

WARHAMMER
40,000

ROLEPLAY

WRATH & GLORY™



SETTING BOOK

THE VARONIUS FLOTILLA

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WELCOME TO THE 41ST MILLENNIUM

The galaxy burns in the fires of thousands of unrelenting wars. Battlefields scream as ancient war engines clash with sorcerous daemons. Untold trillions of warriors die every day in the bloody maelstrom of ceaseless conflict, and Humanity faces what might be its darkest hour.

**‘IN THE GRIM
DARK FUTURE
THERE IS
ONLY WAR’**

The God-Emperor of Mankind once led crusades to conquer the galaxy, but for more than a hundred centuries He has sat immobile on the Golden Throne of Holy Terra. His vast interstellar empire, the Imperium, is beset on all sides. Monstrous alien species ravage Human systems, raiding for supplies, expanding their xenos empires, or simply satiating their hellish hunger for bloodshed. Worse still, the Dark Gods of Chaos corrupt Humanity from within, mutating mind and body into grotesque forms bent on destroying all of reality itself.

Hope is a long forgotten dream in this nightmarish future, but Humanity fights on defiantly — not out of bravery, but for survival, united in faith that the God-Emperor of Mankind protects, and that His Imperium will prevail. There is no peace amongst the stars, for in the grim darkness of the far future, there is only war.

THE IMPERIUM

The Imperium is the greatest interstellar empire in Human history, said to span over a million worlds across the breadth of the galaxy, with ancient Terra at its heart. Untold trillions toil in the Emperor's name, ensuring that His war machine has had the soldiers and resources needed to protect the Imperium through millennia of ceaseless conflict. Their duties have become all the more fraught since the Cicatrix Maledictum cut the Imperium in two. The Emperor of Mankind watches over the Imperium from Holy Terra, the ancient birthplace of Humanity. Silent atop the Golden Throne, his light illuminates the Imperium Sanctus. Faith in the Imperial Cult is the sole mote of hope in the lives of countless billions.

Life is harsh on almost every world, marked by endless toil and untold suffering. But it is necessary, for only by the ceaseless diligence of the Imperium's many citizens can humanity hope to endure. Still, not all bear the burden of labour equally. An aristocratic class rules most worlds, deriving their authority from the High Lords of Terra, and thereby from the Emperor Himself. The best among them live lives of solemn duty, bearing the burden of their authority with dignity and a steel resolve. The worst pay little heed to the needs and struggles of those beneath them, enjoying lives of luxury and excess that border on the debauched. Menial workers toil endlessly across vast Manufactorums, though most lack the perspective to understand their contributions.

As ancient technologies slowly falter and decay, the methods of their manufacture and maintenance lost to the ages, it is human effort, and human suffering, that endures.

A life of comfortless servitude is the lot of most, and those who are lucky enough to escape it do so only to serve in the vast armies of the Imperium, their blood the price paid to keep the xeno, the heretic, and the traitor at bay.

RELIGION

Faith holds the Imperium together in the face of annihilation. The Imperial Cult, the sanctioned religion of the Imperium, holds the belief that the Emperor is the God of Humanity above all else. Anyone that denies the truth of their strictures is a heretic that must be purged.

The Imperial Cult is utterly dogmatic, though over the vastness of Imperium and over the long millennia since the Emperor's ascension to the Golden Throne that dogma has been interpreted in many strikingly different ways.

Still, the doctrine that the Emperor is a divine being, and that only by his sacrifice does the Imperium endure, is all but universally accepted. Those who stray from this path are mercilessly persecuted by the Adeptus Ministorum. Those who have erred are subject to horrific rehabilitation, paying the price for their heresy in pain and blood, or purged ruthlessly and without remorse.

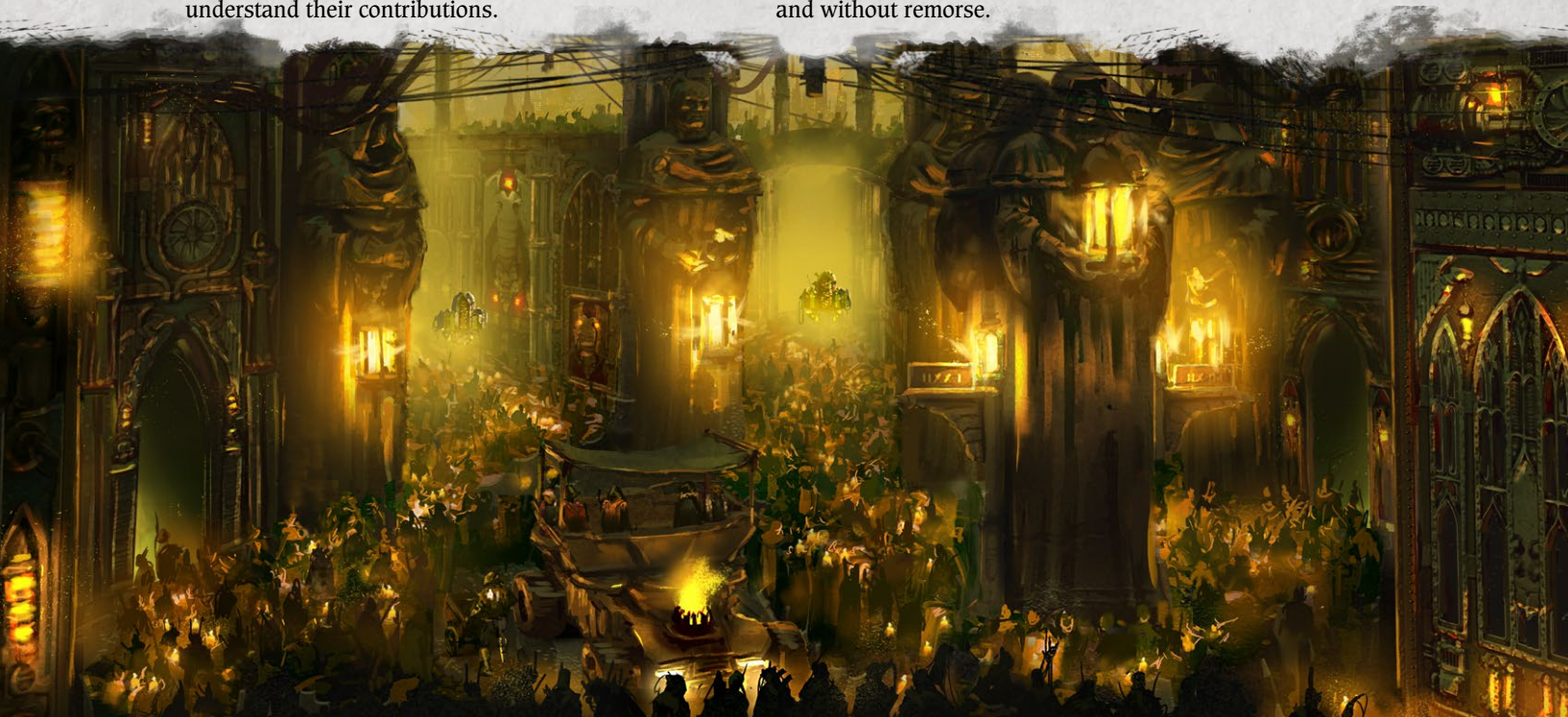
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Faith permeates every part of Imperial life. Labourers work backbreaking shifts in time to emphatic hymns in factories or fields, given time off only for the most essential of human requirements and to give praise to the Emperor — indeed most see these as one and the same.

Such fervent belief is necessary in the bleak reality of the 41st millennium. Humans from opposite ends of the galaxy raised in entirely different cultures can work together, unified by their shared indoctrination to the Imperial Cult. Zealous warriors can mount a bayonet charge against horrific daemons, pushed beyond fear through raw zeal. Every individual must be willing to die so that the Imperium may survive — the martyr's grave is the keystone of the Imperium.

TECHNOLOGY

The Imperium has lost a great deal of technological knowledge over the long millennia, and many devices are poorly understood, their use steeped in superstition. Ancient secrets and arcane devices passed down from long forgotten generations. Few understand the principles that underlie any machine, and such knowledge is jealously guarded by the Adeptus Mechanicus, a machine cult who worship the Omnissiah — a figure they see embodied in the Emperor. The Cult of the Machine is the only other sanctioned religious practice in the Imperium - a necessary concession to the necessity of maintaining

its technology. Even among the Tech-Preises of the Mechanicus machines are barely understood, and religious litanies and rote libations to machine spirits are an essential part of maintaining any device.

THE WARP

Beyond the material realm is an alternate dimension composed entirely of psychic energy, known as the Empyrean, or more simply as the Warp. It is a realm of roiling chaos, a dark reflection of the material universe populated by Daemonic entities whose very presence instills terror in most mortals. It is also, regrettably, the means by which humanity navigates the vast gulf between stars. Protected by arcane Geller Fields that create a tiny bubble of reality to keep the daemons at bay, ships enter the warp guided by Navigators. These are a strange but tolerated mutant clade of humanity capable of guiding a ship through the horrors of the Immaterium with some hope of success, though the process of doing so strains their minds terribly.

The Warp is key to the existence of the Imperium, for without it humanity would be little more than scattered worlds isolated by centuries of travel from their nearest neighbour. It is also home to humanity's most dire threat, though the exact nature and scale of that threat is carefully hidden from the masses of humanity, lest their despair feed the very Dark Gods that would destroy them.



THE GILEAD SYSTEM

The Gilead System is a collection of six semi-habitable planets orbiting a yellow dwarf star, several moons, and a pair of rogue planets thrust into the system by the whims of the Cicatrix Maledictum. It is located to the galactic North of Holy Terra.

Avachrus, the Forge World

A barren rock of vast mineral wealth wreathed in storms of toxic clouds and corrosive acid rain, Avachrus is locked in close orbit of the Gilead star. The force of gravity keeps one side of Avachrus facing the system's sun, its blazing heat reducing simple metals to slag in seconds, while the other side is bound in perpetual night.

Billions toil for the Adeptus Mechanicus beneath the surface of Avachrus in vast factory cities, each subterranean metropolis utterly dedicated to the production and maintenance of holy machinery.

Nethreus, the Knight World

Nethreus is a tectonic nightmare of a world. Volcanoes spit fire and ash into the sky with unrelenting fury and earthquakes ripple across the broken surface of the second planet from the Gilead star. Temperatures burn hot, but humanity survives on the surface of this hostile rock. Megafauna fly, stalk, and burrow across Nethreus like nightmare beasts risen from the mythologies of Old Earth.

This planet was gifted to the Knight House Acasta, a noble family that can trace its lineage back through the millenia and charged with operating the enormous walking engines of war known as "*Knights*". Though powerful weapons of war, the Knights are almost all deployed to defend Imperial bastions on Nethreus from the grotesque native creatures and hellish xenos invaders.

Ostia, the Agri World

A verdant green jewel in the void, the abundant surface of Ostia is given over entirely to farmland, capable of producing tonnes of edible goods per day. Varied biomes provide bountiful crops and stunning vistas, but the majority of the uneducated population

have little time to enjoy them, as Ostia is ruled by the ruthless efficiency of the Administratum who ensure that no moment the populace could be labouring to provide food for their betters is wasted.

Enoch, the Shrine World

Claimed by the Ecclesiarchy during the Gilead Crusade, Enoch was transformed by the Imperial Cult from an impoverished, heretic planet to a shining beacon of faith in the Emperor. Land suitable for building has been covered in skyscraping cathedrals, and the very cliffs of the land have been carved into colossal likenesses of saints.

As the centre of worship in the Gilead System, Enoch is a wealthy world, frequently a major destination for pilgrimage. The priests trained here have powerful say over local politics.

Gilead Primus, the Hive World

The capital planet of the Gilead System is a spent and irradiated rock, utterly scoured for resources over millennia of toxin-producing industry. Its population of sixteen-billion or more is spread across nine colossal hives separated by exhausted wasteland. Each hive is a towering urban construction of several cities packed one on top of the other, stretching thousands of metres into the sky.

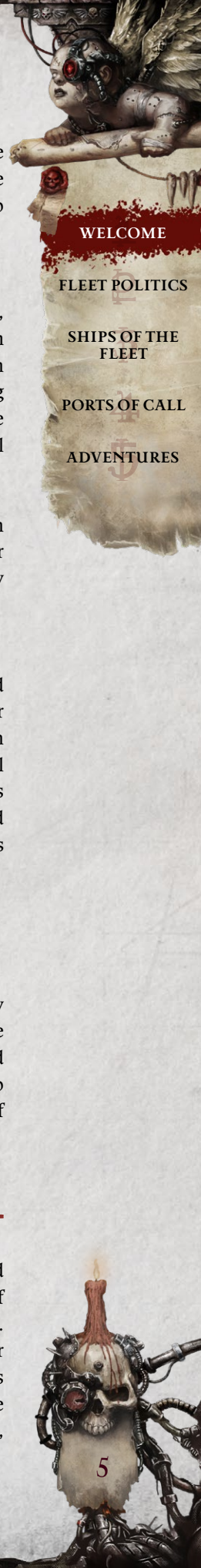
Lord-Militant Tyleria Fylamon rules Gilead Primus

Charybdion, the Ocean World

More than 90% of Charybdion's surface is covered by frigid, roiling oceans. Like Gilead Primus it is a hive world, with titanic city spires claiming what little land is available while others plunge deep into the ocean to plunder its riches. Charybdion exists in the shadow of its sister hive world,

GILEAD HISTORY

The Gilead System is thought to have been colonised during the Great Crusade, when the Emperor Himself led Humanity across the stars to claim His domain. As His mighty armies swept over the small backwater system and continued in their glorious path, it was marked simply as SKN-71-L-009. The scourge of the Horus Heresy left this minor location mostly forgotten, as with many in the Age of Darkness.



The first mention of the Gilead system in Imperial records is truly ancient, a single fragment of data, transferred between ageing cogitators a dozen times since it was first recorded. It dates to the first century of the 31st millennium, when Explorator Fleet Tsuruoka of the Mechanicum of Mars claimed the barren planet closest to the sun of NNE.59021. They named it Avachrus and discovered the presence of non-Imperial Human societies on the fertile world of Ostia and the surprisingly industrial world of Primus.

Though the initial re-colonisation efforts by Imperial forces seemed to go well in terms of construction and resource harvesting, several sects of the Human natives to system NNE.59021, as it was there known, proved recalcitrant. Even as the Tech-Priests of the Explorator fleet discovered — and concealed — evidence of long forgotten yet highly advanced Human technology and peculiar xenos ruins, dissent fermented amongst the newly conquered populace.

In the millennia that followed the Emperor's enthronement on the Golden Throne, the system fell into obscurity, eventually becoming home to heretics and even corrupted Astartes. In M34 a military effort to reclaim and purge the system was undertaken, labelled the Gilead crusade for its leader: Saint Julyanna Gilead. The crusade was successful, and for almost six millennia the newly named Gilead System remained a staunch outpost of loyal Imperial citizens.

This all changed with the coming of the Noctis Aeterna, and the dawn of the Dark Imperium. Triggered by a great outburst of power from an area of space known as the Eye of Terror, a great rift has split the galaxy in two, and Gilead is trapped within the roiling mass of chaos that divides them. For three long years the light of the Emperor was obscured to the few Astropaths inside the system, and none could either enter the system nor leave it. It was only by expert navigation and, some say, incredible recklessness that the Rogue Trade Jackel Varonius was able to travel to Gilead, bringing with him news of the Imperium and a claim on its authority.

Only a third of the fleet survived the perilous journey, and few think that any could make it back out alive without similar — or worse — losses. Gilead remains isolated, though the Varonius Flotilla, as it is known, has brought some relief. Along with material support, the denizens of Gilead have been assured that the wider Imperium has not entirely forgotten them, and indeed that it still exists. Not all have welcomed Varonius with open arms however, as many planetary governors and military leaders in Gilead are loath to relinquish any authority to the Rogue Trader. There is strife even within the flotilla, as various factions struggle to bring their agenda to the forefront.

The Rogue Trader's position is tenuous at best, as is the fate of the system as a whole.





FLEET POLITICS

Existence aboard a mobile flotilla of vast void ships is a strange experience for the inhabitants, and even more so for visitors. From the hallowed halls of the *Julyanna's Homecoming* to the sinister ironworks of the *Blepharaoh*, each ship represents its own miniature ecosystem, connected to those around it by boats and lighters that ferry weapons, travellers, and resources from vessel to vessel in endless criss-crossing streams. Each ship maintains a log of officers and notable passengers, in addition to estimates for how many passengers and crew are currently aboard, but only high-ranking officials can expect to have themselves regularly accounted for in any meaningful capacity.

In the bowels of the ships, countless human beings spend their lives toiling at their prescribed tasks, most of them hoping for nothing more than to live out their allotted time without coming to the notice of their superiors. Each vessel in the Varonius Flotilla is best viewed as an independent city-state, bound in coalition with its sister vessels not by sympathetic alignment but instead by grim necessity and the potential for profit. In principle, every vessel is loyal to Jakel Varonius.

In practice, he's far away on the *Ducal Circlet*, and the Lord-Captain of a vessel is its absolute ruler. The Imperium only rarely sanctions dealing with Xenos, and so the vast majority of those aboard the flotilla are human. However, Rogue Traders often operate far from the idealism and authority of the Imperium, and so find themselves in need of services humans cannot easily provide.

There are a handful of xenos on the fleet, mainly in the form of a few Aeldari who serve as advisors or diplomats when it comes to dealing with Craftworld Ul-Khari. It is even rumoured that a few Ork mercenaries are sometimes allowed aboard in carefully isolated areas of the ships. All are kept from the view of more stringent Imperial authorities. Despite being bound under the banner of the Imperium, the citizens of the fleet find ample reason for internal strife. The practical military concerns of the Adeptus Astartes, the theological dictates of the Adeptus Ministorum, and the technological and spiritual demands of the Adeptus Mechanicus each pull the fleet in distinct and conflicting directions.





This frequently results in political and theological schisms with the potential to bring the fleet to a grinding halt, and has created a political quagmire that Varonius has found as difficult to navigate as the perilous Straits of Andraste by which the fleet came to Gilead.

Food and water aboard the flotilla are often sourced from the worlds visited by the fleet, and acquired through trade, extortion, or whatever means necessary. The resources are divided and allocated according to byzantine laws and regulations only truly understood by the Adeptus Administratum, and authorised by officials under the direct command of Varonius himself. Those who fall out of favour with the fleet captain might find themselves rationing their supplies until such a time as they can worm their way back into his good graces. The hydroponic agri-ship *Sunless Garden* provides a small but renewable source of food. Intended to support deep space exploration, this resource also proves useful when Varonius wishes to make a point about how little the dynasty needs planetary governments' goodwill — though this only serves to aggravate tensions around supply and demand. The couriers which ferry these precious resources from ship to ship are extremely vulnerable to attack, and mercenaries are often hired to make sure that the shipments don't fall into the wrong hands.

VARONIUS' FAVOUR

The captains, mercenaries and traders alike all seek to earn the favour of Lord Varonius, or at least of those who speak on his behalf. The charismatic Rogue Trader holds the entire convoy together with his strength of character, his vast hoards of wealth, and his known policy of sending troublesome or disappointing inferiors on the most dangerous missions. Varonius' esteem can make the difference between a life spent scrubbing floors, and a life in the upper echelons of fleet society. A simple frown at the wrong moment has the potential to send the offender into a suicide mission on the blighted world of Vulkaris. Those whom Varonius considers useful and talented receive the most interesting and lucrative contracts, whereas those who fall short of expectations might find themselves running low-paying escort missions and fading into obscurity. Naturally, this makes competition for good standing incredibly fierce, and it's not uncommon for teams serving individual Lord-Captains to discreetly (or overtly) sabotage each other in the name of professional advancement.

THE CIRCLET COUNCIL

The ships of the flotilla contain representatives from most of the Imperium's powerful institutions. Some of these were dispatched in earnest to aid Varonius in relieving the beleaguered Gilead System. Others were added to the fleet to keep an eye on it, and ensure the Rogue Trader didn't become too powerful or seize the system outright. Tech-Priests of the Adeptus Mechanicus maintain vital machinery on almost every ship, for example, but they also report back to a byzantine web of superiors shipboard activities. A sizable contingent Adeptus Ministorum accompany the flotilla, ostensibly to see to the spiritual needs of Gilead's citizens. Most of the contingent have shown far more interest in the political wranglings on Enoch than in its people, while others see the trip to Gilead as a great pilgrimage that will demonstrate their own impressive piety.

These and a dozen other Imperial factions vie for influence, eager to ensure their own agendas receive the proper attention and resources. All this has led to a great deal of spying, backroom deals, and a ceaseless struggle for power and influence.

The Circlet Council is composed of the flotilla's most influential members, and is the hub for much of this activity. There, wider disagreements are distilled down to the will of a handful of individuals, all arguing their position under the watchful eye of Jackel Varonius himself. The Rogue Trader claims such struggles serve as a proving ground where the best ideas and sharpest minds rise to the surface. The wisdom of this remains to be seen, and it is unclear if Varonius knows the true extent of the political machinations at work.

