

DEATHWATCH™

THE ACHILUS ASSAULT™



ROLEPLAYING IN THE GRIM
DARKNESS OF THE 4¹ST MILLENNIUM

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INTRODUCTION

The essence of war, heroism, and duty pervade the setting for DEATHWATCH. The task of the Achilus Crusade embraces all of these themes, yet it faces great challenges from both without and within. To try and live up to these ideals is a difficult task, yet it is the fate of the Deathwatch Space Marines in the Jericho Reach to shoulder this duty head-on—they are the first and last line of defence against a myriad of threats to the Crusade of which some commanders are not even aware.

The Achilus Assault is a guide to the fires of war raging in the Jericho Reach, from the numberless tides of the Tyranids in Hive Fleet Dagon to the hellish legions of Chaos pouring forth from the Hadex Anomaly and the expansionist aggression of the Tau Empire. The threats presented in this tome provide Game Masters with a surfeit of antagonists and mysteries to confront a Deathwatch Kill-team.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

This sourcebook is divided into distinct chapters, each focusing on a variety of organisations, personalities, events, and warzones that are the focus of the Achilus Crusade into the Jericho Reach. Each section provides key insight into particular aspects of the Crusade, the history and character of the individual Salients and commanders, the particular challenges and enigmas that the Crusade must overcome, and ultimately, its purpose. Where relevant, Game Masters are presented with a range of suggestions on the use of these setting elements in his campaign, as well as possible scenario ideas and adventure seeds.

MODIFYING ENEMIES

The enemies presented in this book can, and should, be modified by a Game Master to create the types of enemies he requires for his game. Some options and variations are presented as part of the enemy profiles but the possible variety of enemies far exceeds these, and a Game Master should feel free to make adjustments to them as he sees fit. If, for example, a game requires a group of Renegade Militia armed with missile launchers, they can be created by removing their autoguns, giving them missile launchers and the Heavy Weapon Training (Launcher) Talent.

ENEMY PROFILE PRESENTATION

In all the entries presented in this book, the characteristics, movement values, and weapon damages have been presented with all modifications included. Weapon damages include the effects of the enemy's Strength Bonus and Talents that always apply to damage such as the Crushing Blow Talent. Talents, Traits and Special rules that have a variable effect or will only apply in particular circumstances, such as the Hammer Blow Talent, have not been combined into the profiles presented here. It is also important to note that NPCs are not necessarily bound to follow the same strictures for their profiles as player characters.

CHAPTER I: THE JERICHO GATE

This chapter contains various reports, sealed data, and rumours providing fragmentary glimpses into the nature and dark history of the Warp Gate in the Jericho Reach. A measure of truth may be gleaned from these mad rantings and official (albeit often confused or contradictory) reports—the nature of that truth, however, rests in the hands of the Game Master and the ingenuity of the Player Characters.

CHAPTER II: THE CRUSADE BEGINS

The history of the Crusade itself is written in blood and ambition, chronicled in this chapter. Particular focus is granted to the Crusade's original Warmaster, Lord Militant Achilus, and his successor, Lord Militant Tetrarchus. The involvement of the Deathwatch into the affairs of the Crusade is examined at length.

CHAPTER III: THE ORPHEUS SALIENT

The alien threat of Hive Fleet Dagon has driven the Orpheus Salient into near-collapse, and its battle lines are now riven with confusion and fear. This chapter describes the Orpheus Salient, from its original successes to the fateful encounter with the Tyranid hordes.

CHAPTER IV: THE ACHEROS SALIENT

A central push of the Crusade smashed directly into a force of heretics and daemons pouring forth from the hellish Warp intrusion known as the Hadex Anomaly. This chapter focuses on the Acheros Salient's origin and current status, holding the line against the warp-spawned forces of Chaos.

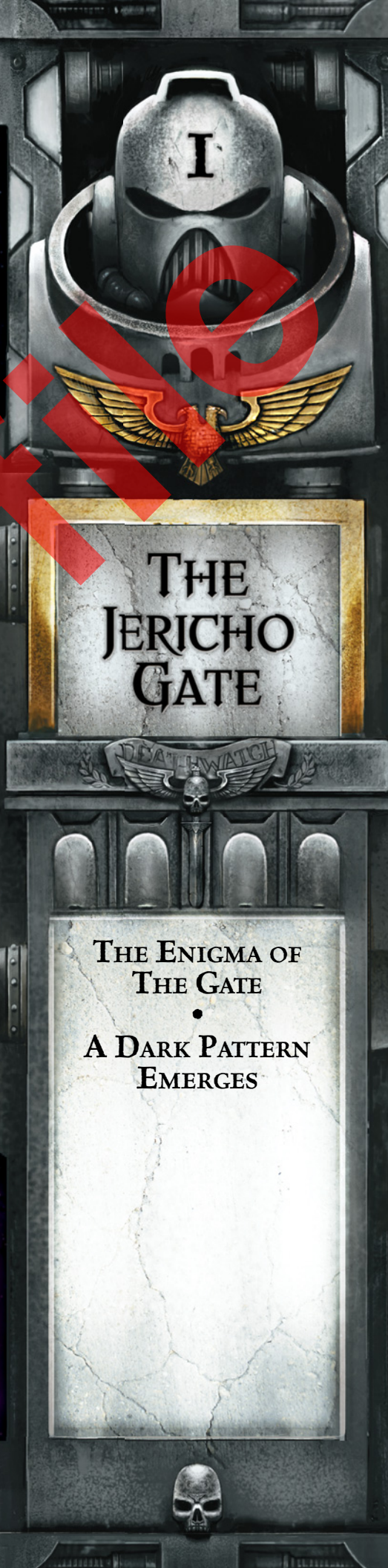
CHAPTER V: THE CANIS SALIENT

An expeditionary force from the Tau Empire began the conflict in the Canis Salient when the Imperium's Crusade interfered with the Tau's plans for expansion. This chapter discusses the Canis Salient in detail, including the mysterious Black Reef.

