Weapon must fully commit to its use.

LEGACY WEAPON EFFECTS

Legacy Weapons possess numerous advantages that arise from a combination of factors. The craftsmanship of a weapon certainly contributes, but it is not so important as might be expected. A Legacy Weapon's strengths come from a rare conjunction of circumstances, including a spirit that is exceptionally well-suited to its wielder and the deeds and events in which the weapon plays a part. A simple cleaver that a humble mutant labourer first used to defeat a powerful warrior might go on to forge a great legacy. Likewise, a simple stub revolver in the hands of a true artist might slay many powerful foes, hence gaining a reputation as great as that of the killer who wields it.

As a Legacy Weapon's story unfolds, it gains abilities that reflect or complement those of its owner. All special rules and abilities of a Legacy Weapon apply only in the hands of its rightful owner; should any other character use the weapon, it simply acts as a normal weapon of its kind and craftsmanship. The following rules apply to all Legacy Weapons:

- A Legacy Weapon adds one half its owner's Infamy Bonus (rounded up) to both Damage and Penetration.
- A Legacy Weapon loses the Primitive Quality, if it had it.
- A Legacy Weapon that does not possess the Power Field Quality only has a 10% chance of being destroyed when it Parries or is Parried by a weapon with that Quality, rather than the usual 75% chance.
- A Legacy Weapon is treated as being one step higher in Craftsmanship.
- A key concept behind Legacy Weapons is that they are the signature weapons of their owners, not mere tools to be used however it is expedient. If a Heretic uses a different weapon when it seems convenient or advantageous, he may not be worthy of a Legacy Weapon at all. If the owner of a Legacy Weapon uses a different weapon of the same type (melee or ranged), the next time the Heretic wields his Legacy Weapon, he must pass an Infamy Test as if elevating the weapon (see Elevating a Legacy Weapon on page 51). If this Test is failed, the weapon is treated as a normal weapon of its kind. The Heretic can attempt another Infamy Test to use the Legacy Weapon once his Infamy characteristic has increased, again, just as if attempting to elevate a Legacy Weapon. At the GM's discretion, the Test may be more or less difficult depending on the circumstances, or even applied in other situations if desired. For instance, if he was fighting an opponent that his Legacy Weapon could not harm, or did not have access to his Legacy Weapon, or used it in a manner unbefitting its legacy, the GM might make the Test easier or harder. Passage should never be automatic, however, even if the Heretic had little or no choice in the matter. Such are the demands of joining one's destiny to such a weapon.



BIRTH OF A LEGACY WEAPON

There are two likely methods by which a Heretic might acquire a Legacy Weapon. The first is for the player to select a Legacy Weapon as one of his starting Acquisitions. The second is for the player to decide at some point during play that his Heretic particularly favours a certain weapon, and nominate it as his Legacy Weapon. It is also possible that a Legacy Weapon may come into the Heretics' hands as part of the campaign's story. These inherited Legacy Weapons are handled somewhat differently, and are explained later in this chapter.

STARTING LEGACY WEAPONS

With the GM's approval, a player may select a Legacy Weapon during his character's creation. After all, many Heretics, particularly Chaos Space Marines, have wielded a weapon for decades or centuries by the time play begins. The Acquisition modifier for the Legacy Weapon is determined as normal, except that it counts as being one step more difficult in Availability than a normal weapon of its type and suffers an additional –10 penalty if the weapon is Heavy or possesses any of the following Qualities: Accurate, Blast, Concussive, Felling, Force, Maximal, Melta, Power Field, Razor Sharp, Spray, Storm, or Warp Weapon. A player can instead make one of his character's non-Heavy starting weapons into a Legacy Weapon, but for each of the Qualities listed above that it has, it counts as an item against the number of equipment items he can acquire during character creation (so, for example, if the weapon has two of these Qualities, it counts as two pieces of equipment). After all, the difference between a power sword and a Legacy power sword is easily as great as that between a chainsword and a power sword. A Heretic may only ever possess a single Legacy Weapon, and so can acquire only one as part of his character creation.

Each Legacy Weapon has a story, and the paths through which it might come into the hands of a Heretic are limitless. When a Heretic begins play with a Legacy Weapon, the player should either roll for or choose a result from **Table 2–6: Legacy Weapon History** on page 52. These should be used as the basis for the weapon's legend, which the player must fully flesh out for the GM's approval before using. The histories presented cover a broad spectrum, but if a player truly feels that none of the results match the concept he has in mind, the GM may wish to work with the player to develop a unique history.

ELEVATING LEGACY WEAPONS

A Heretic who did not begin play with a Legacy Weapon might form a bond with a favoured weapon during the course of play. If a player feels it appropriate for his character, he may, with the GM's approval, choose to elevate a weapon he already possesses to Legacy status. It is recommended that this is done at the end of a session or between games, so as not to distract from play. A Heretic may only ever possess a single Legacy Weapon, and so can only elevate a weapon if he does not already possess a Legacy Weapon.

In order to elevate a Legacy Weapon, the Heretic must pass an Infamy Test, with the Availability and Craftsmanship of the existing weapon modifying it as if it were an Acquisition Test



(see page 306 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) and with an additional –10 penalty if the weapon is Heavy or possesses any of the following Qualities: Blast, Concussive, Felling, Force, Maximal, Melta, Power Field, Spray, Storm, or Warp Weapon. Note, however, that this is not an Acquisition Test, and there is no modifier for quantity. If the weapon has already been used to accomplish great deeds worthy of a Legacy Weapon, the GM may grant a bonus to the Infamy Test. Conversely, if the weapon has been used only sporadically or is a relatively new acquisition, the GM may assign a further penalty to the Test, or not allow the attempt until the Heretic has used the weapon more extensively. If the Test is failed, the Heretic may not again attempt to elevate the weapon until his Infamy has increased. There is no limit to the number of times a player may attempt to elevate a weapon. However, once a player has declared his intent to elevate a particular weapon, he cannot attempt to elevate a different weapon without good reason, such as the original weapon being lost or destroyed. The GM has final say in what circumstances qualify. When a weapon is elevated to the status of a Legacy Weapon, it gains all the benefits of Legacy Weapons listed above. In addition, the GM and player should work together to select the result on **Table 2–6: Legacy Weapon History** (see page 52) that best matches the way the Heretic has used the weapon thus far. If the GM and player agree that none of these results are appropriate, they may work together to create a game effect comparable to those of the Legacy Weapon histories. As discussed above, the player must also create a suitable backstory for the weapon for the GM's approval before using.

TABLE 2-6: LEGACY WEAPON HISTORY

1d10

1: Legacy of Slaughter: This weapon has inflicted innumerable deaths. Perhaps it has slain many champions in single combat, or put countless innocents to death. Regardless, the weapon's spirit now thirsts always for its next victim. This weapon thrives on death, almost seeming to guide the wielder's hand from one victim to the next.

2: Legacy of Hate: The weapon has been used extensively against despised foes. Each kill has imbued the weapon with that hatred, and with it the Heretic is an unstoppable bringer of death.

3: Legacy of Rage: The wielder of this weapon fights in a mad frenzy, venting his bottomless rage on myriad foes, and possibly a few friends as well. These actions have imbued the weapon with a craving for mindless slaughter, and each kill further fans the flames of anger.

4: Legacy of Betrayal: This weapon's story is one of treachery and double-cross. It seems to have developed a fondness for such perfidy, as evidenced by the tendency for its wielder to sometimes inexplicably strike his own allies.

5: Legacy of Pain: This weapon has been used for torture as often as for war. It mirrors its wielder's sadistic tendencies, each wound inflicting agony far beyond its apparent severity.

6: Legacy of Conquest: This weapon has conquered and enslaved, killing so that its master might be recognized. Each victory made with this weapon only increases the Heretic's ambitions.

7: Legacy of Plague: The bearer of this weapon has wielded it extensively in service of the Fly Lord. Often, such weapons are clearly marked by the unclean touch of Chaos. Regardless of its appearance, the weapon draws infection and contagion to the wounds it inflicts. This weapon cannot belong to a Heretic aligned to Tzeentch.

8: Legacy of Blood: This weapon has been dedicated to the service of Khorne and reflects the murderous spirit and hatred of magic all true disciples of the Blood God share. This weapon cannot belong to a psyker or Heretic aligned to Slaanesh.

9: Legacy of Excess: The Heretic who wields this weapon strives always for perfection in his actions, and does nothing in moderation. Whether a warrior-poet or sadistic reaver, his weapon complements his favoured pursuits. This weapon cannot belong to a Heretic aligned to Khorne.

10: Legacy of Change: The wielder of this weapon is thoroughly unpredictable in combat, always changing his style and tactics. This weapon echoes the Heretic's variability, though not necessarily to his advantage. This weapon cannot belong to a Heretic aligned to Nurgle.

Melee Weapon

When used to kill a foe, the Heretic gains +20 on their next melee attack with the weapon during the same combat. The weapon is particularly resistant to any attempts to take an enemy alive, thus Weapon Skill Tests to use the Stun Combat Action are **Very Hard (-30)**.

The weapon gains +2 Damage against targets for which the Heretic has the appropriate Hatred Talent.

Melee attacks made with this weapon are made at +10. However, Intelligence and Perception Tests made while wielding this weapon suffer a -10. If the Heretic possesses the Frenzy Talent, he may Frenzy as a Free Action.

The weapon deals an extra 1d5 Damage against Unaware or Surprised targets. However, on an Attack Roll of 00, the attack instead hits a random ally engaged with the character.

The weapon gains the Crippling (1) Quality, or the Shocking Quality if it already possesses that ability.

When the Heretic successfully completes a Compact without using any other weapon of the same type in place of his Legacy Weapon, he gains an additional +1 Infamy.

A target that the weapon wounds must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or suffer 1d5-2 temporary Damage to Strength, Toughness, and Agility (roll once and apply the result to all three) for the duration of the combat.

The weapon adds +1 to Damage. Any Tests made to resist psychic powers receive a +5 bonus when the Heretic is wielding this Legacy Weapon.

When using his Legacy Weapon, the Heretic adds one extra Degree of Success to successful WS or BS Tests, as appropriate to the weapon. In addition, the Heretic chooses one additional Characteristic that benefits from a +5 bonus whenever the weapon is in hand. Should the Heretic fail a Test of his chosen Characteristic by four or more Degrees, he gains 1 Corruption Point (counting as a failing).

At the start of each session, roll 2d5 to determine the bonus the weapon grants to WS Tests for the duration of the session. If the result is a double, the bonus is granted to BS Tests instead.

Ranged Weapon

When used to kill a target, the user gains +20 on their next ranged attack with the weapon during the same combat. If ever loaded with any sort of non-lethal ammunition, the weapon counts as possessing the Unreliable Quality, regardless of Craftsmanship or other rules.

The weapon adds +1 to its highest Rate of Fire value; if it is single shot only, its RoF becomes S/2/-. Each Round that the character does not wish to attack with his weapon at its highest Rate of Fire, he must pass a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**.

The weapon deals an extra 1d5 Damage against Unaware or Surprised targets. However, on an Attack Roll of 00, the attack instead hits a random ally within 3m of the target.

At the start of each session, roll 2d5 to determine the bonus the weapon grants to BS Tests for the duration of the session. If the result is a double, the bonus is granted to WS Tests instead.

EXAMPLE

*Matt's Renegade character has used the same bolter since the campaign began, even while the other Heretics have acquired newer, stronger weapons. Matt decides that his Heretic has become very fond of his trusty bolter and would never discard it even in favour of a "better" weapon. With the GM's permission, Matt attempts an Infamy Test to elevate his bolter. Consulting the Acquisition Test Modifier table on page 306 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, the bolter's Availability of Very Rare adds a -20 modifier to the Test, and a further -10 is added because the weapon is Good Craftsmanship. Matt does not add the +10 for a single item, as he would were this an Acquisition Test, and so his Infamy Test is made at a -30 penalty. Matt has given his character the goal of becoming a feared warlord, and so chooses the Legacy of Conquest history, working with his GM to add further backstory incorporating the campaign's events thus far.*

FORGING THE LEGACY

The Warp does not only affect living things. Given time, its power twists and corrupts stone, steel, and adamantium as surely as flesh. The Legacy Weapon a Heretic wields is steeped in Chaos, indeed to the same degree as its owner. While the effects of Corruption on a Legacy Weapon are not nearly so pronounced as on a Heretic, they can be quite potent nonetheless. As a Heretic and his Legacy Weapon are exposed to the stuff of Chaos, the bond between them is reinforced in unnatural and deadly ways. The further a Heretic travels on the Path to Glory, the stronger this unholy bond, allowing for the performance of seemingly impossible feats. In some cases, a Legacy Weapon physically mutates, perhaps mirroring the Gifts of the Gods bestowed on its owner. In others, as with many Heretics, the taint of Chaos is hidden just beneath the surface.

When a Heretic with a Legacy Weapon reaches 20, 40, 60, and 80 Corruption Points, his weapon gains a new Legacy Ability. If a Heretic has already passed one or more of these thresholds when he chooses to elevate a Legacy Weapon, the weapon gains one Ability immediately and another each time the Heretic's Corruption Point total reaches a multiple of 10, until the weapon has reached the same level as its user.

Whereas the Heretic's Alignment directly influences the Gifts of the Gods that he gains, the effects of Corruption on Legacy Weapons can be considered more passive in nature. Legacy Abilities develop as a result of the Heretic's bond with the weapon, and with the deeds it performs. As it is steeped in Chaos and used to perform great feats and atrocities, a Legacy Weapon becomes a dark mirror for the actions and attributes of its wielder. This is represented by the Legacy Weapon's Pattern. The first time a Legacy Weapon gains a Legacy Ability, its owner must choose a Pattern, reflecting the fighting style the Heretic most commonly employs. In some rare cases, through the vagaries of the Warp, a weapon takes on abilities contrary to those of its owner. This is perhaps the weapon's spirit seeking to compensate for its owner's weaknesses, or maybe simply a meaningless cosmic jest. The Patterns available for a player to choose from are described as follows:

LEGACY WEAPONS IN-GAME

While the elevation of a Legacy Weapon is a conscious decision on the part of the player, this is usually not the case for the Heretic. Unlike the creation of a Daemon Weapon, which is a complex and intentional process requiring a great deal of effort on the part of one or more characters, the elevation of a Legacy Weapon is a much more organic process. Mechanically, a weapon is either a Legacy Weapon or not, but this is a simplification for ease of play. In truth, the elevation is a gradual process as a Heretic becomes more and more attuned to their chosen armament, finding it more and more effective in his hands.

Heretics and NPCs may speak of Daemon Weapons, but the idea of a Legacy Weapon is not an "in-game" concept in such a way. Characters may know of the reputations and legends surrounding individual weapons, but they would not think of them as being grouped together in a particular category. This is not to say that particular Heretics cannot dedicate their weapons to the service of the gods through ceremony and ritual, but this is purely a roleplaying decision and personal preference. Likewise, Heretics might refer to their Legacy Weapons in any number of ways, but usually such a weapon is known by its own name.

Bellicose: A Legacy Weapon with the Bellicose Pattern reflects the reckless, aggressive nature of its wielder. This Pattern might be chosen for a chainaxe a frenzied Berzerker wields, or just as appropriately for a flamer in the hands of a fearless pyromaniac. Legacy Weapons with this Pattern gain abilities that enhance the fighting style of such a warrior, rewarding the Heretic for acting aggressively. Followers of Khorne who wield a Legacy Weapon often find this Pattern helps to shed the most blood in the name of their god. This Pattern is also appropriate for many followers of Nurgle, who lay about their enemies with gleeful abandon, trusting in their unnaturally resilient carcasses to absorb any return blows. Likewise, any warrior who seeks to dispatch his enemies quickly and messily may find this Pattern appropriate.

Vigilant: Heretics who approach combat in a cautious or methodical manner may find their Legacy Weapons taking on the Vigilant Pattern. Whether the hidden sword-cane of a corrupt noble or the bolter of an intractable Chaos Space Marine of the Death Guard Legion, a Vigilant weapon rewards a warrior who fights defensively and patiently, waiting for more aggressive enemies to wear themselves out. The Legacy Abilities such a weapon develops help its wielder in using an enemy's momentum against them, or in keeping themselves fighting, better avoiding damage in order to outlast their foes. This Pattern is well-suited to many worshipers of Nurgle, as such protracted kills reflect the inevitability of the decay that follows. Some of the depraved followers of Slaanesh choose this Pattern for a similar reason; the longer they can prolong the fight, the longer they have to torture their opponents and enjoy the sweet stinging of the blades and bullets that strike them in turn.

TABLE 2-7: LEGACY ABILITIES

Bellicose Pattern Legacy Abilities

D10 Roll	Legacy Ability
1-2	Bloodlust
3-4	Ragged
5-6	Shattering
7	Overwhelming
8	Overkill
9	Slayer
10	Mangler

Vigilant Pattern Legacy Abilities

D10 Roll	Legacy Ability
1-2	Regroup
3-4	Standing Firm
5-6	Indefatigable
7	Pendulum
8	Defender
9	Shield of Hate
10	Deathtrap

Artful Pattern Legacy Abilities

D10 Roll	Legacy Ability
1-2	Subtle
3-4	Distracting
5-6	Better Part of Valour
7	Spirit-Bound
8	Fast
9	Precise
10	Backstabber

Merciless Pattern Legacy Abilities

1d10 Roll	Legacy Ability
1-2	Terrorizer
3-4	Transcendent Schadenfreude
5-6	Ripper
7	Massacre
8	Chastener
9	Vicious
10	Tormenter

Versatile Pattern Legacy Abilities

1d10 Roll	Legacy Ability
1-2	Instinctive
3-4	Unholy Union
5-6	Unassailable
7	Quick End
8	Adaptable
9	Without Warning
10	Opportunistic

Artful: Artful Legacy Weapons match those Heretics who prefer to overcome their enemies with cunning and skill rather than brute force. A Renegade might select this pattern for their trusty, battered old long-las, as readily as for the envenomed blade of a silent killer. The Legacy abilities it grants might make a weapon more accurate or stealthy; they may also assist the wielder in outmanoeuvring his enemies. The disciples of the Architect of Fate often find this Pattern evolving, as it matches their own tendency to employ intellect and trickery as a primary weapon. This pattern is well-suited to sorcerers and psykers of all stripes, as such weapons provide a subtle recourse should their unnatural powers fail to suffice, and can help to make up for a wyrd's lack of muscle.

Merciless: Some Heretics fight not to test their mettle, to achieve a goal, or even to slay their enemies, so much as they fight in order to inflict pain and humiliation on their foes. Merciless Legacy Weapons develop abilities that help the weapon to inflict further pain, physical or psychological, on enemies (and bystanders) than would normally be possible, allowing for all to witness the Heretic's superiority. Such Abilities might enhance the skill of the wielder, helping him to humiliate his foes, or they might inflict terrible bleeding wounds that lead to a slow, agonizing death. It's no surprise that champions of Slaanesh frequently wield Merciless Legacy Weapons, as their own cruel desires to seep into their weapons. Occasionally, a follower of Nurgle may wield such a weapon, as the ghastly wounds inflicted are pleasing to the Fly Lord.

Versatile: Many fighters take a balanced approach to combat, adapting their style and tactics to the situation at hand. A recently fallen Chaos Space Marine may have the battle doctrines of the Codex Astartes too firmly ingrained to ignore, even after defiling and destroying his own copy. Likewise, a rogue Naval officer may find that the dictates of the *Tactica Imperialis* work just as well when employed against the Imperial war machine he once served. Legacy Weapons with the Versatile Pattern complement a Heretic who fights pragmatically and adaptively. The Legacy Abilities this Pattern grants are often less powerful than those the others grant, but are also more flexible. The Versatile Pattern is appropriate for many adherents of Tzeentch, as it allows for a mutable fighting style involving a broad range of tactics. This Pattern often applies to followers of Khorne, for the more efficient a warrior is, the faster he can reap skull upon skull.

Whenever a Legacy Ability refers to the Heretic's Infamy Bonus, it means the Heretic's current Infamy Bonus at any given time the ability comes into effect. This means such Legacy Abilities increase in effectiveness as the Heretic gains Infamy, or decrease in effectiveness if the Heretic loses Infamy. Legacy Abilities only apply when the Heretic is wielding his Legacy Weapon, and only apply to attacks made with the Legacy Weapon. Remember, a Legacy Weapon is just an ordinary weapon of its type and Craftsmanship when anyone other than its true owner wields it.

LEGACY WEAPON ABILITIES

When a Legacy Weapon gains its first Legacy ability, the player must choose a Pattern that dictates which chart is used to generate Legacy abilities for the weapon. A player may modify the result of his roll on the Pattern's table by an amount up to the Heretic's Infamy Bonus. If a Legacy Ability grants a weapon Quality that the weapon already possessed, the player may re-roll the result or choose to keep it if it is an improvement over the existing value of the Quality. Some Legacy abilities have different effects depending on whether they are applied to a melee or ranged weapon.

EXAMPLE

Because Matt's character has an Infamy of 36 when he elevates his weapon, he must choose a Pattern for his bolter and roll on the appropriate chart. Matt's Renegade tends to be pretty reckless and confrontational, so he chooses the Bellicose Pattern. The result of Matt's d10 roll is a 7—Overwhelming. Matt wants his bolter to make for some really messy kills, and so modifies the result by his Infamy Bonus of 3 to get the Mangler result.

Bellicose Pattern Legacy Abilities

The following are abilities for Bellicose Pattern Legacy Weapons.

Bloodlust

The weapon has been used in anger so many times that it now seems to anticipate each new target, eager to spill fresh blood.

Melee: The weapon adds an additional +20 to the wielder's WS when Charging.

Ranged: Attacks against an uninjured target are made at +20.

Mangler

Whether with blades or bullets, this weapon inflicts horrendous injuries with disturbing frequency, even slaying uninjured foes in a single blow. When this weapon triggers Zealous Hatred, add +1 to the roll on the Critical Hit Table. Once per session, the Heretic may spend an Infamy Point to instead roll 1d10–2 for the result of Zealous Hatred.

Overkill

The Heretic and his Legacy Weapon are a devastating team, slaying foes with wanton abandon. The Legacy Weapon does extra Damage equal to the Heretic's full Infamy Bonus, instead of half. Once per session, the Heretic may spend an Infamy Point to increase the Damage bonus to one and a half times his Infamy Bonus for the duration of a single combat.

Overwhelming

Striking with tremendous force, this weapon easily knocks aside those weaklings foolish enough to stand before the Heretic and his Legacy Weapon. The weapon gains the Concussive Quality, with a value equal to half of the Heretic's Infamy Bonus.



Ragged

The wounds this weapon inflicts are particularly ragged and gruesome, perhaps due to a dulled blade or ammunition that inexplicably deforms in midair. The weapon gains the Tearing Quality; if it already possesses this Quality, it instead gains the Proven Quality, with a value equal to one half of the Heretic's Infamy Bonus.

Shattering

This weapon is like an extension of its wielder's body, channelling his strength into shattering blows, or splitting armour plates apart along invisible fault lines.

Melee: The weapon strikes with the Power Field Quality.

Ranged: The weapon gains the Razor Sharp Quality.

Slayer

The weapon is renowned for the quality of its kills, and its owner may spend an Infamy Point to grant the weapon the Felling Quality with a value equal to the Heretic's Infamy Bonus for the duration of a single combat.

LEGACY WEAPONS AND TWO-WEAPON WIELDING

It is certainly possible that a Heretic's signature style may incorporate fighting with two weapons. The restriction on using weapons other than the Heretic's Legacy Weapon is not intended to limit a Heretic's option to do so. Thus, when selecting or elevating a Legacy Weapon a player may select a matched set. To do this, the Heretic must already possess the appropriate Two-Weapon Wielder Talent (or must purchase it during character creation). Both weapons in the set must be either melee weapons or ranged weapons. In some ways, the set can be thought of as a single Legacy Weapon, or a Legacy set. Such a set might consist of a sword and shield, a pair of chainaxes, or matching bolt pistol and plasma pistol. The GM has final say on whether or not a combination is permitted. In a Legacy set, both weapons gain the basic advantages of a Legacy Weapon, but when a Legacy Ability is gained, the player must choose one of the weapons to gain the ability. The player may alternate each time a Legacy Ability is gained, or may assign them all to a single weapon. When determining the modifier for selecting a Legacy set as a starting Acquisition, or for the Infamy Test to elevate a set, apply the modifier for whichever of the weapons is more difficult, with an additional -10 penalty.

TWO-WEAPON WIELDING WITHOUT A SET

It is also possible for a Heretic with a Legacy Weapon to wield a second weapon that is not part of a set. This may occur, for example, if he gains the Two-Weapon Wielder Talent after acquiring his Legacy Weapon. When wielding a second weapon of the same type as his Legacy Weapon, the Heretic must abide by the following restrictions. Violating any of these prohibitions results in the usual penalty for using another weapon in place of a Legacy Weapon. These restrictions do not apply when wielding one melee weapon and one ranged weapon.

- The second weapon must have a more common Availability than the Legacy Weapon.
- The second weapon can only be wielded in conjunction with the Legacy Weapon, never alone.
- If the Heretic has a dominant hand, he must wield the Legacy Weapon in that hand.
- If the Heretic only attacks with one of his weapons during a Turn, for any reason, it must be his Legacy Weapon.

The Heretic must always show preference to the Legacy Weapon. For instance, if forced to drop one weapon in order to grab hold of a ledge, the Heretic must drop the other weapon. It is up to the GM to determine when an action might violate this rule, but he should generally warn the player first and allow him to change his mind, as a Heretic's preternatural bond with their Legacy Weapon precludes him making such simple mistakes.

Vigilant Pattern Legacy Abilities

The following are abilities for Vigilant Pattern Legacy Weapons.

Deathtrap

This weapon seems to draw on its user's malice to inflict death. Once per combat, when making an attack Action after using the Delay Action, the Heretic may add twice his Infamy Bonus to Damage, instead of the usual half.

Defender

As he strikes down his foes, the momentum of his swings or the recoil of his weapon somehow manages to move him just right to avoid his enemies' blows.

Melee: The weapon may re-roll one failed Parry Test per Round. If the weapon has the Unwieldy or Unbalanced Quality, it instead loses that Quality.

Ranged: Each time the Heretic fires his Legacy Weapon, ranged attacks made against him suffer a -10 penalty for one Round.

Indefatigable

When used defensively, the weapon's weight almost seems to shift of its own accord as the Heretic parries and weaves, helping to move him out of harm's way or intercept the enemy's blows. When the Heretic uses the Guarded Attack or Defensive Stance actions, he may re-roll Evasion Tests until the start of his next Turn.

Pendulum

The user has grown so bonded to his weapon that he can use its mass to aid his defensive moves. Once per Round, the Heretic may gain a modifier to an Evasion Test equal to the modifier to his attacker's roll to hit.

Regroup

The weapon seems to offer succour to its user and, once per combat, after making a successful attack (even if it inflicts no Damage), the Heretic may give up his Reaction in order to re-roll his Initiative for the next combat Round.

Shield of Hate

The bond of shared hatred between weapon and wielder for their foes becomes near tangible. Each Round, the Heretic may expend a Reaction to add one half of his Infamy Bonus in Armour Points to the Arm holding his weapon (or both arms, if two-handed) and Body locations. These stack with any points from existing armour.

Standing Firm

The weapon is patient and rewards its wielder for letting the enemy come to them.

Melee: Regardless of its shape or length, the weapon is perfectly suited to setting against a charge, helping its wielder to strike at precisely the right moment. When the wielder uses the Delay Action in order to attack a Charging opponent, he gains a +20 to his Attack Roll and adds +1 Damage.

Ranged: In a Turn that the Heretic does not move or moves away from his target, Ballistic Skill Tests with his Legacy Weapon gain +10.



Artful Pattern Legacy Abilities

The following are abilities for Artful Pattern Legacy Weapons.

Backstabber

The weapon strikes when the enemy least suspects, and inflicts an extra 1d10 Damage against Unaware or Surprised enemies.

Better Part of Valour

While some Disciples of Chaos are more than willing to expend their lives in service of the gods, others feel it better to live that they might enact their god's will on a future date.

Melee: When taking the Disengage action, the Heretic may make an Opposed Charm or Infamy Test against his enemy's Perception. If the Heretic wins, he may Disengage as a Half Action.

Ranged: If the Heretic fails to kill or incapacitate his target when attacking at range (including a miss) he may immediately make a Half Move as a Free Action.

Distracting

A combination of the weapon's outré appearance and the user's diverting actions leave many foes unready for the final strike.

Melee: The Heretic may substitute a Charm or Intelligence Test for a WS Test when using the Feint Combat Action.

Ranged: When the Heretic hits with a ranged attack, any other characters firing at the same target gain a +10 bonus to BS Tests for one Round.

Fast

After extensive experience in combat, the Heretic and their weapon move as a single entity, acting with preternatural speed.

Melee: The weapon gains the Flexible Quality.

Ranged: Attempts to Dodge attacks from this weapon suffer a -20 penalty.

Precise

The weapon seems to prepare itself for blood when held in ready, ensuring maximum carnage. Standard Attacks made with this weapon after taking the Aim Action gain +1 Damage for every two Degrees of Success on the WS or BS Test.

Spirit-Bound

Thoroughly quenched in the stuff of the Chaos, the weapon's spirit is bound irrevocably to the soul of its wielder, capable of severing the strands of the Warp as readily as the bonds of flesh. The weapon ignores the Daemonic Trait.

Melee: If the Heretic is a psyker, he may attempt to inflict additional Damage with an Opposed Willpower Test as if the Legacy Weapon was a Force Weapon. Note that the weapon does not gain any of the other benefits of a Force Weapon, such as extra Damage or immunity to Power Fields.

Ranged: If the Heretic is a psyker, he may attempt a Focus power Test as a Free Action when attacking. If successful, the Heretic's Psy Rating is added to Damage inflicted with that attack.

Subtle

The weapon has become learned in the ways of silence and disguise as per its user's temperament. Tests made to locate the Heretic based on the sound of an attack or to find the weapon when concealed about his person suffer a -30 penalty.

Merciless Pattern Legacy Abilities

The following are abilities for Merciless Pattern Legacy Weapons.

Chastener

The Heretic delights in the pain and misery inflicted on his foes, finding an advantage either in demoralising his opponent or through feeding his own narcissism. For each successful attack against an opponent, the Heretic gains a cumulative +3 bonus to further WS or BS Tests (as appropriate to the weapon) made against that opponent for the duration of the encounter.

Massacre

The Heretic enjoys demonstrating his superiority over his massed foes, and armed with his Legacy Weapon he cuts them down like grain. The weapon gains the Devastating Quality, with a value equal to one half the Heretic's Infamy Bonus.

Ripper

The weapon leaves ragged, painful wounds in its victims. Any target that suffers Damage from this weapon must pass a Toughness Test with a penalty equal to twice the Heretic's Infamy Bonus or suffer from Blood Loss.

Terrorizer

When blood is spilt, the weapon seems to cast a terrible aura on its wielder that reflects the horror of the death caused. After killing an enemy, the Heretic gains Fear (1), or increases his existing Fear rating by 1, for the duration of the encounter.

Tormenter

The Heretic is like a surgeon, laying enemies low with but the slightest application of pressure. The weapon causes Zealous Hatred on a roll of a 1 or 0.

Transcendent Schadenfreude

Death is never fully denied, as the weapon seeks out the uncanny favour of the gods that prevented the kill for its own wielder. When the Heretic causes an enemy to lose Infamy or burn a Fate Point in order to survive an attack, he gains a bonus Infamy Point to be used during the same session.

Vicious

While some Heretics target vital organs or other vulnerable spots in order to end their foes as swiftly as possible, the bearer of this weapon prefers to inflict painful injuries over mortal wounds, and his weapon has learned to accommodate this desire. The weapon gains the Crippling Quality with a value equal to one half of the Heretic's Infamy Bonus.

OWNERSHIP OF LEGACY WEAPONS

All special rules and abilities of Legacy Weapons apply only when a weapon is in the hands of its rightful owner, as he has more to do with the Heretic's experience and bond with the weapon than any innate characteristics. Generally, the owner of a Legacy Weapon is the Heretic who acquired it during character creation or elevated it. The only way for ownership of a Legacy Weapon to change, barring the most exceptional of circumstances, is for its owner to die. The new owner must form a new bond with the weapon before he can benefit from any special rules or abilities. This requires the Heretic to spend a great deal of time using the weapon. While training can certainly help, some of this time must be spent in actual combat. Once the GM determines the weapon's would-be owner has spent enough time with it, the Heretic may attempt an Infamy Test as if he were elevating the weapon. It is treated as an Inherited Legacy Weapon (see page 60), with Corruption and Infamy corresponding to those of its previous owner at the time of their death.

Versatile Pattern Legacy Abilities

The following are abilities for Versatile Pattern Legacy Weapons.

Adaptable

The Heretic can rely on his Legacy Weapon as a partner, not just a tool. The worse the odds get, the more the pair are able to turn even the smallest opportunity to their advantage.

Melee: When engaged with more than one enemy in melee combat, the weapon gains +1 Damage. When outnumbered two to one in melee combat, the weapon also adds +10 to WS Tests, and when outnumbered three to one the weapon inflicts a -10 penalty to enemies' attack rolls.

Ranged: Whenever the Heretic and his allies are outnumbered, his weapon adds +10 to BS Tests and an extra Degree of Success to successful BS Tests.

Instinctive

This weapon is always attuned to the Heretic's surroundings, practically leaping into his hands when danger approaches. When equipped with his Legacy Weapon, even if it is holstered or sheathed, the Heretic is treated as having the Rapid Reaction and Quick Draw Talents. In addition, he also gains +10 to all attack rolls and Evasion Tests during a Surprise Round.

Opportunistic

The Heretic always looks for any advantage in combat, and his Legacy Weapon is like an extra pair of eyes. It somehow always manages to hit the enemy in just the right spot, whether a chink in their armour or an old war wound. The Heretic may choose to re-roll the result for Zealous Hatred. If the attack would otherwise not have inflicted Damage due to the target's Toughness Bonus or Armour, it causes 1d5-2 Damage instead.



Quick End

The Heretic strives to end battles quickly and decisively, and his weapon has adapted to assist in this goal. The weapon inflicts +3 Damage with the first successful attack in each combat.

Unassailable

As the wielder prepares for defence, his weapon becomes a blur to aid in escaping any attacks. When the Heretic takes the Guarded Attack or Defensive Stance Actions, he may re-roll Evasion Tests until the start of his next Turn.

Unholy Union

The Legacy Weapon is in such sync with the Heretic that it seems to anticipate their every action. The weapon adds +5 to either WS Tests or BS Tests, as appropriate to the weapon.

Without Warning

The Heretic and his weapon are so attuned that it often knows his intentions before he does. The weapon's owner adds one half of his Infamy Bonus to Initiative rolls, even if the Legacy Weapon is holstered or otherwise stowed.

DAEMON LEGACY WEAPONS

Some Heretics may be strong enough, or foolish enough, to bind a Daemon to a Legacy Weapon. This is possible, but only the greatest champions of Chaos could hope to master such a weapon. A Daemon may be bound inside an existing Legacy Weapon, but a Daemon Weapon can never be elevated to Legacy status—Daemons are far too spiteful for even the ablest of warriors to hope to forge such a bond with a Daemon Weapon. Because Legacy Weapons are so suffused with power and dark purpose, they make an ideal home for a Daemon—at least so long as the weapon's wielder can retain control. When creating a Daemon Legacy Weapon, the weapon's status confers a +10 to the Summoning Ritual, as many Daemons are more easily coaxed into such a worthy vessel. However, the Wrought for Purpose modifier can never be claimed for a Legacy Weapon. Once created, a Daemon Legacy Weapon follows all the rules for both types of weapon. However, in any circumstance that requires an Elevation Test or Mastery Test, the Heretic must attempt both an Elevation and Mastery Test, with suitable modifiers. If either test is failed, the Heretic suffers the penalties for both (while the Daemon is in control, the weapon does not gain any benefits of Legacy status, as its bond is with the Heretic, and not with the Daemon).

Taken separately, Daemon Weapons and Legacy Weapons are both extremely powerful; the combination is frighteningly potent. In addition to adding both the Daemon's Willpower Bonus and half of the Heretic's Infamy to both Damage and Penetration, such a weapon has a whole host of special abilities. GMs may wish to consider the power level of their campaign when introducing such a weapon, and should feel free to offset some of the considerable advantages such as calling for Elevation or Daemonic Mastery Tests more frequently than he would otherwise.



INHERITED LEGACY WEAPONS

Heretics and their Legacy Weapons most often rise to power together. Some, however, may come into possession of a weapon with an established history. These may range from the relatively minor to the legendary. A truly remarkable Heretic may form an even greater bond with the weapon, pushing it beyond its previous limits.

While the story of a newly elevated Legacy Weapon unfolds along with that of its wielder, an inherited Legacy Weapon has already participated in great events as the weapon of a mighty Champion of Chaos. An inherited Legacy Weapon reflects the Pattern, Corruption, and Infamy of its previous owner or owners. Generally, inherited Legacy Weapons are introduced as a component of the GM's ongoing plot, and the acquisition of one may even be the focus of a Compact. When designing a Legacy Weapon, the GM should roll for or choose a history from **Table 2-6: Legacy Weapon History** (see page 52). He must then assign a Pattern, Corruption, and Infamy value to the weapon. In order to do so, the GM should give some thought to the weapon's past owner. The Corruption value represents the highest Corruption level any of the weapon's previous owners had reached, and determines how many Legacy Abilities it possesses based on the weapon's Pattern. The weapon possesses these Abilities regardless of the Corruption of a new wielder. However, if the Legacy Weapon's Corruption is higher than that of its new wielder, the Heretic gains 1 Corruption Point after each combat in which he wields the inherited Legacy Weapon, until such time as his Corruption is equal to or higher than the weapon's.

The bonus Damage and Penetration, as well as the effects of Legacy Abilities, are based on the Infamy of the weapon's current wielder. Once per session, under circumstances which the GM deems reasonable, the Heretic can invoke the reputation of his weapon in order to supplement his own. When he does so, the player may substitute the weapon's Infamy for his own on a single Test. However, doing this runs the risk of backfiring, as others scorn the Heretic as unworthy to wield the weapon. If the Test is failed by 3 or more Degrees, the Heretic loses 1d5 Infamy Points. There may also be in-game consequences, such as others deciding to relieve the unfit owner of the weapon.

NAMING THE LEGACY

With the aid of their Legacy Weapon, a Heretic may perform many infamous misdeeds, their name recognised across the breadth of the Screaming Vortex. As the Heretic forges a legacy, his story becomes inseparable from that of his weapon. Players are strongly encouraged to invent a name for their Heretic's Legacy Weapon, one that ties into its history, known to their foes and striking fear in their hearts. The name should be a succinct and distinctive summary of the weapon's qualities or deeds, and should reflect the personality and history of its owner. When equipped with a Legacy Weapon

TABLE 2-8: LEGACY WEAPON NAMES

D100 Roll	First Element	Second Element
1-7	Gore	Blade
8-14	Death	Harvester
15-20	Skull	Biter
21-27	Blood	Slayer
28-34	Void	Bearer
35-40	Slaughter	Child
41-46	Foe	Hammer
47-51	God	Killer
52-58	Chaos	King
59-64	Warp	Reaper
65-70	Corpse	Drinker
71-76	Soul	Prince
77-84	Dark	Bringer
85-91	Doom	Granter
92-95	Daemon	Taker
96-00	Pain	Splitter

with a suitable name, a Heretic gains a +10 or better bonus to Interaction Tests, at the discretion of the GM. The weapon does not necessarily need to be in the Heretic's hands in order to gain this bonus, but it should at least be clearly visible.

Some Heretics may have their weapon's name revealed in a dream or spring unbidden to their lips. To represent such a revelation, a player may wish to randomly generate a name by rolling twice on **Table 2-8: Legacy Weapon Names** on this page, once for the name's first element and once for its second.

EXAMPLE

Finally, it's time for Matt to name his new Legacy Weapon. He decides to leave this in the hands of the gods and rolls randomly, resulting in the name Bloodhammer. Matt thinks this is a pretty apt name, since his bolter is now more capable than ever of blasting enemies into bloody chunks. In his hands, Bloodhammer is treated as Best Craftsmanship, and at his current Infamy does 1d10+7 Damage with a Pen of 6! As the campaign progresses and Matt's character grows in ability and power, so will Bloodhammer. Truly, this is a weapon worthy of a mighty warlord of Chaos.

DESTROYING A LEGACY WEAPON

It is possible that a Legacy Weapon may be destroyed during the course of play through various means. GMs should almost always allow damaged or destroyed Legacy Weapons to be re-forged from surviving components. This could be as simple as requiring a Crafting Skill Test, but could also form the basis for an entire adventure, as the Heretics seek the rare materials or the services of a legendary weaponsmith.

EXPANDED RITES AND RITUALS

"You may have summoned me, foolish mortal, but you do not control me."

—Dis'Thon'Duothwu, the Crimson Terror

The Rites and Rituals presented in the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook give a general overview of how both the GM and players can construct rituals to suit their own needs, the consequences of failure, and a number of example rituals used to summon the more iconic Chaos Daemons.

This section contains many more examples of Rites and Rituals that can be used for a myriad of dark deeds, such as how to ask daemonic entities for assistance, conjure an unending wave of blood, and even how to summon forth the Greater Daemons of the Warp.

The Rites and Rituals listed below follow the same format as the rules from the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook (see pages 228 and 229), but have more specific uses than simply summoning the Daemon of a specific Chaos God. A GM can insert these into an ongoing campaign as obstacles in the path of the Heretics obtaining the power they crave, or at the start of an adventure as part of their Compact. Players might wish to use one of them to enhance their own standing, punish their enemies, or to simply cause mayhem and destruction. In all cases, it is up to the GM to determine both how difficult a Rite or Ritual is, or even whether it would be possible in the first place (for example, attempting to summon a Bloodthirster whilst imprisoned on a corrupted Slaaneshi Daemon World might be impossible).

BLOODTIDE

Within the swirling bedlam of the Screaming Vortex there are many stories and rumours of riches to be had or perils to avoid that run the length and breadth of interpretation and meaning. One such whispered tale is that of a great Bloodthirster sometimes referred to as Ka'jagga'nath the Unbound. Little is known of this powerful Daemon lord other than his ability to summon forth a great corrupting wave known as the Bloodtide. What the Bloodtide truly consists of is as unfathomable as the goals of Ka'jagga'nath himself, and some say that it is blood given purpose or perhaps pure unbridled Warp energy. Others even claim it to be a machine or weapon of ancient and unholy design. The truth may never be known, but some dedicated servants of Khorne have been able to obtain a fraction of this power, conjuring some dark facsimile of the fabled Bloodtide to wash away those that stand in the path of Khorne's plans.

Requirements: Only a Heretic dedicated to Khorne and who possesses the Forbidden Lore (The Warp) Skill can perform this ritual. The Bloodtide should ideally be performed in an area of great violence, either near or in the midst of a warzone, or in an area where many have recently been slain. An altar of some kind is required, preferably one made of the bones of fresh victims—the more opposed to Khorne the victims are, the better! The Heretic also needs to have a firm direction or a destination for the Bloodtide in mind (for example, the Imperial

Cathedral to the west, or the Slaaneshi shrine in the Hab-Dome above). Once the correct conditions have been found and the direction or target chosen, the Heretic enacting the ritual must make a sacrifice to Khorne and pass a **Hard (–20) Forbidden Lore (The Warp) Test**, modified by **Table 6-7: Summoning Ritual Modifiers** (**BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 229). Having the Scholastic Lore (Occult) or Scholastic Lore (Legend) Skill adds +10 to this Test. This sacrifice is what begins the ritual, and the Heretic may sacrifice multiple victims to increase his chances of successfully summoning the Bloodtide; each sacrifice adds a +5 to the difficulty of the Test.

Effects: The altar is consumed and a boiling torrent of blood and unstable Warp energy blasts outwards in the chosen direction. All those that touch this surge become almost instantly corrupted, as a fraction of Ka'jagga'nath's power washes outwards, drowning everything in its path. This flood stretches out like a weapon with the Spray Quality for 100m x Willpower Bonus of the Heretic that enacted the ritual, plus an additional 100m for every Degree of Success after the first. Those dedicated to Khorne are immune to the effects of the Bloodtide, and Khornate Daemons ignore Daemonic Instability as long as they remain within the affected area. Unaligned characters as well as those dedicated to Tzeentch and Nurgle suffer 2d10 Energy damage that ignores Toughness and Armour unless they can pass a **Difficult (–10) Willpower Test**. They must pass this Test for every ten minutes they spend within the affected area, but even if successful, they gain 2d10 Corruption Points. Everyone else, such as Imperial lackeys and servants of Slaanesh, suffers the same effects, but the Willpower Test is **Arduous (–40)** and they must take the Test every 5 minutes. Against non-living objects such as buildings and vehicles the Bloodtide causes 2d10+8 Impact Damage that ignores Armour. The Bloodtide is treated as a psychic attack for the purposes of psychic protections and resistances.

Duration: 1d5xWP hours, plus an extra hour for every Degree of Success on the Forbidden Lore Test after the first; GMs are encouraged to modify this time as desired to indicate the Bloodtide's uncontrolled nature.

Cost: None beyond any material costs required to make the altar and preparation of the sacrifice.

The Price of Failure: If the rite fails, the conducting Heretic must Test for the Contempt of the Warp (see page 227 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). If the Heretic failed by three or more Degrees of Failure, the Bloodtide still occurs but, instead of a focused torrent, it floods outwards from the altar in all directions, covering everything. If this occurs, everyone, even those dedicated to Khorne, who it touches gains 2d10 Corruption Points.



RITE OF MANY EYES

Daemons do not see time and space in the same way mortals do. Their viewpoints are as varied as the forms they take, and there are Daemons that have walked the paths of the Warp for endless aeons. Ancient and terrible, these twisted beings have seen many things in their long existence, and are quite willing to give up their secrets for the right price! The Rite of Many Eyes—itsself a ritual with many different names—allows those seeking knowledge to reach out to an ancient Daemon without summoning it directly in the hope that it might share what it knows.

