

ONLY WAR™



ROLEPLAYING IN THE GRIM DARKNESS
OF THE 41ST MILLENNIUM

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INTRODUCTION

"In the end, only the Emperor can judge you. Only He is qualified to weigh acts of righteousness against deeds of vile treachery and find a verdict for your soul. It is merely my humble task to commend you to His final justice."

—Lord Commissar Salieri

FINAL TESTAMENT is an extended, three chapter adventure for ONLY WAR. Through the course of the scenario within, the characters come face to face with the tragedy of war and the harsh consequences of their own actions. At various points in the adventure, they must fight savagely against a variety of enemies to survive. They must also navigate debriefing and interrogation sessions that require them to tread carefully amidst powers beyond their reckoning. The Player Characters are constantly challenged to innovate and overcome unusual obstacles, even as they strive to uphold the honour of the Imperial Guard—and perhaps even survive!

The adventure is designed to accommodate Player Characters from a myriad of different regiments. As such, certain NPCs are deliberately left open, so that a Game Master can insert characters who he has already been established. Similarly, at different points throughout the adventure, there are suggestions for revising scenes to accommodate regiments with particular skills. Game Masters are strongly encouraged to thoroughly review the adventure prior to the first session of play, so that they can prepare any appropriate materials.

CHAPTER I: PLANETFALL

The adventure opens before the Player Characters arrive upon Hervara. This provides the players a chance to learn about the setting at the same time that their characters do. The earliest stages also present an opportunity for the PCs to interact with members of their regiment in an extended fashion, offering a contrast with later scenes in which the characters typically work on assignment far from their native regiment.

As their transport vessel prepares to enter the Hervara system, they receive their final briefing and mission gear. Then, as their drop ship makes landfall, disaster strikes. The vessel crashes to the planet's surface, coming to rest in the middle of an Ork encampment. The Player Characters must rally their company and escape from the camp. In the process, they discover Big Mek Noshdakka's major project: the refit of a long-lost Imperial Ordinatus for his own insane purposes, none of which bode well for the Imperial forces on Hervara.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on their escape from the Orks, as the company makes its way back to the nearest Imperial outpost—supply depot Hervara-XIX. At the base, the survivors are debriefed about their arrival and the artefact that they accidentally uncovered. During the final scene, the Player Characters also have an opportunity to become familiar with the Imperial base and the personnel stationed there.

Some of these NPCs play a critical role in the adventure as it continues into the next two chapters, and their interactions with the Player Characters can shape the tenour of the story as a whole.

CHAPTER II: THE NIGHT PATH

The second chapter opens as Captain Fordham—commanding officer of Hervara-XIX— informs the Player Characters that they are to remain with the Luggnum Sewer Rats at the depot. Most of their regiment made planetfall safely, but it is currently located too far away to safely reunite with the erstwhile Player Characters. Ork forces hold aerial superiority here, making a quick airlift impossible. For now, the Player Characters and their company are to remain at the base, under Fordham's authority.

Hervara-XIX is located near the Drury-Cobhan Line, a critical Imperial defence line that provides protection against both the Ork and Severan Dominate formations. Throughout this chapter, the Player Characters engage in a number of covert operations against Ork and Severan Dominate forces that are active beyond that line. During these missions, the characters come to know Captain Fordham, the base's officers, and other soldiers stationed in the region. This portion of the adventure includes a number of key missions and offers suggestions for additional missions that can affect the overall outcome of the war effort on Hervara.

Chapter II concludes after the Player Characters are sent on a mission to recapture several bunkers on the Drury-Cobhan Line. The Player Characters discover that Captain Fordham has been secretly working with the secessionist forces, and has used their squad to commit acts of treason. While they had been told that their targets were disguised rebels, this was not the case. The assaults weakened the line, allowing Ork and Severan Dominate forces alike to strike at the Imperial holdings.

CHAPTER III: THE HORN OF MARS

Chapter III opens when Lord Commissar Salieri arrives at Hervara-XIX with a sizable force of Death Korps soldiers. Salieri immediately captures Fordham and summons the Player Characters for an interrogation session. Throughout this session, he questions them to determine whether they were earnest traitors, or if they simply acted in accordance with their orders. While neither option is acceptable in his harsh eyes, the Lord Commissar fears that treason is spreading through the ranks on Hervara.

