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THE FALL OF SOLACE

"Our task is solemn, and our purpose final. This is no matter of raucous glory, but of duty alone."

—Watch-Captain Hrolth Fangtaker

Originally written for Gen Con Indy 2013, **FALLING STAR** is a scenario for **DEATHWATCH**. It is one of four linked scenarios that concern the fate of the Imperial world of Solace. While each adventure stands on its own as a complete module suitable for immediate play, a group that plays all four adventures will spot the connections between the events as they transpire around the hive world of Solace. This section includes a brief summary of each adventure to help the Game Master keep track of how they overlap if intending to run more than one of them.

BINDING CONTRACTS

BINDING CONTRACTS is an adventure for **BLACK CRUSADE** that follows a group of Heretics as they pursue the prophecy of the Many-Eyed, a dread oracle of Chaos. The Ruinous Powers have whispered to her that Solace will end in fire when a star descends from the sky. They murmur that the terror and confusion this event brings about must be properly dedicated to the Chaos Gods.

Before this portent appears, the Heretics must infiltrate Solace and rally the wretched mutants that live beneath the hive. Then, once the star burns bright in the sky, they must lead their newly assembled army up one of Hive Solace's spires, where they can cast down a rival sorcerer and take control of his ritual to summon a Daemon of unfathomable power to the Materium. If they succeed, the Heretics will have struck a blow against the Imperium within the Calixis Sector and won vast glory for themselves. If they fail, however, the unholy ritual could be their doom.

FALLING STAR

In this adventure, the players take on the roles of Battle-Brothers of the **Deathwatch** to pursue lost artefacts aboard an ancient voidship. After centuries lost in the Warp, the *Ardent Crown* has returned in a degrading orbit around the world of Solace. The Kill-team has been assembled to board the derelict, secure the artefacts, and extract from the vessel.

However, the Battle-Brothers are not alone in their ambitions aboard the *Ardent Crown*. An Eldar Farseer also has designs for a particular relic, and leads an elite team of her allies in her quest to take it back. And while the Eldar are powerful and duplicitous foes, something even more terrible lurks aboard the *Ardent Crown*, stirring after aeons of cold slumber as footsteps fall once again on the long-abandoned decks. The Battle-Brothers of the Deathwatch must face these enemies, cast them down in the name of the Emperor, and escape the *Ardent Crown* before it plummets to its demise. The fate of the sector and the honour of the Deathwatch alike hang in the balance.

SHEDDING LIGHT

In this adventure for **ROGUE TRADER**, the Explorers delve deep into the ancient secrets of Solace. Solace was colonised by the Imperium in the final hours of the Angevin Crusade to unite the Calixis Sector, but its secrets wind perilously back into times forgotten by all but the most ancient. There have always been dark tales in Solace's mines about the things that dwell beneath the world's parched surface, but there have also been whispers of fortunes beyond the comprehension of any mortal.

These whispers have spread far and wide and have reached the ears of a daring Rogue Trader, a warrior-privateer who braves the dangers of the unknown in the name of incalculable wealth and glory. Now, an avid group of Explorers journey to Solace, delving deep into an ancient chasm that contains strange relics of forgotten aeons. But when a cataclysm rocks the world of Solace, the Explorers find themselves facing a terrible threat that is not pleased about its rude awakening.

SALVAGING SOLACE

When an unknown voidship strikes the world of Solace, the surface shakes and the brave men and women of the Cadian 99th must gird themselves for battle once again in this adventure for **ONLY WAR**. Having just suffered losses campaigning in the Spinward Front, the Cadian 99th is caught on the outskirts of the catastrophe in the midst of a training exercise. In addition to the devastation the crash wrought, the impact has sent waves of mutants surging up from the underhive, and so the troopers must step forth into the breach to restore order to Hive Solace.

Unfortunately, this is only the start of the Player Characters' troubles. As they struggle to bring Hive Solace under control, still more crises loom over them, and the troopers must go above and beyond their normal duties to have a chance of survival. With the lives of everyone on the planet—including their own—resting on their actions, the PCs are the last line of defence against the coming catastrophe. If they do not rise to the occasion and triumph against the odds, there will be no saving Solace.