Requirements: The Rite of Many Eyes is similar to other rituals where the goal is to summon a Daemon; the main difference, however, is that the Daemon is not being drawn out of the Warp. Instead the rite attempts to give the Daemon sufficient power to partially bleed through the veil, enough that it might communicate directly with the Heretics. The Heretics may enact this rite if they wish to learn something that cannot be learnt via normal means (i.e. investigations, interrogations, and research would be of no use). They could ask about any immediate dangers they might soon face, the location of a rare artefact that could bring them greater power, or for where a hidden enemy base resides—the list is endless. Before the Heretics can attempt this rite they first must have knowledge of any daemonic entities that they could potentially call upon. This requires considerable research, and should the players have access to it they may want to reference the Investigation rules from page 69 of **THE TOME OF FATE**.

If the Heretics do not wish to go down this route, then their research can be abstracted. First the GM ascertains how long the research takes depending on their current location, and then one of the Heretics makes a **Hard (–20) Scholastic Lore (Occult) Test**. Other Heretics may help with the research using the standard rules for assisting with Tests. If the Test is unsuccessful, then the Heretics have failed to learn what they need in order to make contact with the Daemon, and can either give up or find a new place to continue their research. If successful, they may move onto the next step and must find a secluded area with a high concentration of Warp activity for the rite, such as an area where many voidships enter and exit the Warp, or the outer edges of a relatively stable Warp storm. Once the location has been chosen, and the Heretics have decided on the question they wish to ask, they then make a single **Hard (–20) Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) (Int) Test**, modified by **Table 6-7: Summoning Ritual Modifiers** (**BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 229). The expansiveness or obscurity of the question the Heretics wish to ask should also affect the difficulty of this Test, and the GM should be careful not to allow the players too much leeway with what information they seek (asking for the location of the Black Library, or where every Daemon Weapon in the galaxy is located might be a bit much!).

Effects: Reaching forth from the shadowy mists of the Warp, a ghostly apparition—a Daemon edging its way into reality—appears before the Heretics. The GM, speaking for the Daemon, should challenge the Heretics as to why they have called it, and the Heretics should have a good answer. They may ask their question of the Daemon, and should explain what they are willing to do for the Daemon in return.

The Heretics may attempt an **Arduous (–40) Daemonic Mastery Test** in the hope of making the Daemon more receptive to their questions, but if this fails then the Daemon simply asks for more in return. The GM should give the Heretics the answers they seek, but can be as vague or cryptic as he likes, or perhaps only offer part of the requested information, promising more once the Heretics have done whatever the Daemon has asked in return.

Duration: The research portion of this Rite can potentially take weeks or longer, but the actual Rite itself is a speedy affair of roughly an hour.

Cost: There is no cost associated with enacting the Rite of Many Eyes, but the real cost is what the Heretics are willing to promise the Daemon in return for the information. Once the Heretics have managed to complete what was asked of them, they must re-enact the rite, taking a further Forbidden Lore Test as described above in order to contact the Daemon again and tell him of their success (or failure). No additional research is needed for this second rite.

The Price of Failure: Failing either the initial Scholastic Lore Test or the later Forbidden Lore Test means the Heretics either cannot find the information they need, or found the wrong information. If they wish to attempt this rite again they must start from scratch. If the Heretics fail to do what the Daemon asked of them, then the consequences are far greater, and if this occurs the Heretics have two choices. They can confront the Daemon and explain their failure, resulting in a Test for the Contempt of the Warp (see page 227 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). The GM should modify this roll by how badly the Heretics failed in their assigned task (for example, failing to obtain an item the Daemon wanted might incur a –10 penalty, whereas losing that same item to the hands of the Daemon's sworn rivals might incur a –30 penalty). Their other option is to not contact the Daemon at all, in which case they run the risk of gaining the Daemon's enmity. The GM can then perhaps use the Daemon's anger into the ongoing campaign via random attacks, runs of bad luck, or any other Warp-based horrors that might seem particularly fiendish. In either case, the Daemon never helps the Heretics again, and woe unto them should he ever escape the Immaterium.

RITE OF PUNISHMENT

Those who fight in Khorne's name are forbidden the use of psychic abilities, sorcery, and other Warp-based powers, as to the Blood God these represent feeble cowardice and the unwillingness to show one's true ability in combat. Some dedicated warriors even use Khorne's power to dominate and destroy those that use such craven methods through a ritual known as the Rite of Punishment.

Requirements: Unlike many other types of rituals, the Rite of Punishment relies on the absence rather than the presence of the Warp, and so it must be enacted within an area where the Warp is at a minimum, or an area where the power of Khorne dominates. The Heretics must carefully prepare the area they wish to protect, usually by lining the area with fresh blood, or spacing skulls and other bones every eight metres, and so on. Properly preparing the area takes 1 hour. This can be as small as a single room or corridor, or as large as a warehouse or hanger-bay, but should be generally self-contained with clearly defined entrances and exits. Heretics with the Psyker Trait can involve

themselves in the preparation for this ritual, but suffer the same effects should they stay within this space. Once the area has been chosen and it is free from anything that might disrupt the rite (usually active psychic powers), whichever Heretic is conducting the Rite must take either a **Hard (–20) Forbidden Lore (Daemonology)** or **Scholastic Lore (Occult) Test**. This can be modified by **Table 6-7: Summoning Ritual Modifiers** (see the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 229).

Effects: The prepared area is filled with the hatred Khorne holds for those that hide behind Warp tricks and sorcerous ceremony. Any character with the Psyker Trait within the area suffers 1 Level of Fatigue for every 2 Rounds he spends inside, halves his Psy-Rating for the purposes of Focus Power Tests, and cannot Push his powers. If a character causes a roll on the Perils of the Warp chart (see page 211, **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook), all those within the area that are dedicated to Khorne ignore the effects.

Duration: One hour, plus one hour for every Degree of Success on the Test after the first. At the start of their Round, those that the rite affects can make an **Opposed Very Hard (–30) Willpower Test** against the Heretic that enacted the rite to break the warding. This Test counts as a Full Action with the Concentration subtype. If successful, the psyker breaks through the warding and ignores its effects from that point forward, though any Fatigue the character has accrued up until this point due to the Rite of Punishment remains.

Cost: Whilst the power of Khorne is given to any who seek slaughter in his name, those that seek his protection from sorcerous cowards are unworthy in his eyes to reap the glory of any victories they might gain. Any Corruption or Infamy the Heretics would have gained from encounters or events within the warded area is halved.

The Price of Failure: If the Test is failed by three or more Degrees of Failure, the Heretics receive Khorne's disdain rather than his protection. The strength is sapped from bodies as the Lord of Slaughter punishes those too weak to face his enemies themselves. Each Heretic involved in the rite of Punishment halves their Strength Characteristic and loses the benefits of the Unnatural Strength Trait for 8 hours. After 8 hours their strength returns, but they must wait at least 8 days before they can attempt to unleash the Blood God's loathing of psykers upon their enemies again.

RITE OF TERROR UNTOLD

Attempting to bring a Greater Daemon into the world is usually a task for the foolish or insane; most small cults and groups of Chaos worshipers that try often fail, and always with tremendously grizzly results. Harnessing the power of a Greater Daemon requires great skill, patience, and an unrivalled knowledge of the dark arts. The rewards for a successful summoning are limitless, as the Heretics will have at their disposal an entity of unbridled destruction and untold terror. The punishments for failure, however, are often too horrible to even contemplate.

Requirements: Before a Greater Daemon can be summoned, the Heretics need to obtain a Host, someone to act as the bridge between the Warp and the material plane. The Host must be a living being—not necessarily human, but at least sentient—and the Host can either be willing or unwilling. The actual rite follows the same basic premise as any of the standard Daemon



summoning rituals from the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, with the type of Greater Daemon the Heretics are attempting to summon determining the base format (i.e. if attempting to summon a Bloodthirster, the ritual for summoning a Bloodletter works as a starting point). Where the Rite of Terror Untold differs is the degree of requirements. If 8 warriors must die in ritual combat in order to summon a Bloodletter, then 800 warriors must die before a Bloodthirster even contemplates appearing before the Heretics. If it required 6 days of endless torture on 6 unfortunate captives to bring a Daemonette into the world, then it might take 6 weeks of torture to entice a Keeper of Secrets through the veil. Generally speaking though, summoning a Greater Daemon is a massive undertaking that can take days if not weeks to complete, and the Heretics should be aware that their combined efforts are required to ensure it occurs successfully. Additionally, the Heretics must have an exceptionally good reason (and GM concurrence) for summoning a Greater Daemon, as these creatures are destructive and violent and do not like to be called upon for minor tasks. The final requirements for such a difficult task are up to the GM, and the ritual requires an **Arduous (–40) Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) Test**, modified by **Table 6-7: Summoning Ritual Modifiers** (**BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 229). If the Host was willing, treat the Test as **Very Hard (–30)** instead. If the Greater Daemon is successfully summoned, and if the Heretics are feeling very worthy (or suicidal), then they may attempt to control the Greater Daemon via a **Hellish (–60) Daemonic Mastery Test**. If unsuccessful, the Greater Daemon attacks the Heretics for their arrogance!

Effects: Once summoned, the emerging Greater Daemon consumes the Host, killing him instantly, and the Greater Daemon appears where the Host once stood. All Heretics involved in the successful summoning of a Greater Daemon gain 2d10 Corruption and 2d10 Infamy.

Duration: As the Heretics should have a specific purpose in mind for their summoned creature, the GM is free to allow the Greater Daemon to remain corporeal for as long as it needs to complete that task (or until it grows tired of the Heretics, or deems their request unworthy of its attention). If a specific amount of time is required, then a Greater Daemon remains corporeal for 1d10+10 hours, plus two additional hours for every Degree of Success after the first on the Test to complete the rite.

Cost: Bringing a Greater Daemon out from the Warp is a destructive event that shatters reality. The rite causes two rolls on the Perils of the Warp table (see page 211 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook), applying both results. Additionally, every character within 100m of the Greater Daemon's violent emergence point (or larger, if the GM considers it appropriate) must take four **Hard (-20)** Tests. The first, a Toughness Test, to avoid being blinded for 1d10 minutes from the creature's unnatural appearance. The second, an Agility Test, to avoid being knocked off their feet from the psychic shockwave and taking an immediate 1d10 Impact damage that ignores Toughness and Armour. The third, a Willpower Test, to avoid taking 1d10 permanent Willpower Damage from the Daemon's unholy presence. And the fourth, a Strength Test, to avoid taking 1d10 levels of Fatigue and becoming Stunned for 1d10 rounds as the Daemon's breathing tortures the surrounding reality itself.

The Price of Failure: Failing to summon a Greater Daemon is decidedly terminal. If the Rite of Terror Untold is unsuccessful, then the Heretic that conducted the rite must Test for the Contempt of the Warp (see page 227 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook), modified by +20 for every Degree of Failure after the first. Every other Heretic involved in the Rite must also Test for Contempt of the Warp with a +10 modifier. Additionally, failing in such an endeavour will not go unnoticed, and everyone involved in the failed summoning loses 2d10 Infamy. Finally, if the GM is in a cruel mood, a failed rite can still result in the Greater Daemon being summoned (and the Host's death), but the Greater Daemon simply turns on the Heretics immediately and without warning; treat this as a Surprise Attack.



RITUAL OF SLAUGHTER

It is quite common for those that fight in the name of Khorne to call upon the God of Blood for his protection, guidance, or in most cases more power! Most of this pleading goes unanswered, as the majority of those who march to war under the blood-soaked banners of Khorne are but chattel to be butchered in an endless cycle of death and destruction. There are some more formal rituals, though, that can be used to draw power from the Warp and bestow the blessing—such as it is—of Khorne or perhaps one of his Greater Daemons. Asking such a malevolent and wild entity for his support is a dangerous game, however, and Khorne's favour can be ripped away at a whim and for almost no reason other than his own murderous amusement.

Requirements: The Ritual of Slaughter is used to gain favour or power for a specific combat-related task, and only those dedicated to Khorne or those who are unaligned can benefit from its effects. Before the Heretics can enact this ritual, they must have a specific need in mind. They might beseech Khorne so that their weapons grow sharper (gaining the Razor Sharp Quality) or their reflexes quicker (a bonus to Initiative) in their next battle. They could ask for Khorne's protection (a re-roll on Evasion Tests), or for Khorne's strength in the face of the insidious nature of the Corpse-God's followers (the ability to ignore Sanctified Weapons, or resistance to psychic powers those loyal to the Imperium cast on them). The request cannot be too broad (the players cannot ask for an immunity to Damage, for instance, or to always pass their Evasion Tests), and the GM should ensure that the favour granted by Khorne is useful, fits with the themes of Khorne (battle, blood, slaughter, murder, martial prowess, etc.), and is relatively small scale with a specific game effect. The Heretics should also work out what they can offer in return—a promise to slay a certain amount of their enemies, or to sunder an Imperial shrine, and similar such guarantees—and the GM should ensure that the Heretics are given a chance to fulfil this promise, or add the condition that the effects of the ritual only take effect once they have done what they promised. The ritual itself needs to be completed in a secluded area, perhaps at a shrine dedicated to Khorne, and with a sacrifice fitting the God of Murder such as a huge mound of fresh skulls or brass icons to the god drenched in blood. A single **Hard (-20) Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) (Int) Test** is then required, modified by **Table 6-7: Summoning Ritual Modifiers** (**BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 229).

Effects: The Heretics gain the benefits they asked for and that the GM agreed to.

Duration: As long as is necessary for the Heretics to complete the task they promised to Khorne, or as otherwise agreed to in the rite.

Cost: Obtaining the favour of the Blood God automatically gives each Heretic involved 1d5 Corruption Points. Beyond that there is no cost.

The Price of Failure: There is no penalty for failing the Forbidden Lore Test. However, should the Heretics be unable to deliver on the promise or pledge they made, they each lose 1d10 Infamy, and must each Test for the Contempt of the Warp (see page 227 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). Additionally, the Heretics are forbidden from attempting the ritual again until they have regained their lost Infamy, or performed some great and terrible deed in the name of Khorne.



MASTERS
OF
DESTRUCTION



ADVANCED
HORDE RULES

•
MASS COMBATS
AND BATTLES

•
WORLDS OF THE
BLOOD GOD

•
DAEMONS OF
KHORNE



CHAPTER III: MASTERS OF DESTRUCTION

*"Teach a man to fight, and he'll owe you a debt.
Kill a man, and that's one less potential enemy to worry about."*

—Gholthan Qell, Captain of the *Crimson Spectre*

Across the ever-shifting length and breadth of the Screaming Vortex and beyond, hymns to the God of Blood are sung in the clashing of steel, the roaring of cannons, and the screams of the dying. From Berin and Asphodel to the War Moons of Talax, the Vortex calls out for blood, and the spilling of blood glorifies Khorne, whether intended or not. Even those who would defy Khorne cannot help but, in fact, serve him. In the 41st Millennium, one must either kill or be killed, and either outcome is equally pleasing to Khorne. The Lord of Skulls cares not from where the blood flows, as all blood flows in his name.

Violence is a near-constant for all Disciples of Chaos, whether struggling against rivals or making war against the hated Imperium. This is never more true, however, than for the devotees of the Blood God Khorne. For Khorne's worshipers, bloodshed is not a means to an end, but a means in itself. A warrior can offer no higher praise to Khorne than to cut a bloody swath across the field of battle, offering up the skulls of worthy adversaries and cowards alike.

This chapter introduces expanded rules for Hordes and conducting massed battles, allowing Heretics to spill oceans of blood. Rules and advice for using Hordes against groups of humans and Chaos Space Marines ensure that all Heretics have the chance to spill blood while keeping their own heads (for a time, at least), while new Horde Traits and options allow GMs to tailor combats to the right challenge level for their players.

It also provides information on some of the most notably violent worlds of the Screaming Vortex. Whether the inhabitants live for war, such as the brutal xenos on Berin and Asphodel, or must fight constantly just to survive, as the inhabitants of flooded Furia, the rife carnage on these worlds is a welcome sight for the blood-soaked warriors of Khorne. Game rules are included for a sampling of the deadly creatures and characters that Heretics might encounter on their travels to these perilous locations. Also included are terrifying new Daemon Engines for GMs to unleash, unholy beasts of metal capable of astonishing destruction. New Daemons of Khorne make for potential allies to the Heretics, at least until they run out of victims, but only the most confident or insane would dare beseech the aid of the dreaded Bloodthirsters. Whether the Heretics successfully brave these new threats, enlist the aid of the Daemons and warriors, or die grisly deaths on blood-drenched battlefields, Khorne cares not. In the end, all is blood for the Blood God.

ADVANCED HORDE RULES

*"You take the five on the left, I'll take the five
hundred on the right. Rrraaaaaaaargh!"*

—Krelthar the Bloodied, Exalted of Khorne

The **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook includes rules for pitting Heretics against Hordes. These rules fulfil two primary purposes: they allow the GM to easily conduct combats involving large groups of enemies or allies, and they allow the GM to challenge Chaos Space Marines with enemies that would otherwise pose little threat, even in numbers. The core Horde rules cover the basics of how Hordes behave, how they attack, and how they suffer damage. The frenzied servants of the Blood God are particularly likely to encounter Hordes, the better to gather skulls for the Skull Throne. In addition, there are few who can hope to stand against a champion of Khorne in single combat, thus forcing their enemies to assault in great waves, which is welcome for any true warrior of the Lord of Battle. The additional rules for Hordes in this chapter enable the GM to better adapt combats for groups including both human and Chaos Space Marine Disciples of Chaos, and to add more variety and excitement to combats involving Hordes. Even the rules for Hordes can be stretched to the limit in truly massive engagements. Rules and advice for conducting such massed battles are included later in this chapter, which, in conjunction with these expanded rules for Hordes, should equip GMs with the tools to manage battles of almost any scope.

HORDES AND HUMAN HERETICS

When a group of Heretics includes both humans and Chaos Space Marines, combat can potentially pose something of a problem for a GM. After all, an enemy or weapon that can injure a Chaos Space Marine is likely to be overkill against all but the toughest, most heavily armoured humans, and large Hordes are often capable of inflicting enough Damage to take a human Disciple of Chaos out of the fight with a single successful attack. While Hordes often target the biggest threat first, i.e. Chaos Space Marines, many players might not think that being ignored in combat is much preferable to being bruised and bloodied. This is not to say that the basic Horde rules and recommendations in the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook are not sufficient for mixed groups, but some may find that the following rules help ensure satisfying combat for all players.

The first, and perhaps simplest, possibility is to simply not have a Horde engage human Heretics, but instead have one or more members of the Horde "break off" and fight the humans as individual NPCs. Doing this does not require any sort of Action on the part of the Horde, and can even happen in response to a Player Character's attack. Depending on the quality and quantity of foe making up the Horde, a handful of enemies leaving the



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horde might reduce the Horde's magnitude by 1 or more. This method allows for the action to "zoom in" on the human PCs as they engage their foes in single combat, while the Chaos Space Marines attack the mass of enemies indiscriminately.

However, GMs and players who wish to allow human Heretics to attack and be attacked by Hordes can use the following optional rules. These can be used in conjunction with those found on page 274 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, choosing the components they prefer from each for a given situation. These rules are only used when the Horde attacks or is attacked by the human Heretics; they do not replace the basic Horde rules for purposes of fighting Chaos Space Marines, even though a Horde may be fighting both types of Heretics in a single combat.

A human attacking a Horde in melee receives a maximum of +10 to hit a Horde based on its size, representing the fact that a Human is unable to throw themselves fully into the thick of things as a Chaos Space Marine does. By the same token, the amount by which a Horde's Magnitude is reduced in a melee attack from a human is halved, rounding up. Humans gain several benefits when fighting Hordes, however. Humans can Dodge and Parry attacks from a Horde, although with a penalty equal to the Horde's Size modifier due to the number of adversaries against which the Heretic must defend themselves. When rolling Damage against humans for a melee attack, a Horde rolls an additional number of d10s equal to its Magnitude divided by ten, to a maximum of an extra 2d10. However, instead of just adding the result of these dice to the Damage total, as against a Chaos Space Marine, the GM should discard the lowest 1 or 2 dice (1 if one extra dice was added, 2 if two extra dice were added).

While a Horde in melee combat attacks all adjacent enemies, it can only make a number of ranged attacks up to the first digit of its Magnitude. This is because Hordes tend to focus their ranged fire against the most obviously dangerous targets. While the majority of the Horde combines their fire against the Chaos Space Marines, a few members of the Horde might shoot at any Humans present. This can be a carefully selected tactic, but it could just as easily be that a large Horde expends so much ammunition that a few stray shots are bound to hit the human Heretics. To represent this, GMs can allow a Horde with a Magnitude of at least five times the number of Heretics in the warband a free additional ranged attack against each human present. These attacks are in addition to the Horde's normal number of attacks, which are allocated against the Chaos Space Marines as usual. These extra attacks receive a +5 bonus to Ballistic Skill for every 10 points of Magnitude the Horde possesses, but do not receive a Damage bonus. Any extra hits from these attacks cannot be allocated against additional targets.

Ranged attacks from humans decrease a Horde's Magnitude by the full amount. As the majority of a Horde is likely to be concerned with any Chaos Space Marines present, humans may Dodge a Horde's ranged attacks, but with a penalty equal to the Horde's Size modifier. A Horde that suffers significant Damage from a human might respond in kind, however. To represent this, a GM can have a Horde allocate its "normal" attacks against humans, so human Disciples of Chaos would do well to find cover before engaging a Horde at range. A Horde that allocates one or more of its normal allotment of attacks against a human Heretic does not receive a free additional attack against that Heretic.

ADDITIONAL HORDE RULES

GMs who wish to add additional variety and challenge to combats involving Hordes can do so using the following optional rules. A GM might wish to adopt all of the following rules, or he might select certain rules that he feels are beneficial for his campaign.

DEFENDING AGAINST HORDES

Some enemies, when grouped in a Horde, are capable of inflicting tremendous Damage in a single attack, even to Chaos Space Marines. GMs can allow players to Evade attacks from Hordes when taking the Defensive Stance and Guarded Attack Actions, to represent the Heretics enacting desperate fighting withdrawals or preparing for reinforcements. When using this optional rule, however, Dodge and Parry Tests against a Horde suffer a penalty equal to the Horde's Size modifier.

HORDES AND FEAR TESTS

While Hordes have a chance to break from combat after suffering casualties, it is important for many **BLACK CRUSADE** games that Fear affects Hordes. After all, it is quite likely that one or more of the Heretics cause Fear, and the sorts of enemies that commonly group together to form Hordes are likely susceptible to the horrors of mutation and the chosen of Chaos.

Hordes make Fear Tests just as individual characters do, but with a bonus equal to half of the Horde's Magnitude. There is strength in numbers, but such courage is only partially helpful when confronted with the worst of the galaxy's horrors (such as what the Heretics might represent!). Hordes do not usually benefit from the advantages that Heretics receive on Fear Tests, but can at the GM's discretion.

Most Hordes encountered in the Screaming Vortex, for instance, have witnessed enough Warp-spawned horror that they are less likely to snap than the spineless fools encountered on an Imperial world. A Horde that fails a Fear Test breaks from combat and flees, just as if it had failed a Willpower Test from suffering casualties.

If the GM desires an additional level of unpredictability in combat, he can roll on **Table 8-4: Shock** on page 277 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook with a +10 for each Degree of Failure on the Fear Test, just as an individual character would. This is not to say that all of the creatures in the Horde have the same response, but the resulting game effect is the same. For instance, it would be highly unlikely for each member of a Horde to begin vomiting uncontrollably (although when facing certain Daemons and champions of Nurgle, it is a distinct possibility), so the GM can describe a result of 121-130 as some Horde members vomiting, others fainting or staring dumbstruck, while still others claw at their own eyeballs, with the end result that the Horde is unable to act for 1d5 Rounds.

COMBAT ACTIONS

The rules for Hordes in the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook assume that, for the most part, Hordes stick to Standard Attacks for their Combat Actions, or semi-auto or Full Auto Burst Actions if equipped for it. This is certainly the case for many Hordes, but, whether because of training and skill or simply due to the creatures' nature, some make better use of the full range of Combat Actions. Due to the nature of Hordes, many Combat Actions require some modification or clarification to be used with Hordes. As such, GMs can use the following rules for Combat Actions taken by Hordes to challenge their players in combat and to keep fights from growing stale.



Grapple

Some Hordes seek to overwhelm opponents through sheer weight of numbers, particularly true for those lacking in actual weapons such as frenzied mobs, plague zombies, or animalistic creatures. An unprepared Heretic might find himself swallowed up (sometimes literally) in the press of bodies. This can be represented with the Grapple Action. Unlike a Grapple between individual characters (at least, most characters), a Horde can bring dozens of hands, mouths, or tentacles to bear. As soon as a Heretic pulls himself free, another pair of hands immediately drags him down. This makes Grappling surprisingly effective for Hordes.

A Horde can initiate a Grapple with a Standard Attack or Charge with a –20 for being unarmed, as normal. As with a Horde's other attacks, the defender cannot evade the Grapple. The following apply to a Grapple involving a Horde:

- Attacks against a Grappling Horde do not gain the standard +20 bonus as the Horde's size modifier makes its lack of mobility redundant.
- Other characters cannot direct attacks against the character being Grappled, as the sheer members of the Horde tend to get in the way.
- A Horde benefits from its Size on Opposed Tests performed within the Grapple, as per page 237 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook.
- A Horde can continue to make melee attacks and ranged attacks against other characters, as only a handful of Horde members are actively struggling with the Grappled character at any time.
- When using the Damage Opponent option, unless a Horde possesses a Trait such as Improved Natural Weapons, the additional Damage dice for its Magnitude count as possessing the Primitive (5) Quality.
- It is not possible for a character to initiate a Grapple against a Horde, or take control of a Grapple with a Horde.

Knock Down

For every ten points of Magnitude it possesses, a Horde gains +10 to the Opposed Strength Test to Knock Down an opponent. If it wins by two or more Degrees of Success, the Horde adds up to 2d10 additional Damage based on its Magnitude as it would with a Standard Attack, but with the Primitive (5) Quality. A Horde cannot be knocked prone, no matter the number of Degrees of Success with which its opponent wins the Opposed Test.

Overwatch

A Horde can use the Overwatch Action as normal. However, doing so requires a degree of cooperation that can be difficult for many Hordes to manage. As such, the Horde must pass a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** in order to take the Overwatch Action. If a character is leading the Horde, he may instead as a Free Action substitute this for a Command Test.

Stun

When a Horde succeeds on the Weapon Skill Test to Stun an opponent, it adds the first digit of its Magnitude as well as its Strength Bonus to the 1d10 roll that is compared against the target's Toughness Bonus and AP.

Suppressing Fire

Some particularly disciplined Hordes can employ Suppressing Fire in order to gain an advantage over their enemies. This follows the normal rules for Suppressing Fire, except that the Pinning Test is made at an additional –10 penalty for every full 10 points of the Horde's Magnitude. The number of shots a Horde unleashes with automatic weapons can cause even the most hardened Heretic to rethink attacking head-on! Because the odds of a Horde hitting with any significant number of shots are infinitesimally small, any hits scored with Suppressing Fire do not roll additional dice for Damage based on the Horde's Magnitude.

HORDE TRAITS

As described on page 349 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, Horde Traits are Traits that only have an effect when a creature is used as a Horde. Some creatures may include a Horde Trait in their entry, but the GM can also add Horde Traits when he feels they are appropriate. The following Traits can be added to a Horde to make it more challenging, or just to better represent how the individual creatures function together.

Blood-Soaked Tide (Horde)

Whether due to fanatical devotion to the Dark Gods or massive doses of combat drugs, this Horde teeters on the brink of madness. These bloodthirsty creatures thrive on the slaughter of battle, and are as unpredictable as they are ferocious. When the Horde fails a Willpower Test to avoid being broken, or would have broken automatically (see **Breaking a Horde** on page 350 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook), it does not brake, but instead gains the Fearless and Frenzy Talents.

Disciplined (Horde)

The Horde is comprised of hardened and well-trained individuals willing to stand their ground even in the face of overwhelming resistance and despite sustaining terrible casualties. A Horde with this Trait does not suffer the usual -10 penalty to Willpower Tests to resist breaking if it is below one half of its starting Magnitude. In addition, the Horde does not automatically break once below one quarter of its initial Magnitude.

Exemplary Execution (Horde)

Some Hordes have learned to fear their leaders more than their enemies. If a Horde with this Trait is accompanied by a leader to provide suitable “inspiration,” such as an Imperial Commissar or ruthless Chaos magus, once per Round it may reduce its Magnitude by 1 in order to re-roll a failed Willpower Test.

Fanatical Devotion (Horde)

For many of the followers of Chaos, particularly the adherents of Khorne, devotion can only be measured in blood and skulls, their own or those of their enemies. The more casualties a Horde with this Trait suffers, the more enraged and frenzied it becomes, fighting more savagely and recklessly to inflict as much carnage as possible before being defeated. The Horde gains the Fearless Talent, if it does not already have it. In addition, for every 10 Magnitude the Horde loses, it gains an extra Melee Attack and deals an additional +2 to Damage with its Melee Attacks, to a maximum of 3 extra attacks and +6 Damage. These attacks are in addition to any for multiple weapons or limbs, and can benefit from Swift Attack or Lightning Attack.

Fighting Withdrawal (Horde)

When broken, the Horde does not simply flee, but makes a well-ordered, fighting withdrawal. When the Horde breaks, it does not flee at its Run movement rate, but at any movement rate the GM determines suits the battle. The horde may continue to make Ranged Attacks as it falls back.

Fire Drill (Horde)

Made up of well-trained troops, the Horde has been drilled to fire in a deadly rhythm that soaks the enemy in shots. The Horde may always make one additional Ranged Attack above the number it would normally be permitted.

Overwhelming (Horde)

The creatures in this Horde swarm over enemies, ripping them apart with thousands of bites, stabs, or worse. The Horde deals an additional 1d10 for Damage with its Melee Attack so long as its Magnitude is 20 or greater.

Regeneration (Horde)

This Horde can repair itself, either through arcane powers or unknown science. Each Round, at the start of its turn, the Horde makes a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test**. If successful, the Horde regains an amount of Magnitude equal to its Regeneration value plus its current Magnitude divided by 10. A Horde's Magnitude cannot be raised beyond its starting value as a result of this Trait.

Relentless (Horde)

Some mindless foes, such as plague zombies or psychically enslaved thralls, advance at the same ponderous pace regardless of the damage heaped upon them, oblivious to death and dismemberment. A Horde with the Relentless (Horde) Trait gains the Fearless Talent. Whether due to decaying flesh or burdensome armour, the Horde moves at an ungainly plod and can never Run or Charge. For the same reason, however, the creatures that make up the Horde are highly resistant to any attacks that fail to completely destroy them, or sever those limbs necessary for combat. The Horde only ever has its Magnitude reduced by 1 when hit by attacks that do not possess the Blast, Power Field, Scatter, Spray, or Tearing Quality.

Spawn (Horde)

The Screaming Vortex contains horrors and wonders beyond the ken of mortals. In particular, the Daemons that cavort on the worlds of the Lower and Inner Vortex defy reason, but so too do many mutants and alien interlopers. Amongst the most intractable of foes that the Heretics could face are those that change and warp as they fight and suffer damage, increasing either in number or in fighting prowess even as they are cut down. Perhaps the best-known example of such creatures to the learned denizens of the Vortex are the Pink Horrors of Tzeentch, which upon suffering a serious blow are not banished, but split into two Blue Horrors. During any Turn in which this Horde's Magnitude is reduced by 1 or more, it may attempt a single **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** as a Free Action (or Reaction, at the GM's discretion). If it succeeds, the Horde instead increases its Magnitude by 1. If the enemy's attacks reduced the Horde's Magnitude by 5 or more, it instead gains 1d5 Magnitude on a successful Test, and gains 1d10 Magnitude if it was reduced by 10 or more.

MASS COMBATS AND BATTLES

Many Heretics eventually find themselves involved in truly massive battles. After all, how can one hope to successfully lead a Black Crusade with no experience in the crucible of war? **BLACK CRUSADE**'s combat rules are designed to strike a balance between detail and speed of play for combats involving a handful of characters. In a battle involving dozens of combatants, however, making Attack and Damage rolls for each NPC would take great amounts of time, with little benefit to the game. Heretics are just the sorts of important individuals who can play a key role in such battles, with the tide of war pivoting on their actions as lesser men and beasts are cut down around them in droves. This section offers rules and advice for running large combats, from strategic skirmishes up to planetary invasions, as well as rules for resolving the outcome of mass combats and incorporating such battles into Compacts.

RUNNING LARGE COMBATS

Running a large-scale combat might seem daunting at first, but such encounters can in fact be handled with little more difficulty than any other important fight. The critical factor for the GM to keep in mind is that the focus should be on the Heretics, and combat between NPCs should not divert attention from the stars of the story. The exact level of detail with which the rest of the combat is handled should be tailored to each group. Some players have their sense of triumph (or tragedy) enhanced by the knowledge that the outcome of the battle is determined through the choices, abilities, and luck of their allies, and enemies, as well as themselves, while others are happy if the rest of the battle is merely a backdrop for their own actions. Based on the preferences of the players and GM, mass combats can be handled either by the narrative or formation methods. Naturally, the GM is encouraged to adapt these rules to the needs of his game and players. Often, a GM might find it useful to utilise a combination of methods to handle large battles or militant operations.

THE NARRATIVE METHOD

In the simplest approach, the events in which the Heretics are not directly involved can be handled narratively. When using this method to decide the result of a battle, the GM weighs the needs of the plot, the preparations the Heretics have made, and their success in the battle's Pivotal Events. Pivotal Events are explained in more detail later in this chapter on page 73, but can be thought of as those moments that can determine the outcome of a battle, whether directly or through a ripple of consequences. Pivotal Events should be a major factor, as regardless of the mighty armies and battle tanks involved, **BLACK CRUSADE** is about the Heretics. When using this method, the GM should give the players an idea of the battle's progress through his narration of the action around them as well as any particularly important events, thus giving them an opportunity to adjust their tactics and objectives accordingly. Combats or other actions that directly involve the Heretics should be handled as normal.

THE FORMATION METHOD

For relatively small skirmishes featuring dozens of combatants, the rules for Horde versus Horde combat on page 350 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook should suffice to resolve things with the desired level of detail in a timely fashion. When a battle involves a great number of combatants and little or no direct involvement from the players, it might be a good opportunity to utilise Formations.

FORMATIONS

When using the formation method, enemy and allied forces are grouped into Formations, allowing the GM to determine the fates of dozens or hundreds with a few dice rolls rather than dealing with the actions of individual NPCs or Hordes. In relatively small battles, a Formation could consist of a single Horde or a small group of Elite NPCs. In larger battles, a Formation might include several Hordes and their leaders. In truly apocalyptic engagements, a Formation could consist of thousands of infantry, squadrons of battle tanks and support vehicles, and scores of mighty warriors and Daemons.

CREATING FORMATIONS

Each Formation is assigned a Combat Skill, or CS, value, which in many ways is treated as a Characteristic like Weapon Skill or Infamy. Combat Skill represents the ability of the combatants, the charisma of their leaders, the power of their weapons, and even the armour and speed of support vehicles. Obviously, with this many factors involved, a high degree of abstraction is necessary. However, this system should allow GMs to handle anything from a small force of Chaos reavers ambushing an Imperial Guard patrol to a boarding action of Chaos Space Marines against an Emperor-class battleship.

As the soldiers and weapons to be found in the Screaming Vortex, the Imperium, and beyond are nearly limitless, the GM must use his discretion in determining a Formation's Combat Skill. However, the following guidelines should make it easy to determine the CS of all but the strangest forces. To determine the CS for a Formation, consult **Table 3-1: Combat Skill** on page 72. The base CS is determined from the class of the forces involved; the number of warriors in the Formation is accounted for when resolving the combat. After assigning a troop class to the Formation, the GM modifies the CS based on a number of factors such as the armoured support available to the combatants, special gear, and unusual abilities. Several of the entries on **Table 3-1: Combat Skill** list the CS adjustment as a range, to allow for both the quality and quantity of the item or ability in question. For instance, a Formation of Chaos Space Marines that includes a squad of Raptors might benefit from a +5 for specialist equipment, representing the handful of jump packs they possess. A force of Imperial Guard drop troops equipped entirely with grav chutes, however, might benefit from a +10 or even a +15.

TABLE 3-1: COMBAT SKILL

Troop Class	Base CS
Abysmal (Slaves, Mind-controlled Dregs, Gretchin)	15
Conscripted (Cult Zealots, Cadian Whiteshields)	20
Rank and File (Mutant Devotees, Imperial Guardsmen)	30
Veteran (Imperial Guard Storm Troopers, Heretek Tech-guard)	40
Elite (Chaos Space Marines, Bloodletters, Dark Eldar Incubi)	50
Peerless (Grey Knight Paladins, the Chosen of Abaddon, a Greater Daemon)	55
Godlike (Warlord Titan, Baneblade Squadrons, a Daemon Primarch)	60, Unnatural Combat Skill (+4)
Wargear, Abilities, & Support	CS Adjustment
Support Vehicles (Rhino APCs, Ork Buggies, Chaos Dreadclaws, Imperial Valkyries)	+10
Mainline Vehicles (Leman Russ battle tanks, Land Raiders, Defilers)	+15
Air Support (Marauder Bombers, Orbital Strikes, Thunderhawk Gunships)	+15 to +20
Esoteric (Primaris Psykers, Cursed Oracles, Daemons)	+5 to +15
Specialist Equipment (Jump Packs, Grav Chutes, Suspensors)	+5 to +10
Superior Arms and Armour (Terminator armour, heretek-forged weaponry, a high number of lascannons or plasma guns)	+5 to +15
Fear Rating	+5x Fear value
Unnatural Traits	+5 to +10
Poor or limited equipment (black powder weapons, scavenged ammunition)	-5 to -10

Since the adjustment is based on quality as well as quantity, a single Alpha-level rogue psyker might boost his formation's CS by +15, while a whole coven of minor Warp-witches might only grant +5. Usually, only the highest modifier for a given category should be applied. Thus, a Formation including an Alpha-level psyker and a group of witches would gain a +15, not a +20. This is not to say that the witches do not give an advantage to the Formation, only that with the degree of abstraction involved in Combat Skill, their contributions are overshadowed by that of the Alpha psyker. When determining the adjustment for a given category, the GM should consider all creatures and gear that fit that category, taken together. So, a Formation with numerous paltry psykers and Lesser Daemons that, taken separately would grant +5, could benefit from a +10 or +15. Only in exceptional circumstances should the adjustment exceed the listed maximum, however.

Adjusting the base CS to reflect any applicable categories of wargear, abilities, and support gives a final CS for the Formation. Because CS is so abstract, and many of the adjustments are open to interpretation, a GM should feel free to make further adjustments if the final CS does not feel right to him. This is particularly true after determining the CS values for other Formations involved in the battle, as this gives a frame of reference.

The forces of Chaos often do not lend themselves to an organised military structure, whether it be the mercenary armies of warlords battling for territory within the Screaming Vortex, or even a mighty Black Crusade formed of hundreds or thousands of disparate groups and unlikely allies. When dealing with forces that include markedly different kinds of troops, the GM should either group the different types into separate Formations, or average together the CS for each group. This is only warranted when dealing with vastly different combatants, such as a force consisting of Lesser Daemons, Chaos Space Marines in Terminator armour, and cult zealots. In a force of, for instance, all Space Marines, the wargear and support modifiers cover the distinctions between Assault Marines, Devastators, and Tactical Squads.

RESOLVING FORMATION COMBAT

When two Formations come into conflict, the combat is resolved with an Extended Opposed CS Test. This represents ranged weapon fire and melee combat, as well as the application of whatever other esoteric creatures the Formations might possess. Once one Formation attains a total of 6 Degrees of Success over the other, it has won the fight. Depending on the forces involved, this could represent a rout, a surrender, or a wholesale slaughter in which the losers are sacrificed to the Dark Gods in a great ritual. In particularly large or climactic combats, the GM might wish to increase the number of Successes required for victory, or reduce it for small, brief skirmishes.

Just as in a combat between individual characters, the circumstances of a battle can be crucial in determining the outcome. A vastly outnumbered force might be at a disadvantage, but solid leadership and an advantageous position can overcome this. **Table 3-2: Formation Combat Test Modifiers** on page 73 offers examples of how different factors can affect CS Tests.

While important or climactic encounters involving the Heretics should use the normal combat rules, there are some situations in which a GM wishes to allow Heretics and important NPCs to influence the outcome of a Formation Combat. At the beginning of a Formation Combat, any Heretics or important NPCs involved can take a leadership role in the battle, lend their skill at arms to the fight, employ special abilities, or contribute in some other way. While a Heretic might give orders from the front, in the thick of the fighting, he makes a single Test to represent his various contributions. Each Heretic aiding the Formation attempts a **Challenging (+0) Infamy, Command, Weapon Skill, or Ballistic Skill Test**. At the GM's discretion other Tests, such as Operate (Surface) to take command of a tank, or a Focus Power Test to employ psychic abilities, could be substituted instead. Regardless of the Skill or Characteristic tested, every two Degrees of Success add +2 to the Formation's CS for the duration of the combat. Regardless of the result of the Test, each of the Heretics and notable NPCs adds his Infamy Bonus to the CS of his Formation.

EXAMPLE

A GM is planning a major battle in which the Heretics and their allies storm the walls of an Imperial hive city. Unbeknownst to the Heretics, the Inquisition has gotten wind of their plans and a strike force of Grey Knights waits to teleport into battle. The GM chooses to treat the Grey Knights as a separate formation from the numerous Imperial Guard forces arrayed in defence of the city. Consulting **Table 3-1: Combat Skill**, the GM decides that the Grey Knights are Elite, and therefore have a base CS of 50. Since Grey Knights are all psykers, he adds +10 for esoteric abilities. Being as they are Space Marines, the GM adds +10 for the Grey Knights' Unnatural Strength and Unnatural Toughness Traits. The Grey Knights are equipped with power armour, storm bolters, and Nemesis force weapons, and some of them are even clad in Terminator armour, so he adds +15 for superior equipment. After adding everything together, the GM arrives at a total CS for the Formation of 85! The Heretics better have some powerful allies of their own.

The number of rolls made before a victor is determined gives the GM an idea of how long the fight lasts. As a rough guide, one hour elapses for each roll, though it could be much longer for very expansive Formations and much shorter for smaller groups. Each opposed roll represents numerous actions, including charges, retreats, ordnance barrages, and gruelling close-quarters combat. GMs should certainly factor in the needs of the story and the particulars of the situation when determining how long a Formation Combat lasts, and each roll for the Opposed Test need not represent the same amount of time.

VICTORY AND DEFEAT

The detailed and abstract methods of handling mass combat allow the GM to determine the outcome of large fights, but it is equally important to discover how those combats contribute to the overall outcome of a battle, or even a military campaign involving multiple engagements on various battlefields. This is where Pivotal Events and Victory Points come in.

Pivotal Events

Pivotal Events are those events that can change the course of a battle, giving the Heretics a chance to directly influence the outcome. A Pivotal Event can be anything from a display of ferocity to break the enemy's morale, to destroying a powerful enemy war machine, to bringing down enemy fortifications so that allies can overwhelm the enemy. The GM can use Pivotal Events regardless of the method or methods he chooses to resolve mass combats.

Each Pivotal Event involves one or more goals for the PCs to accomplish. These goals can be very clear cut, such as "destroy the Basilisk emplacement atop the hill before it fires," or as flexible as "disrupt the enemy's command structure." Successfully completing a Pivotal Event brings the Heretics' side closer to victory. Failure to complete the goals of a Pivotal Event benefits the enemy.

Narrative

When using the narrative method, the GM considers the Heretics' success in Pivotal Events when deciding the battle's outcome. He could determine in advance that they must first successfully tackle a certain number of Pivotal Events, or that a particular moment decides the entire outcome.

TABLE 3-2: FORMATION
COMBAT TEST MODIFIERS

Difficulty Modifier	Example
Very Easy (+30)	Fighting from a fortified position such as a bunker or bastion.
Easy (+20)	Fighting from an advantageous position such as high ground.
Routine (+10)	Plentiful cover.
Challenging (+0)	Fighting in terrain that is relatively open and level, but provides some cover.
Difficult (-10)	Outnumbered, poor morale, low supplies, fighting alongside untrusted allies, fighting with little or no cover.
Hard (-20)	Terrain disadvantages (such as passing through a bottleneck or no-man's-land), drastically outnumbered, fighting at greatly diminished strength due to previous casualties.
Very Hard (-30)	Horrendously outnumbered, fighting without proper survival gear, fighting without rest for days on end.

Formation

Under the formation method, each Pivotal Event is worth a number of Victory Points, as explained below. Pivotal Events can occur between, during, or as part of Formation combats. For some Pivotal Events that occur during a Formation Combat, it might be necessary to switch to Structured Time. It is important in these cases to record any Degrees of Success scored on the Opposed CS Test, so that the Test can continue after the Pivotal Event has been resolved. The outcome of a Pivotal Event during a Formation Combat not only grants Victory Points to one side or the other, but influences the subsequent rolls in the Extended Test. The Heretics successfully completing the Pivotal Event give a +10 to their side's CS for the rest of the Formation Combat. If the Pivotal Event is particularly important to the ongoing Formation Combat, or the PCs exceed their goal, this bonus might be higher.

If the Heretics fail to complete their goals in the Pivotal Event, the enemy Formation gains a +10 bonus to CS for the duration of the combat. If the event was of particular importance to the larger combat, or if the failure was particularly spectacular, the enemy could gain an even greater bonus.

Victory Points

Each Pivotal Event is worth a number of Victory Points. Once one side has reached the required number of predetermined Victory Points, that side is victorious. The Heretics earn Victory Points through completing Pivotal Events successfully. However, for each Pivotal Event which the Heretics fail to complete or choose to ignore, those Victory Points instead go to the enemy.