In the aftermath of the interrogation, Orks launch their attack. Soldiers dash everywhere to assume defensive positions against the huge force of xenos, giving the Player Characters a chance to make a break for it. Before they leave, they discover that Big Mek Noshdakka's work has come to completion. The Orks are piloting the Ordinatus towards the front line, presumably to use it against the Imperial forces, and—traitors or not—their lives are forfeit as well if the Big Mek fires the weapon.

The squad then has the opportunity to take the Ordinatus from the Orks, to prove their loyalty to the Imperium or earn a place in the ranks of the secessionist forces of the Severan Dominate. If they succeed, they have the chance to fire the weapon, eliminating most of the xenos forces, as well as a substantial portion of either the Imperial or secessionist armies. The Player Characters can then return to the Imperium or side with the rebels, having tipped the battle for Hervara steeply towards the side they chose.

GAZETTEER: HERVARA

"I don't mind fighting the Orks. At least I can tell them apart from us."

—Gunnery Sergeant Corbin Hayworth

The war effort to secure the Periphery Sub-Sector from the myriad threats that loom over it is an ongoing struggle for the Imperial forces of the Spinward Front. Holding Hervara has become essential to the forces of the Severan Dominate, but they are opposed by both xenos, the brutal and numerous Orks, and loyalists, in the form of the Imperial Guard and certain elements of Hervara's own military forces. This is, in large part, because the Administratum is well aware of the strategic value that this world holds for the secessionists. As the battles escalate, some wonder if the world and its human population can survive the conflicts. After all, this world is merely one among countless worlds from the perspective of the Imperium, but it could be key to the Severan Dominate's ability to continue the fight.

Because of this world's importance, the forces loyal to Duke Severus the Thirteenth have dug in their heels sharply upon Hervara. The Duke realises that without Hervara's mineral wealth, his war chest could soon be depleted. His only hope for a successful strategy is to make certain that the short term Imperial losses upon Hervara become so catastrophic that even the implacable Departmento Munitorum chooses to withdraw and redistribute its forces elsewhere rather than continue the direct assault. However, given the limited training of the Duke's troops and the finite resources of the Periphery Sub-Sector, the Severan Dominate has been unable to complete the necessary master stroke. He recently sent one of his best commanders—General Mikhail Augustus—to the world, with orders to achieve such a victory. To date, the General has met with little success in the ash-choked wastes of Hervara, but the renowned commander hopes to find the opportunity or tool to strike a telling blow upon the Imperial forces.

The Imperial Guard has had a much greater degree of success upon Hervara. Miraculously, many members of the local militia remained loyal to the Imperium. When the first transports arrived upon Hervara, a number of units of the Hervara Excavatory Warriors turned against their brethren and provided a secure landing zone for the Imperial forces. The initial beachhead enabled the Imperium to land a full battalion of troops. Unfortunately, that bloodless coup was the only one that the Imperial Guard enjoyed upon Hervara. Every battle since has cost the invading forces dearly in both steel and blood, as the remaining rebels have fiercely protected their homes. Meanwhile, the Orks have wantonly revelled in the world's endless conflicts.

For the Orks, Hervara is a fertile battleground. They take great pleasure in the chaos that has ensued across the world, but have secured few strategic objectives—at least, so far as the Imperium is aware. Even with the assistance of the native Ork population, the combination of Imperial Guard and Severan Dominate forces substantially outnumber the Orks present. However, there are at least as many Greenskins present as there are soldiers for either of the human factions alone. This

provides the Orks with ample opportunity to engage their lust for battle. If the combined human forces were to somehow ally against the Greenskins, they would be able to quickly turn the tide and eliminate them, but given the current climate of bitter hostilities, the Ork menace represents a significant wildcard. Drawn to any conflict, seemingly without rhyme or reason, the Orks frequently engage both sides simultaneously, spoiling the plans of attackers and defenders alike.