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

BINDING CONTRACTS, **SHEDDING LIGHT**, and **SALVAGING SOLACE** each include a full adventure, premade characters, and the profiles for any NPCs unique to the adventure, much in the same way as **FALLING STAR**. Each is designed to be run with the system for which it was written and requires a copy of the appropriate Core Rulebook to play.

Using all four of these adventures, a GM can create a cohesive event that tells the story of the **Fall of Solace** from multiple different perspectives, revealing the many factors that contributed to the events slowly over the course of the individual stories.

Because these adventures were originally written for use at a convention, each one includes certain notes on the time that should be devoted to given sections. If the GM wishes to run one of these adventures in a typical four to six hour convention timeslot, these notes can be useful; if the GM is not under any time restrictions, however, he should feel free to pace the adventure as he sees fit based on the group and other circumstances.

FALLING STAR

"With the orbit's current rate of decay, I prognosticate that the machine spirits of the engines succumb within only a few hours. Suboptimal, but still within acceptable constraints."

—Brother Ceros, Techmarine

FALLING STAR was originally designed for Battle-Brothers with an additional 5,000 xp (beyond their starting xp). The players can use the premade characters found on pages 19–36 or create Battle-Brothers of their own as described in the DEATHWATCH Core Rulebook.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

"The details of our mission change nothing. Our purpose here is singular and pure: bring swift death to the enemies of humanity. No matter how the circumstances change, this is the only truth that matters."

—Brother Orvendr

In this scenario, the Kill-team is assigned to recover a lost Deathwatch artefact from an Imperial voidcraft that has been lost in the Warp for centuries. Its return has been foretold by Astropaths, and its arrival is destined to spell disaster for humanity in the subsector. The precise nature of the disaster is unclear, but the Kill-team is tasked with preventing it.

After completing a briefing and requisition, the Battle-Brothers travel without mishap to the Solace system. Shortly after they arrive, their target—*Ardent Crown*—exits the Warp, heading in-system. As they approach the craft aboard their boarding torpedo, the Battle-Brothers witness the arrival of an Eldar vessel, headed directly for the *Ardent Crown*. Unable to engage the enemy craft, the Space Marines must proceed with their mission as well as they are able.

The Kill-team then enters the vessel and begins the search for the xenos presence and the lost artefact. In the course of their hunt, the Battle-Brothers discover that they face two significant threats. The first are the Eldar, who have boarded the craft for reasons of their own. The second is the fact that the vessel's original crew and passengers are long dead and Tyranids have infested the craft and devoured all available biomass.

In truth, the Eldar seek the same artefact as the Battle-Brothers, while the Tyranids hope to use the biomass from the Imperial cruiser as the basis to devour an Imperial world. Unless the Space Marines can somehow eliminate both of these threats, they will likely have to face them again sometime in the future, when they have grown in power.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

"This ship is an ill omen that we cannot ignore. We must act now."

—Inquisitor Reykholt

The *Ardent Crown* is a vessel cast adrift in the sea of time, and it represents a link to the valorous history of the Deathwatch. Recovering the sacred relics aboard this craft is not merely a matter of preventing the scheming Eldar from furthering their schemes. The honour of the Deathwatch rides on the shoulders of the Battle-Brothers, and they must uphold that weighty legacy in the face of the deadly secrets the *Ardent Crown* conceals.

Each Battle-Brother knows full well the importance of the task before him. The fate of the sector could well ride on the outcome of this mission, but for the warriors of the Adeptus Astartes, such dire stakes accompany every battle. Turning from the foe is not an option, and so the only path is to annihilate the enemy utterly.

GAZETTEER: SOLACE

"Solace's fate has been written. We are not here to change it. Our task is to see that its fall does not herald the doom of the sector."

—Watch-Captain Hrolth Fangtaker

Colonists began to settle Solace even before the Angevin Crusade had completed. Preliminary auguries and portents confirmed that the world could not wait for the end of the interminable conflict, and so colonists deemed "suitable" for this rough, unshaped world—including an exceptionally high percentage of penal colonists—were dispatched to Solace. This first wave of colonists worked under the direct supervision of Adeptus Mechanicus elements from the crusading forces. Hardy individuals were tithed from harsh worlds across what would become the Calixis Sector and Koronus Expanse and relocated to Solace; these new arrivals were promptly put to work extracting the phenomenal mineral wealth that rested beneath the world's surface.