The number of Victory Points awarded for a Pivotal Event depends on the importance, scope, and difficulty of the players' goals. The basic value for a Pivotal Event is 200 Victory Points. This represents a goal that poses a moderate challenge and, while highly beneficial to their side, is not in itself necessarily a guarantee of victory. **Table 3-3: Victory Point Values** on page 74 offers guidelines for determining

TABLE 3-3: VICTORY POINT VALUES

Goal	VP Value	Examples
Helpful	100	Destroying a Leman Russ battle tank.
Beneficial	200	Halting an enemy charge, significantly boosting ally morale.
Priority	250	Poisoning the enemy food supply, corrupting an Imperial Guard squad.
Vital	300	Crippling enemy communications, obtaining enemy plans, corrupting an Imperial Guard platoon or senior officer.
Crucial	400	Destroying an enemy command bunker (and its occupants), banishing a Greater Daemon, scuttling a Lunar-class cruiser.
Decisive	500	Slaying a rival warlord, neutralising an enemy Titan.

the number of Victory Points at stake in a given Pivotal Event. In a Pivotal Event incorporating multiple goals that could conceivably stand alone, the Victory Point value is determined by taking the highest value amongst the goals and adding one half of the value of each additional goal. Simply fighting whatever enemies are available can also earn Victory Points for the players. In effect, this is a Pivotal Event with a goal of killing enemy troops. The Victory Point value for such combats generally should not be more than 100. Attempting to kill a certain commander, annihilate a particular squad, or hold off thousands of enemy troops single-handedly, however, is a full Pivotal Event and should be evaluated accordingly.

The Victory Points of each Pivotal Event do not necessarily need to add up to the value necessary for victory. If, taken together, the Pivotal Events fall short of the requisite number, the Heretics can acquire the additional VPs through slaughter or devising their own goals. If the Pivotal Events offer Victory Points in excess of those needed, the Heretics can choose from the goals available to them, or redeem themselves for a failed Pivotal Event.

Victory!

The Victory Point total necessary for victory is based on the size of the battle being waged. Recommended Victory Point totals are shown on **Table 3-4: Battle Size** below, though the GM can adjust these as needed for his adventure. Once a side has acquired the necessary number of Victory Points, the GM compares the Victory Point totals for both sides and consults **Table 3-5: Victory Results** on this page to determine the outcome of the battle based on the difference in points.

TABLE 3-4: BATTLE SIZE

Battle Size	Victory Points Required
Skirmish	600
Major Conflict	1,000
Apocalyptic Battle	1,500

EXAMPLE

A group of Heretics has decided upon a Compact to conquer the planet of Gjaal, one of the Gloaming Worlds of the Screaming Vortex. The GM decides that a Compact to conquer a relatively minor world like Gjaal is equivalent to a Major Conflict, and thus requires 1,000 Victory Points to achieve. Amongst the Secondary Objects of this Compact is taking control of the Well of Blood; this powerful focus of Warp energy would allow the Heretics to summon the minions of the Daemon Prince Kullivar the Pretender, with whom they have an established pact. The GM decides that taking the Well of Blood is Crucial to the Heretics' strategy, and so the battle for its location is worth 400 Victory Points. The battle itself involves the Heretics and their pirate reaver allies assaulting the Well's defenders, comprising a hereditary coven of mutant guardians and a mysterious Daemon Engine of unknown provenance. The GM decides that the battle is a Skirmish, and so the players must acquire 600 Victory Points to take control of the Well. The GM then decides on a number of Pivotal Events for the battle, such as the destruction of the Daemon Engine, which is Vital for the players' success, and so worth 300 Victory Points.

BATTLES AND COMPACTS

Massed battles can be a major element of Compacts, particularly those dedicated to the Blood God. Such a battle can even form a Secondary Objective in itself. A Compact with a Primary Objective of conquering a planet, or even a star system, may include several such Secondary Objectives. When tracking the progress of such a campaign of conquest, the GM might wish to utilize the Victory Point system, appropriately adjusted for scale.

Through further using Pivotal Events, Victory Points, and Compacts, a GM can track the Heretics' success as skirmishes lead to battles, battles to wars, and perhaps to a galaxy-burning Black Crusade.

TABLE 3-5: VICTORY RESULTS

Difference in Victory Points	Result of the Combat
0-25	Draw: Neither side gains a considerable advantage.
26-100	Minor Victory: The battle was close and your side accomplished its mission, but only barely.
101-300	Solid Victory: The enemy put up a hard fight, but victory is yours for the taking.
301-500	Overwhelming Victory: Khorne is clearly with you; the enemy was utterly crushed and completely repulsed.
501+	Blood for the Blood God! The enemy force was almost completely annihilated, the battlefield a vista of carnage. Your side has exceeded well beyond all expectations in its objectives.



WORLDS OF THE BLOOD GOD

"Some fool once asked me if the Screaming Vortex was the afterlife. I asked him if he thought it was a punishment or a reward, then killed him to prove my point."

—Captain Elga Irontooth of the *Brass Reaper*

Only the bravest or most foolhardy would ever travel through the worlds of the Screaming Vortex by choice. These places—torn from the physical realm or spontaneously manifested from the Warp—are tainted so deeply that their very essence is formed from corruption. The depths of the maelstrom tear at the very souls of any who would dare to view them, just as its locations often shred the bodies of those who attempt to conquer them.

The essence of the Screaming Vortex is conflict. When it originated—according to myth, with the collapse of the decadent and decaying Eldar civilisation—worlds were torn asunder as the Immaterium began to bleed into physical space. At times, it seems that the place must constantly expand to feed its hunger, digesting and transforming those worlds it has absorbed through ongoing conflict, while continuing to seek out new places to devour.

Time is often a contentious notion within the Warp, but from most perspectives millennia have passed since the Vortex first manifested. Through this time, untold worlds have known terrible and endlessly destructive conflict to honour the Ruinous

Powers. In spite of this, new locations are often discovered within its bounds by the few who dare to explore the swirling maelstrom. Some of the Screaming Vortex's residents—often as a manifestation of their madness—have attempted to categorise and map these locations. Though their work ostensibly serves as a guide to those who might travel between these worlds, would-be conquerors who dare follow such directions risk embracing the madness that defines this place.

Just as the worlds of the Screaming Vortex vary, so too are the ways in which one travels between them. For some followers and these minions, travel through the region is more a matter of force and battle than one of careful calculation. Not all travel needs to even involve a voidcraft, as unstable gateways connect many of the worlds at unpredictable intervals. Often, they appear at unknowable times or within the context of an invasion effort.

For those who follow Khorne, a brutal battle is often the focal point of a transit undertaken in his name. Upon slaying a massive Daemon, its body might transform into a passage between worlds. Alternatively, what seems like a mundane tunnel might become the digestive track of a massive beast that must be defeated before the Heretics' journey can be concluded. Even travelling within a vessel, a swarm of attackers might threaten the travellers and must be overcome anew prior to each arriving upon a world. Defeating such opponents might be a physical manifestation of the metaphysical journey required to reach a destination, or could be for the simple amusement of the Lord of Battles. Within the Screaming Vortex, the line between madness and reality is rarely as clean as a knife's edge, and is more often akin to a widening pool of blood spreading across a star-filled void.

BERIN AND ASPHODEL

"Slaves? You mark my words boy, there's naught down there but a hundred different ways to die. You'd best look for your slaves elsewhere."

—Reaver Captain Hican Matsu (deceased)

Trapped in orbit around the poisonous star of Velaj, the worlds of Berin and Asphodel exist in a state of unending war. Both were drawn into the Screaming Vortex only a few centuries ago, although none can say from where. Some believe they existed on the edge of the Vortex and were slowly absorbed by its creeping expansion, others say they were drawn across the length of the galaxy through ritual sorcery or vagrant Warp tunnels. Whatever the truth, the process utterly ravaged both worlds and their inhabitants, and reduced them to savage barbarism, and any records of their previous existence were completely lost. The two races that now inhabit these worlds certainly have no care for the past, locked as they are in a constant cycle of battle, conquest, and death.

ASPHODEL

A dim and miasmal world, Asphodel's surface is almost completely covered in swamps. Twisted Nendya trees reach out from the scum-laden morass to cover the world's surface in perpetual twilight. What little light does pierce the tree cover is weak and only serves to create deep shadows in which the world's many predators lurk and hunt.

Despite its close proximity to Velaj, Asphodel teems with life, all of it utterly inimical to peaceful existence. Fat sting-flies buzz ceaselessly through the unending wetlands, and hideous blooms of flesh-rotting fungus sprout from the clumps of Tangle Vine that dot the swamp. Great beards of burn-moss reach down from the limbs of the trees, catching the unwary in their corrosive grip. Yet despite this deadly environment, the Kroot inhabiting Asphodel have flourished.

These lithe, avian aliens have adapted almost perfectly to the planet's geography as deadly hunters and warriors. Organised into tribal groups called Septs, the Kroot have spread across the face of Asphodel using their racial ability to absorb the genetic information of other creatures, evolving new traits and, in extreme cases, even into new sub-species of Kroot. By taking on the characteristics of the world's apex predators, they have become one of the most lethal and feared species in the Screaming Vortex, acting as mercenaries in warbands across this hellish region.

However, this forced evolution has not come without cost. Cut off from other Kroot and forced to subsist on primitive beasts and each other, they have regressed into a barbaric state of cannibalism and near constant violence. There seems nothing able to temper their violence, and rival Septs make war against each other in an endless savage conflict of ambushes and guerrilla raids.

With no access to or respite for developing advanced technologies, these Kroot warriors fight with simple spears and primitive missile weapons. This has led them to adopt a very close-range fighting style where stealth and the first strike is all important. Many of the Septs have also become adept at brewing poisons and other elixirs from Asphodel's local flora and fauna; hundreds of Kroot hunters stalk the noisome swamps with their arrowheads smeared in Scorchtip frog venom extract or spear tips wrapped in fronds of burn-moss.



Towards the equatorial region of the planet, the mighty mountain range of Lun rises. Here, the Kroot dimly remember more of their life before coming to the Vortex, and Shapers still lead the Septs. Amongst the rocky peaks, the Shapers teach the secrets of black powder, their poorly understood alchemy of rare mountain minerals and ground fungus harvested from the swamps below, and the manufacture of simple flintlock rifles. They also know the art of capturing and shaping the mighty beasts of the mountains, for here gigantic moon moths and sinuous æther wurms return to roost. The Shapers hunt these creatures not only for the meat and hides, but also for the Conjunction when their fiery heaven returns.

The Shapers believe that life on Asphodel is a test designed to breed strength and cunning. To this end, they encourage the primitive Kroot to make war on one another, believing this endless conflict helps breed the strong and prepare them for the holy time. For when Berin appears for the Conjunction, the Septs gather and make ready for the war in the skies.

THE RED MOON SEPT

Amongst the hundreds of disparate Kroot Septs that inhabit Asphodel, one stands out with infamy even beyond this world. Known for its extreme savagery and complete disregard for the beliefs of the Shapers, the Red Moon Sept has become synonymous with fury, betrayal, and cannibalism.

Where most of the Septs of Asphodel fight for territory, glory, or the blessings of the Shapers, the Red Moon are only interested in killing. Their ritual hunts have become more and more obsessed with death and bloodletting, while their ferocity and capacity for violence have grown to the point where all other concerns have become secondary. Willing to fight anything and anyone, often without provocation, the Red Moon are a scourge on the planet.

Numerous slavers and renegade warbands of the Vortex regard these warriors highly. Even so, many captains and champions making planetfall on Asphodel, seeking new recruits for their bloody endeavours, find themselves victims in the blood hunts of the Red Moon. Stalked through the treacherous terrain, visiting heretics are picked apart, one by one, as the Kroot of the Red Moon close in. Finally, when only a precious few of the landing party remain, the Red Moon packs descend, howling with rage, to butcher their prey in a shower of blood and viscera.

Despite the many threats on Asphodel, warbands still attempt planetfall with some regularity. Many come in search of the dozens of wrecked and abandoned shuttles and landers left by previous visitors. Legends speak of the relics and artefacts to be found amongst the wrecks, if one can prevail against the belligerent Kroot and their inhospitable swamp. That there are more legends than actual facts indicates the deadliness of these xenos and their devolved brethren.

ASPHODEL KROOT WARRIORS

Kroot Warriors are tall and lithe with long, slender limbs and curious beaked, almost avian, faces. To untrained eyes, a Kroot appears too lean and wiry to be a danger, but each is surprisingly strong, with corded muscles capable of viciously fast contractions. This allows a trained Kroot warrior to deliver a flurry of powerful blows in a very short space of time, and makes him a swift-moving terror on the battlefield. On the ground, they move with a rapid, hopping gait, but Kroot are also capable of ascending to the tree cover and leaping from tree to tree with great speed and agility.

The Kroot of Asphodel are known for their stealth and are able to move swiftly and silently through their swamp homeland with little or no evidence of their presence or passing. Those denizens of the Vortex who have studied this behaviour believe this is, in part, due to the Kroot's remarkable digestive system and rapid evolution.

The Kroot digestive system is capable of detecting and isolating useful genetic strands in consumed flesh. This also allows a Kroot warrior to bind useful DNA within unused sections of his own genetic structure and to pass on these genes to successive generations, driving the race to evolve along specific lines. This has led these Kroot in becoming efficient swimmers and climbers, and developing entirely new sub-species.

Asphodel's Kroot culture has devolved and much of their heritage has been forgotten. Where once they fought with powerful firearms, they now rely more on simple spears and bows. Innovation has not been totally forgotten, however, as they have developed a number of simple but effective weapons that utilise the poisonous fauna of their world. Even without more advanced weaponry, the Kroot of Asphodel are a match for most warrior races of the Vortex.



Asphodel Kroot Warrior (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
45	25	45	40	45	18	44	30	15	--

Movement: 6/12/18/36

Armour: Hide Armour (Body 1)

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Athletics (S), Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Parry (WS), Stealth (Ag) +20, Survival (Per) +10.

Talents: Counter-Attack, Furious Assault, Lightning Reflexes, Sure Strike.

Traits: Asphodel Fieldcraft, Eaters of the Dead, Unnatural Agility (+2), Unnatural Perception (+2), Unnatural Strength (+2).

Weapons: Hook staff (Melee; 1d10+7 R; Pen 0; Primitive [8], Toxic [2]) or Kroot short-bow (Basic; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10 +4 R; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload Half; Primitive [7], Reliable, Toxic [2]), claw net (Thrown; 12m; S/-/-; 1d5 R; Pen 0; Snare [2]; Toxic [2]).

Gear: Primitive clothing, grisly trophies, meat haunches, poisoned arrows.

Wounds: 12

Total TB: 4

KROOT TRAITS

The Traits listed below are unique to Asphodel Kroot:

EATERS OF THE DEAD

A Kroot who devours a fresh corpse gains a number of bonus Wounds equal to the unmodified Toughness Bonus that the corpse possessed when it was alive. These bonus Wounds cannot exceed the Kroot's own Toughness Bonus and remain for a number of hours equal to the Kroot's Toughness Bonus or until they are lost, whichever comes first. Damage from any successful attack is applied to these bonus Wounds first before application to the Kroot's normal Wounds. A Kroot can only receive bonus Wounds from one consumed corpse at a time.

ASPHODEL FIELDCRAFT

These Kroot gain a +10 bonus to Stealth Tests, and may make them as a Free Action even when being observed. They also treat forests, jungles, and similar environments as open terrain.

KROOT SHAPERS

Larger and more intelligent than their Warrior brethren, Shapers act as the spiritual and martial leaders of the Kroot on Asphodel. Living on the mountains of Lun, away from the swamp and keeping to themselves for the most part, the Shapers have managed to retain a little of their heritage and have not regressed into the same barbaric state as the rest of the inhabitants of the planet.

On other worlds, Shapers have an instinctive understanding of the remarkable Kroot digestive and evolutionary systems, and direct the development of their species through the careful selection of prey. On Asphodel, this function has become secondary to their spiritual guidance and religious beliefs.

The Shapers believe that the world of Berin is actually their form of heaven, or paradise, and the time they spend on Asphodel is but one of the many stages of life they must endure in order to prove themselves worthy to ascend. Where this belief springs from is matter of debate. Some lore-thieves of the Vortex believe it is some semblance of the Kroot's racial memory of the time before they came to Asphodel and is indicative of their desire to leave. Others think it is simply a primitive myth born from the Kroot's inability to grasp their current, mad existence. Whatever the truth of it, the overriding belief held by all Shapers on Asphodel is in order to attain heaven and leave, they must be strong, and such strength is born from conflict.

To this end, they set rival Septs against each other in a never-ending war, promising the secrets of black powder and a place in heaven to those who prove themselves the strongest. The Shapers not only gene-shape the great beasts used to ascend to heaven, but hunt them as the Conjunction draws near, using traditional methods such as tempting the beasts to land with the promise of food (often in the form of an unwitting volunteer or herd of Krootox). They then lead their brethren, both actual Kroot and the lesser species-variants of Krootox and other beasts, into the skies for battle. Each is doomed to soon die, either in the void or on the harsh surface of Berin, but for that short time their war cries echo across the Vortex and they are truly in heaven.

Kroot Shaper (Elite)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
45	30	48	40	55	35	46	40	35	--

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Wounds: 18

Armour: Beast Furs (Body 2)

Total TB: 4

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Asphodel Myth, Kroot Religion) (Int), Dodge +10 (Ag), Scholastic Lore (Kroot Physiology) (Int) +20, Stealth (Ag) +10, Survival (Per) +20.

Talents: Counter-Attack, Furious Assault, Lightning Reflexes, Sure Strike, Swift Attack.

Traits: Asphodel Fieldcraft, Eaters of the Dead, Unnatural Agility (+3), Unnatural Perception (+2), Unnatural Strength (+2).

Weapons: Kroot flintlock (Basic; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload 2 Full; Inaccurate, Primitive [8], Unreliable), hook staff (Melee; 1d10+7 R; Pen 0; Primitive [8], Toxic [2]), claw net (Thrown; 15m; S/-/-; 1d5 R; Pen 0; Clip 1; Snare [2]; Toxic [2]).

Gear: Primitive clothing, bone amulets, charms.

KROOT HOUNDS

Slender, swift, and deadly, this divergent species has earned its place in Kroot society as trackers and hunting beasts almost without peer. They resemble quadrupedal Kroot warriors, but have longer and narrower heads, with a more pronounced beak and extended nasal cavity granting the hound a prodigious sense of smell. Their clawed legs have developed long, knife-like claws for ripping at a downed foe.

Kroot Hounds possess simple minds, little higher than most primitive beasts of the swamp. They are an evolutionary dead end, however, devolved to a state that no Shaper can breed back to sentience. They are capable of learning simple commands and fighting with basic tactics to best aid hunting parties. It is a rare warband that ventures into the swamps without several of these skilled killers leading the chase.

Kroot Hound (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
40	--	45	30	50	15	40	30	02	--

Movement: 10/20/30/60

Wounds: 10

Armour: None

Total TB: 3

Skills: Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S), Stealth (Ag).

Talents: Double Team, Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Smell), Rapid Reaction, Takedown.

Traits: Bestial, Natural Weapons, Quadruped.

Weapons: Jaws (Melee; 1d10+4 R; Pen 1; Primitive [7]).

Gear: None.

TABLE 3-6: KROOT WEAPONS

Name	Class	Range	RoF	Dam	Pen	Clip	Rld	Special	Wt	Availability
Hook Staff	Melee	—	—	1d10+1	0	—	—	Primitive (8), Toxic (2)	3.5kg	Common
Claw Net	Thrown	SBx3	—	1d5	0	1	—	Snare (2), Toxic (2)	2kg	Scarce
Kroot Shortbow	Basic	30m	S/-/-	1d10 R	0	1	Half	Primitive (8), Toxic (2)	1kg	Common
Kroot Flintlock	Basic	30m	S/-/-	1d10+3 I	0	1	2 Full	Inaccurate, Primitive (8), Unreliable	6kg	Rare

KROOTOX

Another evolutionary dead end, this massive beast possibly evolved from an animal no longer in existence on Asphodel (perhaps totally consumed by the carnivorous Kroot), or perhaps was already with the Kroot when they arrived on the planet. Whatever the truth of it, Krootox now lumber through the swamps in great herds.

Krootox are huge animals, four-legged and possessing the beaked, bird-like face of all Kroot sub-species. They are heavily muscled with massive shoulders and thick, powerful forelegs. Asphodel Kroot use the Krootox as beasts of burden, fetching and carrying or occasionally helping with construction, but more often they are put to use as living weapons of war.

In addition to their enormous strength, Krootox are famed for their notoriously short tempers. When threatened or goaded, a Krootox becomes a frenzied monster, smashing through foliage and crushing everything before it. Often, a Kroot warband does not bring these beasts with them, instead preferring to locate a herd near to their intended target. Once a suitable herd has been found, the warband attacks, driving Krootox before them. Many Kroot villages are utterly destroyed, unable to withstand the stampede of dozens of frenzied creatures. With the defences levelled and the remaining inhabitants still reeling from the shock of the stampede, the warband descends, mercilessly butchering the survivors.

Krootox (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
40	—	60	55	20	15	30	30	04	—

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Armour: Thick Hide (All 2)

Skills: Awareness (Per).

Talents: Berserk Charge, Crushing Blow, Frenzy, Iron Jaw.

Traits: Bestial, Brutal Charge (2), Natural Armour (2), Deadly Natural Weapons, Quadruped, Size (Enormous), Stampede, Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (+10), Unnatural Toughness (+5).

Weapons: Clawed fists (Melee; 2d10+18 I; Pen 2, Concussive [1]), beak (1d10+18 R, Pen 2).

Gear: None.

Wounds: 56

Total TB: 5

KROOTOR

Gene-shaped from water dwelling, saurian predators, many consider this to be the apex predator of Asphodel. Strong, fast, and stealthy, each is deadly and greatly prized as a war beast.

A Krootor is a large, quadrupedal creature, its short legs terminating in hooked claws used for scaling obstacles in the swamp. Its wide body is low to the ground, and Krootor spend much of their time swimming, using their thick tails to glide silently through the water. Although primarily aquatic creatures, they are capable of surprising speed on land.

The most distinctive feature of the Krootor, however, is its mouth. Similar in appearance to the avian beak of all Kroot, the Krootor's mouth is much larger. Long, wide, and filled with serrated teeth, its bite leaves terrible wounds that either kill outright, or cause terrible damage as the poisons within its maw take effect. The most common feeding tactic of a Krootor is to surprise its prey, bursting up from beneath the waters of the swamp and tearing bloody chunks of flesh away with savage, clenching bites. Many of the more vicious Septs of Asphodel utilise these beasts instead of Kroot Hounds, favouring their savagery and stealth over the hounds' enhanced senses and greater intelligence.

Krootor (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
50	—	50	45	25	15	20	30	02	—

Movement: 6/12/18/36

Armour: Scaled Hide (All 3)

Skills: Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per), Stealth (Ag) +20.

Talents: Crippling Strike, Crushing Blow, Takedown.

Traits: Amphibious, Bestial, Deadly Natural Weapons, Natural Armour (3), Quadruped, Size (Hulking), Unnatural Strength (+2).

Weapons: Bite (Melee; 1d10+9 R; Pen 1; Toxic [2]).

Gear: None.

Lock Jaw: If a Krootor successfully hits with its bite it will lock its jaw shut, automatically Grappling its opponent (see **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 243). Any Damage inflicted by the Krootor during the Grapple will be bite damage instead of unarmed. Once the Krootor has successfully inflicted Damage, it has torn a chunk off its victim and ends the Grapple at the end of the turn.

Strong Swimmer: When swimming, a Krootor doubles its Movement values.

BERIN

The sister planet to Asphodel, Berin is a barren rock as different to its twin as can be, an empty desert world bombarded with intense stellar radiation and scoured with endless winds. Life here is harsh and uncompromising, and every day is a battle for resources. The great desert plains offer up little save the promise of a slow death. Useful ores are practically non-existent, as is standing water. Life is a constant battle against the relentless winds and the Orks that infest the planet.

The terrible conditions have made these Orks tougher and larger than many of their brethren scattered across the galaxy. Lacking proper resources, many do not carry complex weapons, relying on weighty blades called choppas and the rare heavy pistol. The inhospitable conditions have had other effects on their lives. On other worlds, a healthy population of Gretchin would support the Orks in their day-to-day life; here, they are little more than a food source. Unable to cope with the lethal sunlight and flesh-stripping winds, many simply do not survive; those that do are often seized as food and consumed to feed the Boyz.

The terrible planetary atmosphere has also led to a preponderance of wild Squigs, and endless species of these feral creatures have evolved under the glare of Berin's toxic star. From the lightning fast, multi-legged Racer Squig to the bloated, gas-filled Balloon Squig, these unpredictable creatures are found everywhere on the planet.

Many Ork tribes settle around desert wells, defending them ferociously from any and all aggressors. A culture of Mekboyz, ingenious Ork inventors, has grown up in these settlements, replacing the typical societal norm of a single Warboss leading the tribe. However, the constant battle for water and other resources means these settlements are temporary at best. Soon enough, the wells dry up and what little minerals can be dragged from Berin's deserts run out, requiring the tribe to move on.

The tribes have become particularly adept at constructing a bewildering array of vehicles for crossing the endless deserts. Rocket-driven sleds and buggies race across the parched plains, while Ork outriderz mounted on Racer Squigs scout ahead. Huge hide-stitched airships filled with hundreds of Balloon Squigs lashed together, or in some extreme cases a single Squig bred to a gigantic size, lurch through Berin's skies as their rocket engines cough and sputter. Some of the more successful tribes even manage to amass enough stolen metal to construct tracked battle fortresses powered with simple, smoke belching Squig-engines.

Orks are an aggressive and warlike race by nature, and those on Berin are no different. When a nomadic tribe encounters a defended well or rival stronghold, bloodshed is inevitable. As the battle for water and resources is a constant struggle, a cycle of never-ending warfare has developed. These Ork tribes spend their whole lives defending their wells and settlements from encroaching nomadic tribes or searching out new settlements to conquer in an orgy of violence. The Mekboyz here excel at creating explosives from what little mineral wealth they can extract from Berin's grasp, and many tribes become obsessed with rockets, bombs, and grenades of all types. These are used in everything from vehicular propulsion to warfare, and battle on Berin is highly mobile and very, very loud.

However, no one tribe has yet achieved dominance for any length of time; the climate and geography of the world make defending more than a single settlement almost impossible. The



dust storms that ravage the world's surface can last for weeks at a time and are capable of obliterating entire strongholds, ripping down walls and stripping even Orks to the bone in moments. Three never-ending great storms in particular, known to the Orks as Ulg, Bur, and Zzuk, are exceptionally devastating. Each of these storms is a thousand kilometres wide and rages across the face of Berin, often clashing together and devastating everything in their path. Ork Psykers, called Weirdboyz, have a curious fascination with these storms, believing that Daemons stalk at their heart tearing Orks asunder and leaving messages in their wake.

These beliefs are perhaps not far from the truth. Legends branded on Q'Sal soul-parchments weep that long ago, before Berin was drawn inside the Vortex, the mighty Khornate Daemon Prince Ak'cogu'thiou'euak fought a great and terrible battle there. The world was not as it is now, but that conflict may have caused the eventual absorption of the world and triggered its slide into barbarism and bloodshed. Who or what the Daemon, known to men as Warfiend, fought against has been lost in the sands of time, but what is known is that Warfiend did not win. His essence shattered, his conqueror bound what remained of the Daemon and sealed it deep below the world's crust. Despite its defeat, Warfiend was not destroyed and raged against its imprisonment. Impotent and powerless, its anger grew and grew until its howls of rage were felt on the world's surface. Such was his wrath that the winds of Berin echoed its call, stirring into a great and terrible storm that lashed the planet in a desperate attempt to crack it open and free the Daemon within. Even now, the dust storms that ravage the planet, destroying all in their path, are but a fraction of the true power trapped at the heart of Berin, seeking escape.

ZURRGAB THE WEIRDBOY

A figure of mystery on Berin, Zurrgab is a nomadic Weirdboy with no clan. What happened to force Zurrgab into this lonely life is unknown. Some Boyz claim he wiped his entire clan out with a poorly thrown Bang Squig, others that he led them into a great sandstorm from which only he emerged. Whatever the truth of it, Zurrgab now wanders the desert wastes alone, forever following in the wake of Ulg, Bur, and Zzuk.

The three great storms are responsible for destroying countless Ork clans and are considered an ill omen on the world, but Zurrgab has become obsessed with them. He picks over the wreckage left in their wake with great care, collecting pieces of debris and the bones of the unfortunate victims. Zurrgab believes that the strange spiral symbols often found carved into these remains form a language, one that he is determined to understand. To that end, he collects these bones and other, less identifiable pieces of debris and stores them in a great cave known as the Ossuary. There he has begun construction of a great throne. He has little comprehension about why he is doing this, only that he must. When the massive throne of bones and skulls is complete, he knows that whoever sits upon it will lead the Orks in a great Waaagh! the likes of which has never been seen on Berin, enough to crush the beak-boyz, the world they came from, and anything else in the Screaming Vortex that would stand in their way.

BERIN ORK BOYZ

The vast majority of Orks encountered on Berin are Boyz, massive, barbaric humanoids with dark green skin, deep set eyes, and huge tusks. They do not have ready access to a great many natural resources, and so fight with a far more primitive style than their counterparts elsewhere. An enraged Berin Ork armed with a choppa is still capable of inflicting tremendous damage on any foe and is rightly feared. Their world has led to other, highly ingenious, weapons including buzza bombs and snappa guns.

A buzza bomb is a simple jar of fragile clay into which brave Orks stuff swarms of Buzza Squigs, highly aggressive hornet-like biting insects about the size of an Ork's thumb. When used in battle, an Ork first shakes the jar to anger the Buzza Squigs, thus priming the bomb, then hurls it into a thickly packed group of enemies. The jar shatters, releasing a horde of angry Squigs capable of shredding enemies in seconds. The swarms soon disperse, but there are always plenty more Buzza Squigs for an enterprising Orks to gather.

Equally simple and effective is the snappa gun. The Snappa Squig is a large ferocious breed notable for its massive, tooth-filled maw. Ork Boyz trap these creatures and chain them inside heavy cages with hinged doors and a quick release mechanism, which releases the Squig on activation. The enraged beast leaps out, quickly attacking anything in front of him in a burst of jagged teeth, leaving nothing but shreds of flesh behind before being dragged back into the cage to attack again.



Berin Ork Boy (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
40	15	45	45	20	20	30	25	20	--

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 14

Armour: Hides (Body, Arms, Legs 2)

Total TB: 6

Skills: Intimidate (S), Operate (Surface), Survival (Per).

Talents: Berserk Charge, Furious Assault, Iron Jaw, True Grit, Unarmed Warrior.

Traits: Brutal Charge (3), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (+2), Unnatural Toughness (+2).

Weapons: Berin choppa (Melee; 1d10+7 R; Pen 2; Tearing, Unbalanced), snappa gun (Melee; 1d10+6; Pen 0; Living Weapon†, Tearing), buzza bomb (Thrown; 18m; S/-/-; 1d10+5 X; Pen 0; Clip 1; Blast [4], Crippling [1], Devastating [1], Living Weapon†, Primitive [7]).

Gear: Tattered clothes, bits of shiny metal, assorted tasty snack Squigs.

†Living Weapons inflict one additional hit for each Degree of Success on the attack roll.

Mob Rule: All Orks produce latent psychic energy that makes them feel more confident and aggressive when they gather in large numbers. For every additional Ork within 10m, the Ork receives a bonus of +10 to resist the effects of Fear and Pinning.

Waaagh! on Wheels: Any Ork (including Mekboyz and Weirdboyz) can be upgraded to a Bikerboy, gaining the Operate (Surface Craft) (Ag) +10 Skill and an Ork Bike (counts as a Messiah Outrider but with twin-linked Dakkaguns (Heavy; 75m; -/-/7; 1d10+6 I; Pen 2; Clip 100; Rld 3 Full) and no Sidecar option; see page 49 for rules).

Blood for da Blood God: Something within this planet often infests some Boyz with even greater rage and fury than usual, leading them to abandon proper Orky Kulture and their gods Gork and Mork to follow a darker, even bloodier path. Shunned from their tribes, they wage their own wars upon any foes they find for their own god of slaughter and skulls. These Bloodboyz gain the Frenzy and Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee) Talents but can only use a pair of choppas in combat. They only can gain the Mob Rule from other Bloodboyz, and other Orks do not gain its benefit from nearby Bloodboyz.

MEKBOYZ

The erstwhile leaders and providers for the Orks of Berin, Mekboyz fill a vital role in Ork Kulture. They are similar in appearance to other Orks, although tend to wear better armour and carry bizarre looking, and often very dangerous, weapons. They are larger than Ork Boyz; the confidence their position has given them and constant need to establish their authority over other Orks has resulted in a number of Mekboyz on Berin developing into a warlord role. These Orks are referred to as Big Meks, and their exploits have created both mythic legends in Ork Kulture and mythic craters on the planet.

Orks possess a little-understood form of genetic memory, and are born with pre-learned, instinctive knowledge. This is most prevalent in the Mekboyz ability to design and construct weapons, armour, and vehicles despite having no training or contact with other Orks. Mekboyz far removed from each other are also somehow create remarkably similar devices. Those of Berin are particularly adept at creating explosives, perhaps as there are few metals to make more elaborate items. Where other Orks are content use whatever slab of metal or random Squig they can find to make war, the Mekboyz are constantly inventing new ways to make things explode. These explosives are now used in everything they construct, from highly volatile fuels to their rokkit launchas and buggy busta grenades.

Another important task that the Mekboyz complete is the construction of transport, without which survival on Berin would not be possible. Many Berin tribes become obsessed with speed, and their Mekboyz are often found tinkering with sleds and buggies. There is little that Mekboyz love more than trying to coax more and more performance out of their beloved creations, all the while muttering about how much Squig-power a new engine has or how quickly it can reach "Waaagh!" velocity.

Mekboy (Elite)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
40	25	45	45	20	35	30	30	30	--

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 16

Armour: Metal Plated Hide (All 3)

Total TB: 7

Skills: Intimidate (S) +10, Operate (Surface), Operate (Aeronautica), Survival (Per), Tech-Use (Int) +20.

Talents: Berserk Charge, Bulging Biceps, Furious Assault, Iron Jaw, Pity the Weak, True Grit, Unarmed Warrior.

Traits: Brutal Charge (3), Sturdy, Size (Hulking), Unnatural Strength (+3), Unnatural Toughness (+3).

Weapons: Berin choppa (Melee; 1d10+8 R; Pen 2; Tearing; Unbalanced), rokkit launcha (Heavy; 100m; S/-/-; 3D10+3 X; Pen 6; Clip 2; Reload 2 Full; Blast [2]; Concussive [2]; Overheats), buggy busta (Thrown; 21m; S/-/-; 2D10+2 X; Pen 8; Clip 1; Blast [1]; Concussive [3]; Devastating [1]).

Gear: Meks tools, 2 reloads for Rokkit Launcha.

Mob Rule: All Orks produce latent psychic energy that makes them feel more confident and aggressive when they gather in large numbers. For every additional Ork within 10m, the Ork receives a bonus of +10 to resist the effects of Fear and Pinning.

Into the Air! Some Mekboyz grow so fond of rokkit launchas that they wear them into battle and become Flyboyz. Their Rokkit Packs allow them to triple their Base Movement but are one use only, and they must make a **Difficult (-10) Agility Test** or suffer 1d10+5 I Damage when landing.

WEIRDBOYZ

Weirdboyz are Ork psykers, who draw their powers from the Orks around them rather than directly from the Warp. Often tormented with vivid dreams and plagued by almost constant headaches, they are strange and unpredictable figures in Ork society and act as a conduit for the latent psychic energy generated by all Orks. It builds within them, causing immense pressure on the Ork's already poorly developed mind. Many in their younger days are unable to contain the power building within them, and it tears its way out in a flash of pyrotechnics to the roars of delight of all Orks in the vicinity. However, those that survive long enough learn to master their powers after a fashion, and can become powerful, if unpredictable, members of a clan.

Weirdboyz on Berin play an important role in the desert clans, as they are able to sense the presence of the great sandstorms that batter the world's surface and can thus guide their clan safely around the destruction. Some are also able to sense water and mineral deposits in the planet's crust, through methods such as casting pebbles into the air and observing where they land, feeling the pull on carved twigs to indicate locations, or reading the patterns in pools of spilled blood.

TABLE 3-7: ORK WEAPONS

Name	Class	Range	RoF	Dam	Pen	Clip	Rld	Special†	Wt	Availability
Berin Choppa	Melee	—	—	1d10+1 R	2	—	—	Tearing, Unwieldy	5kg	Common
Snappa Gun	Melee	3m	S/-/-	1d10+6 R	0	—	—	Living Weapon††, Tearing	7.5kg	Scarce
Buzza Bomb	Thrown	SBx3	S/-/-	1d10+5 R	0	1	—	Blast (4), Crippling (1), Devastating (1), Living Weapon††, Primitive (7)	1kg	Scarce
Rokkit Launcha	Heavy	100m	S/-/-	3D10+3 X	6	2	2 Full	Blast (2), Concussive (2), Overheats	30kg	Rare
Buggy Busta	Thrown	SBx3	S/-/-	2D10+2 X	8	1	—	Blast (1), Concussive (3), Devastating (1)	1.5kg	Rare

†Any Ork weapons in the hands of a non-Ork also gains the Unreliable Quality.

††Living Weapons inflict one additional hit for each Degree of Success on the attack roll.

In battle, a Weirdboy can often be found where the fighting is fiercest, drinking in the rage of his clan and hurling it back at his foes. This is a risky tactic, however, as the sheer volume of Ork psychic energy can prove too much for the Ork psyker, resulting in a catastrophic psychic backlash and the death of all those nearby, including the Weirdboy himself. Many Weirdboyz carry small familiars called Bang Squigs for just such an eventuality. When he feels control slipping and dangerous amounts of power building, he can attempt to force all accumulated energy into this specially bred Squig and then hurl it at the enemy before the inevitable happens. Even if it fails to work properly, it is always a source of great amusement for all Orks that survive the resulting explosion.

Weirdboy (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
40	15	35	45	20	25	30	45	20	—

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Armour: None.

Skills: Intimidate (S), Psyniscience (Per), Survival (Per).

Talents: Berserk Charge, Furious Assault, Iron Jaw, Psy Rating 2, True Grit, Unarmed Warrior.

Traits: Brutal Charge (3), Psyker, Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (+2), Unnatural Toughness (+3).

Weapons: Berin choppa (Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 2; Tearing, Unbalanced).

Gear: Assorted bone charms, tattered robe, bag of 1d5 Bang Squigs†.

Wounds: 14

Total TB: 7



Mob Rule: All Orks produce latent psychic energy that makes them feel more confident and aggressive when they gather in large numbers. For every additional Ork within 10m, the Ork receives a bonus of +10 to resist the effects of Fear and Pinning.

Ork Psyker: Orks do not interact with the Warp in the same way as other Psykers, instead drawing on the latent psychic energy generated by all Orks. As a result of this, an Ork Psyker becomes more powerful as more Orks gather around him. An Ork Psyker can never use any Psychic powers at the Fettered or Push power levels and is treated as an Unbound Psyker. However, his Psy Rating is increased by 1 for each Ork within his Willpower Bonus in metres, which is increased by a further 1 if any of those Orks are engaged in combat.

'Eadbang: If a Weirdboy rolls doubles while making a Focus Power Test, he does not roll on Table 6-2: Psychic Phenomena on page 210 of the BLACK CRUSADE Core Rulebook. Instead, he immediately suffers a hit to the head, inflicting 1d10 + Psy Rating Energy Damage that bypasses Armour and Toughness Bonus.

Ork Powers: Weirdboyz know the following Psychic Powers: Hatestorm, Doombolt, and Hellish Blast.

†**Bang Squig:** If a Weirdboy suffers an 'Eadbang as described above, he can spend his Reaction to try to force the psychic backlash into a Bang Squig, if he has one. The Weirdboy makes a **Hard (-20) Willpower Test**; if he succeeds, he does not suffer the 'Eadbang effect and instead throws the doomed Squig away, hopefully at his enemies. The Squig explodes, dealing 2d10 + Psy Rating Explosive Damage with the Blast (2), Concussive (3), and Devastating (1) Qualities.

THE CONJUNCTION

Despite their differences, one thing unites the planets of Asphodel and Berin: the time when the two worlds draw close together and the internecine warfare that rages across both worlds is put aside. All thoughts of bloodshed and personal glory become dreams of migration and battle against their ancient enemies, for periodically the planet's strange orbits bring them near enough to one another to dominate each other's sky. To the races of the disparate worlds, this has particular significance.

The Shapers of Asphodel believe this time is their ascension, when the worthy rise on wings of fire into the night, forever to take their place beside their ancestors. It is also the time when the undeserving shall be punished for their lack of faith, when Daemons stalk them in their own swamps and only the skilled survive to try again. The Orks of Berin have a far more practical outlook on the matter; they see Asphodel as another planet, one rich in opportunity and plunder. A planet where they can escape the endless sun and wind, where they can begin the glorious path of the Waaagh!

As the planets come to grow in the skies of the other, each race prepares for battle. The Shapers of Asphodel call the Septs to the foothills of Lun, where they select warriors worthy of the migration. Feasting on the stringy flesh of Icebloom mushrooms, hordes of Kroot begin to excrete a waxy resin that protects them from the harsh temperatures and other perils of the journey. Once ready, they clamber aboard the great mountain beasts. Burrowing into the thick fur of the moon moths and deep feathers of the aether wurms, they attach themselves to the creatures using their hook staves and spiked harnesses, and carve open blood lesions in the beasts for sustenance on their journey.

Across the void on Berin, Mekboyz begin to construct great rokkit ships and vast trakta-beam generators to hurl entire strongholds into the sky. Other tribes use their assembled Weirdboyz to tear entire chunks of the planet's surface free and propel the cheering Greenskins, encased in glowing force fields, into the air.

When the planets fill the other's sky, each race commits to its invasion. In a flurry of activity, thousands of rokkits blast off and swarms of great beasts race to the sky. Inevitably, the two invasion forces meet in the black of space and such is the ferocity of their clash that the heavens scream.



Aether wurms tear Ork rokkits asunder with their terrible claws, and entire septs swarm onto Ork vessels, whose defenders gun them down or tear them to pieces in brutal hand to hand combat. Deadly Ork explosives blast moon moths apart, their charred remains fluttering lifelessly into the ever-hungry void. Battles rage across Weirdboy-powered Ork Rokks as the xenos engage each other, neither caring that victory might also spell cold death. Only a handful of those that set out survives this clash to arrive at their destination.

The planetfalls claim hundreds more lives, as crippled Ork rokkits smash into the surface of Asphodel and drained, nearly dead moths plummet burning through Berin's atmosphere. Each invading race finds it is able to seize great swathes of territory, as few remain behind to defend their world. Soon, though, the native xenos briefly unite again to rid their world of the enemy, with each Ork burned to ashes and each Kroot rendered down for fuel. These fragile alliances cannot last though, and as the last invaders are dispatched, the races once again fall into their old habits of genocide and bloodletting. Such behaviour has made both races of this pair of worlds prized as mercenary and slave warriors across the Vortex, their ingrained desire for migration and travel driving their eagerness to leave their own hellish worlds.



CRUCIBLE

"The Immaterial Ones within this wretched place grow constantly in power, as though its torment transforms them into ever-more dangerous entities."

—Brother Ruine of the Scarlet Eye

There are few who can confirm the existence of any worlds within the Lower Vortex, where reality and Chaos churn to form ever-changing arrangements of unclean matter and profane energies. Here, the true nature of any of these places is more a matter of legend than it is of confirmed fact. The Daemon World of Crucible is one such location, its surface altering with the rise and fall of the Dark Gods that command its form.

Ancient tales indicate that control of Crucible passes between the Ruinous Powers in response to a schedule indecipherable to mortal minds. The appearance and entities present twist depending upon which of the Ruinous Powers might control it. However, regardless of control, the core essence is always the same—inflicting agonising pain upon the souls of any mortals who might intrude upon this place.

For reasons unclear, Crucible exists as a perpetual shrine to pain and torment in all its forms. Apocryphal tales suggest that those who dwell within this unnatural place are constantly driven to inflict pain—both physical and mental—upon every entity they encounter. Only insane metaphors and allegories offer any suggestions as to their motivations, or what might bring others to such a hellish realm. Few ever escape, perhaps from a combination of the horrid beings that roam the unnatural lands, and awakening compulsions in those who stay sane long enough which drive them to become one with the planet.

TIMES OF BLOOD

Crucible's physical appearance is in a constant state of flux, though perhaps it is only how mere mortals perceive its form that actually changes. Throughout these many shifts, its appearance and nature seems to violate basic laws of physical existence. Here, gravity can seem more suggestion than fact and light can shift in direction, all depending on the whims of the Dark Gods and the Warpstorms that make up the Screaming Vortex.

Some Navigators posit that as a location near the centre of the Vortex, travel to this place is accomplished as much by a mindset as by physical transit. It may be possible that changes in the location's appearance and nature are linked to comparable changes in the minds of the beings that are present there. Regardless of the rationalisations involved, there are clear differences in the appearance and essential nature of Crucible during those times when different Ruinous Powers are in ascendancy. While the changes are not entirely consistent from time to time, there are generalised trends within the legends. These are likely the best indicators that a traveller could use to identify a location as the Crucible of myth.

For those who follow Khorne's path, it is his time in ascendancy that is of greatest interest. On such occasions, the world's environs become focused upon a culture devoted entirely to warfare and bloodshed. Rivers that might flow with disease or knowledge transform so that they are flooded with gouts of steaming blood. A bordello might become an arena, or a puzzle maze might suddenly become inhabited by Flesh Hounds. Daemons devoted to the Lord of Rage become prevalent within the domain of



Crucible. It is unclear what happens to the Daemons that were present prior to the change in ascendancy, however, just as it is similarly unclear how these other entities reached Crucible. No matter their origin, something about the Crucible compels its residents to mercilessly punish all who set foot on the surface. While this is particularly true for mortals, the world might also serve as a proving ground for Daemons, including those that might be presumed to have achieved some degree of authority.