CONTACTS AND ALLIANCES

Whilst engaging with the cloaks and daggers of flotilla life, Agents might wish to maintain their relationships with planetbound contacts and their alliances with factions elsewhere in the Gilead System. Some characters might even find themselves bound by obligation to report regularly back to their superiors, such as Adeptus Mechanicus characters far from their Forge World. It can benefit the campaign's continuity if the characters have tools with which to maintain contact during their travels. Unfortunately, there is only one Imperially sanctioned means of interplanetary communication, and that is the school of Psyker known as the Astropath. Each ship on the flotilla is likely to possess at least one Astropath amongst their number.

Due to the perils of warp activity and the high value of any trained psyker, captains closely safeguard their Astropaths. Astropaths rarely, if ever, have the freedom to wander where they please. As such, gaining access to the services of an Astropath within the flotilla is a costly endeavour. Additionally, there is always the chance that a warp event may corrupt the communications, resulting in misleading or incorrect messages that can hurl unwitting characters into intrigue or danger.

WHO'S WHO

Even reduced in size, the Varonis Flotilla contains a multitude of important or influential people. A handful of these have the influence to advance their agendas in meaningful ways, and there are many opportunities to draw the Agents into their machinations.



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EYRSIC TONDAR

MINISTORUM DEACON

Captain of the *Prerogative*

Appearance

Deacon Tondar is a sallow man, tall and gaunt with an intimidating manner. He seems to be all edges and corners. His voice is hollow and tinged with a subtle urgency. The deacon often emphasises his words with a grasp of his long, supple fingers, which are as cold and unpleasant to the touch as bare bone.

Goals/Agenda

The deacon has long been compromised by Slaanesh, the Chaos god of indulgence, and burns with the passion to bring more into the demonic fold. Hunger dominates his every waking moment, and he uses

his influence to stage lavish dinner parties at which he seeds corruption in his fellow nobles and officers. During his tenure aboard the *Prerogative*, Tondar has already gathered a corps of trustworthy cultists to his cause, and his web of influence grows more tangled with each passing day. Eventually, Tondar plans to seize control of and destroy the food supply aboard the *Sunless Garden*, dooming the flotilla and consigning their souls to the Lord of Excess.

Quirks/Secrets

Tondar has been falling further and further into depravity in recent nights. Of late, he has begun to satiate his endless hunger with cannibalism. So far, the victims are only his fellow cultists. However, his eye wanders to the quiet corners of other ships, where culinary rarities such as passing xenos might disappear unnoticed.



SIDRIAN ICARROS

PRIMARIS LIEUTENANT

Captain of the *Recommitment*

Appearance

Clad in battle-scarred Primaris armour and bedecked with an imposing variety of lethal weaponry no matter the occasion, Sidrian Icarros is an exemplar of military might and Astartes zeal. Scars criss-cross his hardened face, each a reminder of another battle that failed to end his life.

Goals/Agenda

Captain of the *Recommitment*, Icarros' charge is to deliver the strike cruiser to reinforce Gilead's Absolvers chapter. This is a great honour, though one that has been somewhat marred by the chapter's refusal to properly integrate the Primaris Space Marines that

came with him. Some might say the Lieutenant has completed his duty admirably, especially given the danger of navigating the *Cicatrix Maledictum*. Icarros would disagree. He believes that until his Primaris brethren are fully integrated into the chapter's forces in Gilead, his oath to 'reinforce Gilead's Absolvers' has not been fulfilled.

Quirks/Secrets

Icarros has come to bitterly resent the current de facto head of the Absolvers chapter, Brevet Captain Akahir. The newly elevated Brevet Captain has refused to explain to Icarros why the rites and secrets of the Absolvers remain the purview only of the firstborn. In Icarros's view, Akahir's leadership is damaging to the Absolvers, who desperately require reinforcement. Though he is a loyal Space Marine and would not act against his commanders, he considered tasking a team to investigate the fate of the former Chapter Master.

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MARA OLGIMSKY

OFFICER

Chief Quartermaster of the *Ducal Circlet*

Appearance

Officer Mara Olgimsky is a serious woman, and the numerous medals and honours that bedeck her uniform speak of a storied career. On the occasions that her serious manner breaks, she is capable of a grim and unsettling laughter that echoes through the ship corridors and leaves most feeling vaguely unwell.

Goals/Agenda

Olgimsky is a longstanding officer of the Imperial Navy, seconded to serve with the Varonius Dynasty many decades ago in line with one of the Rogue Trader's intricate and extremely profitable deals. As quartermaster, she controls a good portion of the fleets supplies, and has picked up something of

her commander's business acumen. As such, she is dedicated with cutting costs and reducing expenses — it is joked that she would sell the flagship for parts if she thought it would improve the Rogue Trader's fiscal projections. Olgimsky despises such 'unnecessary' expenses as mercenaries, and must often be convinced of their necessity before signing off on important missions. As a result she has amassed a great deal of personal power, and not a small amount of ill-will — facts that she is slowly becoming aware of.

Quirks/Secrets

The decades long deal that saw Olgimsky assigned to the Rogue Trader's service is coming to an end, and she would like nothing more than to somehow leave the *Navis Imperialis* and join his retinue on a permanent basis. Unfortunately her writ of service is far from complete, and the formerly incorruptible officer is considering using her considerable influence to somehow join the Rogue Trader's retinue indefinitely.



XI-99

MAGOS ERRANT

Blepharaoh Tech-Priest

Appearance

Like so many of their creed, Xi-99 is a fusion of metal and flesh in the service of the Omnissiah. The Magos skitters along on numerous spider-like legs which fold under and over each other. Red cloth drapes over the Magos' augmetic right arm, which conceals fifty-nine hidden tools and fourteen secret compartments. Aided in breathing by a ventilation implant, the Tech-Priest rasps and rattles about their business.

Goals/Agenda

Whilst the captain of the *Blepharaoh* attends to self-determined 'higher matters', the Magos Errant are ultimately responsible for the continued functioning of the Flotilla. Xi-99 oversees this small but dedicated corps of Tech-Priests, who in turn oversee the

innumerable adepts and servitors who perform day-to-day maintenance and repairs. In particular, the *Ducal Circlet* is something of a weight around the Magos' neck, as key ship systems keep mysteriously breaking down. Many of the known rituals to revive these machine spirits are failing for unknown reasons. Growing desperate, Xi-99 is always searching for Forge-World approved schematics, rituals, and unguents to apply to the ship, in the grim hope that one of them shows lasting results.

Quirks/Secrets

The months spent researching a means to repair the *Ducal Circlet's* failing systems has seen the Tech-Priest grow in knowledge. This breadth of study has caused Xi-99 to come to two conclusions; that humanity has lost more knowledge than most realise, and that forbidden innovations may be the only way to recover this information. Most would see this as heresy, but Xi-99 is growing certain that innovation and discovery are the true desire of the Omnissiah.

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GLAUCIA

PRIMARIS PSYKER

Sanctioned Psyker assigned to *Straken's Workhorse*

Appearance

Glaucia is an intimidating presence wherever she ventures, the obvious marks of her status and her incredible aura of power unsettling all but the most strong-willed. She is bald, her iris-less eyes appearing blind to the casual observer, though this has not impacted her ability to see. Despite this her features are not unkind, and in unguarded moments she has been known to laugh along at the ribald jokes of the common soldiers.

Goals/Agenda

Glaucia is a Primaris Psyker, a sanctioned psyker of incredible power. She serves the Astra Militarum as a living weapon, unleashing her powers on the enemies of the Imperium during battle, and relying on her training and indoctrination — and the threat

of a commissar's bullet — to resist the corruption of the Warp. Since arriving in Gilead she has watched the better part of the troops who accompanied her be sent to their deaths in countless battles, and has become convinced that someone is purposely weakening the forces of the Varonius Flotilla. She is determined to discover who is responsible, and destroy them. Such investigations are far beyond her remit, however, and undertaking them openly would only draw suspicion to her. She is in search of useful proxies to look into this matter for her.

Quirks/Secrets

Glaucia has begun to hear voices in her sleep — not unusual for a Psyker, but in this case the voice claims to be the Emperor himself. Though wary of the Warp and its seductions, the voice has so far only provided Glaucia with sound advice and encouragement, so she cannot entirely discount its claim. Unfortunately for the Psyker, the voice in fact belongs to a Daemon, Illusak the Proclaimer, who is intent on using her as a gateway into the Gilead system.



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JESSIAEL THORN

CANONESS

Captain of the *Julyanna's Homecoming*

Appearance

Clad in the raiment of a Sister of Battle, Jessiael Thorn glows with conviction and certainty. From the reflective gleam of the sacred Chaplet Ecclesiasticus to her highly polished armoured boots, she seems almost impossibly pristine, and entirely unshakeable.

Goals/Agenda

A force to be reckoned with, Sister Thorn brims with luminous ideas about how to improve the lives of the Gilead System's people. She has authored a 200-step plan to bring the light of the Emperor to the people, though her plans are dangerously progressive and

in some cases stand in direct contradiction to current canon law. While she respects the raw power of the Adeptus Astartes, she privately believes that the Adeptus Ministorum is better positioned to free the Gilead System from hardship and its innumerable enemies. After all, was it not one of their own who first shook the system loose from the grip of heresy?

Quirks/Secrets

Many of Sister Thorn's proposals have caused worried enmity among the upper echelons of Enoch. Not to be deterred and far from the light of Terra, Sister Thorn has deluded herself into thinking that these tensions will be soon forgotten once everyone sees how her notions improve life in the Gilead System and make it a greater asset to the Imperium. In fact, forces within the Eclissarcy have already made a note of her intentions, and have plans of their own to end them — and her.





SHIPS OF THE FLEET



The Varonius Flotilla can be imagined as its own system-in-miniature. Every voidship houses its own unique community, her crew as culturally distinct as the inhabitants of each Gilead Heartworld. But just as each planet relies upon trade and communication with the rest of the Gilead System to survive, the fate of each voidship is bound to the fortunes of the flotilla as a whole. None understand this better than Jakel Varonius, who labours tirelessly to keep apprised of the situation aboard every vessel in his fleet.

When the Varonius Flotilla was first mustered, it was entirely self-sufficient. Titanic forge tenders such as *The Blepharaoh* (page 23) mined refined promethium to keep the fleet fuelled, whilst hydroponic agri-vessels like *The Sunless Garden* (page 25) produced enough nutrient slurry to satisfy the crew of every ship. Soldiers from the Imperium's many military organisations protected this valuable cargo: Astra

Militarum Guardsmen, Sisters of Battle, Skitarii forge guards, and the legendary Adeptus Astartes of the Ultima Founding. Thus the flotilla was prepared not just to endure the ordeal of crossing the Great Rift, but to bring salvation to the Gilead System upon its arrival. In practice, the damage suffered navigating the Straits of Andraste proved so extensive that the fleet's vaunted self-sufficiency has been fatally compromised (see *W&G*, page 297). Many lynchpin ships were lost in the Warp, abandoned due to irreversible corruption, or severely damaged. Now the Varonius Flotilla and Gilead System are locked in a dependent dance of doom — neither can survive without the other.

Life aboard the Varonius Flotilla is quite different from that experienced by most Imperial citizens. Admittedly, the average Navy rating spends their life performing monotonous acts of ceaseless toil; not unlike the mind-numbing, back-breaking labour familiar to hive

manufacturers or forge workers. But whilst the work is exhausting, and the danger of death in vacuum is omnipresent, few voidborn Imperials would choose to return to life planetside, if offered the choice. Aboard a Navy vessel, the opportunity to sail to distant stars and behold bizarre celestial phenomena is the closest thing to freedom an Imperial citizen can hope to experience in their lifetime. The truly exceptional might even catch the Varonius Dynasty's eye with their skills, rising in station far beyond their lowly origins, and enjoying the profits of their new status.

The Varonius Flotilla's ultimate purpose is a matter of conflicting perspectives. To the handful of Adeptus Custodes aboard *The Recommitment* (page 20), it is a Torchbearer fleet, tasked by the resurrected Roboute Guilliman, Primarch of the Ultramarines and author of the Codex Astartes, to deliver new Primaris Astartes to the stranded Absolvers chapter. The missionaries of *Julyanna's Homecoming* (page 21) view the voyage as a holy crusade, charged with rebuilding the Gilead System as a bastion to defy the rising tide of Chaos.

Some of the Varonius Dynasty's scions view the flotilla merely as a profit-making venture, its incalculable risks surely offset by the legendary rewards at stake. Whatever was intended, the arrival of the Varonius Flotilla has rescued the Gilead System from a backslide into anarchy and annihilation. New soldiers hold the line against resurgent threats and new foes, whilst an influx of raw materials provides the Heartworlds with the resources they need to craft a future beyond the Noctis Aeterna. Hope is the greatest gift the flotilla brought the Gilead System. Its presence proves the Imperium still perseveres beyond the Great Rift, and the God-Emperor has not forsaken them.

This revival of faith is how Jakel Varonius talked his way into the position of de-facto ruler of the Gilead Sector, despite the seething resentment of Lord-Militant Taleria Fylamon and the other sovereigns. To secure his position, the Rogue Trader's flagship *Ducal Circlet* (page 17) serves as the meeting place of the Circlet Council, where faction leaders meet to coordinate their efforts to save their system. Their number includes: Navigator Lady Octavia Ecedes Omincara, Canoness Jeanne Grace d'Emysa of the Sanctified Shield, Brevet Captain Akahir of the Absolvers Chapter of the Adeptus Astartes), and Inquisitor Tytrona Dikaisune of the Ordo Malleus, as well as Varonius himself.

The Heartworlds' rulers have a standing invite to the Circlet Council, but many keep the body at arm's length, suspicious that the flotilla intends to supplant their power base.

The ships listed below are only a sample of the many vessels that comprise the Varonius Flotilla, demonstrating the variety of factions in its ranks, and the animosities they cultivate with one another.

DUCAL CIRCLET

Ship Class: *Exorcist*-class Grand Cruiser

Fleet Role: The Varonius Dynasty's flagship

Captain: Rogue Trader Jakel Varonius

Ducal Circlet is the flotilla's flagship — pride of the Varonius Dynasty — and de-facto capital of the Gilead System's provisional government. To set foot about the vessel is to walk the corridors of power, and be overawed by the scale of history, prosperity, and political influence. Ancient when the Gilead System was young, the cruiser has aged magnificently over the millennia, thanks to the substantial resources the Varonius Dynasty has invested in upgrades and maintenance. Every Varonius knows the state of *Ducal Circlet* is emblematic of the dynasty's fortunes — and no expense has been spared to leave a lasting impression.

As Jakel Varonius's personal transport, *Ducal Circlet* crossed many sectors of Imperial space before arriving in the Gilead System, and has souvenirs to show for it. The impressive range is proudly displayed in the ship's opulent arched hallways of its upper decks: a fortune in jewels, glorious paintings, elaborate statuary, and animal skin rugs. . Even the mid-levels are lined with frescoes of the dynasty's earliest victories, sporadically dusted by brush-armed Servo-Skulls. Priceless pieces of archeotech, bartered or looted from far-flung human cultures, are secured in stasis vaults and weapon caches, awaiting a warrior sufficiently prestigious to be awarded their use. The crew are an eclectic bunch, for Varonius prizes individual excellence over uniformity, much to the dismay of the ship's Commissariat. This credo explains the occasional presence of Aeldari, Jokaero, Kroot, and even Orks amongst the ship's personnel — out of sight from those who would dare judge the Rogue Trader's methods.



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Varonius's flagship is the customary meeting place of the Circlet Council, de-facto government of the fleet and the Gilead System. It comprises the local commanders of the Adeptus Astartes, Adepta Sororitas, Inquisitorial Ordos, and Navis Nobilite, with a standing invite to the Heartworlds' sovereign rulers. In practice, most representatives seldom have the opportunity to attend the council in person, so *Ducal Circlet's* council chamber is equipped with an advanced suite of holo-projectors that transmit crackling simulacra of the virtual attendees. Proximity to the Gilead society's upper echelons is an invaluable resource, and many powerful people pay good money for updates on the

Circlet Councillors' activities, especially Varonius. A shadow war of intelligence and intrigue runs rampant across *Ducal Circlet*, and half the crew serve two or more masters.

Ducal Circlet is a *Exorcist*-class cruiser, once a long-range patrol vessel now repurposed and capable of devastating any other ship in the system with its searing plasma macrobatteries. For all her inspiring might, the *Ducal Circlet* is also a ship with a dark reputation, rumoured to have been found abandoned and adrift millenia ago. The dynasty scoffs at rumours of a 'curse' upon their flagship, instructing the crew to ignore such outlandish superstitions.

More often than not, *Ducal Circlet* can be found docked in Avachrus's orbital ring, an army of Tech Adepts and Servitors still labouring to repair the substantial functional and cosmetic damage sustained during her flight through the Cicatrix Maledictum. When Varonius must journey elsewhere, he does so in style, never allowing his flagship to travel without a fleet escort. Whilst this show of force helps bolster his reputation, it also limits his ability to attend to sensitive matters in person. Of late, he has become reliant on small teams of trusted operatives to take care of such incidents.

HOUSE OMINCARA

Every ship in the Varonius Flotilla employs the service of a Navigator. These stable Mutants are trained from birth to perceive the Immaterium's currents with their third eyes, guiding each ship through the dangers of Warp travel. Crossing the Great Rift taxed the abilities of these Navigators to impossible extremes, and not all survived with their sanity intact. Most ships in Torchbearer fleets are fortunate enough to travel with a back-up Navigator, who could theoretically steer a ship home if they were foolhardy enough to attempt another Great Rift crossing.

Aboard *Ducal Circlet*, Novator Octavia Omincara serves as the flotilla's pre-eminent Navigator, from the privacy of her Sanctum Navis. Though *Andraste* was the first ship to cross the Great Rift, it was Lady Octavia's course and charting that made their journey successful. Now she conspires in secret to leverage her newfound renown to the advantage of Navigator House Omincara. (For more details on Octavia Omincara, see *Forsaken System Player's Guide*, page 72.)



ANDRASTE

Ship Class: *Sword*-class frigate

Fleet Role: Forward-scout and exploratory vessel

Captain: Flag-Captain Uma Bhandari

'The Straits of Andraste' is the precious, stable route through the Great Rift. It was named to honour the first Imperial ship to enter the Gilead System navigated by the Varonius Flotilla from beyond the Dark Imperium. *Andraste* has always been at the forefront of the Varonius Dynasty's pioneering voyages, an exploratory vessel tasked with scouting new opportunities for profit. When the flotilla first mustered to penetrate the Cicatrix Maledictum, there was no question which vessel would form the fleet's scout and vanguard.

Andraste is a far younger ship than *Ducal Circlet*, boasting only a single millennium of service. But in that time, she has undergone countless trials that would have doomed lesser ships. Whether running Chaos blockades, plundering ancient Tomb Worlds, or gathering intelligence from active Tyranid Hive Fleets, *Andraste* has scraped by with the tenacity of a true underdog. The *Sword*-class frigate is lightly armed but richly equipped, with a top-of-the-line augur array for planetary surveying, and overcharged plasma drives for bursts of incredible speed. Her crew cherish their reputation for daring actions, with more squeamish naval officers considering a posting to the vessel a death sentence.

Yet, it seems *Andraste's* years of adventure are behind her. As the first ship to cross the Great Rift, *Andraste* has become symbolic of an enduring Imperium, a reminder that Gilead's lost citizens have not been abandoned by The Emperor. If any misfortune befell *Andraste*, morale would take a hit system-wide, and with Gilead's political stability precarious already, Varonius is not willing to take that risk. *Andraste* has been placed on permanent reserve duty, instructed to keep a distance from active warzones, with no return to active service scheduled. Many idle crews become restless, breeding ill-discipline, or even abandon their posts, eager to get back into the action sooner. *Andraste's* captain, Uma Bhandari, invites explorers and other trailblazers aboard *Andraste*, despatching them on missions of discovery so she can relive her ship's glory days vicariously.

Amongst the many grievances nursed by *Andraste's* crew are their ongoing instructions to host a cadre from the Sisters of Silence. These warrior-pariahs train as dedicated witch hunters, observing vows to never speak again as proof of their devotion. Since boarding *Andraste* as the vessel departed Holy Terra, they have kept to themselves within the ship's hallowed battle-monastery. Few aboard *Andraste* realise the Sisters' anti-psyhic field may be the only reason they survived the journey across the Great Rift largely uncorrupted. Even Varonius himself has only recently become aware of their presence.



THE NODEEL ANOMALY

In the lightless abyss of deep space, far beyond the charted routes of Gilead subspace traffic, a Warp rift has been discovered. It's a small deviation, miniscule compared to the galaxy-spanning divide of the Cicatrix Maledictum, but in Captain Bhandari's mind it is no less worthy of examination. Perhaps this gate is the means by which Death Guard plague fleets appeared in orbit of Vulkaris. Prolonged study may even reveal another way in and out of the system, restoring Gilead's connection to the Imperium.