When additional forces from Waaagh! Grimtoof joined the conflict, they brought with them a significant number of Mekaniaks. The presence of these technologically-inclined Oddboyz, under the tutelage and guidance of the cunning and brutally inventive Big Mek Noshdakka, has substantially altered the ongoing war effort. The Mekboyz either built or converted several capable wings of Ork Bombers. Neither of the human forces was prepared for this turn of events, and it has significantly impacted the abilities of both to safely land reinforcements. While an Imperial Navy force could disperse the Ork aerial forces in short order, no appropriately equipped squadron has been dispatched to the system.

For now, both the Imperial Guard and the Severan Dominate have been forced to manage ground-based offensives as the crude Ork aircraft cut roaring trails of black smoke across the skies. The world's vast system of subterranean mines has allowed both sides to move their forces without fear of aerial assault, although it has also led to numerous savage conflicts between Imperial and Severan Dominate forces in the depths of the caverns. Of course, as long as the Orks hold air superiority, reinforcements face serious risks when landing.



GAZETTEER: HERVARA





ENVIRONMENT

"This fertile land shall provide ample food and resources for humanity for untold generations, and we shall flourish here."

—Duke Severus the First

Hervara is physically located along one of the Warp routes that lead between the heart of the Calixis Sector and the region which Duke Severus the Thirteenth claims as the Severan Dominate. Near the edge of the Periphery Sub-Sector, the world saw regular traffic from both the worlds of the frontier and those of the Sector. Prior to its secession, this included Imperial transports, which would often visit the world to transfer much of its mineral output to the hungry Forge Worlds of the Calixis Sector. This regular transport created a culture that was well aware of the dangers of the frontier and the security of the Imperium. As an important transit point, the world was also well-supplied with the resources necessary to curb the regular incursions of the native Ork population, which periodically reared its ugly and bellowing head.

Roughly sixty percent of the planet's surface is covered by landmasses. Relatively shallow, saltwater oceans dominate the remainder of the surface. More than ninety-five percent of the planet's land is divided, relatively evenly, among six major continents. Each is large enough to include a broad range of climates, many of which were well within the acceptable ranges for humanity before Hervara's decline. Hervara's orbit is roughly 456 days and its local days are 22 Standard Hours, with roughly 11 hours of light and 11 hours of darkness per day at the equator. During the day, the light falls flat on the endless ash dunes and scrubland wastes on the due to the constant cloud cover, impairing depth perception on the surface. Hervara has no moons or other larger satellites, but nights are slightly lit by ambient light from surface bastions reflecting off of the toxic smog that fills the atmosphere.

Only the world's equatorial region consistently reaches temperatures too hot for an unprotected human. Near Hervara's equator, the temperature can exceed a searing fifty-two Celsius at midday. While some of the planet's native species are capable of sustaining blistering temperature, none of the imported terrestrial flora or fauna can tolerate such extremes. Consequently, almost all of the human population is isolated to a single continent in the southern hemisphere. That region's relatively mild seasonal changes maintain a temperature range of eighteen to thirty Celsius at midday. Flooding and severe winds during the annual rainy season were the only significant meteorological dangers in this region when it was settled by the Imperium.

Given their rugged and resilient physiology, Hervara's native Ork population was originally far more evenly distributed across the planet. However, a continued Imperial Navy presence kept the xenos from ever becoming particularly active on the world's surface. Any time they showed a significant concentration, orbital bombing quickly dispersed the forces. Imperial forces now believe that this led the Orks to move into the cavern networks where they could breed and plan more effectively.

Because Hervara primarily served the Imperium as a mining world, much of the human population also dwelt far beneath the surface. A seemingly endless labyrinth of natural and man-made caves extends through the planet's crust. Due to the extensive mining operations, these passages are constantly expanding, even today, as the miners dig in pursuit of the world's natural ore resources. Entire generations of mining families have lived within these caves, some tracing their ancestries back to Hervara's original colonists. Many of these people have never known the light of the system's star, living and dying in darkness, sustained only by artificial light and tales of the Emperor's divine radiance.