During Khorne's ascendancy, the nature of the punishment and testing becomes focused entirely upon physical violence. The essence of the conflicts vary substantially, but it is most often the case that both the subject of the test as well as the administrator have equal opportunities to brutally inflict damage to the other. These are seldom matters of simple torture, for there is little martial prowess in such a petty display. It is conflict and carnage that the Blood God demands, and on Crucible the pain must come through combat. Sometimes, this involves a conflict between dozens of warriors in an open battlefield without allies, and the victor might be the last person standing. At other times, a subject might face endless Daemonic legions, all of which gradually become more powerful with each wave.

Ultimately, no matter the manifestation, the essence of Crucible serves to test the devotion of any beings who travel there. This holds equally true for both Daemons and Heretics. Those who are capable of surviving within its unstable environs attract the favour of their dark lords. Those who prove incapable of mastering the location are ultimately shown unworthy to receive any further blessings from the Ruinous Powers, and find themselves lost in eternal torment.

THE POWERS OF CRUCIBLE

Only a few individuals have been brave or foolish enough to claim to have escaped from the confines of Crucible. There are few consistencies in the tales these survivors tell, particularly between supposed survivors who might have visited the location while different Dark Gods held sway. Madmen, historians, and supposed philosophers have attempted to compile these varied tales into a consistent story. The consensus opinion is that when another power comes to ascendance, its reign triggers philosophical and mental changes among the place's inhabitants. All who dare to dwell upon Crucible as a change takes place are transformed so that they embrace these new beliefs with the entirety of their beings. Through the nature of the Warp, these mental changes are reflected by physical transformation as well. In this way, the essence of the location and its inhabitants remains malleable.

The trigger point for ascendancy seems to be the greatest point of contention between the various legends. Many scholars of the Vortex hold that the changes occur when a certain faction achieves some goal, but what the goals might be are still a matter of violent dispute. Members of the Molten Cult, a tenuous group of Dark Adepts exiled from the Hollows, posit that there are particular preordained occurrences associated with the ascendancy of the different factions upon Crucible. These might be somewhat static events, particularly ones associated with different cycles of the Screaming Vortex, and as different elements of the storm reach different points of the Vortex there could be ramifications for different daemoniac factions. It might also be that as human souls reach Crucible, their beliefs and loyalties have a significant impact regarding the allegiance of the location as a whole. Similarly, when souls are slain or convert their allegiance, it might change the ratios. This could serve as one possible explanation for why Crucible's Daemons appear focused on hardening and purifying the loyalties and beliefs of all those who travel to this place, using pain as their method to drive allegiances.

Few, though, would claim any firm understanding of Crucible, especially how it might appear to those who would venture there, either of their own volition or through other powers. Velk'ir sorcerers of Q'Sal sell elaborate charts to predict how the planet twists in coming times; that many have been found exsanguinated or worse could indicate the accuracy of their work. Most simply believe that only the truly mad can begin to grasp how Crucible turns, for certainly no sane mortal can comprehend the minds of the Ruinous Powers.

Even within the different daemoniac factions, there are no clear mechanisms for determining which particular entity is dominant within a given faction. There are dozens of Greater Daemons and Daemon Princes active upon Crucible at any given time, each vying for power amidst the churning world, each struggling for dominance in its own manner. Some seek to draw lesser Daemons to their side with promises of protection or reward, others through threat of destruction or banishment, all perhaps unique characteristics of Crucible. Only one power can be ascendant at a time, but it is a short time (though it might seem aeons for those in painful torment) until another takes control. Khorne is served well, though, as all such conflict empowers the Blood God.

BLOODTHIRSTER

Perhaps the most powerful physical manifestations of warfare within the galaxy—and maybe beyond—each Bloodthirster represents the very essence of brutality. These Greater Daemons of Khorne are avatars of the Lord of Blood, and fully demonstrate his lust for battle, rage, and blood. Every sinew of their massive form is solely devoted to constructing a symphony of destructive force in the name of the Lord of Rage.

As each manifestation of a Bloodthirster has its own characteristics, any physical description is prone to be inaccurate in some way. Most appear massive, standing nearly twice the height of a Land Raider. While humanoid, they are characteristically hunched, so have a much longer reach than even this height might indicate. Wide bat-like wings extend from their upper back, adorned with skulls and chains; their legs end in cloven hooves, and their faces typically have a distinctly canine appearance. Their flesh is the deep red of encrusted blood and interspersed with iron-tipped barbs, and tales speak of a massive axe in one hand and a great whip in the other. Their very presence is an assault on reality; blood weeps from the ground where they stride, and each heavy, panting breath issues red-tinged smoke that burns terrible marks into the surrounding air.



Bloodthirster (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
99	40	75	65	50	48	60	75	25	50

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Wounds: 195

Armour: Iron Hide (All 13)

Total TB: 18

Skills: Awareness (Per), Command +20 (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Daemons, Warp) (Int), Intimidate +20 (WP), Linguistics (All known languages) (Int), Parry +20 (WS).

Talents: Ambidextrous, Berserk Charge, Combat Master, Crippling Strike, Crushing Blow, Frenzy, Furious Assault, Hammer Blow, Heightened Senses (All), Inspire Wrath, Preternatural Speed, Resistance (Psychic Powers), Strong Minded, Swift Attack, Thunder Charge, Two Weapon Wielder (Melee).

Traits: Blood for the Blood God†, Brutal Charge, Daemonic (+6), Fear (4), Daemonic Presence††, Dark-sight, Flyer (10), From Beyond, Size (Massive), The Stuff of Nightmares, Unnatural Strength (+14), Unnatural Toughness (+6), Touched by the Fates (3), Warp Instability, Warp Weapons.

Weapons: Axe of Khorne (Melee; 3d10+25 R; Pen 10; Felling [2], Devastating [3], Razor Sharp, Unbalanced), Whip of Khorne (Melee; 10m; 1d10+25 R; Pen 8; Snare [3], Tearing).

†**Blood for the Blood God:** Creatures of Khorne suffer no penalties from gore and blood—all Critical Effects involving gore and blood (such as requiring an Agility Test not to fall over) do not apply to creatures of Khorne.

††**Daemonic Presence:** All enemies within 25 metres of a Bloodthirster suffer a -20 penalty to Willpower Tests.

Emissary for the Skull Throne: Unless the GM determines otherwise, a Bloodthirster is always accompanied with 1d10 lesser Khornate Daemons, such as Bloodletters (see page 351 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). All Khornate Daemons who can see the Bloodthirster gain the Blademaster Talent and Brutal Charge Trait, if they do not already have them.

Supreme Warrior: When using the All Out Attack Action, Bloodthirsters may make a single Melee Attack that cannot be Dodged or Parried. A Bloodthirster can perform this attack a number of times per combat equal to his Intelligence Bonus (normally 4).



KINSLAYER, HERALD OF KHORNE

Bloodletters are the most common Daemons specifically devoted to the service of Khorne. This frequency should not be taken as a sign that their abilities are somehow lessened, as these creatures are pure manifestations of the Lord of Rage and are amongst the most brutal and devastating warriors in the galaxy. With every swing of their Hellblades, they spread bloodshed and devastation in the name of their dark master.

Even among Bloodletters, some Daemons demonstrate an exceptionally profound talent for destruction, earning the recognition of the Lord of Blood and becoming Heralds of Khorne. These Daemons assume a leadership role among their kind. While usually less powerful than a Greater Daemon, they are justifiably regarded as a significant force to be reckoned with, even among their own kind.

Kinslayer has become one of the most powerful Heralds active on Crucible. When not engaged in a major conflict, Bloodletters typically release their rage upon any opponents available, regardless of their prey's devotion. Ostensibly, this might serve as a portion of their endless preparation for war as well as a way to cull the weakest of their forces. Kinslayer disdains this practice, keeping his followers carefully disciplined. He engages in a never-ending quest to find opponents who have pledged to the other Ruinous Powers. This offers his followers an endless opportunity to utilise their rage to actively weaken the other forces on Crucible. He deliberately herds vast numbers of mortal souls into the incipient battlefields as well, where they can share in the joy of combat through their agonising wounds.

Some believe that Kinslayer receives additional blessings from the Lord of Rage for each Daemon skull he presents to his master. Others watch his ascendancy with baleful senses, trusting that those who have embraced one of the other Dark Gods have surely made Kinslayer a target for destruction.

Kinslayer (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
55	12	45	45	42	35	35	39	17	--

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 25

Armour: None

Total TB: 8

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Dodge +10 (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) +10 (Int), Intimidate +20 (WP), Parry +20 (WS), Survival (Per).

Talents: Battle Rage, Berserk Charge, Blademaster, Combat Master, Crippling Strike, Crushing Blow, Frenzy, Furious Assault, Lightning Reflexes, Swift Attack.

Traits: Blood for the Blood God†, Daemonic (+4), Daemonic Presence††, Fear (2), From Beyond, Size (Hulking), Unnatural Strength (+4), Warp Instability.

Weapons: Hellblade (Melee; 1d10+16 R; Pen 10; Balanced, Power Field, weapon deals +2 Damage for every foe it kills in that encounter).

†**Blood for the Blood God:** Creatures of Khorne suffer no penalties from gore and blood—all Critical Effects involving gore and blood (such as requiring an Agility Test not to fall over) do not apply to creatures of Khorne.

††**Daemonic Presence:** All enemies within 10 metres of a Bloodletter suffer –10 penalty to Willpower Tests.

Daemon Slayer: When Kinslayer attacks any character aligned with a deity other than Khorne, his Hellblade gains the Tearing Quality. Should this be a Daemon, his weapon also gains the Felling (3) Quality.

GORECLAW THE RENDER

Crucible represents a fertile battleground for those Daemons who seek to attain greater blessings in the eyes of the Lord of Rage. Goreclaw the Render is one who has already ascended to the immortal status of Daemon Prince within that unstable locale, a success that has only made him hunger for greater opportunities to spill blood and take skulls in the name of his patron god.

Legend has it that this Daemon Prince was once a Chaos Space Marine who tracked down and slew more than a hundred loyalist Space Marines in hand to hand combat, the latest in a long path to glory that had left thousands of headless Adeptus Astartes across the galaxy. After offering up the last skull to Khorne, the Blood God transformed him into a Daemon Prince, granting him a new form in recognition of his ability to hunt down his prey. Goreclaw now resembles a humanoid Flesh Hound, and leads a pack of those Daemons in an unending hunt to find and slay Space Marines—both loyalists and servants of the Ruinous Powers, for Khorne cares not where the skulls come from so long as are they were taken in violence and bloodshed.

Goreclaw the Render (Master)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
78	59	54 ¹⁰	61 ¹⁴	65	49	82	60	41	83	

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Wounds: 120

Armour: Dense scales (All 7)

Total TB: 14

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness +10 (Per), Command +10 (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) +10 (Int), Intimidate +20 (WP), Parry (WS), Survival (Per).

Talents: Berserk Charge, Blood God's Contempt, Combat Master, Combat Sense, Crippling Strike, Crushing Blow, Disturbing Voice, Frenzy, Furious Assault, Hammer Blow, Killing Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Storm of Iron, Street Fighting, Swift Attack.

Traits: Blood for the Blood God†, Daemonic (+4), Daemonic Presence††, Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear (3), From Beyond, Size (Enormous), Unnatural Strength (+5), Unnatural Toughness (+4), Warp Instability.



Weapons: Claws (Melee; 1d10+13 R; Pen 0; Tearing), Axe of Khorne (Melee; 3d10+13 R; Pen 10; Balanced, Felling [2], Devastating [3], Razor Sharp).

†**Blood for the Blood God:** Creatures of Khorne suffer no penalties from gore and blood—all Critical Effects involving gore and blood (such as requiring an Agility Test not to fall over) do not apply to creatures of Khorne.

††**Daemonic Presence:** All enemies within 15 metres of Goreclaw suffer –10 penalty to Willpower Tests.

Nose for Geneseed: Goreclaw is always accompanied with a pack of 2d5 Flesh Hounds (see page 89). These are particularly adept at recognising the presence of Space Marines, and receive a +20 bonus to any Tests to detect or track such characters.



FLESH HOUND OF KHORNE

Flesh Hounds are great wolf-like Daemons that hunt down and destroy the enemies of the Blood God. They are often unleashed into realspace to pursue those who have earned Khorne's wrath; each is implacable on the hunt and can pursue its target across vast distances. Constantly closing in, their howling often drives their target to madness before the hound's own razor sharp teeth sink into flesh.

Flesh Hounds physically overpower their targets with brutal attacks, savaging them with teeth and claws. Large or particularly well-armed foes (such as armoured vehicles) are encircled instead, with individual Hounds darting in from different directions, worrying at their target until it finally falls from exhaustion or is disabled and unable to move. Once the foe is down, the Hounds rush in en masse for the final kill. Hounds normally hunt in packs, and only the most well-armed and disciplined of groups can hope to face such an assault and survive.

Flesh Hound of Khorne (Elite)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
49	--	45 ⁸	40 ⁸	30	15	60	40	10	--	

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Wounds: 15

Armour: Scaled Hide (all 4)

Total TB: 8

Skills: Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag), Survival (Per).

Talents: Berserk Charge, Crushing Blow, Double Team, Frenzy, Furious Assault, Hard Target, Heightened Senses (All).

Traits: Bestial, Blood for the Blood God†, Collar of Khorne, Daemonic (+4), Daemonic Presence††, Dark Sight, Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear (2), From Beyond, Natural Armour 4, Quadruped, Size (Hulking), Unnatural Senses (30 metres), Unnatural Strength (+4), Warp Instability.

Weapons: Teeth and claws (Melee; 1d10+12 R; Pen 2; Razor Sharp, Tearing).

Gear: Collar of Khorne.

†**Blood for the Blood God:** Creatures of Khorne suffer no penalties from gore and blood—all Critical Effects involving gore and blood (such as requiring an Agility Test not to fall over) do not apply to creatures of Khorne.

††**Daemonic Presence:** All enemies within 10 metres of a Flesh Hound suffer -10 penalty to Willpower Tests.



SLAUGHTERWING, FURY OF THE HEAVENS

The lesser Daemons of Crucible constantly scurry from shadow to shadow, staying clear of the skies. Tales of madmen pass on the legend of a Daemon Prince that had come to master the skies. This prince—Slaughterwing—became renowned for his ability to mercilessly devastate any and all who were bound to the ground. Swooping in at tremendous speeds, he would strike his foes as he flew past, returning only to gather their skulls so that they might be offered up to the Lord of Blood.

Ancient tales suggest that Slaughterwing might have once been a mortal human who was obsessed with the notion of flight. He had idolised the predators of the sky, dwelling upon their ability to prey upon those bound to a planet's surface. Throughout his mortal life, this maniacal warrior mastered the art of mechanised flight, always killing his opponents in Khorne's name. Only after he had traumatised an entire civilisation so that such was their fear of his ravages that none would ever dare to venture beneath the open sky, did the Lord of Skulls grant his blessing upon the champion.

In some circles, this creature is believed to be little more than a legend. However, when a body is found or a soul goes missing, Slaughterwing is often blamed. According to the tales, his wingspan stretches farther than a tank squadron and he wields a truly massive battle axe. Beyond that, he is seldom described as anything more than a red blur that leaves only death in his wake.

Slaughterwing (Master)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
79	55	62 ¹²	60 ¹¹	88 ¹²	54	58	60	47	93	

Movement: 14/28/42/84

Wounds: 101

Armour: Fused Armour (All 8)

Total TB: 11

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Command (Fel), Dodge +20 (Ag), Intimidate +10 (WP), Parry (WS), Survival (Per).

Talents: Battle Rage, Berserk Charge, Blood God's Contempt, Combat Master, Combat Sense, Crippling Strike, Disturbing Voice, Frenzy, Furious Assault, Hard Target, Killing Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Preternatural Speed, Step Aside, Street Fighting, Swift Attack, Whirlwind of Death.

Traits: Blood for the Blood God†, Daemonic (+3), Daemonic Presence††, Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear (3), Flyer (15), From Beyond, Size (Enormous), Unnatural Agility (+4), Unnatural Strength (+6), Unnatural Toughness (+2), Warp Instability.

Weapons: Claws (Melee; 1d10+12 R; Pen 0; Tearing), Axe of Khorne (Melee; 3d10+12 R; Pen 10; Felling [2], Devastating [3], Razor Sharp, Unbalanced).

†**Blood for the Blood God:** Creatures of Khorne suffer no penalties from gore and blood—all Critical Effects involving gore and blood (such as requiring an Agility Test not to fall over) do not apply to creatures of Khorne.

††**Daemonic Presence:** All enemies within 15 metres of Slaughterwing suffer -10 penalty to Willpower Tests.

FURIA

"You've seen what lurks under the dead waters here. Whatever that spawns them from the centre of this world must surely hate all living things."

—Jareen Kolp, survivor of the downed voidship *Endless Vengeance*

Furia's hellish skies stare soullessly down upon a perfect sphere of dark water, floating within the swirling madness of the Screaming Vortex. There is no telling how deep the waters of Furia run; over the centuries many attempts have been made to reach the bottom, all equally fruitless. This has led to the belief in many of the inhabitants of Furia that there simply is no end to the World Ocean. An often-told tale even has it that a void ship once crashed and sank, but the ship's intact saviour-beacon pulsed its continual, remorseless descent into the limitless depths for many years before it finally grew too faint to detect. The final readings indicated the vessel had descended to a depth that would put it far outside the orbit of the planet, still without any sign it was nearing the bottom.

The sky overhead is bleak, and its perpetual cloud cover means that not even stars are visible. The vast emptiness overhead has been known to drive people insane with a sense of immense futility and insignificance. No weather churns the sky or moves the waters, and there are few surface currents to change the immutable skin of the planet. The air is always hot and steamy, humid and oppressive with the dull weight of despair. There is a faint tinge of some vague biological effluvia upon the motionless air, clinging to the back of the throat like an unanswered accusation. The stagnation of the air and of the sad people who populate this tepid, heavy world give a sense of stillness and lethargy that is belayed only by the violence barely contained underneath the waters.

Violent forces constantly churn beneath the surface of the vast ocean, however, giving the lie to the stillness above. These currents are capable of pushing floating villages miles off course in a matter of minutes, while the surface of the ocean, barely rippling, remains strangely calm. On rare occasions, monumental riptides pull entire fleets down into the treacherous waters; here the true masters of Furia strip the vessels bare in moments, allowing the ruined wreckage to sink silently down into the endless blackness below.

BLOOD IN THE WATERS

The native denizens of Furia haunt the inky blackness like vengeful spirits, rendering the entire planet a zone of unrelenting danger and risk. To fall into the waters unprotected means a terrible, violent death at the capricious mercy of any number of savage creatures. One of the most obvious predators of the World Ocean are the Sabre Sharks—long, lithe creatures with pale blue bodies longer than a battle tank and massive, powerful jaws festooned with sword-like teeth. Schools of leaping Dagger Fish make short work of anyone unlucky enough to fall into the water, but they also possess the ability to glide for short periods of time, and are capable of swarming up out of the still water and stripping a small ship of its deck



crew in one flashing pass. Kilometres of Medusa Kelp sit in oily stretches across the surface of the water, like intestines spilled across pools of thickened blood. The kelp instantly paralyses any creature that comes into contact with it, robbing them of all motor function while keeping them gruesomely aware of their predicament and keenly capable of feeling the slightest sensations. Tiny parasites and other creatures calling the kelp beds home then slowly devour the ill-fated prey.

The undisputed lords of Furia, however, are undoubtedly the Leviathans. Enormous mountains of Warp-tainted flesh, the Leviathans' long amorphous bodies are ropey with sinuous muscle, flailing tentacles capable of wrapping an entire village in their grasp, and massive ebon beaks with the strength to crush the hulls of spaceships. Leviathans are not often seen on the surface of Furia, but a horrific flush of red-tinged water known as the Crimson Flow often heralds their approach. No one knows what causes this phenomenon, although many assume it is the grisly remains of a colossal struggle between Leviathans deep beneath the waves. The Crimson Flow is the harbinger of death and despair for the humans on the surface, as the ruddy water drives all of the native wildlife insane with bloodlust and a furious, insatiable hunger. All of this occurs before the dreaded Leviathan surfaces to establish its mastery over all.

There is not a single spit of dry land on Furia, and thus the natives who call the planet home, an unkempt race of humans referred to as Castaways, must fight over a

frighteningly scarce collection of resources. In the absence of fresh water or reliable precipitation, the inhabitants live off the flesh of their catches, saving and drinking the collected blood as the only way to quench their never-ending thirst. These natives live on large floating scrap-towns built from the decaying remnants of starships that arrived on Furia long ago. These human inhabitants are a degenerate horde, their sad lives punctuated with horror whenever the World Ocean's denizens appear to devour them.

Castaways lead a nomadic existence, their large floating scrap-towns at the mercy of the currents. These small colonies are cobbled together from the many pieces of wrecked starships that sometimes bubble to the surface. Most scrap-towns feature a high outer wall of armoured plates surrounding an inner courtyard area of living quarters, rickety workshops, and bare market areas, with a dizzying array of catwalks and gantries suspended above the open lagoons of the inner wards. The most powerful and influential scrap-towns possess a small amount of more modern ranged weaponry, although in many cases these are ancient specimens and poorly maintained. The primary purpose of these weapons is defence against the Leviathans of the deep, but occasionally these communities are called upon to defend themselves from other human settlements as well in the never-ending battle for resources.

THIRST FOR SURVIVAL

Because anything the inhabitants need only ever arrives through the random churn of flotsam and jetsam from the deep, when anything particularly valuable surfaces, a battle is inevitable. For the most part, the Castaways wield only the lowest technologies, jury-rigged melee weapons crafted from the metal bones of ruined spacecraft. Usually these battles are close and bloody, with uncounted casualties being consigned to the ravenous creatures of the ocean. The occasional cough of a rusty chainsword or bark of an autogun invariably marks the presence of a chieftain or warleader of some renown.

Sailing vessels crafted from the scavenged bits and pieces of stranded starships provide the bulk of transportation on Furia. It is not unusual to see a large sailing ship, its hull the sleek shell of a cutter or lander, its masts the support struts or sensor aerials of larger ships, while its billowing sails are the scintillating fabric of grav chutes or solar sails. A few large motorised craft utilise the scant remnant fuels culled from the ruined ships, their dark and smudgy plumes visible for miles in all directions. Even these ships boast masts and sails as well, for it is only a matter of time before the fuel burns out. Among the most powerful men and women of Furia it is not unusual to find small personal watercraft created from the wreckage of bikes and jetbikes found in the dank storage halls of wrecked freighters. These watercraft afford the leaders of the communities and the raiding fleets greater personal mobility in battle as well as a means of escape should the day be lost.

Because of the limited supplies on hand, battles are not uncommon. However, thievery is the preferred means of procurement for most communities. In fact, because of the hardscrabble nature of life on Furia, what little loyalty there is to find on the water planet is only to the immediately family group, and not much even there. It is not unheard of for a man or woman to abandon a family in times of need, taking with them whatever resources might assure them of survival. This appears to be errant cowardice to most denizens of the Screaming Vortex, but it is in fact the doctrine of survival of the fittest in its rawest form. The ultimate reality of any human on Furia is a life of violence, creatures desperate to eat them gliding along at every turn, and surrounded by people who would throw them into the water for a couple of shotgun shells or a scrap of bread. It is a low and desperate life marked by moments of sheerest terror and violence.

The appearance of the rare starship or other wreckage that occasionally floats to the surface of the World Ocean often causes massive battles amongst the various Castaway communities as they fight desperately for the means of survival. The true mystery of Furia, however, is the provenance of these wrecks and the other objects that occasionally come churning to the surface. It is the Leviathans that feed the constant rumours and speculation regarding these wrecks and their source. Clearly Warp-touched and burning with a malevolent intelligence that belies their alien appearance, many assume that the Leviathans are somehow capable of travelling through the Warp, where they prey upon whatever they find there, dragging it back to Furia to feast upon.

Legends speak of violent singularities in sidereal space, vast whirlpools of nothingness that drag in any craft unlucky enough to be caught in their grasp. These vessels are drawn into the singularity and somehow transported to the core of Furia where they are jettisoned with great violence into the World Ocean. Others talk of mysterious paths through the interstices of reality that may link distant Warpstorms with the planetary core, where the victims of the storms are left drifting, shattered and empty. There are almost always survivors on these devastated ships, surfacing with a wrecked ship and then left to the mercies of the World Ocean and its creatures. Sometimes these luckless vagabonds are other than human, and it is not entirely unknown for a vicious xenos predator, an ork Warboss or a Kroot Shaper, for example, to find themselves floating on the currents of the sea only to wreak bloody vengeance upon the Castaways until those sad natives band together to destroy the newcomer.

In the end, there is no way to know what lurks at the centre of Furia. In the crushing pressures and swirling darkness deep beneath the calm surface, some force, power, or phenomenon collects the sad and the lost from across the galaxy and deposits their shattered, devastated shells boiling up out of the inky black. But what causes this, or to what purpose, if any, this power labours, is shrouded in the impenetrable gloom, guarded with some of the most vicious creatures to prowl the Screaming Vortex.

THE CASTAWAYS

Whether living in the precarious hovels of a scrap-town or amidst the desperate crews of a raider fleet, the Castaways of Furia are haunted, wretched creatures. With no obvious mutations, they are nevertheless easily differentiated from the common strand of humanity by their bowed backs and dull eyes. The pressures of a life in constant danger from the violent creatures surrounding them, as well as unvarying deprivation and a culture nearly devoid of the concepts of loyalty and altruism, insure that the merest spark of independence and initiative is beaten out of almost every one of the sad creatures long before they reach adulthood. Nevertheless, they fight like savages when cornered and struggle to their last breath rather than succumb to death.

There exists within the communities of the Castaways a persistent myth that one day a leader will arise capable of delivering them from the misery of their world, or taming their world and turning it into a paradise for humans; the legends never agree on these details, and the people of Furia scarcely care. This paragon of martial virtue is as ill-defined as his ultimate goals, but the vast majority of Castaways believe, even if they refuse to admit this to anyone but themselves. On many occasions, off-planet unscrupulous renegades and warlords have used this myth to control scrap-towns and fleets, bending them to an outside will. Often they search for a particular piece of salvage they believe may wash up upon the planet's World Oceans, or hunt the elusive Leviathans, often a daunting prospect even with the power of an entire fleet or village behind them.

Furia Castaway (Troop)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
38	25	32	31	33	33	38	32	31	--	

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 9

Armour: Scavenged Armour (4 All)

Total TB: 3

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Interrogation (WP), Operate (Surface craft) (Ag) +20, Security (Int) +10, Survival (Per) +20.

Talents: Cold Hearted, Frenzy, Swift Attack, Unarmed Warrior.

Weapons: Battered autogun (Basic; 100m; S/3/10; 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip 30; Reload Full; Unreliable, Scavenged) or similar Unreliable Basic Weapons, Castaway chainsword (Melee; 1d10+5 R; Pen 2; Tearing, Scavenged) or Castaway Improvised Melee Weapon (Melee; 1d10+4; Pen 0; Unbalanced), knife (Melee/Thrown; 1d5 R; Pen 0).

Villages may have the following salvaged weapons for defence, primarily mounted on the outer walls: lascannon (Heavy; 300m; S/--; 5d10+10 E; Pen 10; Clip 5; Reload 2 Full; Unreliable), autocannon (Heavy; 300m; S/3/-; 3d10+8 I; Pen 6; Clip 20; Reload 2 Full; Unreliable), heavy stubber (Heavy; 100m; --/--; 1d10+5 I; Pen 3; Clip 75; Reload 2 Full; Unreliable), harpoon gun (Heavy; 40m; S/--; 2d10+2 R; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload 4 Full; Crippling [5], Primitive [9], Snare [1]).

Gear: Tattered and scavenged clothing, makeshift tools, coveted brass fetishes, fish teeth.

Adapted to Furia: Some Castaways have swam long and deep in the endless seas of Furia, and waters have seemingly welcomed them to life in the World Ocean. They possess the Amphibious Trait; rumours even abound of special denizens, marked for greatness, who not only can breathe underwater, but who the local wildlife is hesitant to attack.

GM Note: Singularly influential or successful Castaways may also be given a Furian Sea-Skimmer for personal transportation across the dread oceans, underscoring their bravery considering the nature of the local fauna. See page 49 for rules.

LEVIATHANS

These colossal sea monsters are warped creatures that could only exist upon a world blessed by the Dark Gods. Most believe Leviathans to be half Daemon and half natural, an unholy collection of nature and Warpspawn that haunt the vast stretches of the World Ocean. Whether they are creatures possessed by Daemons of the Warp, mutated by some brush with the empyrean, or constructs of some dark magi, the beasts are the undisputed lords of their planet, and there is nothing that, when roused, they cannot destroy.

Incredibly violent and aggressive, Leviathans appear as creatures out of nightmare, a foul chimera bringing together the vile, slime-ridden barrel of a giant squid of Ancient Terra with the primeval savagery of an enormous predator of the deep, the majesty of an ancient primordial lizard king and the inhuman intelligence of some dark god out of Mankind's forgotten past. Thick, sinuous tentacles lash out in every direction, each capable of enwrapping the largest vessels to sail the World Ocean. Serrated fangs covering the undersides of the muscular limbs can grip and chew through even the thickest armour. In fact, the teeth found on the inside of the Leviathan's tentacles can be rendered, with patience and skill, into exemplary blades for chain weapons of every description. Renegades from all over the Screaming Vortex journey to Furia for the express purpose of procuring these teeth for just such a purpose.





Leviathans do not appear to be territorial, as they wander freely over the watery planet with no clearly defined pattern. However, they are able to sense scrap-towns from hundreds of miles away and track them for days, attacking as soon as possible with a brutal savagery that suggests some deep and abiding hatred. Only a scrap-town that has secured ancient missile weapons has even the slightest hope of surviving the attention of a Leviathan, and a brutal, violent death awaits any denizens of the scrap-town that does not escape. An important skill successful Castaways cultivate is to know how soon after such an attack a rival scrap-town might be able to swoop in and try to salvage anything useful from the wreckage without attracting the attention of the frenzied creature.

Occasionally two Leviathans attack each other, especially during the Seasons of Blood. The reason for these attacks is unknown, but Leviathans fight with vicious tenacity, destroying anything within miles, and always to the death. The victorious Leviathan never consumes the remains of its victim, but will bellow triumphantly before sinking once more beneath the still waters of the World Ocean. The enormous carcass left behind is often a boon to any scrap-town that manages to secure it, but thousands of native creatures vie for its twisted flesh, sinews like iron cables, and bones with the consistency of steel, all of which sinks beneath the waters once enough of the flesh has been carved away.

Leviathan (Master)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
40	--	64 ¹²	72 ¹³	52	51	56	38	--	45

Movement: 11/22/33/66

Wounds: 500

Armour: Natural Armour (14 All)

Total TB: 13

Skills: Awareness (Int), Survival (Per) +20.

Talents: Berserk Charge, Fearless, Furious Assault, Sprint.

Traits: Amphibious, Dark Sight, Deadly Natural Weapons (Fanged Tentacles and Gaping Maw), Fear (4), From Beyond, Multiple Arms (10), Size (Titanic), Unnatural Strength (+6), Unnatural Toughness (+6), The Stuff of Nightmares.

Weapons: Fanged tentacles (Melee; 2d10+12 R; Pen 5; Felling [2], Crippling [2], Razor Sharp, Snare [2], Toxic [2]), gaping maw (Melee; 4d10+12 R; Pen 8; Felling [8], Crippling [8], Razor Sharp, Toxic [2]).

Master of the Deep: Leviathans are truly titanic creatures and, as such, in melee most Heretics will not be able to combat the creature itself due to its enormous size. In most situations the creature does not even completely surface, attacking from the waters below with only its Fanged Tentacles which can attack up to 20 metres away from each other. With its immense form mostly submerged, the Leviathan can never be reduced to less than 300 Wounds unless its main body is somehow attacked, perhaps through psychic powers or explosives rigged to detonate below the surface. As an aquatic creature, Leviathans take twice normal Damage from Flame or Melta weapons, but gain the Regeneration (10) Trait whilst fully underwater. If faced with ranged weapons with a hope of damaging it, the Leviathan simply submerges and seek easier game, if the prey is lucky. If the creature is feeling determined though, then nothing may save any unfortunates on the roiling surface of Furia.

Wave of Flesh: When faced with a particularly recalcitrant foe, the Leviathan will often retreat and then come roaring in on the attack at its fastest Movement Rate. The target, which must be at least Enormous in Size, is hit with a weapon with the following profile: Melee; 10d10+24 I; Pen 15; Concussive (5). The Leviathan then attacks normally again in the next round.



KURSE

"Aside from actual wars, the Pits of Kurse are the finest entertainment to be found in the Vortex."

—Kamto Lax, Slaver Lord of the *Crow's Flux*

The Dark Age of Technology saw the rise of thousands of worlds filled with splendour and wonder under the auspices of Mankind. Under the curse of technological advancement man stretched forth his dominion of the galaxy and lost the most vital of spiritual connections. Most of these planets were destroyed with the coming of Old Night and the division of darkness and horror that descended with it, falling to powers and influences man had not even begun to understand, neglected in the pell-mell dash towards technological mastery.

The planet Serenis was one such paradise. Knowing unparalleled peace and achievement, it was a fertile world where Mankind's technical mastery and his eternal search for beauty and symmetry had combined to create an ideal landscape that brought technology, nature, and humanity together in one harmonious accord. Under the guidance of a benign global ruling body, civilisation soared to new heights and achievements never before imagined. Warfare was relegated to sport. No longer did men march out against one another and unleash indiscriminate violence upon their world. Instead, district champions fought for honour and glory for their regions in vast arenas with global audiences, their violence harnessed and codified into the greater planetary enlightenment.

Ivory towers and ornate palaces reached into skies so blue they defied description. Generations of rulers, teachers, and pioneers were commemorated in graceful marble statues whose stoic eyes gazed serenely out over a bustling world moving ever-forward to a glowing and hopeful tomorrow. These leaders presided over centuries of peace and abundance, making unprecedented advancements in the mechanical and biological arts. At the time of the Sundering, Serenis was an exemplar of the hope and promise of the Mankind foolishly laid upon the altar of technology.

THE SUNDERING

The Dark Age of Technology ended in a detonation of violence and bloodshed that human eyes had never before witnessed. Star-spanning empires were riven asunder, entire systems disappeared as the Warp boiled across the known universe, dividing Mankind into terrified, isolated pockets of resistance in the night. Some planets, however, were condemned to a far more dire fate, as these isolated mega-storms swallowed them entirely and transported them, in the blink of an eye, to a universe of nightmare and horror.

It was just such a tendril of the Empyrean that snaked out across the void to engulf Serenis, yanking the planet and its moons out of their own reality and depositing them in a realm of madness. A terrified and confused populace tried desperately to make sense of their new situation. Stars familiar for millennia had disappeared from their skies. Communication with the far-flung outposts of empire had fallen silent without warning. Any ships attempting to leave the planet disappeared into the soupy, swirling chaos of their new sky, never to be heard from again.



The men and women of Serenis would be commended for the strength of their faith and convictions in a just universe. But in the dominion that had claimed them, there was nothing but mocking silence. For months after the Sundering, civilisation continued to move forward as all of the powers of science and technology were bent to understanding the incomprehensible. It was only slowly that the reality of their situation dawned upon the poor lost souls of the benighted planet, and the empty hollow of hopeless despair descended upon them.

At first the denizens of the planet assured each other that what had occurred must have some natural explanation. Some hitherto unknown phenomenon, not understood but understandable, had wrenched from them their skies and galaxy. All that was required to re-establish sanity and the galaxy they knew was for enough data to be collected and collated. Trust was placed with the scientists and researchers, who bent their every fibre to understanding the Sundering and discovering a way to reverse it.

But with the loss of their sky and their sun came the slow death and decay of their world. Crops failed and weather patterns were disrupted, wreaking havoc on transportation and communication, and the global civilisation began to shatter beneath the repeated hammer blows against reason and sanity. Fear rose up to consume their hope, and with this unreasoning dread came the very human need to assign blame and exact punishment. As cultures fragmented, blaming each disparate faction for this or that imagined atrocity, tensions rose, and animal fury swept through each enclave and isolated region.

THE WINDS OF KURSE

The bio-chem lakes and Soul Storms are amongst the most dangerous obstacles to confront Heretics attempting to work on the surface of Kurse, both of which should provide serious but different challenges to players seeking glory and treasure.

Bio-Chem Fog: Unprotected Characters exposed to the toxic smogs must make an immediate **Arduous (-40) Toughness Test** or take 2d10 Damage ignoring Armour or Toughness Bonus, and then a **Hard (-20) Toughness Test**, losing consciousness for d5 rounds should they fail. Only sealed powered armour will protect fully from the gases, and any protective measures should be allowed to have a mitigating effect on the tests.

Soul Storm: Any Characters finding themselves caught in a Soul Storm must make a **Hard (-20) Willpower Test**. Should the Test be failed, for the duration of the storm the character's Willpower is reduced by 10 for every Degree of Failure. In addition, the Character will be affected as if possessing the Frenzy Talent, fully engaged, and treating the nearest characters as enemies unless a **Challenging (+0) Perception Test** is passed.

As resources became harder and harder to procure, charges of hoarding, corruption, and graft became commonplace. And with the first outbreaks of widespread disease and famine, the inevitable accusations of enemy action swiftly followed suit.

Stockpiles of ancient weapons were breached, and soon all of the glorious wonders of the Dark Age of Technology were unleashed upon the already tortured world. Test beds for the most destructive powers Mankind had harnessed devastated the planet. Waves of engineered plagues swept the surface of the planet, decimating the biospheres and scouring the planet. Dreaded atomics were detonated in every configuration known to the ancient weaponsmiths, from the refined airbursts that destroyed the technology of entire regions to the brutal efficiency of megaton fusion bombs capable of levelling entire city-states. The furious power unleashed cracked the very mantle of the planet, the crustal plates collapsing into growing lakes of blood red fire that swallowed cities whole. Battle raged overhead, as well, as each faction attempted to wrest control of the planet's moons from their rivals. A particularly savage spread of anti-matter warheads shattered all of the moons in one massive, excessive strike, leaving nothing but a belt of charred and blasted rock orbiting a planet howling for its own blood.

Serenis, had her leaders remained true, had her people hewed to reason and logic, had been in an ideal position to survive the vagaries of the terrible storm. With the technology and ingenuity that had established them as one of the more advanced and accomplished worlds, their civilisation may well have survived even the madness of the Immaterium. Instead, however, they surrendered to Mankind's basest instincts, and only bloody insanity was their reward. The most brutal, powerful factions rising from the ashes clamped down upon the dwindling resources with an iron control. Institutional

trophy taking was initiated, with millions of skulls culled from the battlefields and devastated cities across the planet, housed in enormous ossuaries dedicated to the glory of victory. The world, engulfed in the Warpstorm, hurtled through space and time, the fury of the great ocean of the Empyrean battering the wounded planet. Burning in an inferno of hatred and violence, the passion of her inhabitants called through the Immaterium, and were answered.

THE AGE OF KURSE

The smouldering cinder that had been the paradise world of Serenis hurtled through a howling rift in reality, crashing into the Screaming Vortex, a blasted and shattered shadow of its former glory. Time and space are elastic in the Sea of Souls, and as such there is no way even the most gifted sorcerer can ever know how long the tortured world had fallen through the ruination of the Warp. The desiccated corpse world that had once been Serenis came to rest amongst the Gloaming Worlds in ages now lost to man, as if it had ever drifted their amongst the others. It was now known as Kurse.

The planet bears no resemblance to its former self. A massive hole, like a single baleful eye, reveals the guttering magma core through an enormous crater, vast cracks in the crust of the planet reaching out in glowing tendrils half way across the world. From orbit, the planet has a mottled appearance, ochres and mouldering greens brushed through the dominant reds of the desert wastes. Lakes of fire reach across the blasted landscape, remnants of ancient super weapons whose flames have yet to die out despite the death of the civilisation that spawned them. Isolated regions of jungle crouch with a strange fecundity amidst the ruination, their dark shadows home to all manner of twisted and vicious creatures, the glorious descendants of the menageries and personal collections of some of the most gifted genetic artisans in the history of the galaxy.

Across vast swaths of the planet, appearing as mere desert flats from orbit, can be found entire plains covered with the bones of the dead. For miles in every direction, often marking the sites of ancient cities, lie carpets of skulls, staring up at the Screaming Vortex in silent horror and recrimination. These are the sites of the ancient ossuaries, broken open in the final cataclysm of violence and destruction that marked the planet's final fall from grace. The sound of the planet's haunted winds blowing dismally through the eyeholes of millions of skulls has been known to cause even the strongest Heretic to seek the comfort of insanity.

In low-lying regions, pockets of hundreds of bio-chemical weapons lay untouched for millennia, ragged and tattered fog banks lethal to even the most protected adventurer. It is these clouds, churning and boiling in their cauldron valleys, that have replaced the ancient beauty of Serenis. The gases and fumes comprise every shade of every colour of the rainbow visible to the human eye and thousands more besides. These colours constantly shift and swirl into each other, inviting any who look upon them to enter and taste of their mystery. Local tribes hold contests of battle and combat near such valleys, and those losers unlucky enough to survive their failure are often thrown into the fog, never to be seen again.

GLORY IN THE PITS

The gladiatorial matches in the Pits of Kurse should be sources of adventure and coin for Heretics willing to brave the Shattered Moons, but brave warriors willing to face off against the many vicious champions and creatures of the pits can earn themselves Infamy as well. In order to track a fighter's success in the pits, both within their own fights as well as with the fickle crowds, the following system is included below. Game Masters wishing to make the fighting pits a particularly central focus of their adventures should feel free to adapt, adjust, or expand on these simple rules as much as they wish.

The Match: Within each fight a warrior's success with the crowd is tracked with the use of Match Points. A character receives one Match Point for every Called Shot that successfully lands on his opponent, with the GM awarding additional points for particularly showy or well-described called shots, or for other impressive feats. Match Points may be spent during the fight for re-rolls or to purchase one-time uses of the following Talents: Combat Master, Crippling Strike, Precise Blow, Swift Attack, Whirlwind of Death, Blademaster. The player should track the total number of Match Points awarded in each fight whether they were spent or not. Most fights in the pits of Kurse are to the death, so the winner of each Match is whichever character survives, but the GM can also stage fights until one fighter is unconscious or a certain number of Match Points is accrued.

Reputation: The successful conclusion of a Match converts all Match Points a character earns into Reputation Points. These points should be used to judge how successful a character has been in previous matches for the purposes of odds as well as selection of opponents. A player may convert Reputation Points into Infamy upon leaving the Shattered Moons of Kurse, at a rate of 5 Reputation Points for one point of Infamy. Keep track of total Reputation still for the purposes of any future fights.

A Foe Worthy of a Saga: The Cultori and Rudiarus make every effort to see that the matches make for good spectacles, and that most opponents are at least moderately evenly matched. These opponents can be human, Pit Brute, or even xenos. Keep in mind whether the Heretic is human or a Chaos Space Marine, and plan the challenge accordingly. A Renegade should not be matched against a Juggernaut, for example, nor should a Chosen be matched against a single Cult Zealot.

Aid from the Darkness: It is entirely against the written and unspoken laws and customs of Kurse for outside agents to aid a pit fighter during a match. However, when the compatriots of a particularly successful gladiator are able to assist their friend without being caught, there is a high level of secret admiration for their ability. A Heretic's companions may choose to attempt such clandestine assistance, through psychic powers, crowd manipulation, and other indirect means. A GM should approach this type of effort with an open mind, set difficulties accordingly, but there should be dire consequences if Heretics are caught doing this.

Pit Cryer: These play a large role in the most successful fighting pits, and are often as famous among the fans as the fighters. Consummate showmen, each knows how to work a crowd and steer the fight so as to most please the screaming mob. If the GM allows it, a PC can adopt the role of Pit Cryer in a match. If at any time a fighter has more Match Points than his opponent, to suitably increase crowd reaction the Pit Cryer can direct the GM to pick out and assign that fighter a single use of one of the Talents purchasable through Match Points. Many of these marquis announcers also have famous catchphrases that they say often and loudly, such as Barciphah Claront's infamous "Let there be BLOOD!" chant, and players acting as Pit Cryers are heavily encouraged to create their own catchphrases to fully create the atmosphere of the pits of Kurse.

But even amidst the rampant mutating jungles, the churning lakes of flame, and the sluggish fogbanks of bio-chem death, the ruins of Serenis That Was can still be seen. Thrusting up through the red dust deserts are the cadavers of ancient statues, their once serene features worn away by time and the desert winds, their once wise eyes now hollow pits of empty despair. The shells of delicate towers and intricate palaces can still be seen in majestic isolation, covered in the rampant, lustrous greenery or sitting in the shadows of deep valleys, poisoned for obscuring all details. In some areas, especially nearer to the Great Eye, stand mute testaments to the works of the ancients: roadways laid down in millennia past stretch for unbroken miles, their foundations supporting them over lakes of burning fury that have eaten away all else, while others reach across gaping chasms, the lands upon which they once travelled having tumbled down into the burning maw aeons ago.

Lost among the devastation and the mutated regrowth, remnants of the forces that destroyed this once beautiful planet can still be found. Rumours abound throughout the Screaming Vortex of depots and research stations buried deep beneath the planet's surface. The wealth of empires must still be buried deep

beneath the dust and ash, depositories of ancient technical lore that could easily establish an erstwhile champion of the Ruinous Powers as a force to be reckoned with. Although no windfalls have ever been reported, the rumours are always rampant, turned over afresh with each new item of destruction that surfaces within the Vortex. The legends still bear sufficient force to draw the greedy and the unwary from all over the Vortex, and neither the murderous vegetation, the vicious beasts of the jungles, or the cannibalistic mutant tribesmen that now call the tumbled-down ruins home are deterrent enough to keep the seekers at bay.