If the Agents have the will to examine this relatively far-away disturbance, Bhandari will happily sponsor them to help obtain the necessary materiel and specialists. A voyage this long will push any ship to its technical limits, without any hope of rescue if systems fail or supplies run out. If the expedition suffers a setback, the Agents' crew might mutiny against them, for few fates spook them as readily as the prospect of being marooned in deep space. And that's before the ship draws close enough to experience the reality-distorting effects of the Nodeel Anomaly, and whispers begin to converse with each sailor individually.



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THE RECOMMITMENT

Ship Class: Astartes Strike Cruiser

Fleet Role: Primaris interstellar transport and planetary invasion craft

Captain: Primaris Lieutenant Sidrian Icarros

The newest warship in the Absolvers' arsenal undertook its maiden voyage in the journey from Terra to Gilead mere years ago, bolstering a Chapter in desperate need of reinforcement. For all the power of *The Recommitment's* formidable bombardment cannon and weapon batteries, its true strength lies with the hundred new warriors residing in the Strike Cruiser's spartan quarters. These Primaris Space Marines are the next stage in the Emperor's vision for a genetically-uplifted version of humanity, towering over even Firstborn Astartes. The Absolvers could hope for no mightier warriors to take up the arms of their Chapter.

And yet, these new Primaris brethren have still to be fully received into the ancient rites of the Chapter. Distrustful of the certain claims made by Jakel Varonius, and without the wisdom or leadership of Chapter Command, the Absolvers were initially reluctant to accept these new warriors. The recent intervention by three Custodian Guards aboard *The Recommitment*, legendary bodyguards who have not left the surface of Holy Terra in ten thousand years, has done much to assuage their distrust.

For now, what remains of the Absolvers command structure works to delicately balance the guarding of the Chapters' ancient secrets with the arrival of their new Primaris brothers. So far they have allowed the newcomers to wear the heraldry of Absolvers and undertake their first oaths as members of the Chapter. It is hoped that in undertaking these traditional rites of passage, bonds will eventually be formed in the heat of combat between Firstborn and Primaris Absolvers.

In the meantime, the Primaris Absolvers operate out of *The Recommitment*, building goodwill with Imperial Adepta by despatching individual warriors to support teams of operatives. Though Varonius is grateful to have such supreme warriors at his side, they are not subject to his direct commands, and fall outside



of the flotilla's command structure. Small numbers of Astartes from other Chapters are also hosted aboard the Strike Cruiser, grateful for access to its armoury, firing ranges, and apothecarium. These individuals are a mix of errant warriors stranded from their Chapter by the Great Rift's emergence, and chosen emissaries despatched to the Gilead System with their own specific assignments. Their presence is not enough to prevent *The Recommitment's* interior from feeling sterile and unwelcoming. For a ship of her size, she is sparsely populated, mostly by Servitors, crew, and an insular lodge of dedicated Chapter serfs. The sense of community typically found in the lower decks of Imperial warships is mostly absent from *The Recommitment's* cold, white corridors.

What culture exists aboard *The Recommitment* revolves around the Oath Hall. This circular chapel is sized for Primaris Marines, and filled with relics from legendary battles of bygone eras. Here, the Absolvers of *The Recommitment*, witnessed by their battle-brothers and The Emperor, pledge dire oaths to fulfil missions and quests beyond the capability of mere mortals. The Absolvers are famed for these unbreakable vows, and the hallowed texts stored within the Oath Hall chronicle hundreds of covenants that, to the Chapter's shame, have yet to be fulfilled since the deaths of their pledgers. There is no surer way to earn the respect of the Absolvers than to help resolve these unfulfilled vows — at least, their new Primaris brethren hope that's the case.

THE LOST CHAPTER COMMAND

One hundred years ago, the senior leadership of the Absolvers Chapter — their Chapter master, captains, and most 1st Company veterans — were all recalled to the Chapter's homeworld. No one is sure what event required such concentration of the Chapter's great and good, but it is believed the Absolvers had finally discovered the origin of their Chapter's gene-seed. Unfortunately, before the company captains could return to their battle companions and reveal this lost knowledge, the Great Rift split the Imperium in two. The greater part of the Absolvers Chapter, stationed in the Gilead System, were severed entirely from their command cadre. Only recently have the Astartes appointed Brevet Captain Akahir as provisional overseer in their leaders' absence.

Dark omens from the prophecies of Absolver Librarians hint that the Chapter's leaders have met a terrible fate, perhaps lost in the Warp or killed by the rising tide of Chaos. And yet, Jakel Varonius claims to have been called to the Gilead System by a message from the Absolvers' Chapter commanders. Most can only guess the contents of this message, if it even exists, though Brevet Captain Akahir and Primaris Lieutenant Icarros (page 11) are speculated to have heard its warnings. Discovering the truth could be essential to preserve the future of the Absolvers, and the Gilead System.



JULYANNA'S HOMECOMING

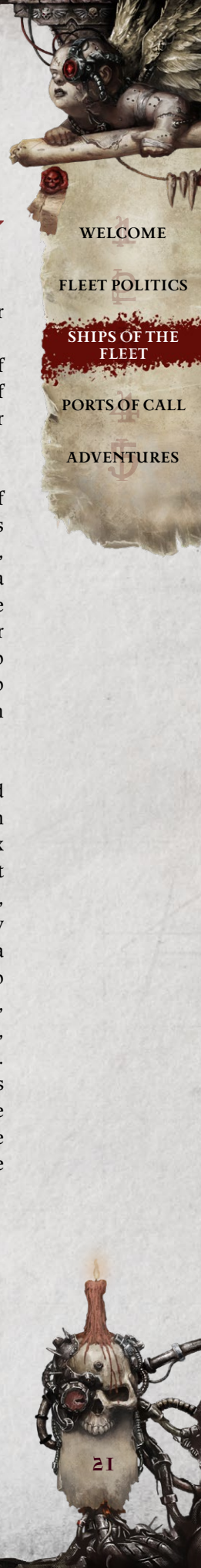
Ship Class: Piety-class light cruiser

Fleet Role: Monastery ship and Sororitas interstellar transport

Captain: Though strictly captained by a member of the Imperial Navy, Sister Superior Jessiael Thorn of the Orders Militant is the true and uncontested power aboard *Julyanna's Homecoming*

The Missionarius Galaxia is the pioneering wing of the Adeptus Ministorum. They deploy missionaries to human cultures beyond the Emperor's light, preaching the creed of the Ecclesiarchy to ease a planet's transition to Imperial rule. Given the nature of their work, they often collaborate with Rogue Trader expeditions outside the Imperium's borders. They also work closely with the Sisters of Battle, ferrying them to new arenas where resistance must be countered with fire and chainsword.

Julyanna's Homecoming's mission is to inspect and reinforce faith in the Cult Imperialis in Gilead, which was, as expected, left floundering from the Cicatrix Maledictum's catastrophic appearance. To that end, it hosts a substantial contingent of Sororitas, preachers, and inspired zealots, collected from the frigate's many voyages along the frontier. The Missionarius Galaxia permits some local variation of the Imperial Cult, to ease the transition of heathens to Imperial worship, and this diversity is reflected in the homeworlds, backgrounds and beliefs of the *Homecoming's* crew. Evangelism is their common trait. Whilst Tech-Priests and stable Mutants are not slighted as they might be on other Ecclesiarchy vessels, they can expect to be hounded by preachers, desperate to show them the Emperor's light.



Julyanna's Homecoming regularly observes religious holidays, broadcasting sermons to the rest of the flotilla through a massive network of vox hailer. On the most sacred occasions, senior officers from all other ships visit the missionary vessel in person. It is a great honour to be attached to one of these delegations, for *Julyanna's Homecoming* is a monument to the Imperium's gothic architecture, richly adorned with black arches, golden skulls, and the wings of cherubim to guide the way.

Julyanna's Homecoming is notorious for taking on a new designation ahead of each mission, and was renamed before journeying to the Gilead System. Arriving in an auspiciously-named vessel, adapted to the culture the crew intend to 'enlighten', helps the missionaries to subvert native superstitions. But the ship's Tech-Priests complain the Machine Spirit responds sluggishly to its new identifier, the side-effect of so many renamings and reclassifications. Lost secrets of old expeditions are buried in the ship's data banks, inaccessible without determined effort to navigate its inconsistent command access protocols.

THE ORDER OF THE SANCTIFIED SHIELD

The Shrine World of Enoch is not just Gilead's Ministorum headquarters, but also home to the main convent of a Sororitas Order. The Order of the Sanctified Shield have safeguarded the system for millennia. Under Canoness Jeanne Grace D'Emysa's — rulership of, their vigil has not relented. Whilst other Orders take up the mantle of crusaders, charging across the galaxy on glorious Wars of Faith, the Sanctified Shield specialises in more defensive warfare. Since the coming of the Great Rift, their conviction to protect the faithful has been tested like never before, and the whole system owes them a debt of thanks.

The Gilead System is stricken with doctrinal dispute. The missionaries of *Julyanna's Homecoming* are determined to enact sweeping Ecclesiastical reforms, purging the corrupt and complacent, and exalting visionaries strong enough to lead through the Noctis Aeterna. Enoch's theocrats, under Archdeacon Merramar Clade, are determined to maintain the status quo, and denounce the reformists as flirting with heresy. In this battle for the system's soul, the Sanctified Shield could be the ultimate kingmakers, much like the Daughters of the Emperor proved to be in the Age of Apostasy. So far, their duty to Enoch slightly outweighs their sympathy for the flotilla, but representatives of either faction could sway their loyalties by offering services to the beleaguered Order.



THE BLEPHARAOH

Ship Class: *Goliath*-class Factory Ship

Fleet Role: Mechanicus factory ship and Skitarii interstellar transport

Captain: Magos Errant Xi-99

The Adeptus Mechanicus' contribution to the Varonius Flotilla is a colossal, space-borne factory. En route, she generated enough fuel from the solar plasma of passing stars to keep the whole fleet flying from Terra to Gilead. Now her manufactora produce voidship components to repair damage sustained crossing the Great Rift and since, for the flotilla's ships. Her vital maintenance and repair facilities are always protected by a squadron of escort craft, though the frigates patrol from a safe distance. If *The Blepharaoh's* defences were ever compromised, the ignition of its plentiful fuel reserves would be cataclysmically explosive.

Trusted operatives pilot massive cargo haulers ferrying material to and from the forge tender, whilst unluckier individuals might be sent for bionic reconstruction. *The Blepharaoh's* growth-vats and cyber-surgeries are famously extensive, with the ship's massive complement of Servitors easily duplicated if another ship requires a bulk order. Demand for Servitor labour is currently so high that the Heartworlds have reclassified minor misdemeanours into heresies. As a result, an increasing number of unfortunates are sent for Servitor conversion. Even Psykers from Charybdion's Ironwatch prison have fallen victim to this trend, a short-term solution to the internment centre's overcrowding fated to have dire ramifications in due course. (For more details see **W&G**, page 54.)

The Blepharaoh's cyber-surgeries are part of the conversion procedure and are known for being particularly eye-watering and painful. *The Blepharaoh's* 'eye-opening' conversion procedure is that all Servitors have their eye-lids removed, a curious and unsettling custom. This procedure ensures that Servitors are easily identified. They are vigilant for defects in their fellow Servitors, swiftly escorting damaged automatons to conversion centres, and sometimes accidentally catching Human crew members in their round-ups.

To avoid this horrifying fate, visitors to *The Blepharaoh* are recommended to suppress emotional responses, blink as little as possible, and enjoy art, love, and laughter only in private.

Every ship in the flotilla requires the expertise of the Tech-Priesthood to function — *The Blepharaoh's* captain Magos Errant Xi-99 strives to ensure the greater part of knowledge gathered on other ships ultimately makes its way back to his vessel. In practice, the priesthood of Mars is as divided by religious schism as its Terran counterpart. An Adeptus Mechanicus agent is as likely to be sent to *The Blepharaoh* to spy or sabotage, as they are to report to a superior.



INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE

The Blepharaoh was not a part of the Varonius Dynasty's operations prior to the Gilead voyage. Many speculate about what payments or promises were made by the dynasty, to secure the Adeptus Mechanicus' backing for this reckless venture. Clearly there is much to interest the Priesthood of Mars within the system: a Forge World, a Knight World, and a Space Hulk overloaded with archeotech. Avachrus's magi suspect these new arrivals intend to steal what does not belong to them, and would prefer to keep their fellow Machine Cultists at arm's length.

Unfortunately, Avachrus's Tech-Priests must also contend with the local rivals' machinations, and cannot afford to turn away potential allies of convenience. So, it is that The Blepharaoh's crew have become enmeshed in the back-and-forth of Mechanicus' power politics. Sometimes they deliberately play one side against the other to keep their operatives on an equal footing. To partake in this secret war exposes an individual to enemies on every side, but the victor gets the spoils. Few organisations are as well-equipped to reward useful assets as the Adeptus Mechanicus' Forge Masters.



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STRAKEN'S WORKHORSE

Ship Class: *Carrack*-class transport

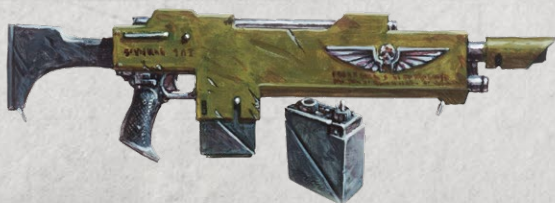
Fleet Role: Astra Militarum interstellar transport and cargo ship

Captain: Zhang Demetra

Straken's Workhorse takes its name from a legendary Catachan commander, 'Iron Hand' Straken, one of many great Astra Militarum leaders the vessel has been honoured to ferry between warzones. Though not the only Imperial Navy troop transport Varonius requisitioned for his voyage, the *Workhorse* was the only one to survive the flight through the Great Rift.

No single Imperial Guard regiment counts the *Workhorse* as its base of operations. Varonius formed his army from a patchwork confederation of displaced platoons and companies, plucked from across the galaxy, and press-ganged for the Gilead campaign. The Commissariat instils discipline in these unfortunate soldiers by having them eat, sleep, train, and battle together, the better to integrate their individual combat specialties. Now trapped in the Dark Imperium, these soldiers will never return to their regiments or their homeworlds again. *Straken's Workhorse* is their home now, albeit one they share with the ratings of the Imperial Navy, whom the Militarum Troopers regard with open animosity.

In addition to transporting human resources, *Straken's Workhorse* is a stockpile of war materiel: rations, weapons, ammunition, and heavy armour. When resources run low, Captain Zhang Demetra relies upon influential mediators to secure what she needs from the Heartworlds. Departmento Munitorum quartermasters undertake the thankless task of managing this inventory, but 'misplaced' containers slip through the cracks all the time.



Straken's Workhorse's lower decks are infamous for their flourishing black market. Everything has a price, but favours are traded as often as coin.

The *Workhorse's* warriors once constituted a fearsome fighting force, but that time has passed. In her capacity as Lord-Militant of the Gilead System, Taleria Fylamon demands constant reinforcements for her endless wars of conquest. By requisitioning one squad at a time, she has frittered away the *Workhorse's* strength, likely as a deliberate strategy to undermine her political rival Varonius. The remaining troops aboard *Straken's Workhorse* cling to hopeful rumblings of glory in a patron's service, lest they be the next sacrificial lambs fed to one of Gilead's many meat grinders.



THE DEPARTMENTO MUNITORUM

As the Adeptus Administratum conducts civilian logistics, the sub-division known as the Departmento Munitorum conducts the logistics of war. Prefects of the organisation hold court upon *Straken's Workhorse*, monitoring the readiness of all the flotilla's military assets. Though Varonius finds their bureaucratic methods stifling, he also considers them a useful and entertaining weapon to unleash upon political enemies. Merely the threat of enduring the droning, legalistic pedantry of the Munitorum's logisters can compel obedience from resistant vassals.

Recently, the Munitorum has clashed with the Sortium of Ostia, a collective of Administratum hierarchs unused to oversight from the wider Imperium. The Munitorum's efforts to requisition food rations for deployment to the front lines have provoked outcry from the Sortium, who insist all decisions about the distribution of supplies should fall under their sole remit. As the true power-brokers like Varonius and Fylamon seem disinterested in resolving such trivial disputes, the Administratum's warring adepts are taking matters into their own hands, by hiring teams of agents to enact covert operations against rivals.

THE SUNLESS GARDEN

Ship Class: *Universe*-class mass conveyor

Fleet Role: Manufacture and processing of food

Captain: Commander Avery Bastroni

However efficiently *The Blepharaoh* manages the upkeep of the flotilla's ships, she cannot produce the food and water necessary to sustain their Human crews. For that, the fleet relies upon *The Sunless Garden*, a *Universe*-class transport vessel used to supply the crews of dozens of smaller vessels with nutrition. Though Adeptus Mechanicus support is a recent boon to the dynasty, *The Sunless Garden* has been the Varonius family's prize for millennia — facilitating deep space exploration and mining operations beyond the limits of conventional supply chains.

With *The Blepharaoh* and *The Sunless Garden* working in concert, the flotilla can theoretically survive for centuries without ever docking at an Imperial world or naval fortress. In practice, the damage those ships sustained crossing the Great Rift have left the flotilla reliant on supplementary imports from the Heartworlds. Some officers even prefer those imports, having grown tired of the *Garden's* fare over long years of service.

Growing crops on an industrial scale without rain, soil, or sunlight requires some degree of creativity from the *Garden's* crew of agri-serfs. Ghoulish refugees from low-light worlds farm enormous swathes of nutritional fungi in the ships lowest levels, manageable in complete darkness and tended in crypt-like complexes. Other nutrition is supplied by harvesting algae from great vats of seawater gathered from ocean worlds.

A handful of Piscid populate these vats, rare delicacies that are reserved for officers and scions of the Varonius dynasty alone. Other ancient and arcane techniques are used to create a variety of bland and tasteless foods, and on one level known from its stench a handful of Grox are reared and slaughtered, their produce again reserved only for the elite.

Since arriving in the Gilead System, *The Sunless Garden* has been stationed in semi-permanent orbit around Enoch, her efforts to feed the starving masses of desperate pilgrims little more than a drop in the ocean. It's an ignoble posting, and Avery Bastroni, the ship's captain, is keen to reverse their fortunes.

Bastroni believes they are being punished, after their previous position managing a dynasty frontier colony ended in failure and desperate evacuation. If a team of well-informed operatives were to help Bastroni into a position of greater influence, they would surely benefit from the commander's goodwill, generosity, and especially his discretion going forward.



RATION RAIDS

With the Sortium contesting every food order from Ostia, rations are in increasingly short supply. Few have suffered as much, at least in their view, as the nobles of Gilead Primus. Their indulgent receptions have decreased in frequency, very much to their indignation. One aristocrat, Fabian Berneyl, has taken matters into his own hands.

Berneyl has used his status to gain access to information on shipping routes and times, and is passing this information to a crew of Greensteel Corsairs willing to ignore the truce and raid flotilla ships. The Corsairs take everything of value and pass along a portion of the food to Berneyl, who is using it to curry favour and build alliances with other Noble houses.

Varonius wants the thefts stopped immediately, and his pleas to the Greensteel Corsairs have gone unheeded. He sent the last ship with a detachment of Voidsmen-at-Arms, but they proved insufficient. He'd like the Agents to escort the next cargo, and additionally to investigate who might be leaking information to the Corsairs.



WELCOME

FLEET POLITICS

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THE PREROGATIVE

Ship Class: *Iconoclast*-class destroyer

Fleet Role: Varonius Dynasty general purpose voidship

Captain: Luric Millner (Though Ministorum Deacon Erysic Tondar wields true power)

The dynasty's oldest servants report *The Prerogative* is where Jakel spent much of his adolescence, learning on the job how the family conducted its operations. By necessity, the dynasty's children are never raised on *Ducal Circlet*, to prevent the destruction of one ship extinguishing the family's present and future. It is said Varonius's daughter, next to inherit his Warrant of Trade, is now sheltered and educated upon *The Prerogative* as her father was. Though the Rogue Trader keeps her outside of public view, scholastic experts are sometimes redeployed to *The Prerogative* and offered extraordinary rewards to tutor the precocious scion in their fields of expertise.



The Prerogative is built upon a chassis class more commonly encountered amongst renegade warbands than contemporary Imperial fleets. An ancient design known for its reliability and simplicity of operation, it makes a suitable vessel for novice crew, and the perfect starting point for naval officers-in-training. Varonius intends for these young commanders to become his heir's court and advisory council, and tests them as diligently as his daughter. All this goes on beneath Deacon Erysic Tondar's watchful eye (see page 10), who has taken a personal interest in the young heir's ascension.

Hidden training areas provide elaborate simulations of close combat, firefights, void battles, exacting negotiations, and encounters with xenos creatures. Any warrior in the Rogue Trader's favour would benefit from a crash course in these essential skills courtesy of *The Prerogative's* facilities. The tireless captain Millner ensures her crew is always ready to spring into action to show off their extensive training.



THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

The Varonius Dynasty dedicates the treasures they win to the glory of the God-Emperor, but many amongst *The Prerogative's* crew exalt the divinity of darker powers. Their cult includes the ship's captain, Erysic Tondar, a Gorger Cultist who prays to Slaanesh with each ravenous bite taken from his ship's selection of luxury cuisine.