During these early days on Solace, countless small vessels flitted back and forth between the mines and much larger craft in orbit, creating a glittering flow of lights in Solace's sky that blotted out even the stars. From orbit, the massive ships transported the fruits of their labour to forge worlds, where the ore and other materials were forged into the equipment necessary to continue the crusade to conquer the Calyx Expanse. Some religious scholars on Solace claim that, were it not for the wealth extracted from their world and the many who shed their blood to get it, the crusade might have run out of raw materials and faltered.

Of course, precise records from this period are fragmentary. The Imperial forces in the region were so focused upon prosecuting the crusade that minor details—particularly those associated with procurement—were often not properly recorded. However, the amount of raw materials extracted from the planet seems to have been truly extraordinary. Further, many of these materials seem to have been combined into alloys that were ready for manufacturing almost immediately, requiring very little refinement. Some historians have speculated that this was simply evidence that the materials had been illegally obtained from another, undocumented Imperial asset. Other, more radical elements have argued that this could be compelling evidence that the world was once home to a sophisticated xenos species, and that the alloys were all that remained of a long-dead civilisation.

Regardless of whether or not the materials came from Solace, one factor is clear. Assignment to the mining facilities on Solace was a death sentence. Few, if any, of the tens of thousands of colonists sent into these facilities ever returned. Official Imperial records indicate that this was due to toxic elements present in the mines and a lack of faith amongst the workers.

The legends, however, are far darker. They speak of unholy terrors that lurked beneath the planet's surface. Oral histories, passed down through the generations, say that there were xenos dwelling far beneath the surface. These tales indicate that the dark things were only banished after the blessed Drusus visited the world and expunged them in the name of the God-Emperor. There are no official records of St. Drusus ever having visited Solace, but the population still reveres him as the man who cleansed their world and liberated them from terror and death at the hands of shadows and nightmares.

THE FIRST HIVES

As the Angevin Crusade wound down, there were few resources to transport the surviving soldiers back to their worlds of origin. Consequently, many were simply delivered to Solace, where they were left. While a minority saw this as a just reward, permitting those who had worked so hard to enjoy the fruits of their labours of war, only a scant few of the newly retired soldiers looked upon their new lot in life as a blessing. While the soldiers now lived without the immanent certainty of a violent death, they also possessed few skills and assets with which to forge their survival. The functionaries of the Adeptus Administratum were no longer willing to provide them with clothing, food, and shelter. Instead, it was up to the soldiers themselves to make their way where and how they might.

At the conclusion of the Angevin Crusade, the Adeptus Mechanicus still had a significant number of assets active in the Solace system. Before all of the elements in the system were reassigned, however, a cunning administrator requested that the manufactorum's available capacity be put to immediate use. Taking advantage of some of the already available raw materials, the manufactorum built rudimentary settlements to house the veterans of the crusade and let them continue to serve the Imperium. While toiling upon Solace was hardly a pleasant prospect, it might have seemed less terrible than the brutal warzones of the Angevin Crusade.

Eventually, what began as a barren mining world became the home of six fully functional Imperial hives, most dedicated to further mining operations. The Adeptus Mechanicus had built facilities that housed the original colonists, and these structures gradually grew into the massive, towering spires of Solace's hives as generation upon generation built upon them.



THE CASTUS LEVY

Thanks to the fact that Solace was settled largely by veterans, military service is an integral part of the world's culture. All able-bodied men and women are required to perform a period of service within the planet's defensive military, known as the Castus Levy. This is typically a five-year term. Often, a large portion of this service is devoted toward maintaining planetary peace within the now tightly crowded Imperial hives. However, roughly once a generation, the Castus Levy are called upon to repel a significant xenos incursion. Solace's assets are sufficient to regularly draw the attention of the greedy, who think that it might be a world ripe for conquest. To date, none of those assaults have succeeded.

Solace has also gladly tithed full regiments to the Imperial Guard upon fourteen separate occasions. Most often drawn from the ranks of the Castus Levy, these regiments proved their devotion to the Emperor by their noble acts of sacrifice to carry on the glorious tradition of the Imperial Guard. While none of these regiments managed to assemble a particularly prestigious roll of service, none disgraced their home world.