The miracles and wonders of the Dark Age of Technology still call to those brave enough to dare the tortured landscape and vicious denizens. Journeying across the tortured corpse of this long-dead paradise is no easy task, however, and those who come here seeking the ancient treasures of those long-dead adepts must brave untold dangers in their quest for treasures that may not even exist. Multifarious challenges arise to meet each Heretic on their path to glory, but even the most sceptical naysayers cannot deny that somewhere amid the ash, skulls, and dust, some remnant of the strength that once was Serenis must still remain.

The rage-filled natives, known commonly as the Vexed, are the mutated inheritors of the once great planet. Vicious, territorial tribesmen, the Vexed do not know fear, and they suffer no outsider to desecrate their sacred sites. Guarding the overgrown jungles and vast plains are mutated animals of nearly every description, howling for blood and eager to test their mettle against anyone wandering into their range. Churning seas of chemical poisons cover any low-land ruins, while rad storms and lakes of fire threaten to burn anyone foolish enough to make planetfall unaware.

The strangest and most disconcerting phenomena to haunt Kurse by far are the violent atmospheric tempests known locally as Soul Storms. Brutal winds and cataclysmic electrical detonations herald the approach of these terrible events. At the heart of the Soul Storm is a wave front of abrasive dust, the irradiated ashes of the planet's dead. Some say the tortured howl of the winds contains the spirits of all those who died in the great cataclysms that convulsed the planet after the Warp claimed it for its own, and that should one listen carefully enough, and long enough, the secrets of the world could be revealed. However, to most who have tried, all that is vouchsafed them is a burning anger and a bloodlust the match of any berserker in the galaxy. Most succumb, falling upon their companions in an orgy of death and dismemberment, while others, riven of their senses and bereft of even the will to live, wander empty and alone until death finds them; never a long wait on the hell world of Kurse.

High above the tormented world of Kurse, girding it as an ancient belt around the swollen belly of a dying giant, is the debris field that was once the planet's many moons. Although the vast majority of the wreckage is made up of small chunks of blasted rock, still jagged and sharp from their initial splintering, there are, among the floating ring of ruin, larger bodies whose steady rhythm around the planet have allowed for them to be chained together and made habitable through the exhaustive efforts of the Exospectre of Forge Castir, in the Hollows.

The adepts of Castir gathered several different collections of larger rock, chaining them together with massive, groaning links sunk deep into the fractured rock. Many of these asteroids have been hollowed out, engorged with slave pens, chambers of unspeakable torture and experimentation, and shrines to a thousand blood-stained gods. The minions of the Exospectre raised elaborate force domes to surround the curved surfaces of the largest, containing fighting pits excavated from the planet below and transported, stone by stone. The dark adepts maintain the life preserving technologies that guard against the void, keeping the rowdy denizens of the Shattered Moons fed and breathing. However, they seldom take an active role in conflicts within these domains, allowing the men and women drawn here to work out their own problems, either in the conference halls of the lower levels, or in the pits themselves.

THE PITS OF THE SHATTERED MOONS

The fighting pits of Kurse are the main attraction to this forsaken world. The legends of ancient archeotech notwithstanding, there is one thing any rising warlord in the Screaming Vortex can be assured of acquiring from the blasted world, and that is fighters. The pits of Kurse perform several roles for the people of the Shattered Moons, providing a proving ground for warriors whose prowess is known throughout the Gloaming Worlds, as well as entertainment for audiences who travel from throughout the Screaming Vortex and beyond. The gladiatorial matches in the fighting pits, and the training required to do well there, are seen as one of the major sources of trained, bloodthirsty warriors for hire.

The habitats of the Shattered Moons are lawless and chaotic places. A shadowy figure known only as the Rudiarus leads a loose coalition of warlords, proctors, and provides what law there is, maintaining a minimum level of calm within which the business of the pits and the trading houses may work. Rumours run rampant concerning the Rudiarus, but most agree that he is a former pit slave, sold into blood service to some warlord or another, who returned to Kurse after winning his freedom in the wider galaxy. Some whisper that this freedom came at the cost of his master's life, a tale that serves to give many a bridling pit slave a glimmer of hope in their imprisonment.

Several clearing houses, including the Floria, the Bagetelle, and Vrush serve to collect warbands from the planet's surface, providing them to the highest bidders among the Shattered Moons. Warriors so collected may be purchased as individual fighters all the way up to entire mutant warbands. The ferocity and bloody-mindedness of the mutants of Kurse is known far and wide, and they have served as bodyguards, shock troops, and entertainment for centuries uncounted.

An entire circuit of fighting pits have been erected among the wreckage of the Shattered Moons for the express purpose of training and showcasing these brutal warriors. However, for many years now the pits have attracted warriors from all over the Screaming Vortex who go there expressly to test themselves against the deadliest fighters, to build their reputations among the rising warlords of the Vortex, or to prove something to them.

A flourishing gambling industry has also developed around the fighting pits of Kurse, and a progressively violently minded clientele journey to the habitats of the Dark Adepts for the sole purpose of carousing among the seedy dives and laying high-stakes bets on the bloody sport of the pits. Quite often the rowdy behaviour of these gamblers rises to a level seen as threatening to the real work of the pits and the Rudiarus, often after vast fortunes have been lost, but the swift intervention of highly trained warriors and infamous pit fighters, all in the employ of the shadowy lords of the Shattered Moons, has always proven sufficient to quell any such boisterous behaviour.



Various houses, known as Cultori, have risen to supervise the training of the pit warriors. Quite often, expeditions embark for the surface of the planet in a fleet of slapdash shuttles, returning with entire tribes of savage warriors who lack only the final polish of the Cultori to convert them into the berserk mercenaries renowned the Vortex over. The youngest, most violent candidates are almost always sold to hulking, mysterious strangers to the habitats who arrive in unmarked vessels, keep to themselves their entire time among the Shattered Moons, and leave as soon as they have secured their charges. These mystifying wanderers go about cloaked and cowed at all times, speaking only through intermediaries in all their dealings among the habitats.

Among the strangest visitors to the Shattered Moons are those of xenos origins. These strangers, often swathed in concealing layers of exotic fabric, come to the habitats as spectators as well as prospective fighters. Some Eldar, known for their cruelty and bladework, in particular seem to have developed an exquisite taste for the pits, seeming to find the atmosphere and raucous celebrations of death and blood as worthy of their attention. Many have been the local favourites, fighting their way up to the highest levels of blood-fame, only to be cut down in their prime by a lithe, leather-wrapped alien fighter wielding strange and unusual weapons.

THE VEXED

The most numerous inhabitants of the blasted world of Kurse are the bands of wretched mutants known as the Vexed. Descendants of the original inhabitants of lost Serenis, these nomadic tribes wander the desolate landscape living off the mutated vegetation, hunting the enormous, savage predators that roam the planet's surface, and often each other. The inheritors of mighty creatures that once strode across the planet like mortal gods, the only legacy the Vexed carry forward from their illustrious forebears is the mindless rage that afflicted them in their last, twisted moments.

These bands identify by local, family-affiliated clans and hold very little loyalty beyond that. There is no awareness of the wider scope of the Screaming Vortex, of the galaxy their ancestors helped to tame, or even the entirety of the world of Kurse upon which they roam. These tribal units, although savagely loyal within their family bonds, happily sell defeated clans into slavery to Dark Adepts of the Exospectre or flesh-mongers of the Shattered Moons. Although the adepts of Forge Castir frown upon such behaviour, occasionally powerful individuals flout their authority and make unapproved expeditions to the surface to pick and choose their own candidates, to hunt the beasts of the jungles, or to search for invaluable lost treasures of a forgotten age.

The Vexed are twisted mutants, many sporting extra muscular arms sprouting from their backs or sides. Victims of their own uncontrolled rage, the Vexed are incapable of higher organised effort and exist at a subsistence level, hunting for meat and stealing what else they need from weaker clans. Most are the size of well-muscled men, wielding primitive weapons or vicious blades of mutated bone that have grown out of the wrists of several of their arms. Caught alone and fought in single combat, most Heretics would have no trouble against a Vexed, but there is very little that may withstand a concerted charge of these fearless warriors.

The Vexed (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
22	18	36	34	38	20	32	21	15	--

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 12

Armour: Tough Hide (2 All)

Total TB: 6

Skills: Intimidate (WP), Parry (WS).

Talents: Frenzy, Lightning Attack, Two Weapon Wielder.

Traits: Natural Weapons, Multiple Arms (4), Natural Armour (2), Unnatural Toughness (+3).

Weapons: Bone-blades (Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 2; Felling [1], Tearing), vicious bite (Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 0; Primitive [6], Toxic [1]).

Gear: Filthy rags, fetishes, brass trinkets.

Born to the Blade: The Vexed learn from birth to utilise every advantage they have in combat. As such, they may fight with a bone blade in each of their four hands at a total -10 penalty to their Weapon Skill.

PIT BRUTES

Rare among the denizens of Kurse are the hulking savages known simply as Brutes. These towering hulks of mutated flesh are often roughly the size of an Ogryn, but lack the refined tastes and developed intelligence of their more famous abhuman cousins. On the surface of Kurse, the Brutes are cast out of their home tribes at adolescence. These Brutes, once cast out, make their best way in a harsh world, wandering aimlessly, fighting whatever they encounter, eating whatever they find, and boiling with an unfocused, ravening anger.

The masters of the Fighting Pits prize the Brutes as both pit fighters and body guards. These giant creatures are gifted warriors, fighting on the planet's surface with improvised weapons such as clubs or spears. In the service of the Shattered Moons, they are often equipped with massive chain weapons and trained in lethal and showy combinations for the pleasure of the roaring crowds. The Pit Brutes particularly favour the brutal chain hammer, a massive warhammer with a broad head housing multiple rows of buzzing chain teeth. In the powerful hands of a Brute, the chain hammer conveys a thunderous impact upon the target, which the savagely spinning chain blades then chew to a bloody pulp.



Pit Brute (Troop)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
42	22	45	49	32	22	29	18	05	--

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 18

Armour: Tough Hide (4 All)

Total TB: 8

Skills: Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S) +20, Parry (WS), Survival (Per) +20.

Talents: Berserk Charge, Deflect Shot, Flesh Render, Furious Assault, Frenzy, Sure Strike, Two Weapon Wielder.

Traits: Brutal Charge (2), Fear (1), Natural Armour (4), Size (Hulking), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (+4), Unnatural Toughness (+4).

Weapons: Chain halberd (Melee; 1d10+11 R; Pen 3; Tearing), or two chainaxes (Melee; 1d10+12 R; Pen 3; Tearing), or chain spear (Melee; 1d10+11 R; Pen 3; Tearing) and pit net (Melee; 3m; 1d5+8 R; Pen 0, Snare [2], Balanced), or chain hammer (Melee; 2d10+14 R; Pen 4; Concussive [2], Tearing, Unwieldy).

Gear: Show Armour, fetishes, trinkets.

Blood for the Crowds: If the Pit Brute makes a Called Shot and hits, if his next action is also a Called Shot then it is at +10. If the second Called Shot hits he may make a third consecutive Called Shot at +20, causing double Damage.

KURSIA WARP HOUNDS

Perhaps the most iconic of all the mutated beasts of Kurse are the massive animals known as Warp Hounds. These enormous creatures are prized both as prey during illicit hunts on the surface as well as their inevitable appearance in the fighting pits. They also are favoured as guard animals for those warlords and adepts able to pay for their training and upkeep. There is a fabled connection between Kursian Warp Hounds and the Serenisian War Hounds of legend, but it is unknown if they are direct descendants of these noble creatures, or of their handlers, or an unholy, Warp-spawned amalgam of the two. It is clear that these hounds are cunning and devious, however, often seen as more intelligent than the human heirs of Serenis.

Warp Hounds are truly enormous beasts, nearly the size of an armoured tank. Covered in hides that seem to incorporate leather, fur, and scales in a confusing conglomeration, their skin often proof against all but the most modern of weapons. In appearance, the hounds seem to trace their origins back through canine, lizard, and the ancient Terran rhinoceros, and its fearsome visage most likely spurred the legends that speak of these creatures as servants of dark masters, often sent to punish the weak-willed and the cowardly. Further abilities to sniff out psykers, and a rumoured resistance to psychic powers, have never been substantiated.

Kursian Warp Hound (Troop)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
38	--	56	42	37	26	46	38	10	--

Movement: 10/20/30/60

Wounds: 32

Armour: None

Total TB: 8

Skills: Ambidextrous, Awareness (Int) +20, Climb (Ag), Dodge (Ag) +10, Survival (Per) +30.

Talents: Berserk Charge, Fearless, Furious Assault, Sprint, Two Weapon Wielder.

Traits: Brutal Charge, Dark Sight, Deadly Natural Weapons (Jaws and Talons), Fear (1), Quadruped, Resistance (Psychic Powers), Size (Enormous), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (+5), Unnatural Toughness (+4).

Weapons: Adamantine talons (Melee; 1d10+10 R; Pen 2; Razor Sharp, Tearing), dagger-fanged jaws (Melee; 2d10+14 R; Pen 4; Crippling (2), Razor Sharp, Tearing, Toxic [1]).

Leap of the Hunter: If a Warp Hound hits with both Adamantine Talon Attacks, its dagger-fanged jaws attack is +20 to its roll to hit.

GM Note: Kursian Warp Hounds can also be taken as a minion for Heretics with the Minion of Chaos Talent and a SB of 5 or higher who desire a beast that only can guard one's life, but also impress one's enemies.

MUTILATORS

Easily the strangest and most lethal beings seen in this system are the hulking entities known only as the Mutilators, enormous creatures encased in shells of armour festooned with bony ridges and sweeping horns. Although the general shape and outline of the armour is reminiscent of Legion Tactical Dreadnought Armour, the living sheaths of ceramite and bone have evolved and developed somehow so that no two Mutilators look the same, and no hint of their origins can be discerned. Watching the bio-mechanical processes that bring forth the enormous, lethal weapons of myth and legend from their grasping gauntlets is enough to show any observer that these creatures are something truly terrible and unique unto themselves.

No one in the Screaming Vortex knows from whence Mutilators come. They are sometimes seen working with various warbands or renegades throughout the region, although how they were enticed into service is a secret yet to be revealed. Outside of these sightings they are rare indeed, and the location most likely to host one of their rare appearances is the blasted planet Kurse. There is no record of them ever arriving or departing from the habitats or the planetary surface on any known transports. How they might travel through the Vortex is a mystery; some theories speak of secret, clandestine space craft relays that shuttle them about, while others, given far less credit, confer upon the creatures the ability to warp-walk through time and space.

Of even greater concern and wonder are the nature and provenance of these warriors. Again, only myths and legend provide even an inkling of their origins. Some say they are Daemon-forged Space Marine mutants, whom the capricious whims of the Ruinous Powers have changed into a form more

pleasing to the bloodthirsty cries of the Warp. Others say Mutilators were created from the stuff of the Warp itself as avatars of violence and personal death. Some renegades claim that the Mutilators are favoured warriors of the Legions whose dedication and commitment have brought their bodies and their wargear into symbiosis, creating the perfect amalgam of warrior and weapon. Whether any of these tales, or all of them, are true, nothing is more certain than the cold lethality of these enormous warriors and their mutable weaponry.

Mutilators come to Kurse for reasons of their own, never uttered to mortal ears. When they do arrive, however, they immediately wreak havoc amidst the gambling population, who must scramble to rearrange their financial dispositions to cover a suddenly dry environment. At the pits these creatures dominate all opposition with such brutal efficiency that little money is to be made, for few are willing to cover wagers against them. They appear without fanfare or notice, roaring with rage until they are granted a foe, and then, when the enemy is inevitably obliterated, leaving for fresh blood elsewhere. On the surface of Kurse itself they rampage across the blasted landscape, tracking down the most ferocious of mutant beasts for titanic combat. It has been known for a single Mutilator to corner an entire mutant tribe and then slaughter them in a frenzy of blood and fury. Although rare, these tales are sacred to the clans, many of whom worship Mutilators as aspects of the bloody gods that must rule their world.

Darker legends say the monsters scour the planet's surface in search of ancient weapons of power, so potent that the devastating weapons the creatures themselves create pale in comparison. Others whisper that perhaps somewhere on the planet is a facility for the creation of such beings, or for their care or modification. Only one thing is certain: there is no deadlier creature on or above Kurse than the brutal Mutilators.



Mutilator (Elite)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
40	35	50	55	38	35	38	36	05	10	

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 48

Armour: Warped Ceramite (13 All)

Total TB: 12

Skills: Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Archaeotech, Warp, Daemonology, Traitor Legions) (Int) +10, Intimidate (S), Parry (WS) +10.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Ancient Warrior, Battle Rage, Berserk Charge, Combat Master, Counter Attack, Crushing Blow, Flesh Render, Frenzy, Killing Strike, Two Weapon Wielder.

Traits: Brutal Charge, Daemonic (+2), Dark Sight, Fear (2), Regeneration (2), Size (Hulking), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (+5), Unnatural Toughness (+5).

Weapons: Any two of the weapons listed under the Violent Metamorphosis special rule below.

Gear: None.

Violent Metamorphosis: Mutilators can form a number of weapons from their Warp-touched bodies, each an unholy amalgam of their original flesh, ancient armour, and the stuff of Daemons. Mutilators manifest two weapons at any

given time, chosen from the list below. As a Half Action, a Mutilator can reform one of their current weapons to one other weapon, also chosen from the list. GMs are free to adopt other weapons should circumstances dictate.

Standard Mutilator weapons are the following: Legion chainaxe (Melee; 1d10+17 R; Pen 3; Tearing), Legion chainfist (Melee; 2d10+17 E; Pen 10; Powerfield, Tearing, Unwieldy), eviscerator chainblade (Melee; 1d10+17 R; Pen 5; Tearing, Unbalanced), lightning claw (Melee; 1d10+18 E; Pen 8; Power Field, Proven [4]), Legion power axe (Melee; 1d10+20 E; Pen 7; Power Field, Unbalanced), Legion power fist (Melee; 2d10+17 E; Pen 9; Power Field, Unwieldy), power mace (Melee; 1d10+18 E; Pen 4; Power Field†), or Legion power sword (Melee; 1d10+18 E; Pen 6; Power Field, Balanced).

Aura of Pain: Mutilators are completely covered in razor sharp spikes, chainblade extrusions, and other implements of violence. In combat, the Mutilator automatically inflicts an Incidental Hit (Melee; 1d10+10; Pen 3; Rending) against any opponent making direct physical contact with the vicious killer, such as a Grapple Action.

The Limits of Steel: Even the arcane powers of the Mutilators know their confines. If, when in battle, a Mutilator's weapon is destroyed, he cannot manifest that weapon again during that encounter.

†If the Mutilator manifests nothing but a single, two-handed Power Mace, the massive weapon gains the Concussive (1) Quality.

MESSIA

"I know not who the mutants serve, but some fool god must love something for it to be so hard to kill."

—Kurst Woebane, Drill-rig commander

A toxic planet near the outer reaches of the Gloaming Worlds, Messia is best known for its unusually long day and the desperation of its promethium miners. With an unusually slow rotational speed—likely due to the machinations of the Screaming Vortex—each day on Messia takes over a year to complete. The only human habitations are cities upon each pole, where they are forever trapped in a state of twilight. In order to heat their structures and provide basic power, these cities constantly send teams of prospectors to travel across the planet's surface in search of additional promethium resources. As the miners travel the desolate landscape, they must regularly face and overcome the massive hordes of mutants that constantly shamle across the surface and change form with the rising and setting of the sun.

MEKONTA

Located atop Messia's north pole, Mekonta is a city whose culture is entirely focused upon physical domination, cunning manipulation, and the notion that force of arms is the only way to secure power. A huge majority of the city's population consist of slaves. The lucky ones participate in blood sports within the city's arenas, to provide entertainment. The remainder rebuild the city as the dayside is constantly shattered under its star's merciless light.

A large part of Mekonta's society is based upon its system of government and inheritance, and the right to own property and govern must be obtained anew in every generation. The ideas of nurture and compassion are virtually nonexistent within Mekonta; once children reach the age of maturity—fifteen years—their rite of passage consists of being exiled from their parents' homes. There is no system of inheritance and when an individual dies, his neighbours immediately begin to fight over his assets. Those who prove dominant through combat and treachery gain control of the property; those who fail in their efforts often become the new owners' slaves.

The city's press gangs constantly roam the streets, seeking out the indigent. These well-armed groups check virtually everyone for their identification, killing those who resist and displaying the bodies as trophies of their skills. Those who do not have identification are immediately added to Mekonta's slave population and sent to work, typically in the mines, refineries, or the city's constantly damaged structures.

The city deliberately provides its slaves with inadequate shelter and too little food to fend off starvation, creating an incredibly volatile environment. Many sicken and die of malnutrition, disease, or from exposure to the elements. The strongest, however, seize what they need from the weakest. This culls the population, so that the city need not care for those who are seemingly incapable of caring for themselves. Prior to death, these weakest of slaves are often sent to the arena, where they usually die in the blood sports.



Of course, such a hostile environment frequently leads to insurrection; so frequently, in fact, that the city's core principles depend upon it. Each landholder maintains weapons that are far more sophisticated than those available to the common slaves. Rebels wielding sharpened sticks face authorities armed with shock truncheons and heavy stubbers. Once a riot is stamped out—there are hundreds each year—the slaveholders seize the leaders. These slaves are surrendered to the arena, where they enter the blood sport competition. Because they have typically demonstrated some degree of competency in a combat situation, they are provided primitive weapons to best exhibit their skills before the masses.

In addition to providing entertainment, the arena rewards those who manage to triumph within the tournaments. Victors are granted far more than just their freedom. The reward for winning a minor tournament includes placement within one of the city's numerous mining expeditions, so that they may travel out into Messia's wilds to prospect for promethium amidst the mutant hordes.

Almost all citizens attained that rank after proving themselves in successful expeditions. After returning laden with promethium and other riches, the triumphant leaders are rewarded with property rights and citizenship—bartered in exchange for the harvested resources. Lesser members of an expedition might horde their shares, working towards eventually attaining citizenship through surviving additional drilling expeditions.

BARONS OF LEGEND

Legends from Messia's past suggests that the drill-barons may have once held far more power than they do today, something that the cities pray never happens again.

According to one legend, it was Magyar the Cruel who began the drilling process and the tales say that this baron was the one who created the planet's mutants, seeking new liquid promethium strains from their dissolving flesh. Some tales state that Magyar eventually fell prey to the very disease he introduced, and that he yet haunts drill expeditions as a leader of the mutant hordes he created.

Some years ago, the self-styled Lord Pinying the Dominant formed a guild of drill-barons and attempted to hold the city of Mekonta hostage to his demands. Though he could not create an alliance of all of the clans, his small fleet of drill-rigs and warbikes was large enough to embargo the city for four months. He was only defeated when the city agreed to reward the other clans with double payments if they brought them Pinying's head. The head is paraded through the blood arenas at the start of each opening match.

Only the drill-barons remember the Faceless One, for no city ever claimed a sighting of his rusted rig. He lived only for the wastes, and attacked any other clans he encountered for sustenance. Some claim he was a mutant that gained sentience, others that he was a former baron driven to bloody vengeance after being left to die. No one claims to have seen him die though, and mysterious burning wreckage indicates his obscured visage still haunts the outlands.

ZANOK

The ramshackle city of Zanok is located at Messia's south pole. Twin to Mekonta, its star's harsh light and the planet's furious weather devastate it during each long day, and is rebuilt as each night begins. According to legend, a group of slaves founded the city when they chose to establish a new home rather than return with their expedition harvests to Mekonta. The legend is believable as Zanok has neither a slave population nor any system of central authority. Ostensibly, the residents have full freedom to pursue their lives in any manner they see fit. Tragically, the combination of rugged environment and lack of central authority dictates that they seldom have an opportunity to do so.

Considering Messia's hostile environment, it comes as no surprise that the freedoms available to all who dwell within Zanok are often abused. Everyone who lives within its confines are granted full and equal rights, and expected to respect one another's privileges. However, there is no central power structure in place to see that those rights are preserved. As a consequence, the ideals that founded the city see little practical application.

Any time some individual or group commits their labours to building a functional structure, that same group must commit resources to defending and maintaining it for the short time that it lasts. Otherwise, their neighbours may attempt to either seize it or scavenge materials from it to use on their



own construction. A culture of jealousy, greed, and violence supplanted the idealised one of respect and personal freedom. This has led to a city that is a veritable warzone. Places that are not well-defended are often seized by roaming gangs formed out of desperation. Precious resources—including food, fuel, and breathable air—are held through force of arms so that they may be used or bartered for the necessities of life.

Above ground, the vast majority of free-standing structures are little more than burned out rubble. Starving scavengers regularly comb through these ruins, spending precious oxygen as they attempt to find anything that they might use to preserve their lives. Desperate gangs roam the streets looking for prey, while well-armed guards man the perimeters of the few well-maintained structures, such as the refineries and forges.

The majority of the city's inhabitants dwell below the planet's surface, a habit that dates back to shortly after the city's founding. New mines had discovered substantial veins of metallic ores, which in turn led to refineries to convert organic ores into promethium, manufactories to build weapons and raw materials for buildings, and an extensive underground air purification network to keep the mines running.

In time, the purifiers became one of the city's most valuable assets, and any who lived within the mines received a steady supply of air that was largely free from the planet's toxic contaminants. As the ages passed, most of the city's population took up permanent residence within the caves, particularly those that were abandoned as different veins of ore were exhausted.

The caves also have the benefit of being far more defensible than the free-standing structures located above ground. Extended families often secure particular portions of each of the man-made caverns, assuring one another of survival and protection. Open markets regularly take place in the larger caverns, though more often than not clans simply steal desired goods rather than barter for them.

Even in these protected environs, violence and poor maintenance present a significant danger to all involved. Many citizens who survived countless battles have died when caves collapsed. At other times, organised gangs have introduced poisons to kill off whole marketplaces in the hopes of securing all of the assets for themselves.

DRILLING EXPEDITIONS

Messia's two cities are entirely dependent upon the promethium ore drilling teams for their survival. Without these resources, the cities would not have the fuel necessary for survival at the planet's poles. Because of this, the nomadic cultures have learnt to maintain a stable relationship with the two cities. With both, the relationship is largely dependent upon trade. The drilling expeditions cannot manufacture replacement parts or sustain agriculture as they drill and defend themselves from the planet's mutant hordes. Leaders of the expeditions sponsored by Mekonta also work towards acquiring citizenship and power, while the ones that regularly supply Zanak are more typically focused upon obtaining material wealth. Offworlders also sometimes appear to launch their own expeditions for the valuable promethium, or wrest away existing drill-rigs and claim their own fiefdoms in the wastes to expand their power.

In addition to the common risks that are universally associated with gathering any volatile resource, such as raw promethium, there are several other dangers endemic to Messia. The world's surface is vast, and an expedition that suffers a critical breakdown far from the poles is much more likely to encounter one of the myriad hazards long before any sort of aid might arrive. The toxic atmosphere is an ever-present danger; an exposed human who attempts to breathe the planet's native air is likely to die of airway burns from the acidic atmospheric compounds within a few short hours. The stifling heat of the planet's lightside can be potent enough to spontaneously ignite the raw ores if an expedition's cooling systems fail. On both the light and dark sides of the planet, hordes of near-mindless mutants stalk the world's surface. These creatures are focused on the utter annihilation of anything they encounter, including the drill machines. Other drilling expeditions are also often ready to sabotage or attack their competitors in the hopes of seizing a drill site or rival's cargo.

As the members of an expedition face these dangers together, they either develop a desperate camaraderie, or they fall prey to the world's myriad dangers. In many cases, individuals soon discover that they prefer this lifestyle to that of the world's two cities, and many become Chem-Hunters who live out singular lives amidst the wastes or even beyond the planet itself. Several of the drilling groups exist as formal bond-clans that have worked collectively for generations, their massive drill-machines becoming heirlooms that are

representative of their lineage. It is these clans that roam the wastelands outside the cities, with powerful drill-barons commanding each in various levels of ruthlessness and savagery. Battles between rival clans can exist for years, drill-rigs changing hands in each conflict as the clans struggle for dominance over each other and the planet itself.

DAYSIDE MUTANT

Vast hordes of mutants constantly travel across Messia's surface, moving in the opposite direction of the planet's rotation. Under the direct light of Xoson, the planet's harsh star, they shed their normal bulk and become far faster and more agile, while their brains seem to enter a hyperactive state. Under these conditions, the roaming hordes not only become more destructive, they also become dangerously clever in their attacks.

The origins of the mutants are shrouded in speculation for at least as long as humans have been on the planet. Priests and scholars who have studied Messia constantly clash over these legends. Some think that the inhuman creatures are all that remains of a plague-ridden, cursed civilisation. One ancient creation myth suggests that these bodies are but the leftover shells of beings whose souls have been torn asunder. Another believes that a mighty warrior damned his army of followers to this life so that he might be transformed into a Daemon Prince.

There is ample evidence that the mutants active upon the dayside are capable of utilising weapons and enacting complex plans against their targets. However, they seldom have a supply of arms at hand. While their plans may be effective against visitors or the unprepared, they lack the survival gear necessary to launch an attack upon either of the world's cities, due to the colder environments at the poles. Most commonly, as they wander across Messia's darkside, the mutants fail to retain any assets they might acquire on the dayside. As they come to a greater state of consciousness, they must either construct or scavenge any weapons that they seek to employ. Under the toxic influence of Messia's atmosphere, anything they scavenge is likely to be of only limited functionality.

Dayside Mutant (Troop)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
35	23	31	32	28	25	30	15	15	--

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 12

Armour: None

Total TB: 5

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness +10 (Per), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (WP), Survival +10 (Per).

Talents: Berserk Charge, Double Team, Frenzy, Furious Assault, Lightning Reflexes.

Traits: Deadly Natural Weapon (Claws), Size (Weedy), Unnatural Agility (+4), Unnatural Strength (+3), Unnatural Toughness (+2).

Weapons: Claws (Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 0), great weapon (Melee; 2d10 +6; Pen 0; Unbalanced).



NIGHTSIDE MUTANT

When the mutant hordes cross the line from the dayside of Messia to its nightside, their bodies enter a brief state of suspended animation. After a short time of putrefaction, each mutant begins the transformation into its nocturnal shape. The bodies gradually take on additional fluids as the climate begins to cool from the scorching heat of the dayside. Their mass increases substantially, with decreased movement and general reaction speed. New mutations, including limbs, tentacles, and expanded sensory capabilities often emerge. The change seems to be a physiologically programmed response to the time of darkness or a consequence of the mutants' arcane origin, rather than an unusual intrinsic effect of the star, as no others show similar effects.

At the same time as their bodies slow, their minds slow as well. The mutants become far less aware of their surroundings, and most weapons that were prized during their time in the daylight are discarded during the putrefaction and ignored without thought upon their restoration. There is no indication that the nightside mutants are capable of employing an ambush, using sophisticated tools or weapons, or even exhibiting any significant signs of teamwork. Further, the savage creatures seem incapable of manipulating even the simplest of locks, which they might use to gain entrance to a drill rig. When they encounter such vehicles, they are far more likely to batter ceaselessly at its exterior, hoping to reach the interior so that they might feast upon the flesh that dwells within.

The only thing that seems to disrupt the trek of these creatures is their drive to feed. While some might weakly subside upon the planet's fungal life, the creatures are clearly driven to devour living flesh. The scent of blood may be used to draw a horde of these mutants far from their normal path; even a relatively small supply of prey animals may draw thousands of the slow-moving beings.

Nightside Mutant (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
25	15	45	47	12	15	20	15	15	--

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 14

Armour: None

Total TB: 9

Skills: Athletics (S), Survival +10 (Per).

Talents: Takedown.

Traits: Bestial, Dark-sight, Deadly Natural Weapon (Claws), Size (Hulking), Unnatural Strength (+4), Unnatural Toughness (+5).

Weapons: Improvised clubs (Melee; 1d10+9 I; Pen 0; Primitive [7], Unbalanced), claws (Melee; 1d10+8 R; Pen 0).

Mutations: At least one in three Nightside Mutants exhibit significant mutations. GMs should choose from Additional Limb, Bestial, Headless, Projectile Attack, Tail, or Tentacle Gifts from the Gods from the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook pages 290–299, all with the Khornate alignment.

DRILL NOMAD

The humans that serve aboard the drill rigs spend a challenging existence of conflict and desperation. Few choose this life; most are either born to it or exiled from one of Messia's cities. For the exiles, only a spectacularly successful mission might provide them with the payments necessary to return to a city with some degree of security. In contrast, those born to the life of a driller look to such a success as a means of preserving their clan's vital machinery so that future generations may continue to exploit the world's resources.

When travelling upon the daylight side of Messia, the drill-rigs attempt to find a secure location so that they might safely burrow deep into the planet's crust to extract promethium, for daytime means vicious mutant attacks. In contrast, travel across the nightside is only undertaken for prospecting missions as a long stop risks the slower but dangerously powerful hordes that can overcome the security of even a massive rig.

Drill Nomad (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
23	21	28	30	30	20	32	29	30	--

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 10

Armour: Climate-controlled suit (All 1)

Total TB: 3

Skills: Awareness +10 (Per), Common Lore (Tech) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Operate (Surface) (Ag), Survival (Per), Tech-Use +10 (Int).

Talents: Jaded.

Weapons: Knife (Melee; 1d5+2 R; Pen 0), stub automatic (Pistol; 30m; 1d10+3 I, Pen 0, S/3/-, Clip 9, Reload Full) or shotgun (Basic; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 I; Pen 0; Clip 8; Reload 2 Full; Scatter).

Gear: Binoculars, spare gas mask, well-worn clothing, prospecting field guide, three spare clips or shell bandoliers.

XURUNT

"Winter approaches and their harvest is ripe. It is time for conquest."

—Gorahn D'Vathe, Chieftain of the Bloody Sword

As one of the Gloaming Worlds, Xurunt's physical scope seems extraordinarily massive, but its gravity is well within a normal range for humans. Some legends suggest that this is because the Ruinous Powers desired a vast arena to test the Xur. Clearly, the constant battles among these native humans serve as a potent example of savagery and bloodshed. Most of the primitive natives devote their accomplishments to their god Baphtar, whether it is the defeat of other tribes or battles against the Svartlings and their Onir—creatures of the underworld that represent nearly as treacherous an opponent as the planet's merciless winters. Only through victory in these constant conflicts can any of the tribes hope to acquire the materials necessary to thrive, often at the expense of their foes.

THE THRONE OF BAPHTAR

A desolate plain near the planet's equator is only disrupted by a massive statue of Baphtar. Much like the other seven statues spread across the planet, this brass structure, over sixty metres in height, depicts a squat, cloven-hoofed, horned humanoid. Unlike the others, at times when there is a warrior or army whose battle rage has proven worthy of recognition, a massive throne devoted to the Ruinous Powers appears between its legs like Canares rising at dawn above the blood-drenched crags. It rests upon a huge, and ever-growing, mound of skulls, and is known as the Throne of Baphtar. According to ancient legend, a warrior who can hold the throne against all comers for a year and a day may become the overlord of Xurunt with all the blessings of Baphtar. Further, he should also gain the ability to instantly transport his warriors between all of the idols of Baphtar distributed across the planet's surface. None of the tales speak of anyone accomplishing this feat, however, in any of the bardic songs that preserve the history of the Xur.

Countless warriors, and their tribes of followers, have seized the throne. Those who chose to take the throne near the start of one of Xurunt's harsh, but brief, winters are generally capable of holding it during that season. However, when the weather warms, warriors invariably turn from the notion of defence to that of conquest. The legends that come with the ancient throne only make control of it even more tempting, for challengers have two reasons to seek to overcome the tribe that holds the throne. First and foremost, it represents one of the highest honours amongst the Xur. Only the world's most powerful warriors might hope to hold the throne against all comers. Further, no warrior wishes to bend the knee before another tribe. According to these myths, anyone who might hold the Throne of Baphtar would become an unbeatable foe. Those who failed to take action against him during his first year might be compelled to submit to his authority ever after.

Legends and glory for the tribe's leader are not the only reason to attempt to seize control of the throne. Even the tribe's lesser warriors are believed to have an ample opportunity to commune with Baphtar when they act upon this site. A stone arena set before the throne is frequently used as a site for furious combats of blade and axe dedicated to the name of their



bloody god. During many of these battles—purportedly only ones that please the deity—the dry moat around the arena fills with blood. In many instances, it is the blood of the vanquished that fills the trenches, but in particularly hard-fought battles the crimson manifests spontaneously, perhaps as a reward from those in the Sea of Souls for such entertainments.

After such fights, the victor receives the opportunity to bathe in that blood. In some cases, the winner may also choose to allow others to join in this foul baptism. This is considered one of the highest possible honours and signs of devoted camaraderie. A portion of the blood is always spilled upon the skulls that support the throne. Moments afterwards, the moat and all of the blood that stains the victor and his comrades turns to smoke, leaving only the crisp scent of burnt blood in the wind. Many believe that those who had an opportunity to partake of this blessing become the chosen of the Baphtar.

Legend holds that in the wake of battles at the Throne of Baphtar, warriors may be directly subsumed by the Warp. These tales tell of Daemons descending upon pillars of fire to remand the bodies of warriors—both victors and the fallen—into the eternal service of the Dark God. These tales fit with ancient inscriptions carved into the walls. On numerous occasions, tribes that have sought to conquer the Throne have discovered the remains of those who have fallen in a previous battle and massive patches of scorched earth. It is clear that any Daemons who visit the site are reluctant to leave any witnesses alive.

Not all who hold the Throne of Baphtar dare to sit upon it, as the bards insist the act of taking the seat draws the direct attention of the god. Many who have dwelt upon it have come

to lead vast armies over the course of their tenure, destroying countless other tribes, and working towards unifying all of the Xur. However, none have ultimately enjoyed success in this path. Each has fallen, either to betrayal or to an alliance of lesser tribes opposed to the tyrant-in-waiting in less than a year after assuming the throne. Only the boldest of warriors dare to seize this opportunity, knowing the fates of all who have gone before him. In spite of this, it is rare that a year passes without some tribal leader attempting to take the throne to begin his own trek towards near certain tragedy, for such is the blood-filled bravery of the Xur to make such an attempt, no matter the price.

THE UNDERWORLD

For the Xur, horrific legends of the Underworld begin with the Svartlings, small humanoid creatures of darkness more at home away from the light of the surface. Far below the rocky surface they perform arcane rituals, sacrificing Xur and even one another to their foul masters. The Onir are the most magnificent of their creations, mechanical constructs granted cognisance with the souls of those the Svartlings ritually murder. Tales vary as to the origins of the Svartlings; many assume they are debased remnants of Xur, corrupted from centuries of subterranean existence, but others claim they must be another race the Vortex claimed in Warp-storm cataclysms. The Xur simply believe that any who fail to prove themselves before the gods are doomed to fall prey to these horrors in the afterlife, in the same manner that these hunched troglodytes claim the living who dare venture below.

The majority of the Svartling civilisation dwells deep beneath the planet's surface, far from the prying eyes of the Xur. In these dank depths, the wretched beings craft complex mechanical devices powered through sorcery ripped from the souls of countless slaves. Anathema to the ways of Baphtar, the Svartlings prey on the Xur to feed their machines and their dark arts. It is unclear if they permit the Xur to live upon the world's surface so that they might continue to use them as fuel for their devices, or if they somehow draw sorcerous energy from the constant conflict upon the planet's surface.

Xurun's underworld extends through countless tunnels and caverns far beneath its surface. Though most openings to the surface are narrow, and must be enlarged so that massive mechanical creatures such as Onir might emerge, there are many larger open spaces deep within the planet. Some of these house sizeable cities of Svartlings and their slaves. Others are used for refining the planet's resources into a promethium-like fuel, cultivating their rheumy fungal agriculture, and the manufacture of their complex machines.

Svartling society is largely divided into four separate subcultures. Highest ranking among these are the sorcerer-priests. These psykers pledge their souls and their services to the Ruinous Powers, just as they struggle amongst themselves to establish superiority. Their sacred pacts sustain their race at the same time as they require a constant flow of slaves to assuage their dark masters. Sorcerer-priests study rigorously for years under more experienced priests, though many who displease their masters become sacrifices instead of priests. Some claim that those who have undergone such training make far better sacrifices to Daemons. Others believe that

the souls trained in this way are better able to control the blasphemous machines that the engineers construct. Some of those trained include humans from above and some that escape from this training often become Xur Sorcerers, if they manage to find their way back to the surface.

The engineers represent the next highest-ranking members of Svartling society. It is these craftsmen who forge the terrible Onir dragons and other complex machines that the Svartlings use in the service of their Dark Gods. They not only design their tools of warfare, but also oversee mining operations, refineries, and the maintenance of the air purification devices necessary to maintain an underworld civilisation. All the while, these craftsmen live in a state of perpetual terror that their latest work might displease the sorcerer-priest for whom they work.

Warriors and slaves make up the Svartling underclass. The warriors—who must constantly manage the slaves—fear the day that their skills fail them, forcing them to live the life of a slave. The slaves live in terror of the day when their souls are needed to power one of the dread devices crafted through their arcane technology. Members of both social classes worship before the might of the sorcerer-priests but also live in constant terror of these dark masters.

Svartling creations, like the massive Onir, are manufactured from ores found deep beneath the planet's depths. As their slaves labour to harvest these precious resources, depleted mines are transformed to expand their habitats. Other mines provide the organic fuels which provide motivating fuel, but it is raw soul-stuff that truly powers each beast. Additional slaves—often ones who have already served for years in the mines and factories—serve as sacrifices for the dark rituals that grant the machines their fury and a degree of sentience. Svartling warriors and engineers then serve as handlers to the mechanical terrors that often go on to devastate the Xur, on their missions to capture additional slaves.

XUR WARRIOR

Warriors make up the majority of every Xur tribe. From early childhood, these savages engage in an endless series of competitions. Some of these are for simple matters of pride and honour, but not all. Even among relatively young children, battles to the death can occur. Such conflicts may be undertaken with little provocation and almost no warning. This is because their society is completely dominated by the notion of permitting only the strongest members to survive.

The Xur believe that showing weakness is a failing in the eyes of Baphtar. A gravely wounded Xur often downplays the severity of any injury, lest anyone challenge his bravery. Many Xur may decide to continue a conflict well after the point has been resolved, particularly when in conflict with beings from other cultural backgrounds. In a losing battle, an entire tribe may be annihilated when all of the members stubbornly refuse to accept the fact that the conflict has already been lost.

Aside from arena battles, Xur warriors prefer to engage in combat while mounted upon the back of a Xurunsh. Their lance-goats are used to guide their mounts and to finish off any opponents who somehow manage to avoid the massive creature's enormous maw. The tips of these spear-like weapons are made of a rare natural glass that absorbs emotional energy from the anger of their wielder. When they strike, they also emit a blast



III: MASTERS OF DESTRUCTION

of rage, enough to stun their victims or further goad the Xurush. Battles fought between tribes using these mounts are renowned, but it is the battles fought against the Onir that can truly create a warrior's legend. Those enormous mechanical terrors dwarf even a mounted Xur warrior, and their defences are such that neither a lance goad nor a Xur is particularly effective against them. In spite of this, the savage warriors engage those beasts without hesitation for the rich resource of metals the creatures offer.

Xur Warrior (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
35	25	40	35	35	21	30	20	25	--

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 10

Armour: Beast Furs (Body 2)

Total TB: 3

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Dodge +10 (Ag), Survival +10 (Per).

Talents: Berserk Charge, Double Team, Fearless, Lightning Reflexes, Swift Attack, Zealous Pride†.

Weapons: Lance goad (Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 1; Primitive [7], Shocking, Unbalanced), bow (Basic; 40m; S/-/-; 1d10 R; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload Half; Primitive [6], Reliable).

Gear: Worn animal hides, talismans of Baphtar, trophy skulls.

†**Zealous Pride:** If a Xur wishes to flee or surrender in a battle, he must first pass a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**. On failure, he ignores 5 wounds of Damage for the remainder of the conflict, but must continue to fight until the end of the conflict.

XURUNSH

The Xur culture is entirely dependent upon the domestication of these massive carnivorous reptiles. They average more than three metres in length and typically mass more than a Grox-beast. Surprisingly swift for their substantial size, they are also renowned for their thick hide and stubborn attitudes. Atypically for predatory creatures, undomesticated examples of these voracious creatures travel the plains of Xurunt as herds that number into the hundreds. They devastate the environment as they travel, devouring all life which flees before the herd when prey animals eventually become too exhausted to continue fleeing.

Though the Xur spend their lives working closely with these animals, they have learned to never fully trust them. Xurunsh psychology is inexplicable, and it is likely that the animals may never be fully domesticated. A major sign of this is their tendency to turn against their owners, often attempting to devour them in the midst of a major battle or when a lance-goad is used in an effort to control them. Other times, the creatures may turn with little apparent provocation, possibly just deciding that their supposed masters were more appetising than the food that had been apportioned for them. The Xur cherish their beasts though, usually adorning each with more armour and decorations than the Xur themselves might wear. Battle-tales involving a Xurunsh are common, and epic songs involving legendary beasts feature heavily in Xur legends far more often than actual Xur.

Xurunsh are prone to mutations—a consequence of life within the Screaming Vortex. Many of these are physical in nature, often indicated by unexpected growths, additional sensory organs, tentacles, or abnormally constructed features. Other mutations clearly manifest as mental dysfunctions, often associated with their temperamental madness. In many instances, the two types of mutations are associated, creating a cultural problem for the Xur. Some of the most heavily mutated Xurunsh may be considered ideal war mounts, but their mental aberrations leave them as very poor choices as a combat mount. Those Xur who choose to use such animals in spite of the danger often regret their decisions when the beasts turn against them in the midst of battle.