Far from the scrutiny of Imperial authorities, cults of every Chaos God have flourished within *The Prerogative*. For now they are content to act in secret, infiltrating the rest of the flotilla, and quietly indulging their sinful passions. But the omens all agree a time of reckoning is soon at hand, when the devoted of Chaos must rise up, and reclaim the Gilead System from the Imperial lapdogs. Dedicated Agents who help to sow the seeds of rebellion will be rewarded with a leading role in the first wave of the uprising. From there, the Path to Glory is only just beginning.

THE HERALD VARONIUS

Ship Class: *Sword-class frigate*

Fleet Role: Convoy escort

Captain: Captain Marcellin Galba

The Herald of Varonius was once a mere escort ship, deployed throughout the flotilla as a shield for more valuable transports. Ostensibly part of the same squadron as *Andraste*, *The Herald* was commonly tasked with the protection of support ships like *Straken's Workhorse* and *The Sunless Garden*. At the Battle of Azlefar, she earned a more prestigious role by guarding the flank of *Ducal Circlet*, helping the cruiser to navigate a broadside bombardment that might have otherwise doomed her. For this feat, she was permitted to take the dynasty's name as her own, and trusted with the delivery of instructions too sensitive to transmit by vox or astro telepathy.

When Varonius wants a prospective trading partner awed and intimidated, he hosts them aboard *Ducal Circlet* — but when he wants them comfortable and pampered, he hosts them aboard *The Herald Varonius*. The ship has only modest trading and military capabilities, for she has been furnished entirely as a monument to the dynasty's success. Her luxury facilities include bath houses, sensory fulfilment

chambers, an army of serving staff, and a fortified wine cellar housing priceless vintages from Agri worlds now lost forever to the Imperium. Only a family as prosperous as Varonius could afford such extravagant indulgences, and even they might be forced to make compromises in due course.

For more information on the *Herald of Varonius*, see the accompanying adventure *Traitor's Canticle*.

THE BILGE

In stark contrast to the relative luxury that *The Herald* presents to those the dynasty wishes to woo, it houses an embarrassing secret. Long ago, an entire deck of the ship became widely uninhabitable due to a sudden and inexplicable series of technical faults. Atmospherics, heat, power — a dozen systems seemed to fail all at once, and no effort could repair them. Rather than deal with this problem, the then head of the Varonius Dynasty ordered the deck isolated, power and other systems routed around it, and all record of the deck struck from the ship's logs.

The result is what has become known among the crew as *The Bilge*, an entire deck of uninhabitable corridors and rooms, many flooded with radiation, toxic sludge, and other environmental hazards. What is unknown to all, including captain Marcellin Galba, is that hundreds of crewmembers were also sealed into the deck.



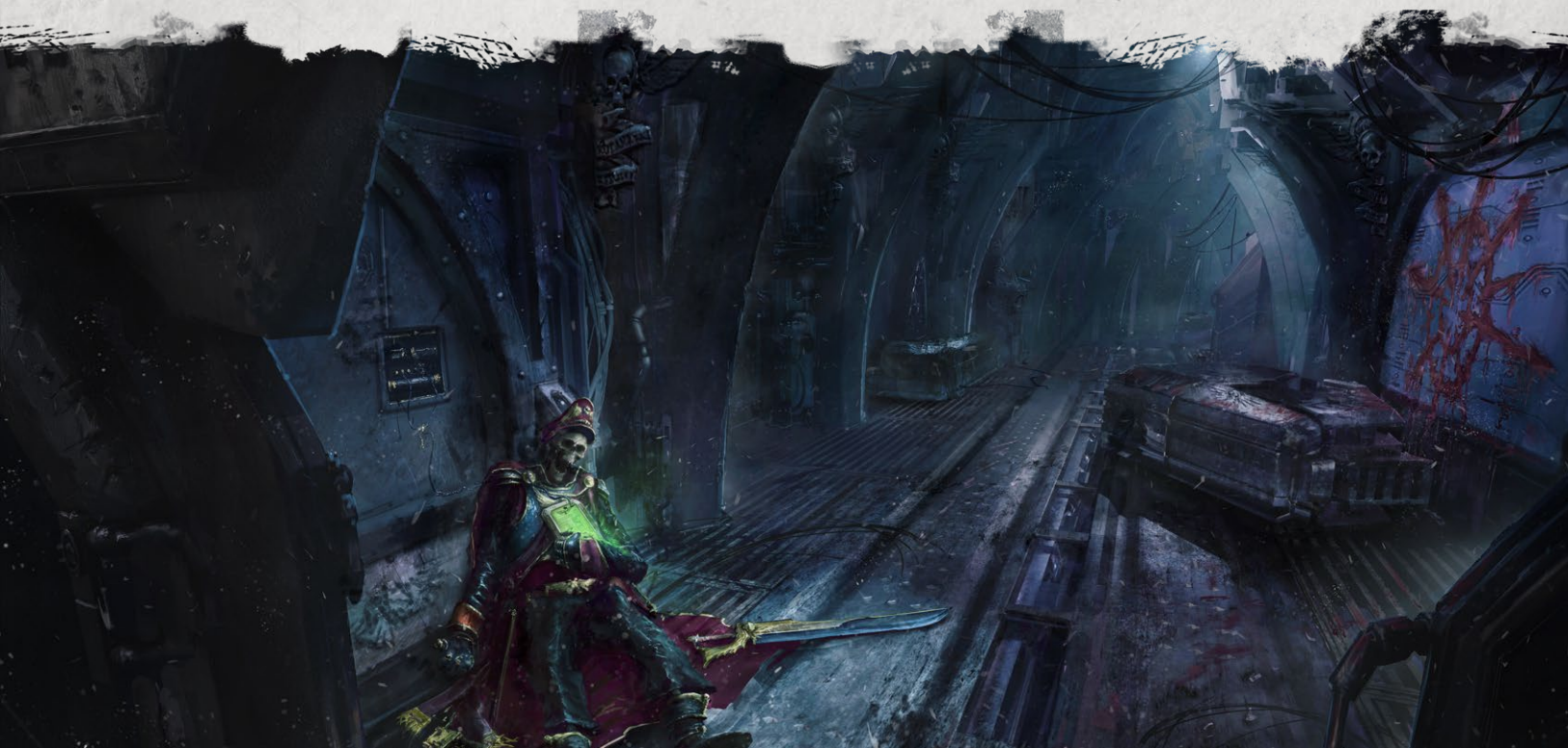
WELCOME

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It has been many generations since this occurred, and the descendants of the original crew still occupy the deck, though as they have explored and modified the Bilge their isolation has become a choice rather than a necessity.

**‘THEY LOCKED US IN
HERE, THINKING THEY
HAD MADE A PRISON, A
TOMB. WHAT THEY MADE
WAS A CRADLE, AND WE
HAVE SWELLED TO FILL IT.’**

—UNKNOWN CULTIST OF FAUSTER A’AN

Survival in the Bilge has necessitated many horrors, even by the already low standards on most void ships, and the denizens of the Bilge have turned to the worship of several dark powers, chief among them being Nurgle, whom they refer to as ‘The Wanton Wastrel.’ They believe that the Wastrel is a figure of largess who will eventually deliver them from the Bilge, spreading its disease and toxicity to the entire ship. Should the true state of the Bilge be discovered, especially after the events of the *The Traitor’s Hymn*, it is possible that the entire ship will be scuttled and destroyed after all — unless it can be dealt with decisively and, most importantly, quietly.

THE SCYTEL TRANSFER FLEET

Ship Class: Mix of Arvus Lighters, Aquila Landers, and other transport craft

Fleet Role: Ship-to-ship and ship-to-surface transportation

Most crew of an Imperial ship never leave its confines — unless forced to do so by emergency evacuation, but the Varonius Flotilla was conceived as a caravan of mutually-supporting vessels, and transport between them is not uncommon. The surplus materials of one ship are vital resources to another, and a small armada of sub-Warp freight and passenger craft are required to make these crucial deliveries on schedule. Since arriving in the Gilead System, their work is even more important, as they also ferry dignitaries between moons and planets. The cruiser officers coined the phrase ‘Scytel’ as a term of disrespect for their darting runs between vessels, but the shuttle pilots have reclaimed the label as a badge of honour.

Imperial Navy convention is for every shuttle to be assigned to a specific warship. When a shuttle completes its deliveries, it returns to the hangar of that vessel, which is responsible for repairing and refitting the transport for its next flight. Varonius has organised The Scytel Transfer Fleet differently.

Any shuttle bearing the dynasty's mark is cleared to dock in any flotilla ship or Gilead spaceport, and obliged to receive maintenance as though it was requested by the Rogue Trader himself.

Varonius uses this special dispensation to tie the flotilla into a unified coalition, and expand his sphere of influence by using shuttle pilots as informants. The arrangement also makes it extremely difficult to catch vessels if they go rogue, as has happened more than once since arriving in the system.

Shipments from the Varonius Flotilla often carry goods and passengers of significant value, and they are frequently attacked by pirates, heretics, and Aeldari Corsairs. Despite these dangers, the position of shuttle pilot is one of the most eagerly sought in the flotilla. Behind the controls of their transports, they enjoy a relative freedom most other Imperial citizens could only dream of. To earn a flight jacket, or win a pilot's service as a personal chauffeur, a warrior must demonstrate exceptional competence in the field, and have the backing of a powerful patron who vouches for them.

PLANETARY SURVEYS

When a Varonius ship arrives in a new system, it is common practice for Explorator teams to be despatched by shuttlecraft, loaded with sophisticated auspexes and trackers. The purpose of these surveys is to identify unexploited resources in the system, which the dynasty can recover to maximise profit. Even inhabited systems are not exempted from these colonisation efforts, however much they are resented by the locals.

Varonius's surveys have already turned up promising leads in the Gilead System, from archeotech on Avachrus, to minerals on Nethrus. Unfortunately, the Rogue Trader's influence counts for little in the borderland territories, and many of these survey teams have come under fire, and have been forced to attempt crash-landings as a result. If a company of Agents is not deployed to complete a planetary survey themselves, they might be sent to recover a team of surveyors, whose transport was downed in suspicious circumstances.



SURVEY SORROWS

When the Varonius Flotilla first arrived in Gilead, several survey teams were dispatched to various asteroids which appeared unusual to long range Auspex arrays. Most of these were natural anomalies, while a few were infested with Orks have been marked for purgation as soon as resources are available to do so.

One, however, resists investigation. A large asteroid dubbed simply G-OJI-14 by the fleet, it has swallowed three separate survey teams. After the third team went dark, and a rumoured but officially denied Macrocannon strike had no effect, the asteroid was dubbed 'The Deathrock', and no further teams dispatched.

Unfortunately, the asteroid has begun to show signs of life – or at least propulsion. It has begun to move of its own accord, slowly changing its eons old orbit and falling toward the centre of the system. Despite previous losses, the Agents are despatched as a fourth and final survey team. They are to determine the nature of the asteroid, and either disable it or destroy it.





PORTS OF CALL



The Gilead System is rife with peril, from natural disasters to opportunists taking advantage of its remote and isolated location. As well as being overpopulated with a shortage of food and goods, these factors and more leave the system ripe for corruption and thick with desperation and greed. Each Heartworld is full to bursting with Imperial citizens, some clawing their way through life in order to survive; others determined to keep a stranglehold on any wealth and privilege they've conspired to accumulate.

Each world within the Gilead System boasts numerous ports, the better to import and export the necessary goods for survival (and the luxuries for those of appropriate rank), and the Varonius Flotilla has access to them all. Of course, some ports hold more risks than others, but for a savvy or well-connected fleet officer — the higher the risk, the higher the reward. The Varonius Flotilla's various ships all have different regular stopping points, the better to conduct business and trade in service of the Imperium.



AVACHRUS
++FORGEWORLD++



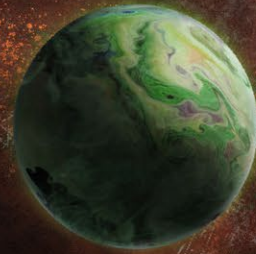
GILEAD PRIMUS
++HIVEWORLD++



OSTIA
++AGRIWORLD++



ENOCH
++SHRINEWORLD++



VULKARIS
++QUARANTINED++



TROILUS
++DEADWORLD++

THE GILEAD SYSTEM

The worlds of the Gilead System have stood for millennia as a beacon of Imperial order, located in the coreward region near the border of the Segmentum Solar and the Segmentum Obscurus. The numerous habitable planets and moons of the system were discovered by an Adeptus Mechanicus Explorator fleet. Heretics and corrupted Astartes had infested the halcyon system, and so the Imperium launched a war against the traitors to claim what was rightfully the Emperor's territory.



CHARYBDION
++HIVEWORLD++



NETHREUS
++KNIGHTWORLD++



NETHREUS

+++Knight World+++

Nethreus is a tectonic nightmare of a world. Volcanoes spit fire and ash into the sky with unrelenting fury and earthquakes ripple across the broken surface of the second planet from the Gilead star. Temperatures burn hot, but humanity survives on the surface of this hostile rock. Megafauna fly, stalk, and burrow across Nethreus like nightmare beasts risen from the mythologies of Old Earth.

This planet was gifted to the Knight House Acasta, a noble family that can trace its lineage back through the millenia and charged with operating the enormous walking engines of war known as a Knight Suit. Though powerful weapons of war, the Knight Suits are almost all deployed to defend Imperial bastions on Nethreus from the grotesque native creatures and hellish xenos invaders.

ASHBREAKER PEAK (NETHREUS)

Ashbreaker Peak sits within the large caldera of a now-extinct volcano. The port fills the entire basin floor, the buildings flowing up the steeply-sloping sides of the bowl-shaped hollow, capped by a massive transparent dome to shield the port from the harsh conditions and constantly-falling ash. The dome is crafted from an impervious crystalline material discovered within the walls of the caldera, and is the main reason the port has endured so long on Nethreus' hostile surface. The extraction process was long, arduous, and left the extinct volcano walls riddled with holes and caverns of all shapes and sizes. The largest tunnels are patrolled by a pair of Knight Gallants in service of House Vesperia of the Acastan league. Their soot black chassis bear the icon of a blue dome that marks them as protectors of Ashbreaker Peak, and they use the tunnels to quickly respond to megafauna attacks.

Despite the many protections in place, Ashbreaker Peak contends with Nethreus's unpredictable tectonic activity, and the aggressive megafauna that prowl the volcanic wastes outside the dome and that lie beneath the surface of the hostile world. In the caldera walls massive tunnels have been constructed through

now-cold lava tubes in order to access the striking port via ground travel, a mostly safe method of traversing from nearby dominions — though it's not unusual for one or more of the tunnels to be closed at any one time because of megafauna infestation, a sudden influx of toxic gases, or a collapse due to earthquakes.

Even with the threats and risks that are a constant part of life on Nethreus, Ashbreaker Peak's Upper Rim provides some of the greatest luxuries to be found outside the Knight Households. The further down the slope, the more densely populated and poorer the area becomes, with the common rabble and scum packed cheek by jowl in The Lee: the lowest point of the caldera floor, and the most depraved as a result of its location. A centre spire rises nearly to the apex of the dome itself, where Port Master Vesperia and her retinue reside, along with any distinguished guests.

Ships from the Varonius Flotilla stop at Ashbreaker Peak in order to restock their food supplies. Rogue Trader Jakel Varonius often sends out hunting bands to bring down megafauna to supply the ships with fresh meat. Politics is Jakel's other primary interest in Ashbreaker Peak; he spends much of his time planetside with Port Master Vesperia, robustly debating political affairs and maintaining a relationship based on mutual respect and competitive jousting

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

While there are a multitude of shops, homes, and hovels within Ashbreaker Peak, the Flotilla crew have a few favourites.

THE SPIRE

Home to Imperium nobility and high-ranking members, including Port Master Vesperia of the Acastan League, the Spire is an anomaly in its placement at the centre of Ashbreaker Peak. Located in the centre of the basin, the base of the towering structure is surrounded on all sides by the poorest workers and most desperate of the port's citizens.

Those who live within the Spire itself are so far removed from the desperation below, they need never lay eyes on those beneath them. Made of gleaming ceramite, the Spire features soaring buttresses, elaborate stained glass, and heavy fortifications. The only way to access the centre spire is by personal craft, so several landing platforms circle the spire at various heights, preventing Port Master Vesperia from having to contend with the teeming masses below any time she wishes to leave or return to the Spire.

Inside, the Spire's rooms are richly appointed, providing a perfect setting for entertaining. Vesperia enjoys a constant flow of high falutin guests and earnest business partners keen on expanding their interests on and off world. Jakel Varonius a regular guest. He makes it a point to visit his old friend for dinner when he is in port, though more often than not he lodges in the Spire until his business is concluded.

THE GILTED GASTRONORIUM

Situated on the Upper Rim, the Gilded Gastronorium is a combination of gourmet butcher and expensive restaurant, catering to Ashbreaker Peak's elite. Run by Damariss Mathesius, the Gastronorium employs a number of bold megafauna hunters, and enjoys the regular patronage of the Port Master, meaning they get the first go at anything brought down by the Knights of House Acasta in the nearby areas.

It provides meat to those in the Upper Rim, and sends the cheapest cuts to its sister establishments in the basin's lower neighbourhoods. Needless to say, any citizens who manage to bring down one of Nethreus's massive beasts can quickly find their fortunes changed for the better if they can smuggle meat to Damariss.



With only five tables, dining at the Gastronomorium is a privilege reserved for the few who have the wealth and influence to secure a reservation. Chefs and cooks in service to the elite create a constant whirlwind of traffic through the Gastronomorium's back door, particularly on days when megafauna have been felled nearby.

While the majority of the meat is sold out the back door, Damariss reserves the finest cuts for herself, and charges astronomical prices for the dishes served. Her most popular menu item is a spiced and steamed segment of the massive *Ferrocuta*, a gigantic millipede-like creature with a nearly-impenetrable carapace. Each segment is large enough to feed a table of 30, but Damariss serves spoonful-sized bites of the tender and succulent meat to her dine-in customers at a premium.

Damariss also provides Jakel with her choicest cuts when he's in town, though he often enjoys them in the company of the Port Master. A visit to The Gilded Gastronomorium often nets members of the Flotilla a delicious meal (though typically only Jakel and a handful of his highest-ranking officers warrant a seat within the restaurant itself, if he desires it), and gives agents access to nobles and — sometimes far more useful — their servants. Gossip abounds at the exclusive restaurant's back door, as servants and cooks jockey for their chance at the day's offerings.

If you have access to **Redacted Records**, members of the The Epicurean Society are known to frequent *The Gilded Gastronomorium*.

THE LEE

Set within the shadow of the central spire, the Lee is home to Ashbreaker Peak's most desperate and impoverished citizens. Tents, shacks, and huts are constructed one atop another here, creating a dizzying array of passageways, hive-homes, and hovels — in many cases, you can only enter one structure by passing through several others first.

Disease, famine, and corruption run rampant through the Lee's homes, and cults rise and fall here with a startling regularity preying on residents' despair, hunger and thirst. The Lee's residents maintain a certain pride in their resilience, especially their ability to weather the ash storms and general hardships, and are suspicious of any newcomers.

CONTACTS, ALLIES, ANTAGONISTS

The Varonius Flotilla has a number of known allies, antagonists, and contacts within Ashbreaker Peak.

PORT MASTER VESPERIA OF THE ACASTAN LEAGUE

Young but nonetheless politically savvy, Port Master Vesperia oversees Ashbreaker Peak from her position at the top of the Spire. Born and raised on Nethreus, she has seen her fair share of megafauna and volcanoes, active, dormant and extinct. She neither blanches nor shivers at the sight of danger, preferring to face it head on. But she's not a fool to run head-long into unnecessary battles. Vesperia seeks her glory, and the Imperium's glory, within the battlefields of careful negotiations and political intrigue.

It is with this goal in mind that she has made a firm ally of Jakel Varonius. When Jakel first began courting the attentions of King Vilmaar, Vesperia was quick to extend her own invitation to the Rogue Trader, fervently wining and dining him with little regard for others' perceptions. While Jakel enjoys the luxuries that his acquaintance with the Port Master provides, he enjoys and respects her shrewd mind and erudite discussion. She holds the entirety of the Varonius Flotilla in high regard, though she may find individual agents distasteful. Along with good food and comfort, Vesperia offers Jakel a link to the other nobles and Barons of House Acasta who aren't directly connected to the King.

DAMARISS MATHESIUS

The Gastronomorium's proprietor and head butcher, Damariss Mathesius enjoys the luxuries of the Upper Rim provided to her by the opportunities she's carved out for herself. With little else on Nethreus to eat other than worldroot, the opportunity to butcher and cook fresh (or mostly fresh) megafauna meat is a privilege few have. With a charming demeanour and a cut-throat business sense, Damariss has a number of incredibly loyal poachers, thugs, and racketeers under her employ that help her maintain her station and the constant supply of fresh meat. Having risen from obscurity, she clings to what she has earned, and refuses to let prosperity make her soft.