Even among the Imperial Guard, the Castus Levy often exhibit an exceptional level of devotion to the Imperial Creed. Those who interact with them often consider them particularly pious. Some argue that this reaction may be a consequence of their uniforms as much as anything else. This is because those of the Castus Levy invariably wear a chasuble over their armour and kit, proudly displaying the iconography of their devotion upon a field of purest white.

PLANETARY LEADERSHIP

The leadership of Solace treads a dangerously narrow path. In what some factions in the Calixis Sector revile as a violation of Imperial regulations, the Planetary Governor of Solace has always been, since the early days of the colonies there, an Ecclesiarchal Cardinal. While this is not strictly in violation of the Decree Passive, the Planetary Governor is the supreme commander of the defence forces of any given world, and the Cardinal who governs Solace has always been eyed with suspicion as a result. The argument has been made, by some, that as neither the Sector Lord nor an Inquisitor has chosen to take action upon this matter, the governance of Solace must be divinely ordained.

Because of the piety of its rulers, the populace of Solace has shown few deviances from the Imperial Creed over the centuries. There are remarkably few known incidents of heresy on Solace. The world has consistently paid all necessary tithes to the sector government, including consistent surpluses of soldiers, labourers, and processed materials.

BEYOND THE HIVES

Even before its great hive spires and the fires of industry blackened the sky, Solace was never a world hospitable for colonisation. Its surface is harsh and largely devoid of water, and its atmosphere was only technically breathable before the fires of human industry poured countless pollutants into the air. The mineral resources beneath its surface, however, were reason enough for the Imperium to claim Solace and condemn millions to toil in vast, cavernous mines, extracting ore and other valuable materials.

Outside of the all-protective enclosures built to house the miners, Solace is little more than a hellish wasteland. Its atmosphere has become even more polluted from the waste that the hives generate. The mines are no longer actively worked by anything more than a skeleton crew. The population centres are capable of producing a significant percentage of their own foodstuffs through fungal farming in long-depleted mineshafts and nutrient reclamation techniques. Still, imported food and other supplies are crucial to the survival of Solace's people (and, more importantly, to its ongoing productivity). Without the support of other worlds in the subsector, the hives of Solace would be utterly unsustainable.

When people leave the relative safety of the hives, they must contend with a dangerous atmosphere and predators who are far better evolved to deal with the dangerous conditions. Much of the world's surface is little more than barren rock that offers no shelter from the planet's scorching daytime heat. As a consequence, travel between the hives most commonly takes place via subterranean tunnels that were adapted to that purpose from the world's ancient mines.

THE SPINWARD FRONT

In recent years, the Calixis Sector has devoted an ever-increasing portion of its resources toward the ongoing war in the Spinward Front. Solace's location along a Warp route makes it a prime location for assembling goods from the subsector before they are reloaded onto transports destined for the Periphery. The fact that the hives have some manufacturing capacity only accentuates this, as many of the raw materials can be transformed into goods that are directly useful in the war effort.

As a consequence, the war effort has been a major boon for the planet. Solace's manufactorums have never been more productive, and the Adeptus Administratum has allocated far more resources than usual to the upkeep and expansion of the infrastructure on Solace as a result. Morale has also significantly improved, as the populace feels that they are acting directly in the service of the Imperium and contributing to the war against the xenos.

Such is the fervour among the Castus Levy that many of the planet's youth have even been reluctant to end their enlistment after the mandatory five years. Enough of the recruits have zealously sustained their service to the extent that the world has already contacted the Adeptus Administratum about raising a regiment, even before their next tithe is due. The wheels have already been set in motion to see that this happens quickly, ostensibly to help with the effort in the Spinward Front.

The only major danger is that this has been disruptive to many of the hives' integral processes and systems. The increased workload has begun to decrease the time that most citizens have available for worship. The sheer number of the planet's youth preparing to join the Imperial Guard could even decrease the overcrowding in some of the hives. It is too early for any certainty, but by the time the war for control of the Spinward Front concludes, Solace could be a world dramatically transformed.

RESOURCES AT HAND

With the flow of new materials to the world, Solace's storage facilities are bursting with resources. With their enthusiasm for the war effort, many of the planet's inhabitants have put themselves to the metaphoric plough such as to astound the functionaries of the Administratum. As a consequence, raw materials and manufactured goods have been produced even faster than they could be transported to the Spinward Front. With every day, additional spaces not intended for storage have had to be used to house the surplus. At their current pace, some of the living quarters in the hive cities might have to be used to hold materials destined for the soldiers in the Spinward Front.