Xurunsh (Elite)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
40	12	45	45	25	15	20	15	10	—	—

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Armour: Dense Hide (All 3)

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per).

Talents: Fearless.

Traits: Bestial, Brutal Charge (4), Natural Armour (3), Deadly Natural Weapons, Unnatural Strength (+4), Unnatural Toughness (+2), Size (Enormous), Stampede.

Weapons: Goring tusks and teeth (Melee; 1d10+12 R; Pen 4; Tearing).

Gear: Domesticated Xurunsh may wear Metal Barding, increasing their Armour to All 5. Many also are adorned with Spikes (Melee; 1d10 + 9 R; Pen 0) attached directly to their hide, which may be used to tear an opponent as the beast passes.

Insatiable: A Xurunsh is an unceasingly ravenous carnivore, and many watch for the slightest opportunity to turn on their master. Any time that a rider makes a Skill Test and rolls doubles, the Xurunsh immediately attempts to devour him; the character must make a **Difficult (–10) Agility Test** or the Xurunsh hits with 1d10+8 Rending Damage and Pen 4.

Prone to Mutation: Whenever a new Xurunsh is introduced, the GM should make a **Difficult (–10) Willpower Test** for the new specimen. On success, roll on **Table 9–1: Gifts of the Gods** from page 291 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook for the beast's mutation.



XUR SORCERER

The god Baphtar preaches against the ways of the psyker, both fearing and hating their abilities. According to the culture's traditions, those who exhibit such abilities are not to be trusted. Because of this, young Xur who demonstrate psychic abilities are often sacrificed to Baphtar, but some are abandoned by their tribes and left to die in isolation amidst Xurunt's merciless wilderness.

Few of these young psykers survive long without the support of their tribe. The Svartlings capture almost all of those who do live until darkness falls. Those creatures closely monitor the surface, and the talents of their sorcerer-priests often enable them to know when and where to look for additional slaves. Svartlings show a marked preference for attempting to capture humans with psychic potential, as these individuals can be used both to aid young Svartlings in mastering their psychic potential and also to serve as even more potent sacrifices to their dark gods.

These young psykers live out their wretched lives deep beneath Xurunt's surface. A few, however, manage to escape and fight to survive on the surface. Their own tribes would kill them on sight, lest their foul sorceries pollute them, so they work their way to new tribes and new lives. Here they work to keep their new abilities secret. They speak little of their experience, though the ritualistic scars that mark their flesh and constantly weep blood quickly identify them as survivors of dark rituals. Most are terrified of nightfall and rarely travel below ground, always insisting on carrying a powerful light with them at all times.

Only the most desperate and unworthy of Baphtar's worshippers would knowingly allow these outcasts to join a tribe, but some do and thus earn their god's rage, as well as the hatred of other tribes. The powers these psykers can wield has tempted some leaders to use them to aid their tribe in combat and survival, as well as to learn more of the Svartlings and the horrors that await below ground. Their lives on the surface lead some of these tribes to escape there though, for on the surface they will know only Baphtar's endless fury for allowing such cowardly magics to befoul his world.

Xur Sorcerer (Elite)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
30	25	30	30	35	30	35	30	35	—	—

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Armour: Beast Furs (Body 2)

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Awareness (Per) +10, Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Daemonology, Heresy) (Int), Intimidate (WP), Psyniscience (Per) +10, Survival (Per) +10.

Talents: Psy Rating 4, Warp Sense.

Traits: Psyker (Unbound).

Weapons: Spear (Melee; 1d10+3 R; Pen 0; Primitive [8]).

Gear: Hide cloak, facial paints, Svartling talismans.

Psychic Powers: Doombolt, Foul Cage, Warptime.

Fear the Dark: Xur Sorcerers fear darkness, knowing all too well what lurks there. Whenever they must enter an area with little or no light they must first pass a **Difficult (–10) Willpower Test** or take a –10 penalty on any other Willpower Tests until the area is well-lit, or they are once again in a lit area.

ONIR

The Xur are an aggressive culture, and fear few things. In spite of this, their darkest stories and legends are dominated by the constant threats of dragons, known as Onir in Xur-tongue. These massive mechanical terrors often strike from deep beneath the planet's surface with little warning. When one of these horrors assaults an unprepared tribal encampment, it frequently devastates the tribe's warriors, leaving the rest of the tribe too horrified to either defend themselves or flee before its might. In this way, a relatively small group of Svartlings may be able to swiftly round up the survivors, adding them to their slave pens.

Physically, Onir may vary substantially in appearance. Each is the product of the twisted Svartling minds, engineers working in concert with a sorcerer-priest to craft each unique metal beast. Each has a heavily armoured shell, with a carapace that constantly belches smoke and steam, Onir have dozens of limbs, most designed to effectively burrow through the planet's crust and create new tunnels to better assault unwary prey. Other limbs are equipped with a variety of different blades, used to quickly overpower those who dare to oppose them. Their gaping "mouths" typically incorporate a flame-based weapon, which is likely the reason that the Xur associate them with the dragons of ancient legend.

Through their dark arts, Svartling sorcerer-priests are able to utilise mortal souls to grant the machines a limited degree of sentience for a few hours at a time. Without a steady supply of souls, an Onir is little more than a machine that a Svartling engineer may manually control. With them, they are a devastatingly potent combat engine, fully capable of overcoming foes who are far better equipped than the typical Xur.

Onir (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
50	--	60	60	23	15	21	15	07	--

Movement: 6/12/18/36

Armour: Brass plating (All 5)

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10.

Talents: Berserk Charge, Frenzy.

Traits: Brutal Charge (9), Burrower (6), Fear (2), Machine (5), Deadly Natural Weapons, Unnatural Strength (+6), Unnatural Toughness (+6), Size (Immense), The Stuff of Nightmares.

Weapons: Slicing talons (Melee; 1d10+18 R; Pen 2), dragon's flame (Heavy; 60m; S/-/-; 1d10+8 E; Pen 5; Clip 10; Reload: 2 Full; Flame, Spray).

Gear: None.

Wounds: 85

Total TB: 12

SVARTLING WARRIOR

These sentients dwell within the depths of Xurunt, haunting its vast network of caves. From the planet's dark places, they devote their lives to the service of the Ruinous Powers. They are seldom seen on Xurunt's surface, save when they engage in an action to seize additional prisoners to add to their slave pens. Even then, these attacks most commonly take place under the veil of darkness, when their sensitive eyes are not confronted by the harsh light of Xurunt's star.

Physically, the Svartlings are humanoid in structure, but somewhat smaller than most humans. Their reduced stature is in part due to a marked hunch in their upper back, which extends above the top of their heads. Their skin is a dark grey, similar to the shades of Xurunt's native granite, and lidless, huge red eyes dominate their bald heads. These eyes stand out in the darkness any time that they are struck by a stray beam of light, glowing brightly for several seconds in an eerie reflection.

Only a relatively small proportion of Svartlings are considered warriors, as the majority of the race is too firmly devoted in the service of their Dark Gods to learn basic martial skills. To make up for this limitation, they strive to strike from stealth and exploit the technological advantages they maintain over the Xur. Though their weapons are quite primitive by Imperial standards, they are vastly superior to anything the Xur possess.

Svartling Warrior (Troop)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
25	35	20	25	30	25	35	35	30	--

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 8

Armour: Arms, Body, Legs 3

Total TB: 2

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (WP), Parry (WS), Stealth (Ag), Tech-Use (Int).

Talents: Deadeye Shot, Rapid Reload.

Traits: Dark-sight.

Armour: Chainmail Coat.

Weapons: Fungal musket (Basic; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 I; Pen: 6; Clip: 1; Reload: 2 Full; Hallucinogenic [1]), dust grenades (Thrown; 6m; S/-/-; 1d10+2 X; Pen 0; Clip 1; Toxic [1], Blast [3], Smoke).

Gear: Flasks of fungal spores and promethium dust, spare igniters, pouch of crystalline shot, daemonic talisman.

Sensitive Vision: Under normal lighting conditions, Svartlings are considered Blinded.



THE WAR MOONS OF TALAX

"The clans are unique... savages in combat, technologically savvy outside of it, and utterly devoid of duplicity by faith. How they have lasted this long in the Vortex is a mystery to me."

—Corsair Captain Gorlod Tane

Orbiting a nameless, reddish-purple dwarf star, the War Moons of Talax appear to be a misnamed system. Those that know its history, however, understand that these are truly the original moons of a much larger planet that died many ages ago. Before the birth of the Vortex, Talax was a system of eight planets orbiting a double-star, all its worlds capable of sustaining life of varying degrees and several inhabited. This changed when the Vortex roared into existence.

When Slaanesh was born and the Screaming Vortex came into being, many of the planets dragged into its midst were destroyed in the process. Talax's two suns collided as the system fell into the swirling tide, and the resulting explosive nova decimated the majority of the system. Of the eight planets, none survived intact; three were immolated in the initial burst of the twin stars, one flew out of orbit where it tore itself apart, and the remaining four were dragged headlong into the Vortex.

BORN FROM VIOLENCE

The journey forever transformed those planets and moons that survived. The Warp compressed the remaining four planets into a huge, singular mass, and the three moons that moved into orbit around it absorbed the unnatural energy the merge generated. This energy found its way into the cores of the moons and ignited something within each, evolving them into bodies where living beings could exist. Though not fully understood by any scryer or seer, the planets do not require the heat of a star to survive, relying somehow instead on the thermal output from its own core. The sorcerers of Q'Sal have sought to attain the knowledge of how this is possible as well as how to replicate it using their arcane arts, but all of their excursions to the War Moons have met with either disaster or capture.

Over time, the moons, bathed in the energies of the Warp, became destination planets for those who survived the devastation of the birth of the Vortex. Rich in minerals and other highly desired resources, all three moons were highly coveted prizes for the first wave of warlords that asserted themselves in the Vortex. Though several of these would-be kings made the attempt to take the system by force, there is no record of the subjugation of the Talax. If the records are accurate, Talax maintains a martial history that few other cultures can match. Even when attacked from space, the Clans have found ways to reach their foes. Whether they captured enemy craft and took the fight to space or fought guerilla wars on the surface, Talax's enemies only took root on the moons as slaves or fertilizer, all for the glory of their god of blood and anger, Gorgeth, who they believe crushed the planets into one and whose rage sustains all life on them.

Cho'unda is the largest of the three moons and the most stark in appearance. Heavily mined and used as the main forge planet of the shaman-smiths, Cho'unda's surface has very little in the way of vegetation or surface water but a considerable amount of open land and mining. With water supplies scarce, the shaman-smiths have placed a stranglehold on the majority



of the precious resources, driving each mining forge into desperate self-sufficiency with frequent raiding parties against their neighbours. Each forge uses its creations or other devices they have captured to vie for the favour of the gigantic Daemon Engine Skull Reaper, the victor forcing the other forges to also craft its superior design while their own are relegated to the vast slag pits surrounding Skull Reaper's arena.

Under the surface of Cho'unda lies Gorgeth's Anvil, the holding place for those deemed dangerous but worthy of keeping. This prison and interrogation centre is where the shaman-smiths perform their blood rituals and torture on sorcerers of all types and enemy combatants. It is a horrific place, filled with the tang of constant bloodshed and the stench of burnt flesh. In cells deep underground, sorcerer-technocrats from Q'Sal, fell engineers of the Hollows, and captured Imperial Tech-Priests have their hidden secrets hammered from their minds. Very few have resisted for long, but many have converted to the glory that is Gorgeth and become valuable slaves, their precious knowledge now ensuring the War Moons grow ever more productive.

Elder, or "Ni'iktu" in the Talaxi tongue, would be a death world in the Imperium, but to the Talax it is merely Gorgeth's hunting ground. Covered in dense forests and jungle, this moon boasts some of the most ferocious creatures within the Vortex, made even more vicious and aggressive from the scarcity of prey and perhaps also the burning hatred venting from the core. The Talax test themselves on this aggressive moon, and harvest its creatures for trade to other worlds.

NI'IKTU CREATURES

Creatures on Ni'iktu are somehow even more ferocious than others of their species found on other worlds. Explanations vary, with the Talax themselves asserting their fury is a gift of Gorgeth to reflect his own rage. To create variant creatures for this jungle moon, GMs should use the following modifiers below and if desired add new Traits from pages 139-144 or Gifts of the Gods (all with the Khorne aspect) from pages 290-299 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook.

- Weapon Skill, Strength, Toughness: +10
- Agility, Perception: +5
- Intelligence: -10
- Willpower: -15

There is only one settlement, located above the jungles on a massive plateau, known in Low Gothic as "Moment's Rest." The fortified town is perhaps the most advanced settlement as it is armed with advanced weaponry and security systems to protect it from the predations of the many carnivores. Moment's Rest has the moon's only landing port, consisting of little more than an open patch of earth and a walled shanty town with pathways leading down below the plateau where the Talax live. Though it would seem that many metres of solid rock would provide more than enough protection, the beasts of Ni'iktu are particularly resourceful and ravenous. Many can burrow through dirt and stone, secrete dissolving acids, or even fly through solid matter, all making Moment's Rest anything but its name.

Those stationed on the moon are tasked with protecting the lone settlement within the plateau from any and all predators, and the clans hold those who take a voluntary post in high esteem. Each is branded after they survive their tour, a visible mark of status across the moons and beyond. During the coming of the blood-soaked time known as the Encarminata, the beasts become even more aggressive, and those manning Moment's Rest must protect the settlement not only for their livelihood but also as it is the only way for reinforcements to arrive. For these defenders, their post is a sacred duty as they believe the plateau to be where Gorgeth rests before roaring forth into battle again.

Ju'ukto is the main inhabited moon for the bulk of the Talax. Where Cho'unda is really home to the shaman-smiths and their creations and Ni'iktu houses the beasts of the system, Ju'ukto, or "Younger," serves as the main base for trade outside the system. Here, the roving clans live predominantly off the land and yet sport one of the most thriving arms and armour marketplaces in the Screaming Vortex.

The individual clans maintain a largely neutral attitude toward each other. In their custom, there are only two offences that instigate violence: theft and witchcraft. Witchcraft tends to be handled within the clans themselves, usually resulting in the ritual and prolonged death of the accused; Gorgeth demands that the Warp-tainted be purged once found and there is little room for discussion or debate. In this, many of the tribes have actually worked together to root out any who have managed to hide in the wilderness. Theft, however, tends to be the dividing force between the clans as it is prevalent and based largely on unmarked territory.

On worlds such as those of Talax where resources are scarce, consumption and replenishment of these resources is paramount to survival. Many millennia ago, the clans established rough borders to allow all to have their own territory to roam. All the resources contained within those borders belonged to the respective clan whether or not the resources were known then or found later. It is this clause of the unknown which has traditionally sparked violence. In years past, as new sources of water and mineral deposits became known, the issue of borders has become more hotly contested. In an effort to control these resources, the clans have engaged in everything from brawls to full-blown military engagements stretching across the entire moon. The conflicts have never been without casualty as, once weapons are drawn, Gorgeth demands that at least one must fall. In most cases, the number is significantly higher than one and Gorgeth is pleased with the blood that soaks into the dusty surface of Ju'ukto.

BRED FOR BATTLE

The Battle Clans of Talax are a fierce people, living almost completely off the harsh landscapes of the three moons and defending a reputation of personal skill at arms and devotion to their blood god that is legendary. Every member of every tribe is equally capable of hunting for food, setting up camp, or leading reverent stories of the clan ancestors. Regardless of age, each person is also a dangerous opponent, as each learns the use of a blade the moment they can walk. Unlike many other tribal cultures, the Talax are not primitive. Roving according to the edicts of Gorgeth, they have also established settlements that act as protection for those unable to travel, such as their elderly, infirm, and injured. The largest of these on Ju'ukto is called the Stride in Low Gothic; on Cho'unda, the largest is the primary starport and forge known as Gorgeth's Anvil. Both serve as the main stations of void traffic for the moons, with Gorgeth's Anvil being the largest in the system.

In these strongholds, the Talax maintain their cultural centre. Housing their larger, permanent shrines to Gorgeth, trading posts, and semblances of central governance, the walled townships help provide a stabilising feature to the nomadic people. Each of the settlements also serves as an inter-clan gathering place for trade of materials, information, and expertise as well as points of departure from a moon. Several times a year, the settlements swarm with multiple tribes, looking to barter resources and restock supplies as they continue their migrations. Outside warlords are eager to learn of these gatherings as they are always hunting for skilled warriors to recruit as bodyguards or elite troops.

The settlements are also where they create their main exports: arms and armour. Using the by-products of their smelting and metal working, Talax armourers have created a process to toughen the hides from the massive carnivores on Ni'iktu and smaller beasts from Cho'unda and Ju'ukto such that they can turn even chain blades. Though the process lacks the refinement of similar efforts on Q'Sal or the Hollows, the resulting lightweight but resilient armour is a favourite among off-worlders seeking protection as well as notoriety.

Where the roving clans are full of active Talax, the settlements house a secondary caste of clansmen. Called the Root Elders, they have removed themselves from their clan when they are unfit for travel due to injury, illness, or age. For most, this is a derogatory status as they are no longer capable of spilling blood on the vast battlefield of their home in the name of Gorgeth. The process is a painful one, with shaman-smiths purifying their blood through an alchemical process that strips any substance but that of the original flesh. Given the clans' propensity for co-mingling blood with other members, beasts, and occasionally the honoured dead, the process of returning the clansman to his original essence is arduous and excruciatingly painful. The hissing concoction they drink forces the blood of the others out through the pores of the skin in painful blisters, split skin, and out of eye sockets in oozing, steaming flows. It is a mandatory rite, though some have chosen death rather than complete this transformation. Most, however, understand the need to preserve the history and stories of the past and teach the youth of the glory that is Gorgeth. The blood-pure of Talax only trust oral tradition, knowing that what is written or coded can easily be altered, and their lore is carried back to the original Elders who formed the first clans. With each tale told, a Root Elder carves a blood-sigil in his flesh to ensure it is remembered, and the most ancient of Elders are covered with layer upon layer of thick, scarred tissue.

BAPTISED IN BLOOD

The Talax worship their god Gorgeth as the source of the heat and fury that powers their three moons. In their eyes, he is a bare-chested warrior-king, wearing an animal skull for a helm and carrying both a hammer and an axe. The people revere him as hunter and warrior, few knowing of the actual Blood God of whom Gorgeth serves as an aspect.

Eschewing lavish temples in favour of portable altars, worship of Gorgeth factors into the daily life of all Talax in a more visceral way. On the surface of the moons, life is challenging at best. The daily strife of survival for the nomadic clans reminds them of Gorgeth's willingness to take the blood of any one at any time, and the natives firmly believe that their deity will take them when their usefulness to the clans is gone. Many hold that Gorgeth comes for a Talax's blood when that clan-warrior cannot take the blood of others, and it is very telling that few Root Elders survive past a single Encarminata once they leave their fighting days.

Though the outward show of worship for Gorgeth seems less combative than other Khornate sects, those who have spent any length of time in Talax have witnessed the blood rituals of the clans. From birth until death, the blood of both fellow clansman and beast factors into all worship to the Blood God. Before their first hunt, the young are submerged in the blood of the burrowing lizards found on Ju'ukto, kept deep within the thick crimson liquid until they can fight out of their clan-mates' grasp to get air. Talax Reavers split their tongues upon initiation with a red-hot blade, their blood quenching and tempering the metal to create their bond-knives. Even at death, clan elders tap the blood from the body before it congeals for use as an offering to their deity. In all things, the blood of those who faithfully serve Gorgeth is among the most sacred offerings. The acts done in relation to the unfaithful, however, are largely unspeakable.

Along with ghastly forms of torture, the shaman-smiths employ a technique of blood-binding used on captives in order to extract information, and to ensure compliance from those deemed as enemies. By commingling the blood of the shaman with their captives, the smiths create a parasymphetic bond between the two which renders the captive more compliant and open to suggestion. Many of the secrets used in the building of their arms and armour, as well as their own Daemon Engines, came from using this process on captured sorcerers and explorers from the Hollows, Q'Sal, and other population centres in the Vortex. Through such blood rites in the name of Gorgeth, the nomadic Talax have become an industrial powerhouse able to defend their moons from invaders throughout the Vortex. Their greatest challenge, however, comes from within the system.

THE ENCARMINATA

Once every eight cycles around Talax, the skies turn pure red instead of their usual dark purple hue for roughly a fortnight. Known as the Encarminata, the natives recognize this as the holy time of Gorgeth and change their behaviour in league with the colour of the sky. On all three moons, fresh water turns red as blood and the surface becomes noticeably warmer as though the planet's own core burns even hotter. Tempers among its people flare more often and the beasts become more aggressive and territorial. It is very common to see an increase in clan disputes or, as in one legendary event, all-out warfare which almost saw the complete eradication of five entire clans. Here, this unnatural selection acts to weed out those unfit to continue or too weak to answer the bloodthirsty call of Gorgeth.

On Cho'unda, the forges immediately mobilize their latest creations and head toward the Island of Dust, home to the mechanical avatar of Gorgeth known as Skull Reaper. The constructs travel to the centre of the island, battling each other until one remains to challenge the Daemon Engine-lord. Thus far, none have survived this final combat, but in each Encarminata cycle, Skull Reaper has chosen which of the constructs is worthy of Gorgeth and continued existence. Talax versions of the Brass Scorpion and Blood Slaughterer are former victors and are now commodities for sale to the highest bidder throughout the Vortex. At the end of the Encarminata, the forge that built the chosen engine holds a great celebration, and the other forges must sacrifice a shaman apprentice as tribute to Gorgeth as well as produce the chosen construct until the next coming of the Encarminata.

Ni'iktu's wildlife becomes more aggressive and territorial during the Encarminata. Fights between dominant creatures often turn deadly; even lowly insects swarm out to attack with high doses of increasingly toxic venom. At Moment's Rest, the reavers protect the site with both blade and firearm, defending the only bastion of human existence on the moon. They also serve as steward for any who embark on the challenges for clan leadership, awaiting the return of those who have survived and honouring the ones who fell in the attempt.



Ju'ukto uses the Encarminata as a chance to change leadership and complete rites of passage for their people. Gathering at the few settlements and camping outside in massive sprawling zones, youths who have come of age are gathered and inducted into their new clan and larger multi-clan bonds. Through multiple tests, scarification rituals, bloodletting, and combat tests, they become full clan members able to travel as equals and carrying the full weight and responsibility of an adult. Failure to maintain this obligation usually means exile from the wandering clan and adoption by the Root Elders in the nearest settlement, should they not gut themselves in shame.

In addition, across the moons there are possible challenges to clan leadership. Each challenger must prove himself worthy to the Root Elders, before traveling to Ni'iktu for their test of survival against the deadly jungle life. Current leaders must also travel here to hold their power, but in a few instances a clan has deemed one as being revered enough to step down voluntarily, but even then the former leader usually volunteers his blood as sacrifice to appease Gorgeth's appetites. At the end of the Encarminata, the surviving challengers return to Moment's Rest as their clan's new leader. In rare cases, two or more applicants from a single clan have returned, and ritual combat to the death on the stark plateau must dictate the victor. After two weeks in the wilds of Ni'iktu, these fights are often swift and decisive as the warriors are usually injured, weary, and eager for a fast resolution. With either victor, Gorgeth is pleased as blood stains the bare rock.

THE BATTLE CLANS

The Clans of Talax are by no means primitive savages incapable of organization. Crafty as only hunters can be when stalking their prey, Talax has established a record of never having lost a war on its own soil. The average clansman is more than able to hold his own in either a voidport brawl or deadly fire fight. Even the children and adolescents are dangerous adversaries, having trained with blade, fist, and firearm from a very young age. Only fools underestimate the capability of a clansman from Talax.

While the average clansman is a dangerous foe, standing above him in prowess and stature are the Talax Reavers. The Clan Chiefs use these as bodyguards and as the primary guardians of Moment's Rest, and they have a feared reputation among all mercenary factions in the Vortex. Skilled in the arts of battle and relentless in their approach to war, the Reavers use their size and speed to quickly shock an opposing force into submission, rending bone and pulping flesh in graphically intimidating fashion. They are an unshakeable wall of spinning blades and gore appealing to the Blood God for his favour in battle and, as mercenaries, they are a mixed blessing as they sometimes follow their innate bloodlust even against their employers.

Above them all are the shaman-smiths of Cho'unda, the chosen of Gorgeth. Equally skilled on the battlefield and in the forges, the combination of craftsman and warrior is a potent force unto itself. What truly sets them apart from their fellow clansmen is their innate sense of the Daemonic. Some claim to smell Daemons like spoor on the wind, others say they can see through the veil between the material and the Warp. Whatever method they use, the hunters' instinct to capture Daemons for personal use or within the forges is uncanny. Employing the Venic Noose to ensnare them like fresh game, the shaman-smiths are able to bind the Daemons without the treacherous sorcery followers of other, lesser gods must use.

Battle Clansman of Talax (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
35	28	37	38	36	29	32	31	25	--

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 13

Armour: Arms, Body, Legs 6

Total TB: 3

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S), Linguistics (Int) (Low Gothic), Parry (WS), Survival (Per) +10, Tech-Use.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Flesh Render, Frenzy, Hatred (Followers of Slaanesh), Heightened Senses (Hearing), Quick Draw, Unarmed Warrior.

Armour: Treated Xeno-Hides.

Weapons: Chain dagger (Melee; 1d10+4 R; Pen 2; Tearing), hand cannon (Pistol; 35m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 R; Pen 2; Clip 5; Reload 2 Full).

Gear: Rebreather, 3 clips for hand cannon.

Talax Reaper (Elite)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
40	38	37	38	36	29	32	31	21	--

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 14

Armour: All 6

Total TB: 3

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Carousing, Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S) +10, Linguistics (Int) (Low Gothic), Parry (WS), Survival (Per) +10, Tech-Use.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Battle Rage, Crushing Blow, Disarm, Flesh Render, Frenzy, Hatred (Followers of Slaanesh), Heightened Senses (Hearing), Iron Jaw, Light Sleeper, Step Aside, Swift Attack, Quick Draw, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee & Ballistic), Unarmed Warrior, Unshakeable Will.

Armour: Talax Hide Armour.

Weapons: Chain dagger (Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 2; Tearing), chainsword (Melee; 1d10+7 R; Pen 2; Balanced, Tearing), hand cannon (Pistol; 35m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 R; Pen 2; Clip 5; Reload 2 Full).

Gear: Rebreather, 3 clips for hand cannon.

Shaman-Smith (Elite)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
30	28	32	33	36	39	42	31	25	--

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 16

Armour: Arms, Body, Legs 3

Total TB: 3

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Dodge +10 (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) (Int) +20, Forbidden Lore (Occult) (Int), Intimidate (S), Linguistics (Int) (Low Gothic), Medicae (Int) +10, Parry, (WS), Survival (Per) +10, Tech-Use (Int) +10, Trade (Armourer) (Int) +10, Trade (Technomat) (Int) +10.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Armour-Monger, Flesh Render, Frenzy, Hatred (Followers of Slaanesh), Heightened Senses (Hearing), Jaded, Quick Draw, Unarmed Warrior.

Traits: Unnatural Senses (10).

Armour: Treated Xeno-Hides and Skullcap.

Weapons: Chain dagger (Melee; 1d10+4 R; Pen 2; Tearing), hand cannon (Pistol; 35m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 R; Pen 2; Clip 5; Reload 2 Full), sacrificial knife (Melee; 1d5+3 R; Pen 0).

Gear: Rebreather, 3 clips for hand cannon, Venic Noose, assorted vials for collecting blood.

DAEMON ENGINES

Daemon Engines are a bizarre and frightening hybrid of mechanical ingenuity and arcane impossibility. Incorporating the pulsating rage of a Daemon within a base metal form requires strong bindings, powerful enticement or coercion, and blood sacrifice. Each construct acts as both prison and new body for the Daemon, bound into service by its new master but given a corporeal form that it would otherwise struggle to maintain.

The Blood Forges of Talax have a unique way of trapping Daemons in their engines. Built into each is a set of bindings known collectively as a Venic Noose, a simple construct filled with the blood of the freshly slain making it almost irresistible to charnel entities and the minions of the Blood God. Once the Daemon emerges to feast on the blood, the noose tightens and the construct is quickly sealed shut around it, locking the Daemon inside. The Daemon's rage provides the construct with an almost unlimited supply of emotional energy to fuel it. While the process is nowhere near as precise as elsewhere in the Vortex, the shaman-smiths of Talax make some of the most bloodthirsty engines in the Screaming Vortex.

They are, however, far from the only ones who manufacture such creations. Regardless of which planet or faction makes them, all Daemon Engines trade the extended durability of a vehicle for the shock and awe factor of daemonic entities striding across the battlefield on legs of metal and ceramite. As a result, all Daemon Engines have the following restrictions:

- Daemon Engines use a living creature stat-line as they are considered sentient and not mechanical vehicles.
- All Daemon Engines have the Daemon Engine Trait (see page 114).
- Any bound crew members cannot be targeted as they are technically part of the construct.
- Daemon Engines must be Size Massive (7) or larger.

Should the engine receive any critical damage, the extent of the damage is not only in the systems needing repair, but also in the loosening of the Venic Noose or other binding mechanisms which holds the Daemon in place. As the knots relax, the Daemon is able to shuck its bindings and begin to exert its own control over the engine. Should the Daemon break entirely free and compromise the integrity of the engine itself, any creature in the daemon's path is likely to face a Daemonic Entity of significant power head-on. If a Daemon Engine takes critical damage, consult **Table 3-8: Daemon Engine Critical Hit Chart** to see the extent of the damage to the internal systems.



DAEMON ENGINE TRAITS

Daemon Engine (X): The creature is a hybrid of Daemon and machine, fusing technology and sorcery in a way that is seamless and horrifying. The visual impact of these entities strikes fear into friend and foe alike and provides it additional protection against standard armaments. The Daemon Engine has the combined effects of From Beyond and The Stuff of Nightmares and is therefore immune to Fear, Pinning, Stunning, Insanity, Poison, and Disease. Psychic powers that affect the mind cannot control the Engine as it is bound to the sorcerous runes holding the construct together. In addition, Daemon Engines gain a Toughness bonus equal to the number in parentheses, which like the Daemonic Trait, can be negated by force weapons, holy/sanctified weapons, or direct damage psychic powers.

Runes of the Blood God: Khorne abhors the guile and trickery of psykers and their ilk, deeming it unworthy of the field of battle. As such, any Daemon Engine bound to the service of Khorne can have engraved or painted runes of protection and warding from the psychic predations of such cowards. Any psychic power used directly on the engine causes the wielding psyker to roll on **Table 6-3: Perils of the Warp** on page 211 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook with a +30 to the die roll. In addition, they also reduce the damage from any direct damage from psychic abilities by 1d10 points. Runes of the Blood God does not protect against Faith Powers used against the engine.

Bellow of Khorne: A guttural roar emanates from the engine like a primordial carnivore. The deep subsonic sound waves trigger the inherent fear response in all living things. For a Full Action, all living creatures within 100m of the front arc of the engine must take an immediate Fear test counting the Engine as one rank higher than its base rating. Any target failing this test is Pinned for d5 turns.

Aortic Rage: Khornate Daemon Engines are attracted to the scent and spillage of blood. If blood has already been spilled within 100m of the engine, the engine must pass a **Difficult (-10) Willpower Test** or it will move to engage the closest bleeding target using full moves and Berserk Charge (if it has the Talent).

TABLE 3-8: DAEMON ENGINE CRITICAL HIT CHART

Damage Points	Result
1-3	Distracting Blow —The Daemon is momentarily annoyed by actually being touched by the weapons of its enemies that it requires a Challenging (+0) Willpower Test to not engage the source of that attack in its next attack. If it was already focused on this target, then it will move with all haste to fully engage the target with any and all weapons at its disposal.
4-6	Ablative Strike —The attack strips layers of armour off the engine as well as some of the protective runes. Reduce the armour by 1d10 points. In addition, any future critical hits receive a bonus of +2 on this chart. This is a cumulative bonus should multiple Ablative Strikes hit the Daemon Engine. Roll a d10. On a roll of 9 or 10, any shielding ability (Runes of the Blood God, for example) is sufficiently ruined and no longer provides protection.
7-8	Weapon Damaged —Randomly select a weapon on the engine. That weapon bears the brunt of the attack and takes the full effects of the blow. While not quite as resilient as Titan weapons, the Daemon will try to preserve its integrity. Roll 1d10, and on a roll of 7 or more, the weapon can be used the next round. On a roll of anything less, the weapon is inoperable until repaired outside of the battle.
9	Penetrating Hit —A powerful attack breaches the construct's structure and unravels the knots in the Venic Noose. Reduce the armour by 1d10 points and roll an additional 2d10 points of damage. The attack also breached the hull in some capacity; roll a further 1d10. On a roll of 9 or 10, the Daemon Engine suffers a Daemon Unbound! Result.
10+	Daemon Unbound! —The attack is strong enough or well-placed enough that the bindings are completely undone and the construct is unable to contain the Daemon within. For all game purposes the engine vaporizes as the Daemon manifests fully in the material world. The sudden release of Warp energy causes an explosion with a 2d10x10 metre radius, leaving a crater in its place. Anyone caught within the blast radius suffers 5d10+10E damage bypassing Armour (unless warded against psychic abilities). Reduce the Damage by 2 points for every full 10 meters the target is away from the exploding engine. Alternatively, at the GM's discretion, the blast damage can be reduced to 2d10+5E and the Daemon can manifest, freed from its shackles. It may offer the players thanks or engage them in combat, depending on the alignment of the Daemon, the players and NPCs involved, and the adventure.



DEFILER

In some parts of the Vortex, this Daemon Engine is almost as common as converted and corrupted Imperial vehicles. Though the methods for binding the Daemons are different across individual forges, the basic look and design of the Defiler is remarkably consistent even within this unnatural realm. Each is roughly tank-sized, and both extremely violent in its actions and indiscriminate in who bears the brunt of it. Whether using the massive battle cannon to destroy entire formations or ripping apart enemies with its massive claws, this engine of war acts as a harbinger of utter devastation to its foes.

Defiler (Master)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
38	28	65	65	32	15	34	38	--	--

Movement: 14/28/42/84

Armour: 12 (All)

Skills: Awareness (Per), Parry (WS).

Talents: Combat Master, Furious Assault, Independent Targeting, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee).

Traits: Daemon Engine (6), Machine (12), Quadruped, Size (Immense), Unnatural Strength (+6).

Wounds: 48

Total TB: 12

Weapons: Battle cannon (Heavy; Front Arc, 750m; S/-/-; 3d10+10 X; Pen 8; Clip-; Reload -; Blast [10], Concussive [3], Devastating [4]), monstrous claws (Melee; 2d10+18 R; Pen 8; Tearing, Unwieldy), reaper autocannon (Heavy; 300m; S/4/-; 3d10+8I; Pen 6; Clip-; Reload-; Reliable, Twin-linked), havoc missile launcher (Heavy; 100m; S/2/-; 2d10 X; Pen 2; Clip -; Reload-; Blast [4], Devastating [2]).

GM Note: Many worlds have the ability to make the Defiler, and not all of them align themselves with any single Chaos Power. To make a Defiler more representative of a specific Chaos Power, add the related relevant Traits for that God. For example, if the Defiler is aligned with Khorne, it can have the Aortic Rage and Runes of the Blood God Traits added to it.

BLOOD SLAUGHTERER

Among the most dangerous and plentiful of the Daemon Engines aligned with Khorne, the Blood Slaughterer is a machine devoid of any purpose other than to hunt down and gorge on the blood of those it slays. Housing the spirits of powerful Charnel Daemons, these engines resemble brass and ceramite ticks larger in size than a battle tank and infinitely more lethal. The vast majority of them have two massive glaive-like blades capable of punching holes through heavy armour, but other variants replace one blade with a massive spear thrower called an impaler, a weapon the Talax delight in seeing used against those craven enough to flee from combat. Slaughterers generally patrol in small packs of two to three and are very capable of sniffing out hidden dens of resistance. They are one of the most bloodthirsty Daemon Engines ever created,



revelling in the shedding of blood and the rending of flesh. As a result, it holds the reputation of being one of the toughest to control while on the battlefield, and has occasionally broken free of its handlers in a frenzy of blood and torn flesh.

Blood Slaughterer (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
45	28	64	68	49	29	37	32	--	--

Movement: 14/28/42/84

Wounds: 48

Armour: 8 (All)

Total TB: 12

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Parry (WS).

Talents: Berserk Charge, Combat Master, Flesh Render, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee & Ranged), Whirlwind of Death.

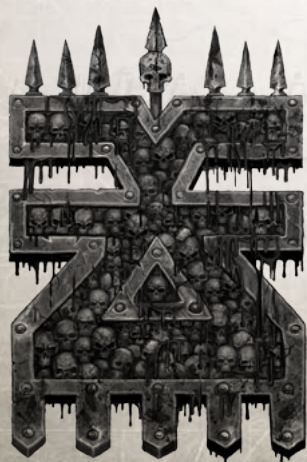
Traits: Aortic Rage, Daemon Engine (6), Machine (8), Quadruped, Runes of the Blood God, Size (Massive), Unnatural Senses (40m), Unnatural Strength (+6).

Weapons: Two titan blades (Melee; 2d10+17 R; Pen 8; Tearing) or one titan blade and impaler (Heavy; 50m; S/-/-; 1d10+8 R; Pen 10; Clip -; Reload-; Felling [4], Snare [4]†).

†At the start of his turn, the ensnared targets must make an Opposed Strength Test against the Blood Slaughterer. If he fails, he is immediately dragged a number of metres equal to ten plus twice the Degrees of Failure towards the Daemon Engine.

BRASS SCORPION

Designed to look like the poisonous arachnids of many worlds and roughly the size of an Imperial Baneblade, the Brass Scorpion is a devastating engine of war. With its combination of heavy artillery and mechanical attack claws, the Scorpion is capable of ripping through soft and hard targets alike with ease. Though not as blindly aggressive as the Blood Slaughterer, the Brass Scorpion prosecutes its battlefield with more precision and ruthlessness, using its entire arsenal for maximum violent impact. The shaman-smiths prefer to refrain from ensnarement to form these creations, and instead entice Daemons with promises of mass amounts of bloodshed to appease and slake its thirst for violence. For such reasons, Brass Scorpions from Talax are rarer on the battlefield, as there are very few Daemons willing to commit so fully to incarceration.



Brass Scorpion (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
49	32	80	80	39	37	37	38	--	--

Movement: 18/36/54/108

Wounds: 80

Armour: 24 (All)

Total TB: 15

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag).

Talents: Berserk Charge, Swift Attack.

Traits: Bellow of Khorne, Daemon Engine (7), Machine (24), Quadruped (6), Runes of the Blood God, Size (Monumental), Unnatural Strength (+9).

Weapons: Crushing claws (Melee; 2d10+24 R; Pen 8; Tearing), two hellmaw cannons (Heavy; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+6 E; Pen 3; Clip-; Reload-; Flame, Spray), demolisher cannon (Heavy; 50m; S/-/-; 4d10+10 X; Pen 8; Clip-; Reload-; Blast [10], Concussive [3]), scorpion cannon (Heavy; 180m; 3/6/10; 2d10+5E; Pen 4; Clip-; Reload-; Storm).

DOOM BLASTER

Seldom seen outside of the Vortex and less frequently within it, the Doom Blaster is a rare model for the Lord of Skulls as it is primarily a support engine rather than close quarters warrior. Armed with four heavy mortars, this creation operates far from the front lines, destroying enemies with its long-reaching weapons. Few of Khorne's Daemons have the willpower to resist the call of blood and stay far enough away for their terrible mortars to achieve maximum carnage, however, making the Doom Blaster a highly sought after and prized commodity in any battle.

Though the damage it can cause with its mortars is enough to scare even battle-hardened troops, possibly the most unnerving thing about this engine is its scavenger-like mentality. Very few have seen the shells, known as gravediggers, up close and they are truly horrific things. Made from the bones of those who have fallen to the engine, a Doom Blaster usually lingers on the battlefield for hours to consume the skeletal remains of those it has killed. After consumption, the construct uses its new material to create its ammunition for the next battle, recycling the remains of its victims for endless years. Many believe that each Doom Blaster still has pieces of bone from its first shell, mixing with the blood of the new as the tally of skulls for the Skull Throne escalates.

Doom Blaster (Master)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
26	38	45 ¹⁰	64 ¹⁴	40	32	40	48	--	--	

Movement: 5/10/20/40

Armour: 12 (All)

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10.

Talents: Marksman.

Traits: Bellow of Khorne, Crawler, Daemon Engine (8), Machine (12), Runes of the Blood God, Size (Monumental), Stampede, Unnatural Strength (+6),

Weapons: Doom blaster heavy mortar (x4) (Heavy; Front Facing; 50-500m; S/-/-; 3d10+6 X; Pen 8; Clip-; Reload-; Blast [10], Concussive [2], Devastating [5], Gyro-stabilized, Inaccurate), prow brass-ram (Melee; 2d10+16 R; Pen 6; Razor Sharp, Tearing, Unwieldy).

Salvo of Skulls: The Doom Blaster consumes the bones of those who have fallen to its assault, shaping them into new shells to fire in a never-ending cycle of carnage. When the construct locates a large concentration of softer targets, it will occasionally fire all four mortars simultaneously, looking to create a new harvesting field in a single shot. This attack is made in a single roll covering all four shots with a +10 modifier to the BS Test and the following Qualities added to the weapon: Blast (25), Concussive (4), Devastating (15), and Recharge. The Doom Blaster may not move on the turn after it has fired in this manner.

Cull the Weak! If there is a choice of targets, the Doom Blaster instinctively chooses the highest concentration of softer enemies as its target. A fellow warrior must make an **Opposed Difficult (-10) Willpower Test** convince it to redirect its fire to another target.

Wounds: 88

Total TB: 14

SKULL REAPER

The Talax hold this enormous Daemon Engine as the Avatar of Gorgeth, a living manifestation of their Blood God. Slightly larger than a Warhound Titan, over the centuries it has morphed many of the mechanical aspects to more closely resemble a monstrous Bloodthirster. One fleshy arm houses a turbo-melta gun, capable of reducing all but the most heavily protected fortifications to molten slag. The other arm holds a massive chain axe, but unlike the rigid joints of a Titan, the axe arm is fully articulated as if it were alive.

Though the engine primarily resides on Cho'unda, it has also been seen on other worlds across the Vortex, though none know if the Talax carried it to these battlefields or if it somehow made its own passage. Rumours also put Titans of its shape on warfronts elsewhere in the galaxy, spawning fears that there may be more than one or that the Ruinous Powers are able to project this daemonic construct wherever and whenever they desire.

Skull Reaper is an integral part of their culture, and holds a special role in the Encarminata on both Cho'unda and Ju'ukto. Despite this, no Elder Root has tales of its creation, or perhaps dares not speak of it, and no shaman-smith claims the ability to forge such a beast. Many simply believe Skull Reaper appeared on Cho'unda when their god breathed his hot anger into the War Moons at their birth, to guide the Talax in their worship of Gorgeth and heat their blood for battle.

Skull Reaper (Master)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
52	38	94 ¹⁸	97 ¹⁸	52	47	38	53	--	43	

Movement: 10/20/30/60

Armour: 24 (All)

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag) (against attacks from similarly sized foes), Parry (WS) +10 (against Titan-sized weapons only).

Talents: Berserk Charge, Lightning Attack.

Traits: Aortic Rage, Daemon Engine (9), Fear (2), Machine (24), Runes of the Blood God, Size (Monumental), Unnatural Strength (+9).

Weapons: Turbo-melta cannon (Heavy; 100m; S/-/-; 4d10+20 E; Pen 10; Clip-; Reload-; Blast [5], Devastating [5], Melta, Recharge), massive chainaxe (Melee; 3d10+24 R; Pen 8; Clip-; Reload-; Tearing).





RED DAWN RISING



THE GM'S BRIEF
•
THE LONG,
DARK NIGHT
•
DEAD BY DAWN
•
DAWN COMETH
•
NPC AND
ADVERSARY INDEX



CHAPTER IV: RED DAWN RISING

"At his left hand moans a Daemon, bound in the shape of an axe. Its songs of blood and hatred echo forth, and fill the sky with a moaning that stirs the dead. At his right hand stand lesser Daemons, huntsmen all, straining at the leashes of the Hounds. They feast upon the shades and spirits they have harried, throwing morsels of innocence to each other, so that all may sample the sweetest meat... Behold, a Daemon Lord comes, and we are doomed."

—From the *Codex Daemonicus*

Red Dawn Rising is a Black Crusade adventure that plunges the Heretics into all-out warfare in the pursuit of a powerful weapon, one powerful enough that they might one day use it to gain ascendancy over all of their rivals within the Screaming Vortex. This weapon, spoken of in awed tones as the Axe of Kha-Aksha, is a mighty axe in which a Bloodthirster of Khorne is entrapped, and located on the planet of Messia. But, as every true champion of the Blood God knows, such treasures are rarely to be claimed without a challenge. The axe is not lying around waiting to be picked up, but is instead in the possession of one of the countless millions of bloated mutants that shamble across the surface on Messia's night side. How the mutant came into possession of the axe cannot be known, but when the tortured light of Messia's polluted sun falls upon that wretched creature, it shall be transformed into a cunning and devious adversary, and at that very moment realise the true nature of the weapon clutched unthinkingly in its distended, filth-encrusted claws. When that happens, the once-lowly mutant will have in its possession the means of laying claim to the entire world.

While the Heretics are unlikely to care for the fate of Messia, they do care very much that this priceless weapon should not fall to the possession of some mere mutant overlord. To claim it for themselves, the Heretics must first gain ascendancy over several other factions, and only through pooling their new-found resources do they stand a chance of defeating the mutant horde and its hideous master, and gaining the axe for themselves.



THE GM'S BRIEF

This section provides the Game Master with a summary of the story so far and an overview of the adventure's plot. Using this information, the GM can provide as much or as little detail as he feels the players need to get started, and plunge them straight into the bloody action.