Whilst she likes Jakel, she maintains caution and keeps an eye out for when things go sour with him and the Gilead System's many powers. She has heard rumours that his authority is not as absolute as he claims. With these rumours in mind, she has no desire to end up on the wrong side of history when his empire crumbles to dust.

ARDENT THRESH

While Jakel and the Flotilla have many allies, they have an equal amount of enemies. Ardent Thresh is one such individual, a famed and accomplished Knight Pilot who hides his venom behind a smile. A House Acasta noble, Ardent watched Vesperia fawn over Jakel Varonius's arrival and was disgusted by their affectionate display. He feels she is no longer fit for her position, but blames Jakel and his 'false Writ' for the diminishing of a once-great woman. While Thresh makes no obvious moves against the Flotilla or its leader, he does what he can through toxic whispers, causing his contacts and agents within Ashbreaker Peak to stonewall any Flotilla agents when they can. Ardent's reach winds all the way down to the Lee, where his people have people who know people within the ramshackle neighbourhood, all looking to gain the favour of a member of House Acasta.

Ardent believes Jakel's Writ to be false, and has heard of how the Rogue Trader employs xenos and cavorts will all types of scum. Ardent believes it's only a matter of time until Jakel is brought low, and hopes the Rogue Trader doesn't bring the rest of the Gilead System down with him.

THREATS

No world within the Gilead System is free from dangers, but Nethreus is a harsh mistress. The land and very air itself are deadly, and the creatures that inhabit the dominions and the ash-strewn wilds beyond the walls are even worse.

MEGAFAUNA

Nethreus's megafauna don't often come too close to Ashbreaker Peak, but when they do, their arrival stirs the majority of the city to action. Without the fortifications of a typical Dominion, it is often up to the independent mercenary bands to take up arms and defend the port. Such megafauna attacks are terrifying, but also an advantage for a citizen to make a name for themselves—if they survive.

GENESTEALERS

The Lee's poverty and population density is the ideal location for Genestealer Neophyte Hybrids to blend in, and a pack of Acolyte Hybrids could easily lair deep within the maze of hovels and hunt without immediately drawing too much attention to themselves.

NETHREAN XENOPHOBIA

Nethreus's people are insular and suspicious of outsiders, even more so than those on the Gilead System's other worlds. Even in a port city such as Ashbreaker Peak, those who were born on the heartworld are often outright hostile to offworlders. Such attitudes make things complicated for Jakel and his fleet, as most of them are not even from the system.



WELCOME

FLEET POLITICS

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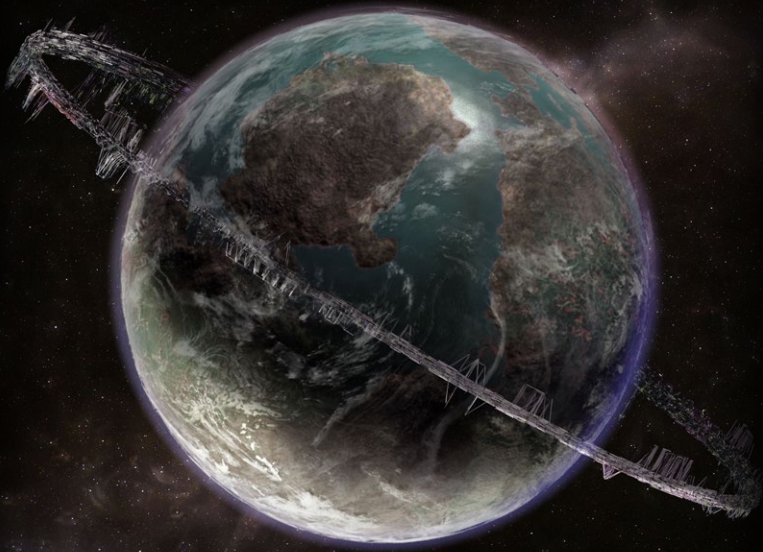
ADVENTURES



NETHREAN ADVENTURES

- ☠ One of the main tunnels to Ashbreaker Peak is infested with megafauna, impeding the transfer of a shipment from a Dominion. The creatures need to be cleared out.
- ☠ One of the nearby Dominions suddenly went dark, and King Vilmaar wants a demonstration of Varonius's might and cunning. Varonius has sent the characters to investigate and rectify the issue, if possible.
- ☠ Rumours are flying that a new, promising material has been found near Ashbreaker Peak. Some say it is another mineral deposit used to create the port city's dome; others whisper that it's a metal stronger than any used by the Imperium. If the Flotilla could verify the veracity of the rumours, and secure the site for themselves, it would put them in a truly advantageous position.





OSTIA

+++Agri World+++

A verdant green jewel in the void, the abundant surface of Ostia is given over entirely to farmland, capable of producing tonnes of edible goods per day. Varied biomes provide bountiful crops and stunning vistas, but the majority of the uneducated population have little time to enjoy them, as Ostia is ruled by the ruthless efficiency of the Administratum who ensure that no moment the populace could be labouring to provide food for their betters is wasted.

THE GREAT LIFT (OSTIA)

Situated upon the equator of this lush, green Agri-World is a massive spire of ancient technology linking to a vast geo-stationary platform that serves at the main point of departure for most of Ostia's produce. A central cable of thick plas-fibre, anchored at the planetside ground station, extends for kilometres into the atmosphere and terminates at a city-sized spaceport held in low-level orbit with the aid of countless antiquated thrusters.

Twenty smaller cords of plas-fibre circle the centre cable, serving as lifts to and from the station. Shipments of produce are loaded onto lifts, which then ascend the cords to the port itself and are loaded onto ships bound for Gilead Primus and the rest of the system under the watchful eyes of countless Administratum scribes and overseers. The view from the station is breathtaking. - Just barely on the edge of space, the Great Lift hovers within Ostia's mesosphere, offering an incredible view of the verdant planet sprawled below and the orbiting space stations and docked vessels above.

The Great Lift is divided into four main portions: the Roots, the Bole, the Boughs and the Heavens. The Roots are located at the base of the space station, for the primary unloading and transferring of goods. The Bole is where the main trading occurs and passengers unload. The majority of the locals live in the upper level of the Boughs, just below the Heavens. Visiting dignitaries are housed in the Heavens, for short- and long-term stays.

While it is technically part of a Heartworld, the Great Lift is isolated within Ostia's atmosphere. While there are many other space stations, satellites, and orbital batteries within eyeshot of the Great Lift, and there is a constant stream of vessels docking and departing, the void of space beyond the station creates a strange, disconnected feeling in many of the Great Lift's residents — especially those living in the Heavens, with an unimpeded view of the stars.

Varonius Flotilla agents are often sent to the Great Lift to maintain Jakel's contacts there. As Ostia is the main source of fresh food for the entire Gilead System, the Rogue Trader wishes to maintain a presence that, if not constant, reminds those in power of his influence and his ability to aid those who aid him in return.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

A space station the size of a city holds many nooks and crannies to be explored, though it is heavily patrolled, and as controlled as any such station can be — which is not much.

THE CENTRAL MARKETS

Within the narrow corridors of the Bole, the Central Markets are where the majority of the Great Lift's barter and trade occurs, both legal and illicit. The majority of goods sold here are produce of one type or another, fresh from the fields and orchards of Ostia. Since the Sortium maintains tight control over the rationing of Ostia's produce, what fruits, vegetables, and grains can be found here are sold at a premium, most of it rotting or smuggled out of a shipment bound off-world. Inflated prices, unscrupulous merchants, and shady back-alley deals are commonplace here.

SMUGGLING DENS

Ostia produces a veritable bounty of plants. Fruits, vegetables, grains, greens — the assortment of goods is as wide and varied as the imagination. By long standing decree, these are all rendered into a bland, nutrient rich powder for distribution throughout the Gilead system.

However, several smuggling networks exist which specialise in syphoning off unrendered fruit, vegetables and meat. These highly prized luxuries are then distributed throughout the system, fetching exorbitant prices from those who cannot access them through legitimate channels.

In the past, copious bribes and often ancient agreements allowed these smuggling rings to operate almost openly. This is no longer true, as the general lack of food in the system has meant that every shipment is now carefully watched. The inefficiencies of smuggled produce have caused the practice to be upgraded from nuisance to capital crime, and as a result the smugglers have become far more careful — and far more ruthless.

Ostian smuggling dens have become a hive of illicit activities, with the smugglers expanding their operations into other areas, always attempting to keep one step ahead of the authorities.

If the Agents require an inroad into Ostia's criminal underworld, then a smuggling den is just the place to find one. This is not without its perils however, for the dens also host a slowly growing Slaaneshi Cult known as The Serpent's Flesh (see page 38 for more)

CONTACTS, ALLIES, ANTAGONISTS

Inhabitants of the Great Lift generally fall into three categories: dock workers, merchants, or overseers. Dock workers labour away for long hours, loading and unloading the lift cables and transferring produce and goods from the lifts to the markets and the ships. Working the docks is hard, backbreaking work, but has a much longer life-expectancy than those working factories or mines on other worlds. Merchants enjoy less menial labour, but face the constant struggle of keeping their stores and booths well-stocked, turning a profit, *and* paying off the racketeers that make their rounds regularly. The overseers live in the Heavens and the upper Boughs, and rarely need to leave their comfortable surroundings.

OVERSEER NARCISO URSINIUS

Bitter, petty, and cruel, Narciso Urinius is the Administratum Overseer of the Great Lift. In charge of every soul, ship, and product that moves within the station, he lives within the Heavens, taking the primest shares of produce for himself and his fellow bureaucrats. He is not a fan of Jakel Varonius or his Flotilla, as he sees the Rogue Trader's arrival as a disruption to the status quo, and views Varonius as a scheming opportunist. In truth, Ursinius sees Varonius's nigh-unlimited authority as a threat to his own power. He awaits the sacred day Varonius falls out of favour with bated breath. Thus far, he does not have the courage to deny Jakel access to the Great Lift, but he does everything he can to make the Rogue Trader's time on his station difficult, throwing every inch of red tape and every possible bureaucratic complication in Varonius's path. Varonius tends to send Agents to the Great Lift to handle any Flotilla business rather than make the trip himself — and the more subtle the Agents can be, the better.



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OCTAVIAN

A grey mouse of a man with an innocent demeanour, Octavian lurks about the markets and Smuggling Dens in the Great Lift's Bole. Technically a minor official of the Administratrum tasked with duties of oversight and inspection, in truth Octavian acts as a spy for the Sortium. The control the ruling body of Ostia exercises over its people is far from absolute, and agents like Octavian are not uncommon.

He sends reports back to his masters on the growing influence of various cults, on the simmering dissatisfaction with the Tech-Priests and their servitor-run farms, and on the fear that cuts to food rations will lead to starvation. The Sortium is not Octavian's only master, however. He has taken to selling the secrets he gathers to supplement his own meagre allotment of resources, passing sensitive information to criminals and heretics to acquire luxuries normally reserved for those far above his station. He has extensive dealings with Dowager Peregrina, though he is not above doing business with anyone.

DOWAGER PEREGRINA

Dowager Peregrina is the owner and operator of one of Ostia's largest ring of smuggling dens. A delightful conversationalist and a shrewd opportunist, she delights in displaying her own wealth and good fortune for all to see. She has no compunctions or guilt about her business ventures, and claims she's offering the Gilead System's starving citizens a kindness — never mind that a smuggled grox flank fetches more than the average worker would make in a year.

She adores Jakel Varonius, as his presence in the system and enforcement of Imperial decree, has driven up demand for her products. Dowager Peregrina has crafted a small empire by trading not only in Ostium, but in information, and has dirt on nearly every official on the station, some of whom are her clients.

THREATS

The Great Lift faces threats of all sorts, both from the world below and from within the station itself.

CORRUPTION

Grandfather Nurgle has had his eye on Ostia for some time. How could he not? Such a pristine, green world is clearly in need of Nurgle's blessing. Meanwhile, Slaanesh loiters in the debauchery of the smuggling dens, the excessive indulgence of their patrons a tantalising morsel.

CRIMINAL FACTIONS

Though Dowager Peregrina has a hold on much of the Great Lift's underworld, rival gangs often rise and fall, convinced that they will be the ones to unseat her. They often do not last long, but occasionally one will make enough trouble that Dowager Peregrina must take decisive action. These wars are often waged in the Great Lift's back alleys and tunnels, away from the eyes of the general populace, but they can destabilise the station for weeks. If a faction *were* to finally topple Dowager Peregrina's smuggling ring, it is likely that an even more ruthless operator would quickly replace her.



OSTIAN ADVENTURES

- ☠ Some of Ostia's fields have been afflicted with a strange rot that no one can cure. The most recent shipment of produce made it up to the top of the Great Lift before it was discovered to be putrid... it's unclear how such noxious food made it past so many checkpoints, and anyone who came into direct contact with the produce immediately fell ill with a bizarre fungal disease.
- ☠ A cult of Slaanesh, The Serpent's Flesh, has been slowly growing in the eateries that operate out of Dowagers Peregrina's smuggling dens. The Dowager has become suspicious of them and would like them investigated, though no doubt she underestimates the threat they represent. The cult sees the Great Lift as the means by which many luxuries leave Ostia, and therefore an abhorrent thing. They intend to destroy it, and have foreseen that in its death throes the great expanse of writing technology will resemble a great serpent shedding its flesh. They hope to rebuild Ostia in their own image, and care not at all about the devastation the destruction of the lift would cause.

ENOCH

+++Shrine World+++

Claimed by the Ecclesiarchy during the Gilead Crusade, Enoch was transformed by the Imperial Cult from an impoverished, heretic planet to a shining beacon of faith in the Emperor. Land suitable for building has been covered in skyscraping cathedrals, and the very cliffs of the land have been carved into colossal likenesses of saints.

As the centre of worship in the Gilead System, Enoch is a wealthy world, frequently a major destination for pilgrimage. The priests trained here have powerful say over local politics.



PORT OF TITHES (ENOCH)

A smaller port on the surface of Enoch, the Port of Tithes serves as an isolated, fortified citadel of Enoch's nobles. A transfer point between strongholds, as well as a stepping stone to off-world locations, the Port of Tithes is a veritable bastion of law and order — or so it seems. The slums that surround this stronghold are wide and sprawling, and fester with starving citizens as well as heretics, cannibals, and sinister cults. Teeming with unrest, the populace constantly pushes against the defences of this stronghold, and if it were to fall, the Port of Tithes would be an ideal springboard to the rest of the Gilead System.

Cathedral-like spires pierce the air within the Port of Tithes, with gothic arches and wide, proud thoroughfares extending out from the central bastion like spokes of a great wheel. Enforcers constantly prowl the streets and watch the skies, ever-alert for threats against the stronghold from desperate scum. The priests and nobles that live within the port pray daily for the Imperium's glory and the lives of the faithful outside their walls, while enjoying the safety afforded to them by their station.

Set on a smaller continent on Enoch's equatorial region, the Port of Tithes is surrounded on all sides by vast and arid desert. The sand is not visible for a great distance, however, for the press of refugees and their tent cities is so dense. In the distance, far to the east, the glimmer of the ocean can be seen, as well as the shadows of the native fisherfolk's fortified cities.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

SPIRE OF LIGHT AND THE GOD EMPEROR'S SHRINE

One of the tallest spires within the Port of Tithes, the Spire of Light is called so because it is the first point the sun hits when it rises every morning. Seen as an omen and a sign of the God Emperor's blessing, nobles vie for chambers within the Spire of Light, and a massive shrine to the Emperor himself has been erected in the top-most floor attended to and kept brilliantly polished by the Ecclesiarchal servitors stationed within.

The nobles strive to outdo each other to show their piety, most presenting themselves for supplication before the shrine once a day, while the more devoted visit several times during the daylight hours. It is not unsurprising to find politicking happening within the massive chamber, nobles coming together to form clusters of alliances before breaking apart to liaise with another group entirely.



THE BINDERY

Within the Port of Tithes is a rare and wonderful thing: a book bindery. Ecclesiarchal scribes work day and night to copy the words of the God Emperor onto pages made of bleached and pressed reeds, binding them in a shimmering leather made from the skin and scales of the fish caught within Enoch's oceans, then carefully embossing, engraving, illuminating, and gilding each manuscript until each one is a unique work of art. Occasionally, a particularly powerful noble will pay to have their own book scribed and bound to their own exacting specifications. Any such noble is sure to earn the jealousy, admiration, and ire of their peers.

CARALISA'S KITCHEN

In the refugee shanty town, and in the shadow of the Port of Tithes, Caralisa's Kitchen appears to be little more than a collection of pots boiling beneath a roof of fabric and other reclaimed scraps. It functions as a Ministorum-sanctioned slop house, providing sustenance to a tiny fraction of the endless starving pilgrims that throng the Shrine world. The only reason Caralisa's kitchen has not been overrun is the unusually coordinated group of muscled thugs who stand guard. They keep away trouble makers, admit only as many as the kitchen can handle, and all seem to bear some kind of subtle familial resemblance. Caralisa serves up her passable fare with a smile, and those who gain her favour and usually receive preferential treatment — and a quiet sermon on the proprietor's own unusual interpretation of the Imperial Creed.

CONTACTS, ALLIES, ANTAGONISTS

CARALISA

The organiser of what has become known as Caralisa's Kitchen, Caralisa claims to be a pilgrim who became stranded upon Enoch when the Gilead System was violently cut off from the rest of the universe. In fact, she arrived on Enoch from Gilead Primus, smuggled there to spread the word of the Emperor Larval, a secretive cult that claims the Emperor will soon arise from the Golden Throne, remade and ready to descend from the stars and reform the entire Imperium. Caralisa and her kin are Genestealer cultists, their blood corrupted by Xenos taint, and intent on overthrowing the current order in Gilead.

However, they truly believe their faith will lead to a better life for all the system's citizens, and use Caralisa's kitchen as a recruiting ground for new worshipers. Given the desperation and fomenting unrest on Enoch, this has proven a very fruitful endeavour. indeed.

GRAND LIGAETOR LUKIAN

Those who lay eyes on Lukian at first assume him to be a military man. Broad shoulders, thick arms, and a stout physique mark him for battle or physical labour. To say they are all shocked to learn Lukian is a bookbinder is not overstating the fact.



Lukian began as a scribe as a boy, and has, over time, worked his way upward to the position of Head Binder. His age is only betrayed by the dusting of grey at his temples and the glasses he wears perched on the end of his nose when he works. Lukian takes great pride in his work, and the work of all the scribes and binders beneath him, his heart lit with fervent passion both for the art of book binding and the God Emperor's words that he knows by heart just as well, if not better, than any preacher of the Ecclesiarchy.

It is through this fervency, paired with the respect and awe at his years of service, that make his books so rare and valuable. Each and every tome that Grand Ligaetor Lukian handles are imprinted with his passions, emotions, and zealotry and the resulting book imparts powerful emotions and religious fervour upon any who read it.

SISTER GENEVIEVE D'ARMAS

Sister Genevieve D'Armas is a member of Orders Famulous of the Adepta Sororitas. She is ostensibly in the Port of Tithes to act as an advisor to and liaison between the noble families who live within the city's walls. Sister D'Armas's primary goal is, unsurprisingly, discovering and destroying any heresy before it can take root. Recently, she has taken the daughter of one of these noble houses within the Port of Tithes under her protection as a potential novice. She suspects the girl's parents to be heretics, and her true motivation for this arrangement was to remove the girl from their influence and keep her in the Emperor's light. Sister D'Armas has not yet moved against the girl's parents, but it's only a matter of time before she confirms her suspicions — something that the Agents might be able to assist her with.

THREATS

Perhaps more so than any other Heartworld, Enoch thrums with overpopulation and desperation. When the Gilead System was cut off from the rest of the universe, Enoch's pilgrims were left stranded. Though Enoch has a source of food — the ocean — that source has become depleted and far more dangerous in recent years, and monstrosities prowl the deep.

UNREST IN THE ENCAMPMENTS

Unsurprisingly, the overabundance of citizens has led to many with no assigned tasks. Though many stay faithful to the Emperor, knowing his light will return one day, many of these citizens turn to more unscrupulous means of survival, determined not to let their fate rest on a salvation that may never arrive. Many, instigated by Caralisa, plot rebellion against the nobles hiding within the Port of Tithes.

TZEENTCH CULTS

Some scum are not satisfied with mundane illegal activities, and fear and desperation leads many astray. Cultists easily infiltrate the tent cities, filling a void left behind when Enoch was cut off from the God Emperor's blessed light. The laity hope, more than anything, for change, and in that hope Tzeentch finds its way in. The Fraternitas Anticipant are the most successful of Tzeentch's cults: they don't know that they've given way to heresy, believing themselves pious. They have a nine-step charter for change, which they advance through manipulation and sabotage.

DAEMONIC INFESTATIONS

The minions of Chaos and disciples of the Dark Gods are everywhere, and Enoch and the Port of Tithes are no exception. These heretical creatures are particularly drawn to Enoch by the opportunity to profane and destroy such a holy place. Intent on preserving a facade of stringent purity and control, the authorities quickly and routinely purge any evidence — or witnesses — of such incursions.