This excess of useful materials has drawn the attention of some less pious and law-abiding parties. Criminal elements have begun to take note of these supplies and speculate on how they might be used for personal gain rather than the good of the Imperium. At least one Rogue Trader has taken advantage of this overflow to fill his holds with undocumented supplies.

As word spreads of this manufacturing and storage capacity, it is likely that elements from beyond the Imperium might take an interest. This could include both xenos and heretical



threats. Just as this wealth of equipment and supplies can contribute in a meaningful way to the war that the Imperium wages, they could also be used against it. While enlistment in the Castus Levy is high, Solace's defensive plans are not designed for a world as desirable as it has suddenly become. If a well-organised attack plan were implemented, it could be vulnerable. This would place many extraordinarily useful assets at a level of tremendous risk. Currently, the Calixis Sector can ill afford a loss of this magnitude, but it also lacks the available resources to reallocate for improving the planet's modest defences.

THE ARDENT CROWN

Millennia ago, an Inquisitor stole a powerful Eldar soulstone. The stone in question held the soul of an accomplished Eldar Farseer. Imprisoned within the stone, his spirit was unable to reach the Infinity Circuit of his home—Craftworld Kaelor. The names of the xenos soul and the Inquisitor who captured it have both been lost to the ages. For reasons unknown, however, the Inquisitor made the deliberate choice to integrate the soulstone into his psychic hood.



When the Inquisitor died, his raiment was recovered by a Deathwatch Librarian beside whom he had fought on several occasions. Completely unaware of the xenos contamination, the Librarian wore the Inquisitor's psychic hood and employed it proudly, returning with it to his home Chapter upon completion of his service to the Deathwatch. For centuries, the artefact remained in the service of his home Chapter, becoming a prized relic that served the Imperium effectively in its ongoing wars. None knew of its xenos origins or of the Eldar soul that remained imprisoned within its ornamentation.

More than a century ago, the artefact and its current owner—another Deathwatch Librarian—were travelling aboard the *Ardent Crown* when the vessel was lost in the Warp. The voidcraft was on a routine mission to transport supplies from an agri-world to the hive world of Solace. A Deathwatch Kill-team was among the passengers, travelling on a mission to complete a routine inspection of several planets within the subsector. The precise reasons for the voidcraft's failure to reach Solace remain a mystery to the Imperium, as it had seemingly been lost to the Warp for eternity.

Several decades ago, a chorus of Astropaths foresaw the arrival of the *Ardent Crown* in the Solace system. Their visions foretold the arrival as a herald of disaster and a great triumph for the enemies of mankind. The Astropaths recognised that this event could serve as a nexus of various possibilities, many of which could have significant repercussions for the Imperium within the Calixis Sector. Consequently, annotations of the psychic event were passed up to subsector authorities and then on to the sector authorities. As the message travelled through the various bureaucracies, it was intercepted by Agents of the Inquisition.

After initial review, the missive was passed on to the Deathwatch. A tersely worded request asked the Watch-Commander to deal with the situation. When preliminary research revealed that the *Ardent Crown* was also likely to be the resting place for the lost artefact, the mission was given a much higher priority.

Centuries before the Astropaths were exposed to this possible future, the seers of Craftworld Kaelor sought it out and began preparations to address it. While they sought to recover the soulstone that contained the spirit of their long lost Farseer, they also sought to prevent a specific chain of events from occurring—one that could lead to the return of one of their ancient enemies. If such a return were to take place, those unholy foes could someday make war against the Eldar anew. A unit was quickly assembled to recover the soulstone and prevent the tragedy from taking place.

Meanwhile, aboard the remains of the *Ardent Crown*, another threat silently waits. For the vessel was not trapped in the Warp due to a Navigator's grave error or some terrible mechanical failure. It was trapped in the Warp when a swarm of Tyranids overran its crew. The origin of this infestation is unclear, but it was sizeable and successful. The foul xenos bred far too quickly and struck too swiftly for even the Deathwatch Kill-team to stop them. Now, these same xenos are awaiting a chance to exit the Warp so that they may once more spread their plague anew.