Before reading this section, it is recommended that the Game Master familiarises himself with the setting of Messia. This world is introduced in the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook on pages 335-336, and further, more specific details of its hazards, cities and factions are provided on pages 101-104. **Red Dawn Rising** takes place in the blasted wastes, where competing drill-barons vie for desperate resources whilst fending off limitless hordes of mindless mutants. When the dawn finally comes, however, these mutants are transformed into cunning murderers, and should this transformation take place whilst one of their number is still in possession of the Axe of Kha-Aksha, all hope of the Heretics gaining that prize for themselves must surely be lost.

THE STORY THUS FAR

The occupants of Messia exist at the mercy of the relentless day and night cycle of their blasted world. The planet's two cities would soon fail if not for the numerous drill-barons scouring the wastes for promethium deposits, but the drill-clans must endure myriad hazards to locate and defend their finds. Aside from the perilous environment of Messia itself, the vast hordes of twisted mutants present a constant threat to the clans' drilling operations. These creatures shamble mindlessly towards the light of dawn, and when that light finally falls upon them, they are transformed into devious beasts of murderous cunning.

When the Heretics arrive on Messia in search of the Axe of Kha-Aksha, dawn is not far away and the mutant carrying the axe is shambling instinctively towards the poisonous light. How they choose to set about retrieving the axe before its bearer "awakens" under the influence of Xoson, Messia's baleful star, is the focus of the adventure.

ADVENTURE PLOT

The adventure begins with the Heretics arriving on Messia in search of the Axe of Kha-Aksha. The Player Characters soon learn of the axe's whereabouts, but it should be obvious that they have little or no chance of obtaining it on their own. Only by gaining power over one or more of the other factions—the various drill-barons operating in the area—do the Heretics have any realistic chance of claiming their prize. How they choose to achieve this is up to the players.

The adventure presents details of three drill-clans, along with guidance on how these groups act throughout the events of the adventure. Whatever course of action the Heretics pursue, the Game Master should find sufficient background to allow the adventure to proceed smoothly.

ORDER OUT OF CHAOS

Red Dawn Rising is intentionally very open in its structure, and the Heretics are free to explore the wastes of Messia and interact with the drill-barons and other inhabitants any way they like. Should the Game Master wish to impose a more rigid structure on events, however, there are two main ways of doing so.

Firstly, the map (see page 143) is laid out so that a group of Heretics approaching the terminator line encounters each of the drill sites in turn, unless they make a deliberate effort to avoid doing so. This allows the GM to run each encounter with a drill-site as a distinct phase of the adventure, concluding one before moving on to the next.

The second means of imposing structure is by way of a timeline. Dawn is coming, and while the Game Master need not use a strictly regulated countdown, he can use this to move events on. The drill-barons need to head out back towards Mekonta before the sun rises, and do so regardless of any other events. That is, of course, unless the Heretics take control of the drill-clans, which is a whole objective in itself.

Following the map, the adventure is most likely to flow as follow:

- The Heretics arrive via the point indicated on the map, and must face the perils of the wastes as they approach the first drill-site, that of the Jorgstern Clan.
- The group interacts with drill-baron Caleb Jorgstern, perhaps usurping his power or bartering a temporary pact.
- The Heretics cross the wastes and engage with Ore-Corps 358, once again facing the perils of Messia's surface in their travels.
- Having reached the second drill-site, the Heretics engage with drill-baron Vassid, arriving at some arrangement or taking control of his drill-clan.
- The Heretics cross the wastes once more, heading for the drill-site of the Scornful Host.
- The group engages with Rahim Scotia, buying his services or defeating him.
- The Heretics learn of the location of the Axe of Kha-Aksha, either during interactions with the drill-barons or using one of the other methods presented in part 2.
- Dawn rises, and the adventure reaches its climax as the Heretics confront the mutant axe-bearer.

Given the different natures of the three rival drill-clans, the players may decide to negotiate with them, fight them, attempt a hostile takeover, or ignore them entirely. They might gain power over one and use this to exert influence over another, or any other combination of approaches. The drill-barons have their own goals, of course, and each reacts to the Heretics' presence differently.

However the Heretics choose to interact with the drill-barons, the adventure is subject to a deadline independent of their actions. Dawn is just over the horizon and the mutants are shambling mindlessly towards it. At the moment the mutant bearing the Axe of Kha-Aksha passes into the light of Messia's day cycle, he is revealed and at once is suffused with power.

The adventure culminates with the coming of the dawn and the inevitable confrontation with the mutant horde. By this time, the Heretics might have taken power over one or more of the rival drill-clans, and so may use the skills and resources of each to achieve their aims. If they have decided against doing so, or attempted a different approach entirely, the Heretics may still try to win their prize, using any and all weapons and skills at their disposal.

As will become apparent as the GM reads through the adventure, **Red Dawn Rising** explores a number of the themes presented throughout **THE TOME OF BLOOD**. It is centred around power, in particular martial power gained and exercised by the strongest. But Khorne has many aspects, and so martial power may be wielded in numerous ways. For some it is raw muscle, and for others firepower. For a few it is the unseen knife plunging from the shadows, while the very strongest need only raise a finger to force others to their will. Each of the rival drill-barons has a very different approach to war, and so the Heretics have to approach each in a different way, proving their mastery of the myriad arts of war and, in the process, their worthiness to receive the blessings of the Blood God. Of course, the key facet of the nature of Khorne is conflict, and there is plenty of that to be found on Messia. In fact, it is the outbreak of bloodshed on a staggering scale that brings about the final scene of the adventure, where the conflict that erupts in the wastes calls inexorably to the true power within the axe as it attempts to break free.

The objective of **Red Dawn Rising** is to claim the Axe of Kha-Aksha, but the adventure presents the Heretics with a stark choice when they discover its true nature. With uncounted mutants closing on them, will the Heretics unleash the full power within the axe, expending it once and for all as the Greater Daemon entrapped within emerges to do their bidding, or will they flee or attempt to fight their way through the horde in the hope of wielding the axe another day?



GM GUIDANCE: THE BIGGER PICTURE

Red Dawn Rising is the second in a series of adventures published in supplements dedicated to a single Chaos God. The first—**Toppled Spires**, published in **THE TOME OF FATE**—pitched the Heretics headlong into the plots and intrigues of the followers of Tzeentch. Each of the Ruinous Powers will have their own supplement, each featuring an adventure fully exploring the themes explored in the book. These adventures can be used to punctuate an ongoing campaign and eventually, once all four have been played through and the Heretics are ready to ascend to mastery over all of their rivals in the Screaming Vortex, they can be tied together in an apocalyptic finale.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Red Dawn Rising makes the assumption that the Heretics have come to Messina in search of the Axe of Kha-Aksha, a notorious Daemon Weapon fabled across the length and breadth of the Gloaming Worlds. The mere possibility of gaining this awe-inspiring weapon should be all the motivation needed to set up the adventure, but Game Masters might like to give some thought to the question of how the Player Characters found out about it in the first place. Especially enterprising GMs might like to allow the Heretics to hear about the axe earlier in other adventures, perhaps describing it in such a way that they can hardly resist seeking it out for themselves.

Game Masters are entirely welcome to alter the set-up, of course, perhaps having the players on Messina for another reason entirely, and only learn of the axe later in their stay. This would work especially well if the GM wants the Heretics to spend some time in one or both of the cities of Messina, taking the opportunity to explore these locations. This also gives them ample opportunity to learn more about the planet, so that they are better prepared for the horrors awaiting them in the wastes—an **Easy (+20) Inquiry Test**. Once discovered, the adventure can form part of a Compact (see the Game Master Chapter of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook).

Another possibility might arise from the nature of one or more of the Player Characters. If some or all are natives of Messina, such as Chem-Hunters, they might bring knowledge of the axe to the group. This would serve as a great way of introducing a new Player Character to an established group, as is often necessitated when a player's character has been killed and he has rolled up a new one who needs to be integrated into the campaign. In such a case, the new character is bringing something very worthwhile to the group, in the form of some degree of useful knowledge (as the GM determines) not just about the axe but the planet itself, the mutants and how they twist form from day to night, the toxic wastelands, the drill-barons, and other useful background. Even if the other Heretics are well established, this focus on the "new guy" gives the character a reason to be there and allows him to take some of the spotlight straight away.

The adventure could be tied into other adventures, such as **False Prophets** (see Chapter XII of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). A text describing the axe and its approximate location could be found in the Temple of Lies, or communicated to the Heretics by the Mendacious Oracle. The adventure could alternatively follow on from **Toppled Spires**, the adventure presented in **THE TOME OF FATE**. This is particularly applicable if the GM plans to have the Heretics face a challenge relating to each of the Ruinous Powers in order to prove their worthiness to gain ascendancy within the Screaming Vortex, or the Heretics who survived their stay on Q'Sal simply are eager for greater power to defeat their foes.

Should the Heretics leap right into the adventure without any research or information about Messina other than the axe, hints as to its noxious nature and other threats might come from plentiful rebreathers in their shuttle taking them into the wastes, random conversations from crewmen about the coming dawn and the mutants, easily noticed drill-clan tattoos and markings, and other clues that should lead them to realising there is more to the planet than simply an axe in the wastes.



The following legend can be read aloud to communicate what the characters know of the axe:

It is said that long ago, the Lord of Blood created the Axe of Kha-Aksha, that only the most worthy of those who would wield his power might prove themselves upon the field of battle. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of aspiring champions have borne that weapon to war, but ultimately, none have proved its equal. The last mortal to have borne the axe fell in battle upon the world of Messina. It is said he reaped a crimson harvest amongst the shambling mutants of that world, yet ultimately fell to them, his form torn to shreds and the axe taken up unthinkingly by one of those lowly creatures. Now it resides in the wastes, home of the mutants and the drill-rigs that wrest promethium from the planet like blood from flesh. Whoever would claim it must first survive these harsh, toxic lands and the harsher drill-barons. They must also do it soon, for Messina's sun is beginning to rise, and with dawn comes the horrific transformation of the mutants.

How might the Blood God reward one who could wrest that axe from its unworthy, unknowing bearer, and raise it high in the name of Khorne?

BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD

Red Dawn Rising is very much focused on the themes presented in this book, namely power, war, and bloodshed in myriad different forms. This makes it inevitable that Player Characters of a more warlike nature will dominate, as is appropriate. It is unambiguous in its exploration of these themes, and so it is ideally suited to a group of Heretics wholly or partially devoted to the Blood God. This does not mean that Heretics of all sorts of different loyalties and outlooks should not be able to take part. Indeed, the involvement of characters of wildly divergent approaches is to be encouraged, if for no other reason than because the nature of Chaos encourages competition in all things. Players should be encouraged to consider how their characters might react to situations where their natural instinct is to proceed with cunning or guile when the only obvious means of winning is to use direct force. These tensions can provide all manner of additional gaming opportunities, and make the adventure all the more engaging and memorable.

If the Game Master wishes, he can use the following secondary objectives to provide those dedicated to a power other than Khorne with some specific secondary missions and motivations.

Because a Heretic dedicated to another power might find himself at a disadvantage at various points in the adventure, it is only fair he should have some means of righting the balance. The following provides a number of optional, personal goals Player Characters might like to pursue, along with the rewards for attaining them. Players and Game Masters are, of course, encouraged to invent further goals and motivations as befits the Player Characters and the ongoing campaign narrative.

CHARACTERS DEDICATED TO TZEENTCH

Those dedicated to the Changer of the Ways often regard the followers of Khorne as brutal and unsophisticated. They see each phase of a conflict as a milestone on a far larger journey and are ever ready to use intrigue and guile to achieve long-term prizes the followers of the Blood God might not even perceive. That does not mean that those devoted to Tzeentch are lesser warriors, but conflicts are likely to erupt when their politicking clashes with the more immediate concerns of all-out war.

Personal Goal: A character devoted to Tzeentch who sees the long-term value of establishing power over the drill-clans gains an additional 100 Experience Points per drill-clan still able to function, and over which the Heretics have power, at the end of the adventure.

THE MAP

This map on page 143 may be shown to the players, and it represents what they know or can easily find out about the region in which **Red Dawn Rising** takes place. It is scaled such that an inch is roughly 1.5 kilometres, but the GM is free to adjust this as desired to best fit his plans for the adventure. Beyond the information presented on the map, the players are unlikely to know details of the region, unless one or more of the Heretics is native to Messia or they have spent significant time investigating the region before departing. If this is the case, the GM may choose to reveal a few more details or to drop a few hints as play progresses, perhaps through interrogation results from captured drill-clanners or other sources.

CHARACTERS DEDICATED TO SLAANESH

Characters dedicated to the Prince of Chaos should find plenty of experiences to slake their thirst for sensation on Messia, but only if they are prepared to suffer the company of the crude and rough-mannered drill-clans. Such individuals are likely to find the servants of the drill-barons boorish, while the natives undoubtedly resent the character's arch ways. Players are encouraged to play out these tensions, and Game Masters should reward them if they do well.

Personal Goal: A character devoted to Slaanesh that gains power over a substantial group of drill-clanners by using Interaction-based Skills rather than brute violence (as determined by the GM) gains an extra 100 Experience Points for each demonstration of his patron power's superiority.

CHARACTERS DEDICATED TO NURGLE

For those dedicated to the Plague God, war is far more than an exercise in destruction, for with death comes decay, and with decay comes rebirth. One determined to propagate the word of Nurgle might find all manner of opportunities to spread his patron's delightful gifts amongst the battlefields of Messia, though to do so fully he might need some combatants to survive, a fact that inevitably sets him at odds with those dedicated to the Blood God.

Personal Goal: The mutant horde swarming towards the sunrise represents an opportunity for the character to spread the contagious blessings of Nurgle across the entire surface of Messia. This may be achieved by using the Nurgle's Rot Psychic Power on the horde, or spreading some suitable plague upon them, or some other noxious rite. This must be done within 100 metres of the horde, and any test to perform it (such as a Focus Power Test) must be carried out at an **Arduous (-40)** level in order to infect sufficient numbers of mutants to please the Lord of Plagues. If the character can achieve this, he gains an additional 100 Experience Points. Note that the horde must survive so that the mutants can scatter to the corners of Messia after the sunrise, so the bonus is not awarded if the horde is (somehow) destroyed.

CHAPTER I: THE LONG, DARK NIGHT

Exactly how the Heretics arrive on Messia depends very much on the group's circumstances, as does the exact method they use to travel to the world. If **Red Dawn Rising** is to be the first adventure of a campaign, then they might start out already there, so no set-up is required. Regardless of how the group arrives, the Game Master should spend some time "acclimatising" players to the world, and the best way to do this is to plunge them straight into it. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Messia is a world constantly at war with itself and with those few mortals that dare dwell there. No wonder then that it is said to be host to the legendary Axe of Kha-Aksha, for surely if the Blood God was to place such a mighty relic anywhere in the Screaming Vortex, it would be a world where the air itself sears the flesh from the bones of the weak and the ground weeps a heady mix of acid and blood.

Once the players are familiar with the hazardous setting, and clear as to their objective, they have the opportunity to decide how they are to proceed. They may be shown the map, and may decide to travel to and investigate any of the locations shown on it. There is no specific order in which the players are expected to approach these locations. After departing their landing area, or one of the cities should they have spent time researching and preparing before hand, the Heretics move into the wastes. They might travel on foot (extremely dangerous), via a commandeered or hired shuttle-crawler that regularly travels from the cities to the wastes, on bikes or mounts, or even via one of the rare flyers of Messia. Merely gaining transportation could become a short adventure itself, depending on the nature of the Heretics. Each location and the characters that feature in it are described next, along with any specific events that are likely to ensue there.

INTO THE WASTES

The events of **Red Dawn Rising** take place in a particularly hazardous and unpleasant region of Messia, a zone in which three rival drill-barons are seeking to consolidate their extracted promethium from the area and heading out before dawn rises, with all its attendant risks. Aside from the three drill-clans, the region features several other locations or types of location. These are broadly defined as the open wastes, the acid swamps, and the spore forests. Each presents its own range of hazards, and the descriptions that follow provide the Game Master with all the detail he needs to run encounters set within them.



THE OPEN WASTES

The blank spaces on the map in between each location might appear empty, but in reality they are anything but. The land is blasted and the going extremely hard. Acid winds scour the plains, making it all but impossible to breathe without filters or the unnatural blessings of the Ruinous Powers. Thick, weirdly lambent mists may descend at any moment, cutting visibility to less than a metre as corrosive dew forms on exposed armour and skin. The ground itself is littered with the boltholes of the numerous small, but often deadly creatures that dwell beneath the surface, none of them in the slightest bit tolerant of other life forms intruding upon their dens.

When the Heretics travel across the wastes, some or all of the following hazards can be used. Exactly how each is manifested is likely to depend on how the Player Characters are travelling and how long they spend in the wastes. If attempting an ill-advised trek on foot, it is appropriate to use at least one of the following hazards per kilometre of travel, while a more rapid trip on a mount or vehicle would result in fewer such encounters. Of course, the mode of travel is likely to affect what sort of perils the Heretics are exposed to. For example, if they are flying, they are far more likely to suffer the effects of airborne pollution, storm winds, and the likes than underfoot acid bursts and similar hazards. Note that storm winds and mists occur naturally with no trigger needed, so GMs can simply make a 1d10 roll to determine them: 1-2 is dead calm (but add +1 to next roll), 3-8 is Storm Winds, 9-10 is Dark Mists.

Acid Bursts

Messia is notorious for the ferocity of the storms that scour its surface, and for the fact that they can strip the flesh from a man's bones in seconds if he is foolish enough to get caught in the open when one strikes. Even worse is when the winds pick up acids, a common occurrence near the "terminator line"—the ever-moving dawn as it creeps slowly across the world's blasted surface. Here, the atmosphere boils with turbulence and the acidic residue that mires the ground is sucked upwards into the skies by the raging updrafts, transforming the sky into a churning mass of burning clouds. Needless to say, any life form caught in such an updraft has little chance of survival.

Characters are most likely to get caught in an updraft of acid when they are caught unawares, perhaps distracted by some other peril and not paying close enough attention to the dangers underfoot. Therefore, whenever a Heretic fails an Awareness Test while in the wastes, a spray of acid gushing upwards from the ground strikes him in a random location, doing 2d5 Energy Damage with +1 Damage added for each Degree of Failure.

Airborne Pollution

The atmosphere of Messia is stained a noisome sepia, as is any material exposed to it for more than a few hours. The exact nature of this airborne taint is unknown, and likely to be some unnatural hybrid of chemical pollution and Chaos-induced corruption. Certainly, none of the population of the planet or of the Screaming Vortex at large cares sufficiently to analyse it. What they do know, however, is that any individual not blessed with unnaturally prodigious resilience must don breathing apparatus or suffer irreversible damage to the respiratory system.

After every full hour spent in the open wastes, the Heretic must make a **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test** to avoid the effect of the pollution unless properly protected with respirators, filtration plugs, and the like. Each time such a Test is failed, the Heretic gains a level of Fatigue (see page 256 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook).

Autochthonic Life

Messia might appear devoid of life, but the opposite is true, with numerous bizarre life forms existing out in the wastes. Most are entirely unknown, for they take shelter from the searing light of Xoson during Messia's daytime, only to emerge unseen during the night to feed and to breed. Most of the life forms lurking beneath the acid-soaked ground have never been seen by human eyes, or if they have, none have survived to describe them.

The GM can roll for one of these creatures to appear in any suitable situation, especially should the Heretics disturb their surroundings through bloody conflict or Warp-drenched rites. These make for excellent Hordes, especially against Chaos Space Marines who might otherwise shrug off individual creatures. GMs are encouraged to use the Advanced Horde Rules on page 66 to balance these threats against Human and Chaos Space Marine players so that each player is appropriately challenged. Profiles for these creatures can be found in the Appendix on page 140.

TABLE 4-1: AUTOCHTHONIC LIFE FORMS

D10 Roll	Encounter
1-2	Lamprey-rats: A swarm of bloated, hairless things, their vile features all jagged teeth and devoid of eyes, surges from the cracked ground.
3-5	Acid-spitting leech: A giant leech rears from the ground and spits a stream of rank corrosion at those that dare intrude upon its territory. Bile-mites: A wave of thorn-legged, sharp-toothed parasites sweeps from their hidden nests underground, drawn to the Heretics by the scent of warm blood.
6-8	
9-10	Ravenous Maw: The ground beneath the Heretics opens up to form a toothed gullet, with noxious acid bubbling upwards from its unnatural guts.

Dark Mists

While most of the time the surface of Messia is scoured by burning, alchemical winds, there are times when these drop off without warning to be replaced by a phenomenon still more hazardous to those attempting to travel at ground level. When the winds fall silent and eerie stillness descends, seasoned travellers know that the mists cannot be far behind. Within minutes, the brownish-tinted air thickens, visibility even with powerful lumens dropping all the while as creeping tendrils of vapour leech upwards from the blasted ground. Soon, the mists are fully descended and visibility reduced to arm's length or less. Unless a traveller is blessed with unnatural senses or equipped with the sort of scanning device impossible to manufacture on Messia, he is best advised to take shelter quickly!

For every hour or so of narrative time, the GM should roll 1d10 to determine the general level of visibility across the wastes. On a result of 1-8 all is normal. A 9 indicates visibility is down to d10x10 metres. A result of 10 indicates visibility is reduced to d5x5 metres.



Mutant Stragglers

Each long night, Messia's mutant population forms vast, shambling hordes that stretch from one horizon to the next. But there are always stragglers, individuals cast out by sickness or injury and barely surviving in the open wastes. Such creatures stalk the land in small groups, and while they present little danger under ordinary conditions, should they somehow manage to approach their prey unseen, they can be a challenge indeed.

Once per kilometre of travel, a **Hard (-20) Awareness Test** should be made. If this is failed, d10 Nightside Mutants (see page 104) attack, though this number can be altered or even made into a larger Horde attack to best challenge the Heretics. The Advanced Horde Rules on page 66 can also come into play to ensure all of the Heretics face suitable threats. The distance the mutants appear at is equal to 50 metres minus 10 metres per Degree of Failure, and if they appear within 10 metres, the mutants gain the benefit of Surprise in the first turn of combat. Note that the effects of mists further conceal the mutants, and their base starting distance becomes the current edge of visibility.

This can also be an excellent opportunity for the Heretics to learn of the cyclic nature of the mutants, if they did not gain such information earlier. Any natives that are travelling with the Heretics, perhaps as bearers or even slaves, know how the mutants alter with the rising of the sun, and eagerly warn the Heretics of this danger in order to curry favour with their masters.

Outcast Drill-Clanners

The drill-clans of Messia are engaged in a brutal war of attrition: against one another, against the mutant hordes, and against the planet itself. When the opportunity arises to crush a rival clan it is always taken, and thus the strongest return from their expeditions laden down not just with priceless promethium, but with the enslaved survivors of numerous battles with their enemies. Those not slaughtered in the titanic battles between the mechanical behemoths of the clanners' rigs, or captured and enslaved, are cast out to die amidst the mutants and other foul life inhabiting the wastes. In other cases, a clanner chooses to flee, his mind cracked or desperate to escape especially brutal overseers.

Though such outcasts rarely survive long, there is a chance of the Heretics crossing paths with them during a trek across the wastes. Whether the outcasts will fight or flee depends very much on the circumstances of the contact.

For every hour, or part thereof, the Heretics spend within a kilometre of a drill-site, there is a 10% chance they encounter a band of drill-clanner outcasts on foot or riding Messian Outrider bikes. The group consists of d10+2 Drill-Clanners and, if needed, the distance at which it appears can be determined using the same mechanic described under Mutant Stragglers above. The outcasts only attack if cornered or if they outnumber the Heretics 3:1 or better (counting power armoured Heretics twice). Otherwise, they afford the Heretics a chance of gathering some Minions or, at least, some cannon fodder for the upcoming battles, and start with a Disposition of Challenging (Indifferent) towards the Heretics.

Storm Winds

Even in conditions of relative calm, the skies over Messia are constantly riven with blistering currents of chemical-scoured air. To those travelling across the surface, these winds are an inconvenience, especially when attempting to erect any sort of shelter. To those foolish enough to use atmospheric aircraft or an airborne mount, they are a downright hazard, for they obey no natural law and frequently appear without any warning.

Any Skill Test involving airborne movement is made 1d5-1 levels of difficulty harder than it would normally be (minimum of zero), indicating the unpredictable severity of the winds.

ACID SWAMPS

Much of the surface of Messia is swathed in shallow, bubbling mires of unnameable acid, the surrounding air thick with creeping, poisonous mist. Whether these areas came from some exotic chemical process or the irresistible influence of Chaos is unknown, and probably unknowable. Few would dare approach such a region were it not for the fact that the presence of these wide, bubbling swamps is often an indicator of nearby deposits of promethium, raising the possibility that some truly esoteric interaction between nature and the Warp is occurring.

The most experienced drill-barons are adept at reading the lay of the land, of observing where and how the acid swamps have formed, and of using them to judge where best to drill. This is a hazardous business, for should he order the well be sunk too close to the swamp, the rig may be consumed by a geyser of searing acid, while his efforts are wasted should he drill too far from the acidic shores. The success or failure of an entire expedition can rest upon such a judgment, and with it the fortunes of entire drill-clans.

Travel through the acid swamps is reasonably safe only so long as the characters travel at half their normal pace. Should they not do so, there is a 10% chance each turn of combat, or ten minutes of narrative time, that a character sets foot on a dangerous patch of ground. The character must make a **Challenging (+0) Agility or Survival Test**, or sustain 1d10 Energy Damage plus 1 extra point of Damage for every Degree of Failure.





SPORE FORESTS

Vast stretches of the surface are swathed in dense vegetation of a particularly noisome kind. These spore forests are avoided at all costs, even by the most hardy of life forms and the most experienced of travellers. The foliage rears dozens, sometimes hundreds of feet into the air, the blasphemously twisted stalks and fronds so thickly clustered they block out even the harsh light of Xoson. By night they form oceans of blackness through which only the insane would attempt to pass.

Aside from being a major hazard to navigation, the spore forests are especially dangerous because the limitless varieties of fungus that make them up exist in a life cycle that can only be the result of insidious taint of Chaos. During the day cycle, the forests exist as little more than shallow lakes of bubbling, stinking goo, from which rises countless billions of airborne spores to seed new stretches of forest. As the air cools with the approach of the long night, these spores set down hideous roots, which spring into vast and twisted fungus bows so fast that an onlooker could observe their growth in a few hours. Yet, as dangerous as the dense banks of spores are to human health, it is the rearing fungal forms themselves that represent the true threat. Any life form that breathes in the dense spore fog is immediately incapacitated as the microscopic invaders attack the body from within. Even

as this happens, the forests themselves come alive, vile fungal limbs thrashing wildly as if drawn to the scent of the blood coughed up by the unfortunate victim. Very soon, the intruder is enveloped by the questing fungal pseudopods and its body drained of blood. What remains of the body eventually falls to the forest floor, to serve as nourishment for the next generation of flora.

It is highly unlikely that the Heretics would deliberately enter one of the spore forests, unless they were seeking to avoid pursuit or to risk a short cut between two drill sites. Should they do so, they are faced with the following hazards.

Each Round, or d10 hours of narrative time, spent within the bounds of a spore forest each Heretic must make a **Challenging (+0) Survival Test**. Failure indicates the Heretic has breathed in a lungful of spores, touched a frond, got stung by a fungapositor, or otherwise fallen victim to the potentially hideous effects of the spore forests. The Heretic immediately uses **Table 7-16: Impact Critical Effects—Body** from page 252 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook to determine the effect of the spores rampaging violently through his respiratory system, rolling 1d10 to gain the level of injury and adding +1 to the result for every Degree of Failure. Any injury resulting in blood loss causes the entire spore forest to come alive with hideous motion, animated by the scent and taste of the character's vital fluid.

Once the forest has tasted blood, the Heretics are doomed if they cannot escape very soon. Each turn the characters remain within the bounds of the forest they must make a **Hard (-10) Dodge Test**, or be struck by 1d5 whipping fungal pseudopods that each score one automatic hit inflicting 1d10+8 Impact Damage to a random location. Any character losing consciousness in a spore forest and remaining there for more than an hour without aid is horribly consumed in a manner that leaves nothing organic behind.

Given that the spore forests are so dangerous, Game Masters can seed them with the loot-laden remains of previous victims of the spores to balance things out. Items to be found on the desiccated corpses can range from weapon reloads to potentially useful items of wargear. They can also contain all manner of dangerous adversaries as well, ready to defend their lairs from intruders or simply eager to spill blood for the sheer pleasure of the act.

THE MUTANT HORDE

The mutant horde is a vast river of braying, stinking insanity and abomination stretching from one horizon to the next and steadily marching towards the pre-dawn light. It is gigatonnes of densely packed flesh moving with little purpose other than to feed and destroy. The Heretics may or may not know when they first encounter the sight that one mutant amongst the million and more before them is carrying the Axe of Kha-Aksha. The next chapter of the adventure contains details on how they can discover this, and what actions they might take as a result.

JORGSTERN CLAN

The Jorgstern Clan is known and feared across Messia as one of the most brutal and bloodthirsty groups on the entire planet. When not on expedition across the wastes, the drill-clan's master, Caleb Jorgstern, controls his subjects with absolute and brutal efficiency, ensuring that every one of the murderous men and women that serve him rein in their urges whilst within the ramshackle walls of Mekonta. Needless to say, these periods of enforced restraint result in the build up of such tension that the clanners can hardly resist unleashing the full extent of their fury the instant they are allowed to do so. Jorgstern wields this fury as a weapon, using it to scour the wastes for rival clans that might have located a deposit of promethium, and to defeat them utterly. Having taken a rival's drill-rig, Jorgstern offers the survivors a stark choice—join his clan and surrender to the will of the Blood God, or die like honourless slaves on their knees. The vast majority join the clan's ranks, and thus despite the losses in manpower incurred by the constant state of battle, the Jorgstern Clan inevitably returns from each of its expeditions laden with promethium and with its numbers intact. Though the clan has the capacity to drill its own promethium, its master would far rather take that which his rivals have already extracted, and to slaughter them all in the process.

The clan's rigs are currently occupied as they pick over the remains of a defeated rival. Jorgstern's berserkers are still high on the thrill of battle and will be for some time, for there are still pockets of resistance active in amongst the wreckage and fleeing defenders to be pursued into the wastes. Even once the last of the rivals are brought to heel, the site is a chaotic and dangerous place. The victors tear about the site on bikes and trucks, firing wildly into the air as they bellow the praises of the Blood God in thanks for their victory. Heavy weapon emplacements on the rigs, normally used to defend against attackers, rival the bikes for sheer noise as they blast away for the sheer joy of violence. Brutal rites are enacted, the blood of the fallen used to anoint the bodies of the strong and to daub the skull-face icon of Khorne across the slab-like flanks of the clan's rigs.

Even as the raucous celebrations continue, the clan's techs drive their slaves to consolidate their prize. Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of unprocessed promethium is transferred to waiting tankers, while the captured rigs are repaired for new use.

Over all this, Caleb Jorgstern watches with grim satisfaction. At a single word from their baron, the entire blood-daubed horde will take to their rigs and begin the return journey back to Mekonta.

The master of the Jorgstern Clan is a huge bear of a man, bedecked in leather armour said to be hardened with the soaked blood of a thousand defeated rivals. Jorgstern rules his drill-clan with an iron fist, ever ready to strike down and slay any of his underlings that would dare defy him in any way. Jorgstern's warriors appear to be no more than a murderous, undisciplined rabble, yet in reality this is far from the truth. Each and every one of the clanners knows the exact limits of his freedom, and that to exceed them to even the slightest fraction is to invite certain death. Their bloody energies thus focused and confined, the clanners are liberated by the relentless power enforced upon them.

The so-called "Berserker Baron" very rarely has to enforce his will, and much of his time is spent seated upon his grizzly throne on the control deck of his personal rig. From this vantage point, Jorgstern's murderous gaze sweeps the wastes in search of any rival he may face and plunder, or, having done so, looks impassively upon the anarchic celebrations of his victorious host.

Despite his seeming inaction, Jorgstern is fully capable of exploding into wild rage at the slightest provocation, and although he rarely does so, the threat of such an outburst is sufficient to keep his hundreds of warriors and underlings under control. Jorgstern expects the utmost obedience from any who enter his presence, especially if they have yet to swear fealty to him. The many clansmen that surround him armed with heavy bolters and other dangerous weapons ensure this is always so. There are but a handful of men on Messia that Jorgstern regards as equals, and none of these are to be found within a thousand kilometres of his clan's current location. All others are beneath his contempt unless they are foolish enough to refuse to show him the respect he has earned in a hundred battles and more.



INTERACTING WITH CALEB JORGSTERN

The Berserker Baron represents an interesting character for the Game Master to run, and a prickly prospect for the players to deal with. He is the master of a sizable horde of well-equipped and motivated warriors that would make a tempting prize for the Heretics. With such an army at their side, the Heretics would surely stand a good chance against the mutants and gaining the Axe of Kha-Aksha. Jorgstern bows to no man, however, and gaining power or influence over him or his horde is going to be challenging indeed. The following guidance covers some of the potential routes any interaction with the Berserker Baron might follow:

Negotiations

Should the players decide that Clan Jorgstern and its master are simply too powerful to take on, but still wish to gain its services, they might decide to attempt to negotiate some sort of deal. Merely gaining access to the Berserker Baron's rig should be difficult, for the entire camp is overrun with warriors wildly celebrating their recent victory over their rivals, whose bodies still litter the ground. The GM should allow the Heretics to approach the rig and make their case to the still-wired and heavily armed guards, and be taken up onto the huge vehicle's command deck and the drill-baron's throne. It should not take long, however, to discover that Caleb Jorgstern expects total obeisance from all who come before him, so if the Player Characters are sincere in their wish to treat with him they will literally have to scrape and bow at his feet. Ironically, doing so merely demonstrates that the Heretics are unworthy to even speak to the baron, and so the audience is unlikely to go well.

The Berserker Baron begins the audience with a Disposition level of Very Hard (–30). With each act of obeisance the players make (as determined by the GM) this level is reduced by one step. Having reached the Indifferent level, he takes them seriously and is willing to talk. However, there is no way the baron will converse with the Heretics as equals if they overdo it, and although they should not be warned, if they continue to scrape and bow, his Disposition worsens once more. Once this happens, things get tense, until he reaches his original Disposition once more. At that point, the drill-baron orders the Heretics executed for their pitiful display. The Heretics are forced to defend themselves against the baron's inner guard (see the Appendix on page 140 for profiles), and the GM should make this battle as balanced (or unbalanced) as he feels appropriate for the adventure and his players.

If the Heretics defeat the guards, the Berserker Baron rises from his throne, unmitigated rage burning fiercely in his eyes, and faces off against the entire group. This is in effect a hostile takeover as detailed below, and if the Player Characters play things right they are likely to end up in control of the entire drill-clan, for now at least.

CLAN JORGSTERN'S RESOURCES

Caleb Jorgstern commands a sizable horde of Drill-Clan Nomads, roughly consisting of the following assets:

- 1500 Nomads (three Formations, each with a Combat Score of 35).
- 1200 Servitors (these do not fight).
- 100 Outriders (a mix of bikes and light walkers) (two Formations, each with a Combat Score of 40).
- 25 Armed Heavy Transport Rigs (five Formations, each with a Combat Score of 50).
- 10 Capital Drilling Rigs (not used in combat).
- 12 Mega-tankers (not used in combat).
- 8 Utility Tenders (not used in combat).

Hostile Takeover

Should the Heretics decide to attempt to gain direct control over the baron's drill-clan, it should be clear to them that the only possible way to do so is by defeating Caleb Jorgstern in one-on-one combat. He is all too willing to partake of such a combat, the only constraint being that the Heretics face him one at a time and without mechanical augmentations. The drill-baron's profile can be found in the Appendix on page 140, and so total is his control over his underlings that none dare interfere in the combat, even to aid their master if he is obviously losing the combat. Jorgstern, however, is ready to act should his favoured chain weapons be lost or destroyed, quickly killing one of his guards with his hand cannon to take a replacement weapon from the corpse.

However the fight progresses, there is no way the baron is willing to back down or retreat, for to do so would be to show weakness before his men and thus accept the loss of command. He must be slain in single combat according to his rules, and his servants must witness this defeat, for the Heretics to gain power over the clan.

Should the Heretics defeat the Berserker Baron, they are its new masters, though they must decide on one overall leader if their new underlings are to accept their rule. See the **Clan Jorgstern's Resources** sidebar above for the nature of the clan's resources.

Show Me the Money

In the event that the players decide to attempt to buy off the drill-baron, the GM should allow them to attempt to do so. The Berserker Baron hears them out, his contempt large across his scarred face, but it is true that everyone has his price. Jorgstern is indeed willing to ally his clan with the Heretics cause, but the price is a great one indeed. Put simply, Jorgstern wants off of Messia, for he has bigger ambitions than any of his peers know. He (and his inner circle) know of the legend of the axe and the mutants, but never believed enough power could be gathered to claim it. He wants to become a power in the Gloaming Worlds, having heard tales of the wonders to be found beyond the world of his birth, and the Heretics might be a way for this to happen. Whether or not the Heretics choose to grant his wish is up to them, and if they do, the Game Master might be able to use him as a future ally or nemesis.

ORE CORPS 358

This recently formed drill-clan is ruled over by the self-styled “Machine Lord” Chæmus Vassid. The clan derives its name from the unusual manner in which it is organised, according to the whim of its master. Upon the completion of each expedition into the wastes in search of promethium, the clan is ritually disbanded, its servants dismissed and its holdings dispersed, leaving Vassid alone to plan the next mission. This he does in exacting detail, slowly rebuilding his force according to the needs of the expedition as he predicts them. Every single rig, every clanner and every crate of supplies is gathered according to Vassid’s scheme, until a new “ore corps” is assembled and ready to head out into the wastes. It seems to matter not a jot that the new corps is often indistinguishable from the last, consisting of a great many of the same rigs and clanners, many of whom have spent the intervening period drinking and fighting, safe in the knowledge that they will be taken on again before long. To date, Vassid has mounted 357 successful expeditions, but this, his 358th, is proving to be one of the least profitable in a long time. The clanners are growing restless due to a decline in the amount of promethium being claimed with each expedition, their own fortunes linked to the Machine Lord’s success rate by the prize-terms of their contracts. Some mutter that the drill-baron spends too much time beseeching the machine spirits when he should be doing honour to the Ruinous Powers, and that the Warp is turning against him.

Baron Vassid is one of the most accomplished engineers in all of the drill-clans of Messia, and with each expedition he leads he introduces ever-more monstrous forms of technology intended to make his rigs faster, his augurs more accurate, and his drilling operations more efficient. Yet, there is some truth in what the naysayers whisper—as the tech becomes more radical, the actual results appear to dwindle. Vassid is too proud to admit this, and his response has ever been to simply build larger, heavier weapons with which to smite his foes. On numerous occasions, he has launched paranoid and vengeful pogroms of his own clan, rounding up and executing any he believes to be against him. Each time he reforms his ore corps, a few less clanners answer his call, having decided that the Ruinous Powers have withdrawn their blessings from the clan and that the coming expedition can only end in disaster. Perhaps this time, they are right.

INTERACTING WITH THE MACHINE LORD

Chæmus Vassid is at once an ambitious and ruthless overlord. He is obsessed with heavy, brutal engineering and scornful of fragile or diminutive rigs others might use. He values only the most over-scaled of machines, such that his rigs are often twice the size of those of any other drill-clan, driven upon track units larger than most battle tanks. His drill apparatus consists of screw-head excavation borers so large they would not look out of place mounted upon the weapon arm of a Battle Titan. Everything about the drill-baron’s operations is at once obsessively over-scaled and colossally inefficient, thick black smoke belching from mighty stacks, great runnels of dirty lubricant streaming from broken seals and great bursts of searing hot steam venting from burst conduits. Vassid cares little for the aesthetics of such minor details, his only concern that the machines function as a mighty whole.

In temperament, drill-baron Vassid is obsessive and irrational, infatuated with the notion of mastering machines of ever-greater size and utility. Though it is clear to many of his servants that the drill-baron has allowed his worship of the machine to distract him from making due obeisance to the Ruinous Powers, Vassid himself has become far too blinkered to perceive this. With each over-sized rig he creates, the promethium deposits on which his drill-clan relies grow ever more elusive. Vassid’s answer is to build ever larger machines, and so the inevitable spiral of obsession and paranoia grows ever-more drastic.

Despite his obvious instability, the self-proclaimed “Machine Lord” is still master of a sizeable force, and one that the Heretics could make great use of in facing the mutant horde and retrieving the Axe of Kha-Aksha. Vassid’s drill-rigs are so huge they could smash a swath through an ocean of mutants, and the numerous fusion borers, drill-heads, scourers and filtration blasters would make a fearsome arsenal. As with the Berserker Baron, the Heretics are confronted with several options when it comes to interacting with Ore Corps 358 and its obsessive Machine Lord.

The Heretics are unlikely to find it difficult to gain an audience with Vassid, so long as they refrain from overt signs of hostility as they approach his drill-site. The entire area is surrounded by a perimeter of



ORE CORPS 358's RESOURCES

Chæmus Vassid's Drill-Clan relies on its warmachines, roughly consisting of the following assets:

- 1000 Nomads (two Formations, each with a Combat Score of 30).
- 1500 Servitors (three Formations, each with a Combat Score of 25).
- 75 Outriders (a mix of bikes and light walkers) (three Formations, each with a Combat Score of 30).
- 36 Armed Heavy Transport Rigs (six Formations, each with a Combat Score of 55).
- 18 Capital Drilling Rigs (not used in combat).
- 15 Mega-tankers (not used in combat).
- 9 Utility Tenders (not used in combat).

heavily armed, specially created Gun-Thralls—debased, vat-grown creatures encoded to open fire on any intruder that shows any sign of hostile intent. The drill-site is surrounded by a ring of twenty of these creatures and details of them can be found in the Appendix on page 140. The Heretics are only ever likely to face one of these enemies at a time, unless they draw significant attention to themselves. In this case, two additional Gun-Thralls appear every five minutes or so until all twenty are present.

Assuming the Heretics approach with caution, they are taken to the Machine Lord's throne room, the bridge of the largest drill-rig ever witnessed, though its control deck appears more like an infernal engine room than a control centre. Several Gun-Thralls arrive to escort them, carefully maintaining their weapons on the largest of the Heretics with unnatural ease.

The drill-baron is a large, flabby man clad in ragged robes stained with machine oil. Despite appearances, Vassid is possessed of fearsome presence that cows most around him into abject submission. Unlike Jorgstern, Vassid has no concern for such displays and barely notes the presence of any that come before him, his attentions almost exclusively upon the operations of his beloved machines.

Negotiations

Though at first the Machine Lord shows little interest in reaching any sort of deal with the Heretics, he can be goaded into negotiations if offered the secrets of unfamiliar or novel technology. Despite the vast scale of Vassid's rigs, the technologies they rely upon are comparatively primitive and generally reliant upon the animating taint of the Warp to function. With the withdrawal of the favour of the Ruinous Powers, this animating force has grown weak, and so the Machine Lord is eager to find a means of restoring or emulating it. If offered a prize of sufficient magnitude, Vassid is willing to ally himself with the Heretics, for a while at least. He begins any negotiations at the Disposition level of **Hard (-20)** and must be taken to a level of **Ordinary (+0)** to aid the Heretics.

Confrontations

Unlike the Berserker Baron, Vassid has little interest in maintaining his honour by displays of personal power. If confronted with a challenge he simply orders his dozen or so Clanner Guards (see the Appendix for details) to deal with the Heretics, watching with detached interest as battle unfolds.

Should the confrontation go against the bodyguards, Vassid attempts to escape during the melee, but if cornered his Gun-Thralls come to his aid even as he himself fights like a bull-grox. Defeating this assembly is sufficient to gain power over Ore Corps 358, for Vassid's nomads have hovered on the brink of rebellion for some time.

Should the Heretics launch a full-scale assault against Ore Corps 358 in an effort to take power over it, a feat they could only attempt if another of the drill-clans aids them, he fights back with every one of the fearsome weapons at his disposal. In all likelihood, the only chance the Heretics have of gaining power over the drill-clan in this instance is by subterfuge, perhaps influencing the numerous dissatisfied elements of the clan's work force.



THE SCORNFUL HOST

The third of the expeditions operating in the region is that of the drill-baron Rahim Scotia, a group often referred to as the Scornful Host. This drill-clan's master was at one time a slave fighter in the pits of Mekonta who won his freedom after long years of combat where he established a reputation for elegant and efficient kills. Under normal circumstances, such an individual would take his place among the elite of that city and begin a reign of terror over those unable to emulate their achievements. Uniquely, Rahim Scotia rejected this right, scorning citizenship and deciding to become a drill-baron instead. Gathering as many former pit-fighters as he could, Scotia began what would become a highly successful career in the wastes of Messia.

Scotia rules his drill-clan with cold efficiency, and his rule is as simplistic and black as his normal garb. He channels the murderous bloodlust of those who serve him, ensuring that his expeditions never fail to return to Mekonta laden with spoils. One way in which the drill-baron maintains this peak efficiency is to offer his followers a limited number of prize-stakes in the promethium they return with, but not enough to pay every single member. Working at anything other than full output is regarded as a crime, punishable by a worker's own peers. Brutally punishing their own fellow workers, even slaying them where possible, ensures the workers their share in the prize, keeps the expedition lean, and always returns the Scornful Host with noticeably fewer members than it set out with.

INTERACTING WITH RAHIM SCOTIA

Should the Heretics attempt to gain an audience with the drill-baron of the Scornful Host, they are met with cold, hard suspicion. Scotia was raised in the slave-pits and did not escape them by trusting strangers. The expedition's guards are under instructions to simply shoot any who attempt to intrude upon the clan's operations, and so any attempt to gain access to the drill site is met with force, even if the Heretics make every effort to demonstrate their intentions to parley. Seeing these attempts fail should lead them to try and gain access to the drill-baron through stealth, and Scotia's reaction to such an attempt, should he discover it, is to order the intruders put to death.