ENOCHIAN ADVENTURES

- A cult of heretics has sprung up in one of the shanty town slums. The characters must root out its cause, and kill its leader before the threat grows and triggers another Night of Tears.
- A member of the Order Pronatus of the Adeptus Sorotitas has arrived in the Port of Tithes. Rumours of a holy relic surfacing elsewhere on Enoch have reached off-world, and she has arrived to find and claim it.



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THE WAYSTATION (THE VOIDMIRE)

Within the disastrous dark of the Voidmire, wreckage of ships drift amidst fragments of broken worlds and shards of xenos cityscapes. One such remnant is the Waystation. Once a void station in orbit around a now-shattered world, the Waystation hovers on the edge of the ebbing tides of the Great Rift. It has been repaired and altered multiple times with scrap found floating in the Voidmire, and is now a patchwork of the original station's construction. Haphazard expansions dot the exterior like jagged growths, giving the entire structure a strange, misshapen appearance.

The Voidmire is claimed by Emerald Princess Ferianwyr, an Aeldari Corsair who has a tenuous truce with the Varonius Flotilla. Her authority over it is anything but absolute, however. Though her Greensteel Warrior Corsairs saw some initial success at purging the Orks who had most recently infested it, the creatures have ceased their infighting and rallied against her forces to retake the station. Only a single level of the massive station remains directly under their control, and even this is uncertain. Ferinwyr has claimed the entire

station will soon be back under Corsair control, but infiltrators sent by the Varonius flotilla are less certain. They report that the Orks have been ripping the station apart to create crude but effective war machines, and are soon likely to launch an overwhelming assault on the Corsair positions.

Despite being a warren of endless tunnels and ceaseless warfare, the Waystation has long been a lure to the brave and foolhardy of Gilead. It is a city sized construction of ultimately unknown origin, much of it cobbled together from non-Imperium or even Xenos components. It dates back at least to the arrival of the Explorator fleet in Gilead in M.31, and was an object of fascination to those Tech-Priests who dared explore it. It is rumoured to contain artefacts from the Dark Age of Technology, some still functioning and capable of wonders that border on tech-heresy. Whether or not this is true is unclear, but occasional emissions of intense energy have been detected from it that so far remain unexplained.

Some sections of the Waystation are relatively compatible with life, air, heat and power provided by a cobbled together mix of machinery than an interested Tech-Priest could spend a lifetime studying. Other areas range from the merely hazardous to the entirely lethal, bathed in intense radiation, coated in toxic sludge, or simply exposed to the void.

Other than the Orks and Corsairs, small enclaves of other factions still hold out deep in the bowels of the station. Some are entirely cut off, while others have endured by carefully avoiding attention. Most would leave in an instant if given the opportunity, but a few have become obsessed with the Waystation and its many secrets.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Within a place such as the Waystation, nearly all locations seem notable. However, a few stand out from the rest.

THE RATWAYS

Travel within the Waystation is tricky and dangerous, even if one can avoid the crossfire between the Orks and Corsairs. Aside from the relatively navigable main corridors, a vast warren of smaller conduits, vents, and maintenance passages exists that offers a modicum of safety when getting around the station. However, these tunnels are far from empty.

As well as the occasional Grot or Snotling, the remnants of many past expeditions to the Waystation make their homes here. As well as mutants and Xenos, a handful of Imperial citizens and their descendants live their entire lives in these twisting passages, which they have named the Ratways. A handful of these have been contacted by spies sent by the Varonius flotilla, and while some have proved nothing but hostile, others have offered assistance in exchange for their eventual evacuation. The Circlet Council has yet to officially consider any of these requests.

DA WORKSHOP

The Ork Mekboyz originally began to gather here out of convenience, littered with scrap and ancient technology ready to be put to use by the raving mad Oddboyz; it was also an abandoned deck... well, mostly abandoned, save for the poor Scum who had been squatting here...

Da Workshop rings out with the sound of steel-shod mallets on metal and rivet guns as the Mekboyz set to work, constructing the unhinged Killa Kans under orders from Gobsmakka while their Grot underling furiously search and loot anything not nailed down. Lately many of the Grots have been complaining of

hearing whispers in the depths of the Waystation, however these concerns are normally met with violent reproach from their overseers.

THE EMERALD DECK

A haughty title for a battle scarred series of docks and hangers, the Emerald Deck is the last remaining bastion of the Aeldari Corsairs under Emerald Princess Ferianwyr's command. The pirates have done what they can with the crumbling infrastructure and décor, but despite a handful of comforts, the deck remains a spartan affair. The sound of Ork gunfire and the shriek of Shuriken weapons is almost constant. The Corsair's last remaining Wraithcannon has so far helped to hold back the Orks, but the defenders don't expect this to last much longer.

CONTACTS, ALLIES, ANTAGONISTS

The Waystation is a dangerous place to explore. Though the Corsairs would welcome almost any assistance, the alliance between the Flotilla and Princess Ferianwyr is hardly robust. Agents who attempt to make contact with anyone in the Waystation should exercise extreme caution, though the desperation of the waystation can make for unusual alliances.

TENELYAN QUICKBLADE

An Aeldari Corsair of the Greensteel Warriors, Tenelyan Quickblade has risen to a position of command by the expedient if brutal method of watching all of her superiors perish in battle with the Orks. She is a competent if unimaginative battlefield commander, and sensibly ordered the withdrawal of her forces to the Emerald Deck before they were completely overrun. There she has organised a solid defence, but one that no one — least of all herself — believes can last for much longer.

Though on the surface Quickblade maintains a stoic demeanour befitting one who almost became an Exarch before abandoning her life on Ul-Khari, she is in truth anything but calm. Despite being in frequent contact with Princess Ferianwyr, Quickblade remains in the dark about why maintaining a presence on the Waystation is necessary. Ferianwyr simply proclaims it to be vital, and so a great deal of Aeldari blood has been spilled to do so.



The Emerald Princess does sometimes ask unusual questions about the station, and a steady stream of samples are sent back to the Corsair fleet, but so far it is unclear if anything of worth has been found. The Princess has suggested that Quickblade send teams to retrieve samples from deeper in the Waystation, but so far Quickblade has declined to do so. Should the queen order her to do so, then the recently elevated corsair leader will have a difficult decision to make. So far, that hasn't happened.

As the situation grows more desperate, so does Quickblade. At this point she would entertain almost any plan to improve the fortunes of the corsairs on the Waystation, even if that involved working with Imperium forces. Certainly they might serve to recover new samples and readings from deeper in the station. Though she judges this far too dangerous a task to risk spilling Aeldari blood to achieve, she has no such compunctions about risking mon-keigh life.



ISENRATH

Isenrath is a human born on the Waystation some time ago — he is unsure exactly how long — but claims that Gilead Primus is his true home. Though he has never visited the hiveworld, at least one of his parents was born there. In his idle moments the greying, pale and chronically malnourished Isenrath speaks longingly of how beautiful a world Gilead Primus must be.

Idle moments are few and far between in the Ratways, however. Isenrath is the leader of a small enclave of humans that make one section of these twisting tunnels their homes. So far they have avoided falling prey to Aeldari, who never had the numbers nor the inclination to properly clear the vast and winding Ratways, or the Orks, who simply haven't found them yet. The group is aware of the ongoing battle for the Waystation and believes that it will soon conclude. Isenrath, incorrectly, assumes the outcome will have little effect on their own squalid existence.

Long isolated in the Waystation, Isenrath's group are suspicious of anyone they don't recognise. Still, Isenrath still keeps to some Imperial practices. He and many of his followers pray to the Emperor, and recognise many Imperial sigils, such as the Aquila. If the Agents wear or present such symbols, Isenrath will be sure to at least hear them out.

Recently Isenrath made contact with one of the spies sent by Varonius to the Waystation, whom he has helped to navigate several remote sections. The old man is delighted to have made contact with the Imperium proper once again, and is certain that he and his enclave will soon be rescued. Unfortunately the spies' orders are merely to conduct surveillance of the Waystation, and did not include any provision for the rescue of its residents. Without someone advocating on their behalf, the group is likely to be abandoned.

WARBOSS GOBSMAKKA

Across the darkened reaches of the Waystation the remaining Orks have united under the Warpole and savage authority of the Warboss known as Gobsmakka. A hulking brute, even by the standards of the Orks he has established himself as the biggest and most brutal of the surviving Orks, accompanied by several broken jaws, earning him his moniker.

Gobsmakka has wasted no time in setting the other Orks to task, larger mobz of Boyz roam the Waystation, attacking and pushing the Aeldari back to the Emerald Deck. While far from sight, Mekboyz and their Grot underlings loot and plunder huge sections of the Waystations depths, these resources being put towards the construction of their crude warmachines.

THREATS

On the Waystation, any ally can become an enemy in the blink of an eye. Even so, there are those who have no desire to maintain the façade of civility, and will just as quickly cut off your hand as shake it.

AELDARI CORSAIRS

The Waystation's Corsairs harbour no love or trust for the Imperium's citizens, or any other creature that may find its way to the Waystation or the Voidmire surrounding it. Regardless of any alliance or arrangement, the Corsairs will quickly turn on anyone if they appear to be withholding information about one of the Waystation's many secrets.

DESPERATE HUMANS

Exceptions aside, most of the Humans who dwell within the Ratways are as far removed from the God Emperor's light as any heretic. Some may be working in service of the Imperium, but most are simply attempting to survive, and a group of well equipped strangers may look like little more than an opportunity to them.

HERETICS

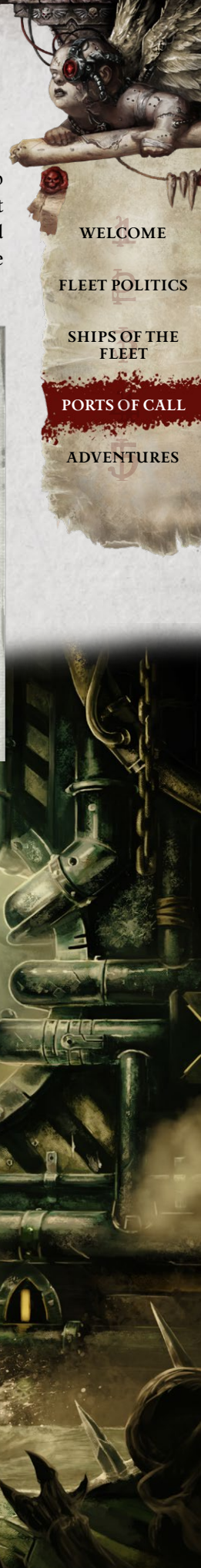
Deep within the Ratways, there is a chamber that is said to be the very centre of the Waystation. There, the stations intermittent artificial gravity is entirely absent. Those who float there for a time find themselves lost to the contemplation of the many distant sounds that filter to them. Among the chatter, gunfire, and racket of ancient inscrutable machinery, there is a voice. To those who listen to it, it brings great fortune, and ultimately disaster. Entire cults have sprung up around worship of the Creaking Voice, all of which are invariably hostile to outsiders.

OTHER XENOS

The Aeldari and Orks are not the only xenos to reside within the Waystation's hull. It is possible that Genestealer hybrids are among the Humans secluded in the Ratways, and the ancient Xenos elements of the station may be home to even stranger creatures.

WAYSTATION ADVENTURES

- Rumour has it that a valuable and powerful artefact has surfaced in one of the rare trade hubs of the Ratway. The characters must get their hands on it before another faction does.
- Corsairs mistakenly raided a Varonius Flotilla ship, and its crew was taken to the Waystation. Keen to avoid a diplomatic incident, the Corsairs are willing to hand over the crew to the Agents. Unfortunately, some have already disappeared into the bowels of the station, and must be recovered.



GILEAD PRIMUS

+++Hive World+++

The capital planet of the Gilead System is a spent and irradiated rock, utterly scoured for resources over millennia of toxin-producing industry. Its population of sixteen-billion or more is spread across nine colossal hives separated by exhausted wasteland. Each hive is a towering urban construction of several cities packed one on top of the other, stretching thousands of metres into the sky.

Lord-Militant Tyleria Fylamon rules
Gilead Primus



RUNNER'S RIDGE (GILEAD PRIMUS)

Built upon the protruding middle tier of a domestic hive, Runner's Ridge does brisk business in both legitimate trade and an underground smuggling and racketeering ring. While the majority of Gilead Primus's population is concerned mostly with survival rather than advancement, the opportunity for profit exists within Runner's Ridge for those with the ambition and moral flexibility to achieve their goals.

Shrouded in dense clouds of toxic gases, Runner's Ridge is dark and gloomy, lit only by dim lighting that does little to penetrate the clouds outside the hive, and somehow barely pushes back the darkness within as well. Since it is part of a domestic hive, there is little in the way of official shops or markets. Still, business is booming in Runner's Ridge. Densely packed and filled to bursting with citizens working to load and unload cargo, hawk their wares to crew members, or attempting to slip aboard a ship unnoticed, the streets of Runner's Ridge are easy to get lost in, by accident or design. Jakel Varonius first arrived at Runner's Ridge in an uncharacteristically impulsive act. While there, he met with Verity, and established a working relationship with Kernen Cree.

Most of his subsequent visits have all been to check in with Cree, and he has strangely not mentioned Verity since he left her domicile.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the districts within Runner's Ridge are residential, at least according to their official classification. Situated roughly halfway up the hive, the residents here are in a better position than those further down the city. While those in the hive levels below them toil their short lives away in the manufactorums on Gilead Prime, and only return to their squalid homes long enough to sleep for an hour or two before returning to work. The residents in this portion of the hive serve as dockworkers, runners, and servants. While their meager existence is still dominated by work and worship, their labour is less backbreaking and hazardous than those in the lower levels.

THE DOCKS

The Runner's Ridge Docks vary in size, from the smallest slip for a personal shuttle to a massive docking bay able to hold a gigantic cargo ship. Citizens stop to gawk whenever a large craft comes into port, hoping to catch a glimpse of an illustrious figure — maybe even the famed Jakel Varonius himself.

If no one of high rank is purportedly on the ship, however, most rush off to continue whatever work is required, cursing the lost minutes of work that will be taken out of their rations or their hide.

Ships that dock at Runner's Ridge take extra precautions, making sure security is in top shape before opening their doors to the populace. The ships here represent a tantalising, though illusory, freedom, and while most citizens are content to let their work guide them, a few find the temptation too hard to resist. Service on a ship neither brings independence nor autonomy, and those who find themselves aboard a vessel heading offworld discover they have simply traded one form of oppression and exploitation for another. Even those who linger too long near the docks may find themselves press-ganged into service — a ship needs a crew and many officers don't have the money or patience to hire legitimately.

DOCKING BAY 86/B

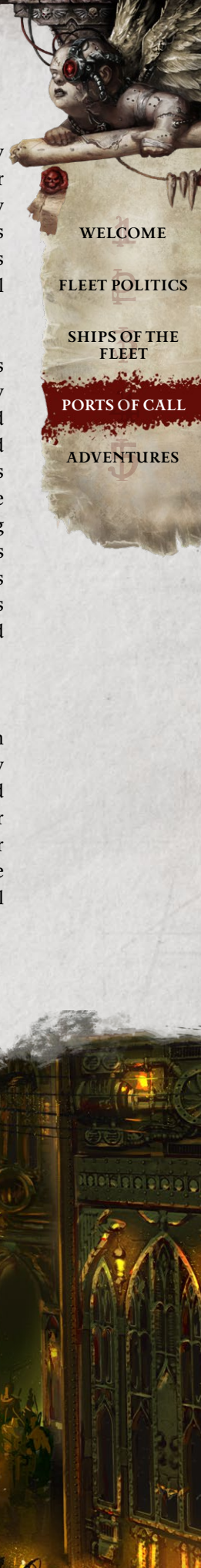
Docking Bay 86/B is kept empty, no matter how crowded the skies become or how large of a bribe a captain offers. The *Light of Purity* was the last ship to dock here, bound from the Voidmire. When its doors opened, instead of a crew of tired Imperials, Genestealers and Genestealer cultists poured from the decks and swarmed the waiting workers. They devoured and corrupted thousands of residents before they were finally killed and their remains cleared out

— a process that took weeks and scores of heavy flamers. While there were plenty of citizens from lower in the hive eager to capitalise on the sudden vacancy above them, regardless of the lingering bloodstains and scorch markings, the new Dockmaster refuses to utilise the dock, claiming it is tainted with the foul essence of the creatures and will only bring tragedy.

Needless to say, some of the more enterprising elements of the hive were more than happy to use Docking Bay 86/B to suit their own needs. There, amidst the twisted remains of the *Light of Purity*, scum, smugglers, and other unsavoury types meet. If asked, no one ever sees anything or anyone within Docking Bay 86/B. In some circles, the dock has gained a reputation for being haunted, infested, or even cursed, and any noises heard within are easily blamed on such superstitious nonsense; others know the truth of what happens within Docking Bay 86/B, but are happy to pretend they don't.

HAB-UNIT 167-AQ-5640-A

A Hab-Unit home much like all the other homes within this level of the Hive, there is nothing that immediately sets this Hab-Unit apart from any other. A cramped room with nothing but the basics for survival — four beds, cold storage for rations, and a privy with a door — Hab-Unit 167-AQ-5640-A is important not because of what it holds, but *who* it holds: Verity Beverit, a well known information broker.



CONTACTS, ALLIES, ANTAGONISTS

Residents, dockworkers, and scum make up the majority of Runner's Ridge's population.

CORNELIUS CLERICUS

The Dockmaster oversees every ship that comes in and out of Runner's Ridge. Currently Cornelius Clericus holds the position. A shrewd and ambitious man with an eye on the upper levels of the hive, he is determined to advance his station, either through a carefully preened presentation of dedication and loyalty to his superiors or through corruption and simple bribery. For Cornelius, the ends almost always justify the means, even when it comes to dealing with those he considers beneath him.

Pragmatic in every way, Cornelius was raised to the position after the previous dockmaster was devoured along with so many others when the Genestealer-infested ship, *Light of Purity*, docked at Docking Bay 86/B — an incident he blames entirely on the previous Dockmaster's ineptitude.

VERITY BEVERIT - INFORMATION BROKER

Within the cramped confines of the Hab-Unit the elderly form of Verity Beverit sits hunched over a low table with an assortment of small, brightly coloured velvet stools arrayed around her. She greets guests with a kind smile and warm, welcoming eyes before earnestly guiding them to sit opposite as she lays out the wafer thin cards of the Emperor's Tarot - though her ability to actually discern a coherent message from the shifting images of the cards is subject to some contestation.

In reality, Verity deals not with the insight garnered from the blessed cards of the Emperor but from a clandestine and well established network of intelligencers, counterspies and an untold number of indebted information gatherers across the entirety of the system. From the highest spires of Enoch to the dilapidated habs of her homeworld no deals are made, promises delivered or endeavours undertaken without one of her many agents lurking in the shadows, eager to report back. Verity uses this seismic flow of information to her immense benefit. This wide reaching network has given Verity an enviable position. Aware of the major movements and arrangements within the system, selling the most prudent of information to the highest bidder and gaining vast amounts of wealth in the process. A dangerous enterprise, Verity also ensures she has enough nobles and officials indebted to her to guarantee her own continued security.

Needless to say, these services are in high demand but affordable only by a scant few. Jakel Varonius is one such individual. He has visited her once, leaving with an uncharacteristically grim expression that took him days to shake off.

TECH-PRIEST ENGINEER SETT-9 RECURSIVE

Sett-9 Recursive is an Engineer of Avarchus, usually tasked with maintaining Imperial warmachines on the battlefield. He served faithfully in that role for decades, before political machinations he incorrectly thought did not concern him saw the unfortunate Tech-priest banished to Gilead Primus. He has been given the sisyphian task of repairing what remains of the voidship *Light of Purity*, now a tangled mass of scorched metal.



Sett-9 Recursive knows this task is impossible, but labours on regardless. Recently he discovered several intact sections of the ship, buried deep beneath the wreckage. These could contain any number of threats — dormant Genestealers, rogue combat servitors, or devices whose machine spirits have become confused and hostile. He would like the Agents to finish the task began years ago, and purge what remains of the *Light of Purity*.

THREATS

THE FAITHFUL OF DOCKING BAY 86/B

Though the authorities of Runner's Ridge believe they dealt with the Xenos incursion released from *The Light of Purity*, the infestation was not so easily purged. A nascent Genestealer cult is developing on Runners Ridge, with those infected by the Genestealers Kiss coming to see dock as the birthplace of their new religion. These faithful leave small offerings there, a strange xenos faith masquerading as a memorial to those who died in the battle. If not addressed, the cult will only grow in power an influence, their ranks swelling with infected citizens and their hybrid offspring alike.

ROGUE PSYKERS

With the Gilead System in isolation the feared Black Ships of the Adeptus Astra Telepathica are no longer capable of reaching the System. In combination with a dwindling Inquisitorial presence an increasing number of Rogue Psykers go unnoticed and unmolested as their powers swell. The most sensible of these individuals hide away their abilities, living a life of fretful trepidation, hiding from the authorities, while the truly recalcitrant eventually fall to the call of Chaos.