CHAPTER VI: HEROES OF THE CRUSADE

Champions of the Crusade, enemies of the Warmaster, and famous warriors can be found in this chapter. Many influential and significant individuals are detailed.





THE
JERICHO
GATE

THE ENIGMA OF
THE GATE
•
A DARK PATTERN
EMERGES

CHAPTER I: THE JERICHO GATE

“The opportunity that we are offered is far too great to ignore. A brief foray, using the assets of the Calixis Sector, could spread the glory of the God-Emperor to millions who crave his light and return untold wealth and glory to Scintilla.”

—Tiber Achilus, in his bid for command of the Crusade into the Jericho Reach

This section contains a series of primary source reports on the discovery and analysis of the Warp Gate artefact that connects the Koronus Passage with the Jericho Reach—an artefact later named “the Jericho Gate” by the Crusade forces. Those who discovered the artefact, studied it closely, and felt its true nature compiled these reports directly. Agents of the Administratum and the Ecclesiarchy have studied each of these extensively. They ultimately launched the Achilus Crusade based upon the information provided by these and similar, related reports. When woven together, they offer hints about the artefact’s origins, purpose, and portent.

The future of the Achilus Crusade is entirely dependent upon the Jericho Gate, and without it, the Crusade could never have occurred. Millions of Imperial soldiers would have never seen duty outside of the Calixis Sector, the Deathwatch of the Jericho Reach would be operating against Tau, Tyranid, and Chaos forces with little hope for Imperial support, and dozens of planets in the Reach would never know the light of the God-Emperor.

At the same time, in order to pursue the Crusade, the Administratum has chosen to wilfully exploit an artefact that is clearly of xenos origins. More than sixty years of analysis by the most accomplished scholars of the Adeptus Mechanicus and the Inquisition have not even managed to identify the race that created the artefact. The long-term risks of using it remain unknown. In fact, they may not even be identified until they are experienced and can no longer be avoided. Many of those aware of the Jericho Gate have questioned this decision—at least in private. Exploiting the artefact seems inconsistent with the Imperial Creed and exposes humanity to xenos contamination. However, if the Imperium is to prevail with the Achilus Crusade, it will need to press forward with the use of the Jericho Gate for the time being.

The very nature of the Jericho Gate dictates that ignoring it is an unacceptable risk. Its existence presents a huge tactical opportunity for any force, including the growing Tau Empire, to introduce tactical elements into a portion of the Imperium that seemed comparatively safe from external threats. These threats must be prevented from reaching fruition with extreme prejudice, for the safety and security of mankind. The only practical way to eliminate these is to secure both termini of the Warp Gate.

Analyses further suggest that simply destroying the artefact may not be a viable option. The xenos technology involved in its construction is, at best, poorly understood by the Adeptus Mechanicus. Though its use may be dangerous, its obliteration could have even more severe consequences. Better to face known and partly comprehensible risks than to needlessly take risks that are not understood whatsoever.

The Jericho Gate has indirectly caused the deaths of millions and directly caused the deaths of many who attempted to plumb its mysteries. It is a xenos device, representing a threat to the Imperium. While that might place it under the purview of the Deathwatch, other elements of the Imperium have claimed it for themselves. The possibilities this presents for conflict—both internal and external—may be endless.



GUIDANCE FOR THE GAME MASTER

Sidebars are placed throughout this volume that offer suggestions to the Game Master (GM). These include tips on using the xenos threats presented in a campaign and on the various ways that the material might be interpreted. Please keep in mind that these materials are subject to the GM’s discretion. Stories and themes that are well suited to one playgroup may not be ideal for others. Choosing what material to embrace, what to ignore, and what to reinterpret allows a GM to uniquely tailor the Jericho Reach. Additional information about the Warp Gate (and a sinister plot involving it) can be found in the adventure sourcebook **THE EMPEROR PROTECTS**.

USING THE JERICHO GATE

The Jericho Gate represents a core element for any Deathwatch campaigns set in the Jericho Reach. It can offer an impending threat, a source of hope, or an unresolved mystery. These articles, and others like them, may offer insights to the Warp Gate, or they may offer false leads.

The artefact may play as small or large a part as the GM feels is appropriate. If the Jericho Gate is unreliable, a campaign might recount the Deathwatch’s efforts to recover those lost to the artefact. If it is perfectly safe, then it might instead slide into the background, as yet another miraculous device upon which the galaxy depends. Alternatively, the Warp Gate might appear safe, but hide a xenos threat that could be revealed at a crucial juncture in the campaign. Regardless of what role the Warp Gate presents, the GM should determine how it will impact his campaign.