To gain entrance in this manner, the characters must pass a total of three Opposed Stealth Tests against the drill-nomad look-outs. Should they ever fail a test, the players must silence the look-out before he can raise the alarm, and must do so without making any noise or attracting undue attention to themselves. Each time a test is failed but the look-out slain, the next Test is subject to a -10 modifier (cumulative in the case of failures). If the Test is failed and the look-out not silenced before he can activate the alarm (which takes a Full Action), hundreds of nomads descend upon them from the night, surrounding them and taking them before the drill-baron. Of course, the Heretics could decide to fight, but must do so against the entire camp (see the **Scornful Host's Resources** sidebar on this page), a course which most should realise is a suicidal act.

The means by which the drill-baron intends to punish the Heretics for their intrusion is by way of a fight to the death, against his menagerie of slaves and beasts, a remembrance of his days in the fighting pits. A large space is cleared in the centre of the drill-site, cargo crates piled up into barricades atop which the clanners gather to witness the unexpected entertainment. Should the Heretics have managed to sneak in to meet with him, he insists they prove their worthiness in such a fight before he considers any discussions.

The Heretics are stripped of their weapons and thrown at gun-point into the improvised arena. Once inside, the jeering crowds toss them battered but still deadly swords and axes, one per Heretic (see page 165 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook for rules for these Primary Weapons).

How the players wish to proceed in these circumstances is largely up to them. They might attempt to break out of the hastily erected fighting circle, in which case a pitched battle is certain to ensue. Any attempt to break out of the fighting arena leads to the entire crowd descending on the Heretics, furious that they would

THE SCORNFUL HOST'S RESOURCES

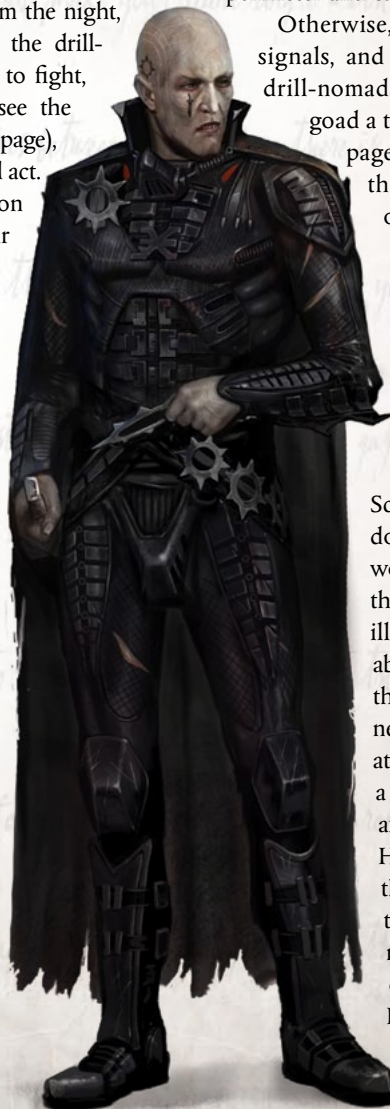
Rahim Scotia's forces are finely balanced between men and machines, roughly consisting of the following assets:

- 1200 Nomads (three Formations, each with a Combat Score of 32).
- 1300 Servitors (not used in combat).
- 90 Outriders (a mix of bikes and light walkers) (three Formations, each with a Combat Score of 30).
- 24 Armed Heavy Transport Rigs (four Formations, each with a Combat Score of 45).
- 12 Capital Drilling Rigs (not used in combat).
- 12 Mega-tankers (not used in combat).
- 10 Utility Tenders (not used in combat).

deny them the pleasure of their sport. The characters are forced to fight their way through what amounts to an army of vengeful foes, in which case the GM is advised to have them face up to four Magnitude 20 Hordes of drill-nomads, two of which must be defeated before the group reaches the perimeter and can escape into the wastes.

Otherwise, they must fight for their lives. Scotia signals, and his men push a small group of captured drill-nomads armed with axes, then with shock-prods goad a trio of night-side mutants into the arena (see page 104 for their rules). The GM should alter the composition of these foes depending on the Heretics, and if they dispatch these foes too quickly Scotia releases some of his prized beasts, which can be other creatures from **THE TOME OF BLOOD** or other **BLACK CRUSADE** books.

Eventually, the combat should result in one or more of the Heretics being left standing, while their foes lay scattered about either dead or dying. At this point, Scotia silences the raucous crowd and jumps down into the pit to talk with these clearly worthy fighters. He never does so in a way that would lose him face, maintaining the illusion that whatever transpires has come about because he has allowed it to, even when this is patently not the case. Any ensuing negotiations should be carried out in an atmosphere of high tension, with violence but a gesture away. Scotia has little interest in the axe himself, but sees opportunity with the Heretics. Should the Heretics be successful, the drill-baron is willing to ally himself with the Heretics' cause so long as he is richly rewarded, whether this payment is in loot or other resources. The master of the Scornful Host begins negotiations at the Disposition Level of **Difficult (-10)** and becomes amenable to the group's plans when he reaches the level of **Ordinary (+10)**.



CHAPTER II: DEAD BY DAWN

In this chapter, the Heretics are faced with the imminent coming of the dawn as the vile light of Xoson swells over the horizon. By this point, they should either have gained sufficient power over the drill-clans to lead an army against the mutant horde and recover the Axe of Kha-Aksha, or they should have formulated some other scheme for doing so. The focus of the last part of the adventure is very much on combat, but there is one question that must be answered first—which one of the countless mutants swarming from one horizon to the other towards the rising sun is actually carrying the axe?

LOCATING THE AXE OF KHA-AKSHA

Regardless of the various power plays the Heretics engage in with the different factions present in the region, they are here to find the Axe of Kha-Aksha. It is likely that the players themselves have plenty of ideas on how to go about finding out exactly where the axe is, and Game Masters should consider any interesting plan they come up with and, if necessary, adapt the adventure on the fly.

The Heretics know that the axe is in the possession of one of the countless mutants shambling inexorably towards the rising sun, but finding out exactly which of the hideous creatures is carrying it is likely to be a major challenge. Should the players draw a blank, they may need some help, in which case the following guidelines should come in useful.

INTERROGATION

One obvious way of seeking the information they need is for the Heretics to demand it from those who have spent more time in the wastes than themselves. They might attempt to interrogate captured drill-clanners in the hope that intimidation or exorciation (or even psychic powers) might yield the information they need. In truth, the chances of this happening are outlandishly unlikely, to the extent that the GM should only entertain the most inventive ideas the players might come up with. They can bully, threaten, and cajole as much as they like, but none of the drill-clan labourers knows or wants to know enough about the mutants to offer useful information about the prized weapon.

That said, should the players come up with a suitably entertaining plan, the Game Master should allow them to try it out. This might lead the group down all manner of blind alleys and cause those they are seeking to interrogate to move against them, and all of this against the background of the clock ticking slowly down towards dawn. If the GM wishes, or if the players spend so long pursuing this course of action that time completely runs out, he could have a drill-clanner impart some useful information, such as a report of a mutant bearing some odd relic or artefact even during the night, when most drop their weapons.

Another option is to use one of the drill-barons to impart a clue. This is just the sort of information that such a powerful individual would covet, and only give up with extreme reluctance. Such a course of action is only possible if the Heretics have defeated one of the drill-barons and taken him captive. This scene should be roleplayed out rather than come down to a series of die rolls, and the Game Master should award bonuses to the players' Interrogation rolls for rising to the challenge. The roll should be modified according to the circumstances of the drill-baron's capture and imprisonment, with reference to the example modifiers given on page 101 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook.

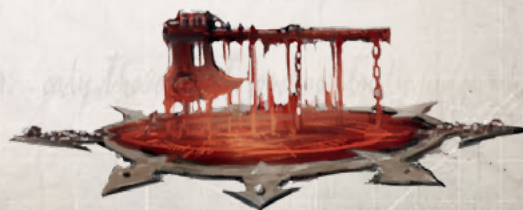
The number of Degrees of Success by which the Test is passed determines how much useful information is gained, using **Table 4-2: Interrogating a Drill-Baron** below.

TABLE 4-2: INTERROGATING A DRILL-BARON

Degrees of Success	Information
1	The axe is being carried by one of the mutants roaming the wastelands.
2	The axe was last sighted being dragged along deep within a huge mutant horde in a region near the baron's own drill-rig. A Chem-Hunter scout recently sighted the mutant with the axe amidst a vast horde to the west of the Scornful Host, before he was driven off by the sheer size of the horde.
3+	

INVESTIGATION

Another potential course of action is for the Heretics to attempt to locate the bearer of the Axe of Kha-Aksha by way of an investigation. This course of action takes the adventure away from the themes it sets out to explore, and so Game Masters should be cautious about allowing it to be successful. With the clock ticking down to sunrise and the region riven with conflict, there is little time for the subtle approach, though some Heretics, particularly those devoted to Tzeentch, might prefer to take this route. GMs are advised to make such an investigation extremely unlikely to yield results, but should he wish to explore a different aspect of gameplay it is quite possible to do so. Those with access to **THE TOME OF FATE** might like to utilise the Investigation system presented there, though this entails additional preparation that is beyond the immediate scope of this adventure.



DEALINGS

Usually, any information can be bought at the appropriate price, but unfortunately this is unlikely to be the case when it comes to locating the axe-bearer. Instead of this avenue leading to a drill-clanner selling the Heretics the location of the mutant in question, the Game Master could use it to lead to one of the other conclusions presented in this section. For example, entering into a trade with one of the drill-barons or a senior member of their clan could very well lead on to the performance of the Rite of Many Eyes, as discussed in the Rites option below. Knowledge of the Rite could come at almost any price, depending on who the Heretics are attempting to trade with. The drill-barons, for example, want for very little and care mostly for power over their rival clans, while the more lowly clanners often covet a chance of rising through the ranks or gaining ascendancy, however petty, over their rivals. There are plenty within each clan who would betray their masters for a chance to take their place or simply to escape. Needless to say, those wishing to explore this aspect of the adventure have plenty of opportunity to do so.

RITES

Perhaps the best way of locating the axe-bearer is to use one of the new Rites presented in this book—the Rite of Many Eyes. Players should be made aware of this option if they are not already, but the possibility should be communicated to them in a manner suited to the adventure and the needs of the story. For example, they could witness a Chem-Hunter attempting to use a similar method to scry the location of a promethium deposit, or one with knowledge of such rites could approach them and offer his services in performing it. They could discover the possibility as a result of an Investigation or even of interrogating a drill-clanner, with a desperate individual offering to perform the rite in return for being set free.

The Rite of Many Eyes is described on page 62, but there are several elements to the rite that need to be addressed before the Heretics can perform it to locate the mutant bearing the Axe of Kha-Aksha.

The first step is for the Heretics to identify a suitable Daemon on whom they can call. Though they do not know it, no matter their research into possible daemonic contacts, the Daemon they contact during the ritual is in fact the Bloodthirster entrapped within the Axe of Kha-Aksha. Because this entity is the closest to the scene (in every sense), the Heretics unknowingly have no choice as to which of the countless things in the Warp answers their call. The actual identity of the Daemon they question should be kept hidden, with the replies giving no clue as to its name or nature.

The second requirement for a successful Rite of Many Eyes is to identify a suitable place to conduct the ritual. As it happens, the terminator line on Messina is such a location, its effect upon the vast hordes of mutants so drastic the Warp resounds with sound and fury as it passes over the surface.

The last part of the preparatory stage of the ritual is to formulate a suitable question to ask the Warp entity they are to call upon. The only question the Heretics are likely to ask is, of course, “which mutant is carrying the Axe of Kha-Aksha?” Given the circumstances, the time pressure imposed by the imminent sunrise, and the power of the Daemon, the GM should not allow for a second question—if the Heretics ask the wrong one, they will have to find another way of identifying the mutant.

Before identifying the axe-bearer, the Daemon names its price. This is very simple, though the Heretics have no way of knowing its exact meaning as yet. The demand is simply “This day I have aided you. One day, mortal, you must aid me.” Only the Game Master knows at this stage exactly what this enigmatic demand means, and it should ideally leave the players scratching their heads.

If the Heretics accept the Warp entity’s bargain, the axe-bearer is revealed to them. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The air grows thick as the pounding of the blood in your veins becomes the deafening beat of approaching war drums. The dark sky takes on a crimson hue, the shadows lengthening like runnels of spilled blood. Your eyes are drawn to a portion of the mutant horde approximately five kilometres towards the bloodstained pre-dawn, for there the light is growing steadily thicker. Even as you watch, a column of sanguinary illumination erupts from the seething masses and lances directly upwards, disappearing into the swirling clouds. Those mutants at the base of this column of blood-light explode in a welter of gore, while those further from it stagger backwards with dumb panic.

Only one mutant remains standing in the midst of the blood-light. The vile creature is holding an axe that can only be the prize you have come to Messina to claim.

In its filth encrusted, distended claws is the Axe of Kha-Aksha.

The axe-bearer having been located in suitably dramatic fashion, proceed to the final phase of **Red Dawn Rising**.

OBSERVATION

Rather than seek out second hand information, canny Heretics might want to discover for themselves which of the countless mutants is bearing the axe. This approach has the advantage (from the Game Master’s point of view) of exposing the Player Characters to danger, a price that is well worth the reward of locating the axe. It allows the Heretics to witness first hand the sheer scale of the mutant horde and puts them in the right place at the right time to proceed to the climax of the adventure. Despite these advantages, the GM should be cautious about obviously steering the players in this direction and allow them to come upon it themselves.

The mutants themselves are very easy indeed to locate, and no test is required to do so. The Heretics need only head towards the horizon over which the sun is to rise and very soon catch sight of the mutant horde. So long as the Heretics do not approach too close (roughly half a kilometre) to the horde’s outer edge, they are not in too much danger, but any closer and those mutants on the fringes of the horde start to take notice and attack.

The first time the Heretics set eyes upon the mutant horde, read aloud or paraphrase the following. This text assumes that the sun has not yet risen and that the Heretics are on foot (or have dismounted or set down). Should the event take place under different circumstances, the GM should adapt the description as needed.

At first it looks like you're gazing out across a vast, swollen river in flood, its surface undulating with anarchic currents. The air itself roars with a sound reminiscent of a vile torrent and the stench that assails your senses is beyond unholy. But this is no swollen waterway. It is a vast migration of debased mutants, a mass of distended, bloated bodies stretching from one horizon to the next and all shambling inexorably towards the lightening glow of pre-dawn. So numerous are they that no single body can be picked out. How, by the Ruinous Powers, are you to locate the mutant said to be carrying the precious Axe of Kha-Aksha in the midst of such a vast horde?

The sheer scale of the mutant horde should make it obvious to the players that the chances of locating a single individual within it are all but nonexistent. However, this may not be the case. More cunning Heretics are able to bring to bear a range of different Skills that might help them in this situation, and this is where those devoted to Tzeentch have an opportunity to influence events. While the horde appears to be moving in an anarchic stream, the movements of each of the uncountable individuals within it are subject to some manner of influence, and those devoted to the Changer of the Ways are adept at scrying such patterns. Any Heretic might attempt to do so, but those devoted to Tzeentch gain a +30 bonus to the following roll.

To attempt to locate the approximate location of the axe-bearer, a Heretic must observe the horde and decipher the numerous subtle eddies and currents that manifest in the movements of its members. By doing so, he can perceive the presence of the Axe of Kha-Aksha as the baleful energies imbued within it subtly affect the motivations of those nearby. For every full ten minutes the Heretic studies the ebb and flow of the horde without doing anything else, he makes a **Hellish (–60) Scrutiny Test**. The result is modified by +10 for each successive attempt, but every ten minutes there is a 50% chance of 1d10 Nightside Mutants (see page 104) stumbling upon the Heretics and attacking. As noted in the Mutant Stragglers encounter on page 126, this can be adjusted as needed or even made into a large Horde attack to offer a suitable challenge to the Heretics. The GM should also impress upon the Heretics that the sun is rising, and they cannot spend too long in this pursuit.

If and when the approximate location of the axe-bearer is determined, the adventure can proceed to the next and final phase. Depending on how much time has already passed, the Heretics might decide to muster what allies they have made (if any), or if they have engaged in lengthy investigations or become embroiled with the internecine wars between the drill-clans, they may have little or no time left before the sun rises. Game Masters should be flexible in the timing of these events and have the sun begin to rise when it is best for the story, though players should remain ignorant of this fact.

Scrutinising the seething mass of bloated, distended bodies stretching endlessly before you, you catch a glimpse of sanguinary light flashing from burnished copper. You look again, seeking out the source of that brief hint of something other than corrupted flesh in the horde. There it is again! Truly, a portion of the Blood God's power is yours this day, as you see clearly the sight of a hideously misshapen abomination shambling forward, a mighty axe of archaic construction grasped unthinkingly in its distended claws. Your blood pounds at the thought of such a base, unworthy creature even touching such a blessed weapon, the desire to wield it against your foes surging up inside you.

WAIT AND SEE

This final option is provided not so much for the players' benefit, but for the Game Master's. It is entirely possible that the Heretics will become so diverted by other concerns, or that they completely fail in any of the other courses of action presented here. Having overcome one or more of the drill-barons, some Heretics might decide that their newly won hordes of drill-clanners are prize enough and the axe is now superfluous to their plans.

In such cases, the GM should simply proceed to the next part of the adventure, where it will soon become apparent which of the mutants has the axe. If the Heretics have forsaken the search for the axe, the GM can also have the mutants overrun the Heretics and force them into action. Of course, by that point the axe-bearer's transformation into its day cycle state is well underway, making recovering the Axe of Kha-Aksha even more of a challenge than it already is.

REALISATION

However the Heretics discover which of the mutants has the axe, one thing should be immediately apparent to them—it is highly unlikely that they themselves can take on such a vast horde. Unless they can concoct a particularly cunning stratagem, the only way of recovering their prize is by utilising the resources of one or more of the rival drill-clans.

At this point, the Heretics must take stock of events so far. Have they made allies (however temporary) or enemies of each of the drill-barons? Have they squandered the chance they had to gain power over the only forces in the region powerful enough to have even a hope of engaging the mutant horde?

Depending on how the Heretics have comported themselves so far, the Game Master might allow them one last round of negotiations, or a final chance to gain power over one or more of the drill-clans. This is particularly true if the Heretics have been unsuccessful in their dealings so far, either failing to gain any power at all or simply making harsh enemies of one or more of the drill-barons. This final chance should not be allowed to drag on too long, however, for Xoson is about to rise over the horizon and with it the entire mutant horde is to undergo its drastic transformation.

CHAPTER III: DAWN COMETH

When the Game Master is ready to move the action on to the final scene, it is time for the vile light of Xoson to edge over the horizon and the transformation of the mutant horde to take place. Ideally, this should take place at around about the same time the Heretics locate the axe-bearer, but this need not always be the case, especially where the GM is wary of steering the players too much towards a set conclusion. The dawn could come before the axe-bearer is located, in which case the window of opportunity to recover it is that much more narrow. It could take place afterwards, especially if the Heretics have been highly focused on their goal and not allowed themselves to become too embroiled in the wars of the drill-barons.

Regardless of the exact circumstances, some or all of the following events play out as the sun rises over the horizon. Exactly how the players react depends on their plans and how they have interacted with the other factions. They might find themselves all alone, or they might have a mighty coalition of drill-clanners at their backs. They might also find themselves caught up in the internecine struggles of the drill-clans, a fact that could very well spoil all of their efforts to date.

The exact timing of each of the following phases is left up to the Game Master, but he should maintain a sense of pace and tension so players are forced to act quickly or have events overtake them. If a more structured timing is required, then each event can be played out in ten minute intervals.

RED DAWN RISING PHASE I

The first sign that sunrise is imminent is the reaction of the horde of bloated mutants shambling towards it. Endless numbers of the blasphemous abominations bellow, gurgle and bray at the sky, a fell sound that can be heard for dozens of kilometres in every direction. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The ever-present rumble of the mutant horde suddenly grows deeper, a sub-sonic roar building up in the very earth beneath your feet. Even as you listen, the air grows as thick as congealed blood and the bass roar grows louder. Loose objects tumble all around you and you realise exactly what is creating the mournful dirge. It is the sound of countless hundreds of thousands of mutants braying mindlessly as the pre-dawn light of Xoson edges towards the horizon. Within seconds, the sound is all but deafening and it can herald only one thing—dawn is imminent, and the transformation of the mutants into their murderous day cycle state must surely begin any instant.

MASS COMBAT

This book contains a system for representing very large scale battles (see page 71), and these are perfect for use at the culmination of this adventure. The system can be used for whatever battles should erupt between the drill-clans, one or more of which may be under the control of the Players. It can also be used for some combats with the mutant horde, but only for localised action as fighting the entire horde would not be a battle as such, but more like trying to stand in the way of an animal migration or to hold back the tide!

If using the Abstract method of mass combat, the resources boxes presented previously provide most of the information needed (Formations, Combat Score, etc.). In addition to these factors, any drill-clan formation that includes its drill-baron gains a +20 bonus to its CS.

The GM can determine Pivotal Events (see page 73) as the battle progresses with reference to the notes provided on what each drill-baron attempts to achieve during the final scene (if he is still alive and in command of his clan). Each of these events can be assigned a Victory Points Value, as detailed in **Table 3–3: Victory Points Values**, on page 74. The Battle Size is likely to be “Major Conflict” unless the actions of the Heretics have caused significant losses on one or more of the drill-clans.

The Game Master should keep in mind that any battles involving the drill-barons are secondary to the climactic conclusion of the adventure. It is entirely appropriate for such confrontations to be presented as a (very noisy) backdrop to the action, with the fight occasionally affecting the Heretics’ own endeavours.

At this point, the mutants are still in their night cycle state, but they do not remain that way for long. If the Heretics plan on moving against the horde or the axe-bearer, now is the time to do so.

COMBAT IN PHASE I

At this stage, the mutants are largely unaware of what is going on around them. They attack any enemy that directly threatens them, but are unlikely to react to the Heretics’ presence so long as the Heretics keep their distance.



RED DAWN RISING PHASE 2

As the light of Xoson edges over the horizon, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The braying of the mutants reaches a deafening crescendo and the limitless horde erupts into frenzied motion. The light of Xoson lances over the horizon and the sky lightens. Crimson clouds spread outwards like bloodstains across a sepia sky until the air itself is stained a sanguinary hue. The mutants react as if caught up in some blasphemous and supremely murderous ecstasy, their transformation now underway.

The horde's transformation from bloated and shambling night cycle state to cunning and murderous day cycle state is drastic in the extreme. At first, each mutant is gripped in a violent spasm, its formerly sonorous braying at the sky transforming into an atavistic howl of rage and pain. The mutants start thrashing violently as their flaccid limbs and bloated bodies boil away flesh, becoming taught and angular as cracked nails mutate into wickedly sharp claws. Dead and empty eyes awaken, feral cunning shining forth where previously there was nothing but unknowing dimness.

COMBAT IN PHASE 2

Whilst in this phase of their transformation, the mutants are unable to react to any actions taken against them except for base defence. They are so gripped in the hideous process that the Heretics can actually pass through the horde so long as they avoid physical contact. The sense of danger inherent in moving amongst the mutants whilst they are in this state cannot be understated, as the players should have no idea how long it might last.

RED DAWN RISING PHASE 3

Even as the red globe of Xoson rises into the sky, its baleful light staining everything blood red, the mutants' transformation nears its hideous conclusion. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Now the dirgeful braying is a deafening chorus of atonal shrieks and the horrifying spectacle transforms into something else entirely. Arcs of blood spray through the air and severed limbs are cast in all directions. Gripped by bloodlust and rage, the strongest of the transforming mutants set upon the weaker, tearing them apart with serrated claws and gulping down great loops of bloody innards to fuel the final stage of the process.

COMBAT IN PHASE 3

If the Heretics are caught in this phase of the transformation they are at great risk. Unless provoked with direct attack, the mutants focus most of their aggression on the closest targets; this soon results in the ground being scattered with still-twitching body parts and the mutants casting eagerly about for fresh prey.

THE AXE OF KHA-AKSHA

The ancient and feared weapon known as the Axe of Kha-Aksha is spoken of in numerous texts known to the hell-seers of the Screaming Vortex and, so it is said, the most soul-blasted savants of the Ordo Hereticus. While many writings disagree as to the weapon's origins, all concur that within it is entrapped one of the most powerful Warp entities ever spawned—Kha Ak-Lash Kha-Aksha, also known as the Usurper. Exactly what deeds earned this being its name remain the preserve of those truly steeped in the most forbidden of lore, but some whisper that, having attained such power as to set itself apart from the Blood God, Kha-Aksha attempted to turn against its master. Angered to such a degree that entire Daemon Worlds burned, Khorne himself is said to have imprisoned the Bloodthirster within the axe, which he cast out from the Warp and into the cold, hard dimension of reality.

How many ambitious and brutal warlords have wielded the Axe of Kha-Aksha since then cannot be said; many of the Vortex's most infamous and bloodthirsty murderers have sought the axe, and a number have mastered it, for a brief time at least. In truth, all ultimately fall to the rage of the Bloodthirster within, for mortals cannot harness such power without a price being exacted. That price is, inevitably, the soul of the bearer, a soul so blood-engorged that it makes the most satisfying of meals for the Daemon entrapped within the axe.

The Axe of Kha-Aksha is a Daemon Weapon (Melee; 2d10+8 R; Pen 7; Accursed, Bloodlust, Fuelled by Slaughter) that weighs 14kg and with a Willpower characteristic of 75, and a Binding Strength of 8. It requires two hands to wield in combat. Kha-Aksha's thirst for blood and power over the wielder is so great that a **Very Hard (–30) Willpower Test** is needed to resist Frenzy and an **Arduous (–40) Willpower Test** is needed to sheath the weapon. In order to take up the Axe, the Heretic must first pass a Daemonic Mastery Test, as described on page 194 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook. If this is ever failed, the Bloodthirster within does not attempt to possess the wielder, but immediately escapes and turns upon him.

Khorne's imprisonment keeps the Daemon entrapped even should the current axe bearing mutant be slain, and from the weapon being destroyed should Kha-Aksha be freed (so the Blood God can imprison him again). While in the hands of a mindless mutant, the prison holds tight, but with the coming dawn the Daemon feels opportunity for escape coming with the light.

THE DRILL-BARONS

Throughout the events described in the final part of the adventure, the Game Master should keep an eye on what the drill-barons are doing. In all likelihood, the clans either aid the Heretics in attempting to gain the Axe of Kha-Aksha, or they fight one another to settle outstanding blood-debts or other scores. The following guidance should help the Game Master keep track of the clan's actions and motivations.

Caleb Jorgstern's drill-clan is a supremely warlike group. If they have been brought under the Heretics' control (however this comes about) they add their fearsome battle strength to whatever forces the Heretics muster. The clanners very soon abandon themselves to the bloodlust their drill-baron master has kept in check throughout the expedition. The Heretics might attempt to rein in the clan's fearsome instincts, in which case a suitable Interaction Test holds them in check for a while at least, with the level dependent on how the Heretics are working with the clan. If Clan Jorgstern has not been brought under the Heretics' control or influence, then the bloodlust takes over with even greater effect. The clan masses its forces and hurls them at the nearest enemy, the clanners seemingly caught up in the bloodlust that has consumed the transforming mutants. The target of the clan's wrath should be another drill-clan or the Heretics themselves, as the GM desires.

The master of Ore Corps 358, if he is still alive at this point in the adventure, faces an upsurge of resentment amongst the ranks of his drill-clan. If he is not alive and/or if the Heretics have taken control of the drill-clan, an uprising still takes place, but its members are confined to the most discontented of the clanners. This uprising should be sabotage or rebellion, or some other single act that can be remedied by the timely deeds of the Player Characters. The drill-clans' heavy weapons and equipment could be very useful or valuable to the Heretics, and if they do not act quickly some or all might slip out of their control at a crucial moment with potentially disastrous consequences.

The actions of the Scornful Host during the final stage of the adventure depend very much on whether the Heretics have taken a firm hand in gaining control over it. If they have dethroned the clan's drill-baron and set a clear example of their power, the Scornful Host performs whatever missions they order it to. If they have not, the clanners turn against them as punishment for their laxity and unworthiness to lead them. This can take place at any time the GM decides is appropriate; the exact betrayal can vary but it is likely that the clanners desert the Heretics at the worst possible moment, turn on one of the other drill-clans, or attack the Heretics themselves.

RED DAWN RISING PHASE 4

Up until this point, the mutant unknowingly carrying the Axe of Kha-Aksha is just one abomination amidst the countless millions. With so much blood and violence erupting all about, however, the Daemon entrapped within the axe is straining at the mystical bonds holding it there, its fearsome anima enthusing the axe-bearer with hideous potency. If the Heretics were unaware of the axe-bearer's location before, they now become fully aware of it as the creature is transformed into a rearing mass of muscle, sinew, gristle, and spines. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

At last the axe-bearer is revealed. One single mutant in the midst of the seething, blood-stained ocean of gristle and spine is transformed before your eyes into a mountain of spasming, glistening muscle. The axe-bearer's size doubles in the passage of seconds as it holds aloft the precious Axe of Kha-Aksha. Even as you look on, the creature's eyes come alight with power and cunning, even while its body is still gripped in hideous, clenching flesh-quakes. It is clear that within moments the beast's transformation will turn into a nigh undefeatable mountain of sinew and muscle...

If ever the Heretics are to defeat the axe-bearer and claim the priceless artefact for themselves, now is the time.

COMBAT IN PHASE 4

The Heretics have a brief window of opportunity to attack the axe-bearer while the spasms of its transformation alters its body to its new form. During this time, all of its Characteristic Bonuses are doubled (along with its number of Wounds) as great swaths of flesh appear to grow out of the axe and cover the mutant with endless muscle.

Each turn, the GM should roll 1d10 and add the number of turns that have passed since Phase 4 began. For example, on the sixth turn of Phase 4, 7 is rolled, resulting in 13. If and when the result totals 10 or more, the mutant is fully transformed into a new form of hideous flesh infused with Daemonic will. The raw power of the Warp, channelled through the axe and made a thousand-times more potent for the limitless bloodshed erupting all around, makes it many times more potent than the other Nightside mutants. See page 141 for the axe-bearer's new profile.

In addition to the axe-bearer, the Heretics are faced with the dangers presented by the other million or so mutants surging all around them. Though the GM should allow the players to work it out for themselves, the Dayside Mutants are so cowed by the raw power of the axe-bearer that they dare not approach within twenty metres of it. So long as the Heretics remain within the distance of the axe-bearer they are relatively safe from the other countless mutants of the horde.

Until they work this out, a Dayside Mutant charges any Heretic outside of 20 metres from the axe-bearer. There is no need to track the attackers' Wounds, etc.—as one is wounded another steps in to take its place, presenting a constant stream of feral, blood-maddened abominations.

RED DAWN RISING PHASE 5

The transformation of the mutants into their dayside state is complete and the wastes are transformed into a nightmare vision beyond imagining, even for the most debased of Heretics. If the players have not defeated the axe-bearer and recovered the Axe of Kha-Aksha at the onset of Phase 5, they should pray the Ruinous Powers are looking upon them favourably. Regardless of whether the axe-bearer has been defeated, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The completion of the mutants' bloody transformation is heralded by a gestalt, atonal roar as every one of a million and more blood-soaked throats give voice to a berserker fury that must truly be the gift of the Blood God himself. The last of the weaker mutants are torn apart, the ragged shreds gulped down hungry gullets or cast to the blood-mired ground. Now truly, the mutants have entered their day cycle state, and each and every one of them is a supreme hunter and a killer.

What happens next depends on whether or not the Heretics have recovered the Axe of Kha-Aksha. If they have not, they face not only the fully transformed axe-bearer but hordes of dayside mutants. If they have defeated the mutant and hold the axe, then they still must face the hordes but must also decide how best to use the power of the axe against them.

THE CHOICE

The instant a Heretic sets hands upon the Axe of Kha-Aksha, time itself freezes for everyone but him. Unlike the former axe-bearer, who was nothing but a lowly animal when it took up the axe, the Heretic is a being well able to gauge the implications of his actions and decisions, and the moment to take such a decision has arrived. Read aloud or paraphrase the following; the reference to the price agreed upon during the Rite of Many Eyes should be dropped if the Heretics did not pursue that particular option.

The instant your hand closes about the bone-wrought haft of the Axe of Kha-Aksha, a wall of silence slams down all about you. Time itself crashes to an abrupt halt, every living being on the battlefield frozen as if caught in a stasis field. Even as you look about, a veil of blood descends, staining everything deep, dark red.

A voice, older than the stuff of reality and deeper than the oceanic depths of the Sea of Souls, resounds from nowhere and everywhere.

"Now, mortal, deliver unto me the aid you agreed upon. The time is come. Release me!"

The source of the voice is now made shockingly clear. It is a mighty lord of the bloody abyss, a Greater Daemon of Khorne, entrapped countless aeons ago within the artefact you hold. It demands its release from the axe, clearly drawn to the limitless bloodshed set loose all about.

But should the Daemon be released, then what of the axe? Surely, its power will be spent and its potential expended.

The time to decide is now...

The Heretic holding the axe is presented with this stark choice—release the Greater Daemon entrapped with the weapon or defy it, maintaining its imprisonment against its will. The player must decide right now, and the adventure does not proceed to the next part until he does.

If the player decides to release the Daemon, the results are spectacular indeed. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The sanguinary veil obscuring your vision lifts and the Warp's grip on the passage of time is released. Where an instant before a million howling mutants were frozen as insects in amber, now all motion is resumed. But before the wave of muscle and spine can crash upon you, the axe is wrenched from your grip and cast high into the air as by unseen hands. An explosion of crimson energies erupts from above and the stink of brimstone, hot metal and flash-burned flesh assails you as a pair of cloven-hooved feet lands heavily.

The words of an ancient telling set to runes long ago burst into your consciousness:

"And behold, a Daemon Lord comes in the panoply of battle. At his passing, the trees gibber their rage and the stones shout their hate to the uncaring sky. He hunts the enemies of his Master, for his meat is mortal flesh and his wine mortal souls.

Behold, a Daemon Lord comes, and we are doomed..."

Now, the killing truly begins, as the Bloodthirster sets about slaying every last one of the hundreds of thousands of mutants it can reach. The spectacle is truly awe-inspiring, even for a Heretic well used to bloodshed and murder. While many of the mutants fight back with rage and berserk fury they are no match for a Greater Daemon of Khorne and many others flee. The Heretics have little choice but to get well clear of the slaughter and the stampede it sets in motion, and should they tarry overlong they are crushed beneath a surging tide of mutants.

Should the Heretic in possession of the axe decide not to release the Bloodthirster, he must make three **Difficult (-10) Willpower Tests** and cumulatively gain six or more Degrees of Success. If he fails, the beast is released as described above. In this instance, the Heretics have around ten minutes to get clear before the Daemon decides to hunt them down and punish them for their attempt to become his gaolers. If the Test is passed, the Greater Daemon remains entrapped within the axe—for now.

THE END

Whether or not the Heretics choose to release the Daemon or it escapes anyway, they must escape the horde and possibly a vengeful Bloodthirster. The Game Master need not run every single encounter in this scene, and may instead reduce it to a small number of key confrontations or simply describe it in overview. The wastes of Messia are by now a charnel plain and, as the Heretics depart, those mutants not slaughtered by one another, or (if it was released) by the Greater Daemon, disperse into the surrounding lands, their day-cycle cunning taking over from their night-cycle sloth.

CONSEQUENCES

Given the nature of **Red Dawn Rising**, there are a number of positions the Heretics can find themselves in at its end. Some or all of these can be developed further, and have an impact on the ongoing narrative of the campaign. In particular, how the Heretics choose to answer the Daemon's demand to be set free from its imprisonment within the Axe of Kha-Aksha could and should have numerous repercussions in future games. The Heretics should gain Experience Points (along with bonuses as described on page 123 if the Heretics pleased their patron god), plus Infamy as warranted (see page 266 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). Here are a few possible consequences of the Heretics' actions:

- If the players released the Daemon, they are left in possession of the Axe of Kha-Aksha. While no longer a Daemon Weapon, it would make an ideal new Rune Weapon for one of the Heretics (or as a trade item); see page 39 for Rune Weapon rules.
- If the Heretics refused to release the Daemon but it escaped anyway, or if they played no part in it gaining its freedom through some other complication, the players might still be in possession of the axe as described above, but they have made a powerful enemy in the form of the Bloodthirster. The Game Master can use this entity as a powerful nemesis, and have it return at some point in the future when the players least expect it.
- If the Heretics refused the Bloodthirster its demand for freedom, they now have in their possession a potent, yet ultimately highly unpredictable Daemon Weapon. The details of the axe are presented on page 137. Such a powerful weapon might appear at first a potentially unbalancing influence on a campaign, but this should be balanced as the Daemon entrapped within is actively seeking to escape, and should it do so the Heretics are very likely to be doomed. Nonetheless, the GM should feel free in curtailing the weapon's use whenever he feels is appropriate. For example, there are times when the Bloodthirster within the axe rages so hard against its bonds that the weapon burns with white hot heat that makes it impossible to wield, or it roars with such fury that it drowns out all other sounds and causes fear and insanity on all who hear it.
- The Heretics may end the adventure in control of one or more of the drill-clans of Messina. If the players wish, the group can return to Mekonta (possibly an adventure in itself given the perilous nature of the wastes) and establish themselves as drill-barons in their own right. Here they may establish their own empires to gather further power and infamy, enough to move on to even greater adventures within the Screaming Vortex and their Paths to Glory.

NPC APPENDIX

The following is an Appendix of notable NPCs and Adversaries featured in **Red Dawn Rising**. GMs are encouraged to add other NPCs depending on the desired length of the adventure in their own games.

DRILL-BARON CALEB JORGSTERN

A full description of Jorgstern can be found on page 128.

Caleb Jorgstern (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
55	45	55	45	48	43	42	56	40	40

Movement: 5/10/20/30

Wounds: 30

Armour: Body, Arms, Legs 5

Total TB: 4

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Command (Fel), Commerce (Int), Common Lore (War), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag) +20, Navigation (Surface), Parry (WS), Scrutiny (Per).

Talents: Ambidextrous, Bulging Biceps, Catfall, Combat Master, Disarm, Fearless, Inspire Wrath, Jaded, Killing Strike, Leap Up, Lightning Reflexes, Pity the Weak, Quick Draw, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee), Unarmed Master, Unarmed Warrior.

Traits: Size (Hulking).

Armour: Hardened leathers and chainmail.

Weapons: Chainsword (Melee; 1d10+7 R; Pen 2; Balanced, Tearing), chainaxe (Melee; 1d10+9 R; Pen 2; Tearing), hand cannon with amputator rounds (Pistol; 35m; S/2/-; 1d10+6 I; Pen 2; Clip 8; Reload 2 Full).

Gear: Numerous trophies and shrivelled body-parts of defeated foes, 2 pistol clips.



DRILL-BARON CHÆMUS VASSID

A full description of Vassid can be found on page 130.

Chæmus Vassid (Master)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
50	50	42	42	30	35	43	36	35	38	

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 35

Armour: Body, Legs, Arms 5

Total TB: 8

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus, the Warp) (Int), Interrogation (WP) +10, Logic (Int) +10, Linguistics (Techna-lingua) (Int) +10, Navigation (Surface) +10, Operate (Surface) (Ag) +10, Scrutiny (Int) +10, Survival (Per) +10, Tech-Use (Int) +10.

Talents: Cold Hearted, Corpus Conversion, Disturbing Voice, Iron Jaw, Total Recall, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee)

Traits: Mechanicus Implants, Unnatural Strength (+4), Unnatural Toughness (+4).

Armour: Augmented Leathers.

Weapons: Pair of custom power hand axes (Melee; 1d10+14 E; Pen 5; Balanced, Power Field).

Gear: Various tools and machine components worn as fetishes.

DRILL-BARON RAHIM SCOTIA

A full description of Scotia can be found on page 132.

Rahim Scotia										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
55	55	55	41	50	40	40	52	45	40	

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Wounds: 32

Armour: Augmented Body Glove (All 3)

Total TB: 4

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Command (Fel), Commerce (Int), Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +20, Navigation (Surface), Parry (WS) +20, Scrutiny (Per) +20, Sleight of Hand (Ag) +20, Stealth (Ag) +20.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Catfall, Combat Master, Disarm, Fearless, Inspire Wrath, Jaded, Killing Strike, Leap Up, Lightning Reflexes, Pity the Weak, Sacrifice, Unarmed Master, Unarmed Warrior.

Traits: Unnatural Agility (+3).

Weapons: Power Stiletto (Melee; 1d10+7 E; Pen 6; Balanced, Power Field), Throwing Knives and Stars (Melee; 1d5+5 R).

Gear: Respirator, survival cloak.

THE AXE-BEARER

The mutant carrying the Axe of Kha-Aksha has the profile of a Nightside Mutant until the point at which it transforms through the rising of dawn in Phase 4. Having transformed, it is powered by the bloody anima entrapped within the axe and gains the new profile below.

The Axe-Bearer (Elite)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
58	21	52	47	38	21	29	38	15	--	

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 37

Armour: Toughened Skin (3)

Total TB: 9

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (WP) +10, Survival (Per) +10.

Talents: Battle Rage, Berserk Charge, Crushing Blow, Frenzy, Furious Assault, Hatred (Psykers), Iron Jaw, Lightning Attack.

Traits: Blood for the Blood God†, Brutal Charge, Dark Sight, Deadly Natural Weapon (Claws), Fear (2), Natural Armour (3), Regeneration (3), Size (Hulking), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (+4), Unnatural Toughness (+6).

†**Blood for the Blood God:** The Axe-Bearer's infusion with the power of Khorne means it suffers no penalties from gore and blood—all critical hit effects involving gore and blood (such as requiring an Agility Test not to fall over) do not apply while it carries the Axe.

Weapons: The Axe of Kha-Aksha (Melee; 2d10+19 R; Pen 7; Accursed, Bloodlust, Fuelled by Slaughter, see page 137 for additional details), bone-spike claws (Melee; 1d10+10 R; Pen 2; Tearing).

Gear: None.

DAYSIDE MUTANT OF MESSIA

The profile for a Mutant of Messina in its day-cycle stage can be found on page 103.

NIGHTSIDE MUTANT OF MESSIA

The profile for a Mutant of Messina in its night-cycle stage can be found on page 104.

MESSIAN DRILL-NOMAD

The profile of a typical Messian Drill-Clan Nomad can be found on page 104.

CLANNER GUARD

The elite Clanner Guards attend their Drill-Baron masters. They have the profile of a drill-nomad (see page 104) but with an additional +5 to Weapon Skill and Agility, and are typically better armed. Suitable weapons could include chainswords and bolt pistols, but the GM should equip them with other weapons and wargear as desired to suitably challenge powerful Heretics. Groups including several Chaos Space Marines should face heavy bolters, melta weapons, and autocannons, and plentiful heavy stubbers for example.

AUTOCHTHONIC LIFE FORMS

These horrible creatures are likely to encountered while crossing the open wastes of Messia.

Lamprey-Rats Swarm (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
35	--	11	12	51	08	40	15	--	--

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 30

Armour: None

Total TB: 1

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Athletics (S), Survival (Per) +20.

Traits: Bestial, Dark Sight, Size (Miniscule), Swarm.

Weapons: Jaws (Melee; 1d10+1 R; Pen 5; Tearing, Toxic [2]).

Acid-Spitting Leach (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
40	--	45	53	20	15	30	30	--	--

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 20

Armour: 2 (All)

Total TB: 5

Skills: Survival (Per) +20.

Traits: Fearless, Bestial, Crawler, Dark Sight, Deadly Natural Weapons (Acid Bite), Size (Hulking).

Weapons: Acid bite (Melee; 1d10+4 E; Pen 4; Tearing, Toxic [2]), acid spray (Basic; 10m; S/-/-; 1d10+2 E; Pen 5; Clip-; Reload-; Spray, Toxic [4]).

Bile-Mites (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
30	--	05	10	35	05	45	15	--	--

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 50

Armour: None

Total TB: 1

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Athletics (S) +20.

Traits: Bestial, Dark Sight, Natural Weapons (Miniscule Mandibles), Size (Miniscule), Swarm.

Weapons: Mandibles (Melee; 1d5 R; Pen 0; Toxic [3]).

Ravenous Maw (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
30	--	30	45	30	10	35	15	--	--

Movement: 0 (Immobile in lair)

Wounds: 30

Armour: 4 All

Total TB: 4

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20.

Talents: Multiple Weapon Wielder (Melee).

Traits: Bestial, Dark Sight, Multiple Arms (6), Natural Weapons (Whipping Tentacles), Size (Hulking).

Weapons: Whipping tentacles (Melee; 10m; 1d10+4 R; Pen 0; Flexible, Shocking).

ORE CORPS 358 GUN-THRALL

These drooling, near-mindless creatures are cultured in huge bubbling vats from the remains of fallen enemies. Suffused with the taint of the Warp and the arcane machine lore of the master of Ore-Corps 358, the Gun-Thralls are animated by some spark of consciousness and obey only the word of their creator.

Gun-Thrall (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
30	35	55	55	30	10	35	15	--	--

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 30

Armour: Ironhide (6 All)

Total TB: 5

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20.

Traits: Auto-stabilised, Blind, Sturdy, Sonar Sense, Size (Hulking).

Weapons: Razor cannon (Heavy; 100m; -/-/6; 1d10+8 R; Pen 3; Clip 80; Rld Full; Razor Sharp, Scatter, Tearing).

The Word of the Creator: Should Vassid be slain, all of the Gun-Thralls fall silent and can only be made functional again (and made to obey anyone other than Vassid) on a successful **Arduous (-40) Tech-Use or Trade Test**.





FORGSTEIN CLAN

ORE-CORPS 358

THE SCORNFUL HOST

THE MOUNTAIN HORDE



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THE TOME OF BLOOD™

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