GILEAD PRIMUS ADVENTURES

- Verity Brevit has a message for the Agents, one that can only be delivered in person.
- Cornelius Clericus has impounded one of the Flotilla's ships and imprisoned the crew. Jakel requires the player characters to travel to Runner's Ridge to negotiate their release.

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THE WARRANT OF TRADE

Like all Rogue Traders, Jakel Varonius bears a Warrant of Trade, giving him power to negotiate, barter, steal, and kill in service to the Imperium.

The warrant enumerates the specific borders and boundaries of Varonius's authority... though they are extensive, and it is worded in such a way that a particularly cunning or charismatic individual (which Jakel Varonius certainly is) could twist the meaning and extract enough plausible deniability as to have authority to do nearly anything they wish.

As long as Varonius is bringing new worlds into the fold of the blessed Imperium, eradicating heretics and other enemies of the faithful, or, barring that, turning a profit, few find cause to complain. In the Gilead System, his authority goes beyond the Warrant of Trade: he's the only Imperium representative to enter the system since the Great Rift opened, and he brought much needed resources, including trained military personnel. At first he was hailed as a saviour. Over time, the system's rulers have come to feel increasingly threatened by his power, though very few dare to move against him.

To Jakel Varonius, Rogue Trader in Service of The Emperor, Glory Everlasting to Him on Terra, To Him All Things Are Given, and in Service of the Imperium, Greetings,



Know thou that we have bestowed upon thou, master of one ship The Ducal Circlet, and master of another ship, The Herald Varonius, and of numerous other ships bearing your colours and your marque, the authority and blessings of the God-Emperor to trade, barter, bargain, contract, and pact with those who seek the Emperor's Light, or with those others necessary to expand the reach and influence of the Imperium, and full bearing to apprehend, seize, attack, besiege, kill, slay, destroy, conquer, or take into your custody any and all who would impede the expansion of His Wisdom and Glory, and any and all who would work alongside such heretics, and the authority to seize, repossess, reclaim, and appropriate any merchandise, money, goods, weapons, or other cargo or wares found in the possession of such heretics and their conspirators, and to reappportion, ration, and dispense such goods and you see fit and necessary in the service of the blessed Imperium.

In discharge of this great trust, any loyal citizen of the Empire is expected to provide you with any and all services, supplies, labour, funds, and aid as necessary to successfully complete your mission as set forth in this Writ. To refuse to do so is to refuse our God-Emperor himself, and to be considered heretic.

Written this day in the year of our Emperor M41.984.

Lord Sylar Pruss VJJ



By his will let it be done. In His name let all our work prosper. By his strength let all our enemies fall. Let the Xenos burn, let the Heretic know fear. By the Throne and by the High Lords of Terra, let the agreement here sealed stand forever, or if fractured, let those who broke be shamed in His sight and fensed of their flesh and sin.

Jakel Varonius maintains his trust and good will with the Gilead System's various leaders, not just through the authority of the Rogue Trader Writ, but by being the contact you want to call when you have a need. Whether it's a problem that needs solving, goods that need transporting, or heretics that need killing, someone in the Varonius Flotilla is sure to possess whatever particular talent is needed, and Varonius is quick to help his allies.

BROAD AUTHORITY, PLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY

The nature of the Rogue Trader Writ gives Jakel Varonius — and anyone flying his colours — broad authority to act in ways many higher-ranking members of the Imperium cannot. This makes Flotilla's members highly sought after by nobles or Ecclesiarchs requiring a delicate problem handled without the Imperium's full force and might.

With such things in mind, it is not unusual for Jakel to temporarily confer authority on a group of Agents to answer a summons in his stead, or to look into rumours and leads before they become much more public issues. These operations can be anything from an extermination mission within a towering hive or a tricky negotiation with scum, heretics, or xenos. Some of the Gilead System's areas are too volatile for the martial nature of Astartes forces, or are better handled by Agents empowered to negotiate rather than risking outright war — these are usually the missions with the biggest pay-out and the best prizes. In these cases, often the lesser-known Agents are the best to handle these dicey situations... should things go south, Jakel can easily disavow the group he sent, claiming they were acting on their own without his authority or knowledge. This allows the Flotilla to claim its many successes, but more importantly, wash its hands of any failures, keeping its reputation intact.





TIER 2 ADVENTURE

BAYING FOR BLOOD



After months, the desperate band of stranded pilgrims besieging Saint Rathama's Rest on Enoch has suddenly gone quiet. But the people of this once-prosperous fishing enclave remain wary — some of their boats have been found close to land or run ashore, their crew missing, and the pilgrims remain the chief suspects.

Unknown to the enclave, the pilgrims are dead or in hiding in the cliffside caves around their impromptu settlement. They are being hunted and killed by a Lictor, a terrifying Xenos monstrosity whose presence on Enoch heralds dread times ahead for the system. The Lictor has been picking off pilgrims one or two at a time, and with most dead has turned its attention to fishing boats which venture too close.

HOOK

When the appearance of the Cicatrix Maledictum stranded uncounted pilgrims on the shrine world Enoch, people quickly became desperate enough to fight over food. The leaders of Rathama's Rest are loath to risk reigniting the violence but want to know why the attacks stopped so suddenly. Have the refugees given up, or are they gathering strength before the next attack? The locals have petitioned Varonius to send neutral investigators.

ACTION

Ulina Caln, the flint-eyed and weary speaker for Saint Rathama's Rest, outlines the enclave's situation. She finds the notion that the refugees could be responsible ridiculous — they are hungry, but hardly capable of ambushing a boat full of experienced sailors — and wants the agents to act as go-betweens to prevent escalating the situation.

The refugee camp clings precariously to a shore of jagged stone slabs encircling a small bay. The rocky shore is a honeycomb of caves, many of which have been converted into shelters for the desperate pilgrims. From a distance all seems well — figures appear to mill about cave entrances, and the smell of roasting meat is carried on the air.

As the Agents approach it becomes obvious that not all is as it seems. The 'figures' are merely tent flaps and windbreaks twisting in the constant sea breeze, and the smell seems to be coming from a single gruesome bonfire in the center of the camp, close to the water. Closer examination shows the fire to be full of bones — human remains slowly being consumed by the flames.

As they are examining this, a few rocks scatter and fall from a nearby cave mouth. As the Agents investigate, a figure suddenly appears as if from nowhere next to one of the Agents. This is Clauth Nu, an emaciated young girl aged far beyond her years. She eyes the Agent with suspicion, and asks if they are here to kill the 'monster'.

Clauth is a Novitiate of the Adepta Sororitas, the famed Sisters of Battle. Attending the Shrine of St. Rathama as part of a pilgrimage, the rest of her squad were slain by the Lictor. She was spared her for unknowable reasons — though Clauth attributes this to her faith in the Emperor. It was she who set the bonfire, in the hopes of putting to rest the creature's victims. Clauth says little else, but can direct the Agents to Carinelle Beauford, leader of the camp. She and a dozen others have been hiding behind a barricade in one of the Caves, with only Clauth willing to venture out safely.

A minor noble before becoming stranded on Enoch, she is terrified of the Lictor, having seen it kill dozens, and is desperate for help. She will promise the Agents anything they wish, but in truth has very little to give. She knows Clauth is a psyker, but doesn't reveal that unless coerced with a successful **DN 5 Intimidation (Wil) Test**.

If the agents wish to kill the Lictor, they will have to be clever. It is a serious threat, and will hunt them through the warren-like caves, across the beach, and even into the sea if they attempt to swim away. It is more than a match for them, but prefers ambush hunting and will not attack them when they are all together. Beauford knows the camp well, and can direct the Agents to a small supply of Promethium — a powerful incendiary — in some caves across the bay. Clauthe has seen the creature up close and knows some of its abilities. Though a novice of her order, she has some skill with a Bolter — it is up to the dice if the Emperor will spare her from the Lictor a second time.

Agents can identify the Lictor as a Tyranid bioform that specialises in stealthy ambush with a successful **DN 6 Scholar (Int) Test** from Clauthe's description, which drops to a **DN 4 Test** if they see the beast themselves.

LICTOR						
Threat	A A E E T	TYRANID				
S	T	A	I	WIL	INT	FEL
7	4	6	5	4	4	2
Defence		Wounds		Shock		Resilience
4		8		6		7 (AR 4)
SKILLS: Default 5, Athletics 9, Awareness 8 (Passive 4), Stealth 10, Weapon Skill 8						
ABILITIES						
ACTIONS: Flesh Hooks: 7 +6 ED / Range 5 / Brutal, Silent, Inflict (Poisoned 4)						
Grasping Talons: 7 +2 ED / Range 1 / Silent, Inflict (Restrained)						
Ruin: Spend 1 Ruin. The Threat makes a Stealth (A) Test as a Free Action. It resets its Stealth Score with the result.						
DETERMINATION:						
Spend 1 Ruin to roll 4d6.						
Conviction		Resolve		Speed		Size
4		3		6		Avg

AFTERMATH

If the Agents can kill the creature, the survivors thank them profusely, doubly so if they can further convince the enclave to provide them some food or shelter. If they fail to do so and are forced to flee, another strike team is called in to deal with the issue, and the Agent's reputation suffers.

Either way, if the Agents identify the creature as a Tyranid, they will become the subject to prolonged interviews by the authorities in Gilead, who seem extremely concerned at this development. Sworn to secrecy, it will be weeks before they hear tales of an entire peninsula on Enoch being vaporised by brutal orbital bombardment.

If Clauthe survives she returns to her Abbey, and her prayers to the Emperor for the Agents' good fortune and grace provide +2 **Bonus Dice** to one Test during their next adventure.





TIER 2 ADVENTURE

THE DEFENCE OF HILL 09-L7-8B7



Among the ever shifting wastelands of the Knight World Nethreus an amassed horde of barbaric and vicious Orks has begun to lay siege to one of the great domed cities of the planet known as Kalva. Recent tectonic activity has destroyed many of the outlying Millitarum emplacements and the vast majority have already safely fallen back to defend the defensive fortifications of the city walls.

The noted exception to this is a large mound of a hill with the official designation of 09-L7-8B7, several kilometres ahead of the main defensive line. Known by its bloodied defenders simply as “The Meatstack”. An entrenched and embittered detachment of Gilead Gravediggers hold this hill with a steely determination under direct orders that can be traced back to Lord-Militant Fylamon herself. The Meatstack has, inexplicably, been deemed of vital strategic importance and to be held at all costs.

With reinforcements being dispatched to the desperate hill on an almost daily basis and an ever growing attrition rate Varonius himself has taken an interest in bringing the ongoing defence of the Hill to swift conclusion

HOOK

Jakel Varonius has grown concerned over the defence of Hill 09-L7-8B7 and its spiralling consumption of resources. Aside from the apparent lack of strategic importance Varonius is also worried about the abnormally high mortality rate and has tasked the agents with investigating further and even suggests making use of the planet’s Knight Houses to hopefully bring a swift end to the protracted affair.

ACTION

The Agents will be shuttled directly to the planet’s surface and after a brief shuttled transfer find themselves on the other side of Kalva’s huge defensive fortifications. From here the Agents can see the ash plains of Nethreus and the isolated hill in the distance. A Gilead Gravedigger scout has been assigned to guide them through the battlefield towards the beleaguered outpost, Agents must pass a **DN 3 Stealth (A) Test** or find themselves ambushed by an equal number of roaming Ork Boyz eager for a fight.

On reaching the base of the Hill, the Agents see that it is nothing more than a blood slicked quagmire — punctuated by burned out Chimera tanks, rusted razor wire and the smell of promethium searing the Agents’ nostrils from the constant battle. The encampment atop is a sombre and disheartened place, commanded over by one Commissar Gimneus Dak.

Dak is an impassive and grim-faced woman who has enforced the orders of Lord-Militant Fylamon with the liberal application of her Bolt Pistol and a stringent adherence to the Imperial Creed. The assorted ranks of the Gilead Gravediggers stationed here are obviously combat fatigued and apprehensive, seemingly caring little for standing to attention or morning prayer as makeshift Ork ordinance thunders around them. If the Agents succeed a **DN2 Insight (Fel) Test** they quickly realise the Commissar is neither well regarded nor trusted by the Millitarum troops present, although none would dare to voice this aloud.

Commissar Dak will be professionally accommodating to the Agents and informs them her only expectation of them would be to love the Emperor and to take up arms should the Hill come under attack while they are present. Otherwise she is willing to let them conclude their investigations, confident in her superiors orders although it is evidently apparent that the hill holds little to no strategic value.

On returning to the main Defensive lines the Agents should enquire after the Knight Houses present and will be directed towards Ardent Fresh who will demand an update from the besieged outpost.

On hearing the Agents assessment of the strategic importance of Hill 09-L7-8B7, Fresh curses Varonius' stupidity, blaming him for the atrocious casualties and quickly mobilises to pacify the encampment and claim glory. Agents can attempt to convince Fresh to issue withdrawal orders to the camp and save the remaining Gilead Gravediggers with a **DN 4 Persuasion (Fel)** Test prior to the assembled Preceptors Las-impulsors laying waste to the area. If they fail this Test, the Agents will have little time to return to Hill 09-L7-8B7 and will face the wrath of Commissar Dak should they attempt to organise a retreat.

COMMISSAR DAK

Threat						
A E T T T						
IMPERIUM, ASTRA MILLITARIUM, OFFICIO PREFECTUS						
S	T	A	I	WIL	INT	FEL
3	3	2	3	5	2	4
Defence		Wounds		Shock		Resilience
2		6		7		6 (AR 3)
SKILLS: Default 5, Deception 7, Intimidation 7, Persuasion 7, Weapon Skill 6						
BONUSES						
Champion: This Threat may use Ruin Actions and has 1 personal Ruin.						
Zealot: This Threat may become Frenzied as a Free Action.						
ABILITIES						
BATTLECRY: Imperial Creed						
The Threat may make an Intimidation Interaction Attack against anyone with the IMPERIUM keyword within 15m. Any target affected by the Interaction Attack becomes Frenzied						
ACTIONS: Bolt pistol: 10 +1 ED / Range 6-12-18 / Salvo 1 / Brutal / Pistol						
Chainsword: 7 +4 ED / Range 1 / Brutal, Parry						
DETERMINATION:						
Spend 1 Ruin to roll 4d6.						
Conviction		Resolve		Speed		Size
5		4		6		Avg

AFTERMATH

If the Agents have managed to convince Ardent Fresh to issue new orders to retreat or decided to return and attempt to intervene themselves then shortly before the amassed weaponry of the Knight House turn Hill 09-L7-8B7 into a smouldering crater the beleaguered ranks of the Gravediggers can be seen making their way towards the relative safety of Kalva's defensive line.

As long as the drain on resources is resolved then Varonius will consider the undertaking a success, however should the Agents leave the remaining Gravediggers and the Commissar to their fate it may be some time before he trusts the Agents with a resource sensitive mission again.

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TIER 2 ADVENTURE

THE WAGES OF COWARDICE



Servitors are criminals and traitors the Adeptus Mechanicus has cybernetically lobotomised, reprogrammed, and augmented with technological parts to perform the Imperium's harshest tasks, making them important cogs in the war machine. There's a wealth of condemned criminals for conversion, but the supply of mechanical, augmetic components has slowed as requisition requests have stalled in the Adeptus Administratum.

Telot-9-Rho, a Tech-Priest stationed on the *Belaphron*, has finally been assigned the proper components to create a new cohort of combat servitors — six mighty Kataphron Breachers. The components are aboard *Straken's Workhorse*, remnants of a long resolved conflict that have only recently emerged from the bowels of Administratum logistical bureaucracy.

Their presence on *Straken's Workhorse*, an Adeptus Militarium troop carrier, has sparked an idea in Telot-9-Rho's cogitators. Is it truly wise to risk using just any condemned criminal to create servitors from such rare components? Wouldn't it be better to use the bodies of those who are already experienced combat veterans, to ensure the servitors are as effective as possible?

It's up to the Agents to go to *Straken's Workhorse* and retrieve the components for the Servitors — both the machinery, and the flesh.

HOOK

Tech-Priest Telot-9-Rho summons the Agents to *The Belaphron*, an Adeptus Mechanicus ship, and sets them the task of retrieving the components for the servitors and a squad of Adeptus Militarium Guardsmen to create them from. The Guardsmen have an outstanding disciplinary notice against them for cowardice, which Telot-9-Rho uses to justify their fate.

ACTION

The Agents are brought before Tech-Priest Telot-9-Rho in his private workshop, a high-vaulted space with churning machinery and stained-glass windows. Telot-9-Rho explains the situation and requests the Agents go to *Straken's Workhorse* to retrieve both the soldiers and the components to turn them into servitors. The Tech-Priest notes that it may be inadvisable to inform the soldiers of their intended use as, in his experience, this has been known to cause '*undue and regrettable distress*.' If anyone questions his choice of subjects, the Tech-Priest launches into a long and highly technical discussion of the many precedents for the use of those awaiting trial during times of great need. In return for their services, the Tech-Priest offers repairs and suitable upgrades to the Agent's equipment — though shortages abound in Gilead, Telot-9-Rho is adept at acquiring supplies from unusual sources.

On *Straken's Workhorse*, the Agents are greeted by Lieutenant Silt. She directs the Agents to the bunkhouse where the condemned soldiers can be found, and to Hanger 66b, where the components are stored. The Lieutenant has been told only that the soldiers are to accompany the Agents — she assumes to help guard the delivery. If the Agents question Silt further, they find that she does not think highly of the squad. She explains that the six are all that remains of the Gilead Gravedigger's D Company. They fled from battle with a small Ork incursion on Gilead Primus, and are awaiting trial for cowardice.

Retrieving the components from Hanger 66b proves to be a straightforward matter, though the large munitorum cargo containers prove awkward to load aboard the shuttle without help. The Agents may first retrieve the soldiers of D Company to assist. The Guardsmen are a sorry lot, clearly veterans from their scars and physique, but entirely dejected.

They are led by Sergeant Helna Thar, whose many medals indicate that she is, or perhaps was, a decorated hero. She is professional with the Agents, but clearly suspicious. She asks many questions about the details of their assignment, only quieting if a superior (such as a Space Marine or Astra Militarum officer) orders her to do so.

If the Agents use these soldiers to help load the servitor components, have them make a **DN 3 Deception Test** if they wish to avoid having them discovering what is inside. If they do, the questions only become more pointed, and a successful **DN 5 Deception** or **Intimidation (Wil) Test** is required to calm them. In either case, Sergeant Thar attempts to sneak a small supply of weapons onto the shuttle — allow Agents a **DN 5 Awareness (Int) Test** to notice this. If she is confronted about it, Thar merely shrugs and says *'It always pays to be prepared.'*

During the trip to the Belaphron, the Agents may ask the Guardsmen about the circumstances of their disgrace. They explain that, after holding their position for three days and losing most of their comrades, they finally fled from battle in the night. This necessitated a massive shelling of the position to finally destroy the Orks — something that could have been done at any time, were it not for the ammunition shortage. The trip to *The Belaphron* is otherwise uneventful, though two of the Guardsmen play at games of chance and invite anyone around to join them.

AFTERMATH

If the Agents successfully return the components to Telot-9-Rho, the Tech-Priest is pleased. If the cache of weaponry was not discovered the six Guardsmen, realising their fate, put up one last stand against the Agents and Telot-9-Rho. The Tech-Priest demands the Agents deal with the issue without causing undue harm to the Guardsmen's bodies in the process.

If the Agents chose to try to convince Telot-9-Rho to find other candidates for servitorship, he can be convinced to do so with a **DN 5 Persuasion (Wil) Test**. If failed, the Tech-Priest orders his 5 Combat Servitors to attack the 'traitorous' Agents, whom he declares have volunteered their own bodies for his purposes.

If the Guardsmen were able to sneak in their weapons, Sergeant Thar orders her troops to help them — all but herself and one other soldier take the opportunity to flee. Should Telot-9-Rho perish, the Agents will have some explaining to do, and are unlikely to be welcome on the *Belaphron* again in the future.

If the Agents allow the Guardsmen to escape, they are later captured, though to their credit they never reveal any aid the Agents gave them.



COMBAT SERVITOR

Adeptus Mechanicus, Imperium, Servitor						
Threat	T	A	I	Wil	Int	Fel
S	T	A	I	Wil	Int	Fel
4	2	2	2	1	1	1
Defence	Wounds		Shock		Resilience	
1	5		-		7 (AR 4)	

SKILLS: Default 4, Weapon Skill 5

BONUSES

Iron Soul: This Threat is unaffected by abilities that target the mind, and never needs to make a Resolve Test to continue fighting.

ABILITIES

ACTION: Servo Arm: 9+2 ED / AP -3 / Range 1 / Brutal, Unwieldy (2)

COMPLICATION: Error: The Servitor is Exhausted for 1 Round. This can be negated by an ally succeeding on a **DN 3 Tech (Int) Test**.

DETERMINATION: Spend 1 Ruin to roll 3d6.

Conviction	Resolve	Speed	Size
1	1	5	Avg

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TIER 2 ADVENTURE

A GLACIAL OPPORTUNITY



Thousands of years ago, Humanity's greatest warriors, Space Marines of the Adeptus Astartes, stood against a green tide of Orks on the ice planet Trollius. The battlegrounds have since been long buried in Trollius' ever-shifting ice, until an Adeptus Mechanicus Explorator team chanced upon reopened glacial paths. They uncovered an ancient temple filled with hundreds of frozen Ork corpses surrounding a damaged Venerable Contemptor Dreadnought, a war walker of immense power. The explorators managed to transmit details of the find to the flotilla before falling mysteriously silent.

Word of the find quickly reaches Primaris Lieutenant Sidrian Icarros. Oath bound to ensure the dreadnought's recovery, quickly dispatches a handpicked team of his own Agents, hoping to get to the temple before the shifting ice reclaims it.

Icarros isn't alone in pursuing the Dreadnought. Other factions have taken notice, and scans show a Death Guard dropship has already landed near the temple site. The corrupted Astartes must not be allowed to infect the holy war machine and turn it to their foul purpose. The Agents must race to secure a powerful war machine from an ancient battleground before the planet's shifting ice or heretic Astartes can claim it.



KNOW NO FEAR

This is an ideal mission for a group of players looking to serve the Emperor as a party of Space Marines, who will better appreciate the importance of the ancient Dreadnought. It will also serve to acquaint them with the Death Guard and Chaos Space Marines, some of the most dangerous foes the Absolvers face in Gilead.

HOOK

The Agents receive a priority summons from Icarros himself. A Venerable Contemptor Dreadnought has been discovered in a temple below Trollius' ice, and he needs them to immediately secure the Dreadnought. The planet's ice might re-bury the site at any time, and with Death Guard already at the site and other covetous factions taking notice, he's arranged for their immediate deployment. The race is on!

ACTION

The Agents receive priority communications from Icarros explaining the importance of securing the Contemptor Dreadnought, and immediately deploy on Trollius at the entrance of the fractured ice paths that lead down to the temple.

This mission is a race against time: the longer the Agents take to reach the Dreadnought, the more time the Death Guard have to rouse the war machine's weapons. Ruin represents this time pressure. Increase Ruin when the Agents progress too slowly, including if they take time to rest. If Ruin reaches its maximum before the Agents arrive at the temple, you can spend it all to have the Death Guard escape with the Dreadnought.

The ice paths to the temple are treacherous, as are the extreme cold temperatures. Hordes of Orks are frozen in the ice, their bodies making the path steep, unpredictable, and hard to traverse. As the Agents travel to the temple, they encounter one or more of the following obstacles:

A mob of 5 Cultists and a Plague Marine attempt to stall the Agents. The GM gains 1 Ruin at the start of each Combat Round after the first.

The shifting ice and recent activity have freed a mob of 10 befuddled Ork Boys with choppas who had lain dormant. They attack on sight The GM gains 1 Ruin at the start of each Combat Round after the first.

As the Agents move along the side of a deep crevasse, an avalanche crashes over the path. Characters must succeed on a **DN 4 Athletics (S) Test** to hold their ground. Anyone who fails is swept off the path into the crevasse, falling onto a ledge 10 metres down. The GM gains 1 Ruin if any Agent fails the Test.

Reaching the temple, the Agents find a cavernous chamber 40 metres wide with frozen Orks in the walls and blanketing the floor, slain long ago by the Dreadnought. On a dais in the centre of the temple stands the gloriously shining Dreadnought, damaged in battle and with its sarcophagus hacked open. A Plague Surgeon is manipulating tech inside the Dreadnought A Plague Marine and a mob of 10 Cultists stand ready for battle, attacking anyone that enters the temple.

A Plague Marine has activated the Dreadnought's arm-mounted Kheres-pattern assault cannon. Once each combat round, a creature touching the Dreadnought can use a Full-Round Action to aim and fire the enhanced assault cannon, which has a **+2 DN penalty, +2 ED, Salvo 8**. The GM must spend 1 Ruin for a Threat to use the assault cannon.

Once all Threats are dealt with, the Dreadnought has been secured. Icarros sends in a waiting retrieval team to remove the Dreadnought.



AFTERMATH

Mere hours after the Agents depart, the ice shifts and the temple is again lost beneath the glaciers. If the Dreadnought was secured, Icarros gives hands it over to the care of the Chapters Techmarines stationed aboard the *Recommitment* and as a means of thanking the Agents rewards them each with a single piece of Uncommon or Rare wargear from the vaults.

If the Death Guard recovered the Dreadnought, the Plague God blesses it with bile and corrupts it into a putrid and devastating weapon of war to turn against the Imperium in short order.

PLAGUE MARINE

Threat	A	I	E	E	T	
S	T	A	I	WIL	INT	FEL
6	8	5	5	4	3	2

KEYWORDS: HERETIC
ASTARTES, CHAOS, DEATH
GUARD, NURGLE

Defence	Wounds	Shock	Resilience
4	12	6	14 (AR 5)

SKILLS: Default 5, Awareness 9 (Passive 5), Ballistic Skill 8, Weapon Skill 8

BONUSES

Architect of Ruin: The Threat Seizes the Initiative without spending a point of Ruin and Charges. It gains an additional +1 bonus die to its attack Test as part of the Charge.

Champion: This Threat may use Ruin Actions and has one personal Ruin.

Mark of Chaos: Nurgle.

ABILITIES

ACTION: Plague Belcher: 10 +1 ED / Range 5 - 10 - 15 / Salvo 1 / Assault, Inflict (poison 4)

Plaguesword: 13 +5 ED / Range 1 / Brutal, Inflict (poison 4)

RUIN: Veteran of the Long War: Spend 1 Ruin to add the game's Tier as ED to all attacks this Threat makes this round.

REACTION: Noxious Discharge: Whenever this Threat takes a wound, roll a d6. If you roll an Icon, a mix of virulent gasses and toxic effluent spills from the Wound. The Noxious Discharge hits every target Engaged with the Death Guard.

Noxious Discharge: 2 +4 ED / AP -4 / Blast (4), Inflict (Poison 4)

DETERMINATION: You do not need to spend Ruin to roll Determination for this Threat. Roll 8d6. This Threat can roll Determination against Mortal Wounds.

Conviction	Resolve	Speed	Size
4	4	5	Avg

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TIER 2 ADVENTURE

UNFINISHED BUSINESS



Alyxea Hanzel, an officer of the Astra Militarum, is haunted by dreams of her younger sister Lyzette, who was killed in action as a result of an air-strike Alyxea ordered during a protracted battle with a force of *xenos horribilis*. Lately she has dreamed of her sister, seemingly alive in an unfamiliar place, telling her that all is forgiven. After months of searching, Alyxea has finally identified the place in her dream: an ancient, crumbling aqueduct in the slums below the Port of Tithes, and has resolved to find out if her sister is there.

Lyzette survived her sister's airstrike, but she and her soldiers were infected by the Genestealer's kiss. She wants her sister to join her and become part of her new 'family', but the Agents may have other ideas...

A former officer of the Astra Militarum asks the Agents to help her find her sister — but will the Agents find what she's looking for beneath the Port of Tithes before disaster strikes?



THE GENESTEALER'S KISS

Genestealers are a particularly lethal Xenos creature and herald of the terrifying Tyranids. It excels in close combat, but in many ways this is the least dangerous of its abilities. Genestealers can also administer what is known as 'The Genestealer's Kiss', depositing a genetic package that corrupts the mind and body of the victim. Those infected typically become thralls, forming strange cults and spreading the curse among the greater population.

HOOK

During a routine stopover at the Port of Tithes (see page 39), the Flotilla's voidmaster, Evgenio Crowe, introduces the Agents to an old friend: Alyxea Hanzel, an officer of the Astra Militarum, also newly posted to Enoch. The voidmaster owes Alyxea a favour; he pays his debt by volunteering the Agents to help Alyxea find her missing sister, who she believes is in the Port of Tithes.

ACTION

A crisp military bearing clings to Lieutenant Alyxea Hanzel, even as she outlines her troubles to the Agents. At first she merely explains that she is looking for her sister, a fellow soldier whom she has reason to believe is somewhere beneath the Port of Tithes, possibly having been kidnapped. Agents passing a **DN3 Insight (Int)** Test will realise she is hiding something, and if pressed she relents. Many years ago her orders led to the death of a company of soldiers including her younger sister (and junior officer) Lyzette. She asks the Agents to accompany her to a concealed location beneath the slums of the port, where she believes her sister may be living. She claims that her sister was sighted there by a mutual friend.

A **DN 5 Persuasion (Fel) Test** gets Alyxea to confide in the Agents that she obtained the information from a particularly clear, recurring dream that started when she arrived on Enoch after her time in the Astra Militarum came to an end. When she found that her dream accurately depicted a real location, she concluded that it might be a message from her sister. Though she does not know it, this message was sent by a Cult Magus, eager to draw an Astra Militarum officer into their expanding 'family.'

On leaving the main port area, Agents who pass a **DN 4 Perception (I)** Test notice that they are being followed by five Astra Militarum Guardsmen. If pointed out to Alyxea she starts, and whispers that the group's mismatched uniforms and lax gait means they are certainly not Guardsmen. In fact they are members of the Genestealer Cult, fourth generation hybrids able to move freely through human populations. If ignored, they follow the Agents to the meeting. If confronted they will depart with a **DN 5 Intimidation (Will)** Test, though this is to avoid causing a scene rather than being truly intimidated.

Alyxea leads the Agents through the darkest and most desolate slums of the Port of Tithes. Here the most disadvantaged in the Imperium scabble out a meagre existence among the toxic sump-waste. Eventually their route leads the Agents to a vast cavern full of gantries, pipes, and archways, all rising above a massive chemical lake. Six robed and hooded figures step forward as the Agents approach. The leader pulls back her hood to reveal Lyzette Hanzel —the family resemblance is unmistakable. The others wear remnants of Gilead Gravedigger uniforms. Any Agent studying them can make a **DN 3 Awareness (Int)** Test to notice that two of Lyzette's companions are misshapen and hunched beneath their robes.

Lyzette greets her sister with obvious delight and opens her arms to embrace her. A successful **DN 5 Awareness (Int)** Test notices the glossy carapace of a Genestealer as it moves through a tangle of pipes overhead. Despite the strangeness of the situation and the apparent danger, attempting to convince Alyxea to leave her sister and flee requires a successful (**DN 5 Persuasion (Cha)** Test). Any attempt to leave with Alyxea causes the cult to attack, with Lyzette bitterly criticising her sister for abandoning her a second time.



AFTERMATH

The Agents' decisions have both immediate and further-reaching consequences. If either sister is killed while the other survives, the survivor will become a powerful and vengeful future antagonist. The Genestealer cult beneath the Port of Tithes has infiltrated the city's society. The Agents may choose to investigate it further, and the longer they stay, the more likely it is that any psychically sensitive Agents start to experience disturbing dreams of their own.

GENESTEALER CULTISTS

Threat	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	HUMAN, GENESTEALER CULT
S	T	A	I	WIL	INT	FEL		
3	2	2	4	3	2	2		
Defence	Wounds	Shock	Resilience					
3	1	2	6 (AR 2)					
SKILLS: Deception 5, Stealth 3, Weapon Skill 4, Default 3								
ABILITIES								
ACTIONS: Autopistol: (Damage 7+1ED; AP 0; Range 20m (R); Salvo: 2; Pistol)								
Knife: (Damage 5+1ED; AP 0)								
DETERMINATION: Spend 1 Ruin to roll 2d6.								
Conviction	Resolve	Speed	Size					
2	2	6	Avg					

GENESTEALER

Threat	A	A	E	E	E	E	E	TYRANID, GENESTEALER CULT
S	T	A	I	WIL	INT	FEL		
6	6	6	6	4	1	1		
Defence	Wounds	Shock	Resilience					
5	12	7	7					
SKILLS: Default 6, Awareness 8 (Passive 4), Athletics 10, Stealth 10, Weapon Skill 10								
BONUSES								
Second Strike: Instead of attacking once on your turn, you can attack twice instead. If you do, you may not shift any icons to inflict extra damage.								
ABILITIES								
BATTLECRY: Swift and Deadly: The Threat Seizes the Initiative without spending a point of Ruin and Charges. It gains an additional +1 bonus die to its attack Test as part of the Charge.								
ACTION: Rending Claws: 12 +4ED / AP -2 / Range 1 / Rending (2)								
DETERMINATION: Spend 1 Ruin to roll 6d6.								
Conviction	Resolve	Speed	Size					
4	3	8	Avg					



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TIER 2 ADVENTURE

THE DREAMING AND THE DAMNED



The death of the Corsair Wayseeker Aryllaine Spiritsong on the decks of the Waystation was an unutterable tragedy for every Aeldari in her small contingent of Corsairs. Her essence lingers in her ancient and precious Spirit Stone, currently in the possession of an ambitious and heretical Cult Leader known as the Savant of Excess. The Savant brazenly intercepted it en route to Aryllaine's mother, the Aeldari and Corsair Queen Ynderaille.

Word of the missing Spirit Stone has reached Varonius aboard the flotilla via one of his many contacts aboard the Waystation, a ruthlessly opportunistic information broker by the name of Jaryk Virtanen. Viewing the developing events as an opportunity to help stabilise and build upon the uneasy alliance brokered with the Corsairs he has arranged for the Agents to meet with Jaryk and to retrieve the stolen artefact.

Interfering directly in an attempt to retrieve the Spirit Stone by the Aeldari in a manufactured show of benevolence is a risky strategy and as such Varonius makes it clear that maintaining deniability is of the utmost importance during this mission.

For the Dark Commune that rules over the cult the Spirit Stone provides an opportunity to further abase themselves before their Dark God, breaking it asunder in an offering to Slaanesh. To the Aeldari, it must be returned; for allowing She Who Thirsts to lay claim to the once powerful Wayseekers soul would be unthinkable. With the cultists looking to complete their rituals and the Aeldari desperate for its safe return the Waystation is about to erupt into bloody conflict—with the Agents caught squarely in the middle.

HOOK

The Agents are sent on a dangerous and politically volatile mission to the Waystation (see page 43) to meet with Jaryk Virtanen, their contact, then to locate and retrieve the lost Spirit Stone on behalf of their employer, Varonius (see page 8).

Everything goes wrong, however, when Jaryk betrays the Agents and the Aeldari begin to sweep through the battleworn outpost.

ACTION

After being shuttled directly to the Waystation The Agents wait for over an hour in one of the few relatively safe and unoccupied areas of the Waysation before Jaryk arrives at their agreed meeting point. The mutant walks with a pronounced gait and is obviously nervous as he continually dabs at a thin film of sweat beading across his upper lip. On seeing the agents, Jaryk's face lights up, he thanks the Agents for coming armed and eagerly informs them that he knows the location of the missing stone. Suspicious Agents may attempt a **DN5 Insight (Fel) Test** to realise that he isn't being entirely forthcoming with the truth. If successful he admits that the stone is in the possession of the cult for use in their dark rituals. Otherwise he attributes his demeanour to the innate danger of the Waystation.

As the Agents follow Jaryk into the depths of the Waystation the station's Vox-System begins to blare out a squalling warning tone. A veritable army of the Emerald Princess's Corsairs board the station, blocking access to the shuttle bays and beginning to sweep the station deck by deck for the stolen Spirit Stone. To avoid a head-on confrontation with the bulk of the force, the agents must all succeed on a **DN2 Stealth (A) Test** to avoid them in the labyrinthine passages of the Waystation

As the Agents proceed into a poorly lit and particularly cavernous section of the Waystation, Jaryk falls behind them, slowly backing away before turning to flee. Agents who pass a **DN3 Perception (I) Test** notice the six cultists covered in writhing, disturbingly beautiful tattoos, led by a Blessed Blade of the Dark Commune before they launch their ambush. In an ecstatic frenzy, with no thought beyond indulgent murder for their Dark God the cultists descend on the Agents.

As the smoke clears the Agents will find the stolen Spirit Stone concealed within the robes of the Blessed Blade. Now in possession of the stolen Aeldari artefact the Agents face a dilemma. More cultists can be heard advancing through the ancient station towards them and with the xenos of the Corsairs sweeping through the Waystation and holding the shuttles, the Agents are trapped.

The Agents are pursued relentlessly as they attempt to move through the Waystation from now, with cultists appearing from unseen passages or emerging from the shadows eager to reclaim the Spirit Stone for Slaanesh. As the situation around them deteriorates rapidly, the self-styled Emerald Princess Ferianwyr, the Aeldari Corsair who claims the Waystation as her personal domain, reaches out to the Agents, her voice resonating with distinct clarity within their heads. She offers them safe passage and her personal protection, in exchange (of course) for the Spirit Stone.

If the Agents accept her offer the Corsairs stop their sweeps and fall back towards the Emerald Deck. Should the Agents eventually make it to the Emerald Deck Princess Ferianwyr welcomes their arrive and anxiously accepts the Spirit Stone, quickly having it taken out of sight before turning on the Agents sharply. When questioned the Agents must undertake a **DN4 Deception (Fel)** Test in order to keep Varonius' involvement a secret or a **DN2 Cunning (Fel)** Test to convince her Varonius sent them to help.

Alternatively the Agents make seek to complete their mission as intended, attempting to fight their way through the Corsairs and making a **DN8 Pilot (A)** Test to break through the cordon of Aeldari vessels; or they could attempt to negotiate with any of the other groups on board for safe passage off the station in exchange for the Spirit Stone.

However they choose to leave the Waystation, the Gamemaster is encouraged to throw a selection of threats in their way.

AFTERMATH

If the Agents willingly hand over the spirit stone and either keep Varonius' involvement a secret or convince Emerald Princess Ferianwyr they were initially deployed with good intentions then they gain her personal favour. If the Agents choose to fight through the Corsairs and survive their attempt to flee the Waystation their eventual destination and thus Varonius' intent quickly becomes apparent to the Emerald Princess, which may cause irreparable damage to an already fragile alliance.

BLESSED BLADE						
Threat	A E I T	HUMAN, HERETIC, CHAOS				
S	T	A	I	WIL	INT	FEL
4	3	5	4	4	4	4
Defence		Wounds		Shock	Resilience	
3		8		5	7 (AR 2)	
SKILLS: Default 6, Intimidate 5, Intimidate 6, Deception 5, Cunning 6, Persuasion 6						
BONUSES						
Champion: This threat may use Ruin Actions and has one personal ruin						
Dark Master: The Blessed Blade generates 1 point of Ruin per round for every 5 cultists present at the start of each turn.						
Silver Tongue, Black Heart: This threat gains +3 bonus dice to all interaction attacks						
ABILITIES						
ACTIONS: Commune Blade: Damage 10+2ED; AP -1; Brutal, Unwieldy						
DETERMINATION: Spend 1 Ruin to roll 3d6.						
RUIN: Dark Ecstasy: As an action, the Blessed Blade may spend 1 Ruin to make an Interaction Attack against all targets who do not possess the Chaos keyword within 15 metres. Any character affected by the Interaction Attack is stunned for a turn as waves of corrupted ecstasy flood through them, and must make a DN 4 Corruption test.						
Kill them All! : As a free action, the Blessed Blade may spend a point of ruin to let a mob of Cultists within 3 metres make a combat action.						
Conviction		Resolve		Speed	Size	
5		4		6	Avg	



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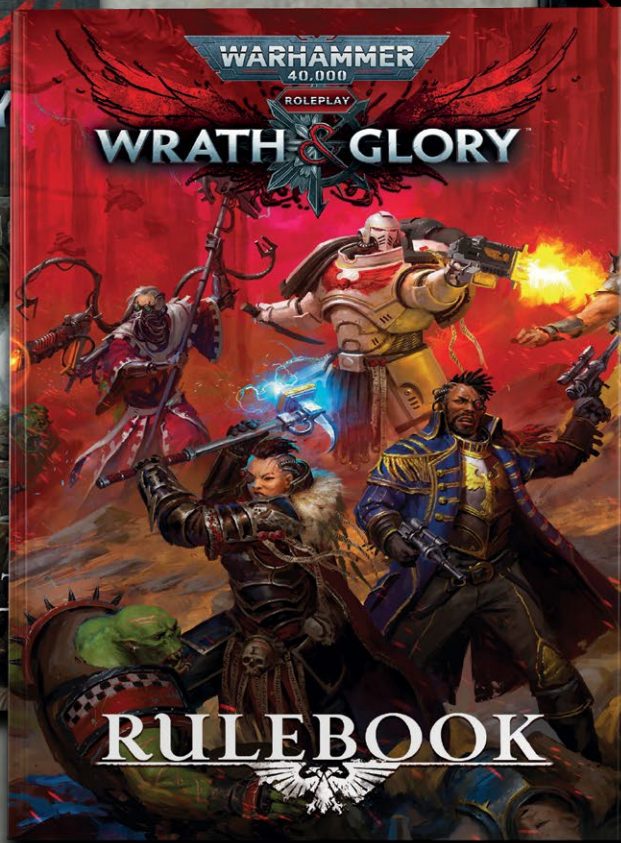
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