

# ROGUE TRADER™

## THE SOUL REAVER™



AN ADVENTURE FOR  
ROGUE TRADER

**WARHAMMER™**  
40,000  
**ROLEPLAY**



# ROGUE TRADER™

## THE SOUL REAVER™



ROLEPLAYING IN THE GRIM  
DARKNESS OF THE 4<sup>1</sup><sup>ST</sup> MILLENNIUM



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1975 West County Road B2  
Roseville, MN 55113  
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ISBN: 978-1-61661-455-3 Product Code: RT12 Print ID: 1360JUN12

Printed in China

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# INTRODUCTION

**O**f all the many xenos that inhabit the Koronus Expanse, the Dark Eldar are the most devious. **THE SOUL REAVER** is a chance for daring Explorers to look deep into the twisted heart of Dark Eldar society in the Koronus Expanse, and pull the greatest heist of their careers, ripping an alien ship from the very center of a Dark Eldar city hidden in the webway. **THE SOUL REAVER** also contains a full Career Path for a Dark Eldar Kabalite Warrior, which players can use to create their own Dark Eldar characters for the Adventure contained in this book and beyond.

## WHO ARE THE DARK ELДАР?

*"I am all your nightmares. I am the legends your forebears whispered of in fearful tones. Every terror you have never imagined comes from me. Look upon my majesty and weep at the terror I have wrought upon you and your kin. I am an artist, and dread is the colour I splash across the canvas of your mind."*

—Archon Anas Vaenix of the Kabal of the Sundered Eye

**T**he tale of the Dark Eldar is the tale of the decline of the Eldar race. For uncounted millennia, the Eldar dominated the galaxy, their might unchallenged by any other species. However, without anything to threaten them for so long, the Eldar turned their attentions inwards. With every passing generation, the taboos and restrictions of the past fell away in the wake of unconstrained exploration of lore and sensation, until no act was beyond comprehension. Over thousands of years, the potent psychic echoes of generations of depraved acts coalesced within the Warp, growing steadily more potent.

Even amidst this, certain places were havens of debauchery within a civilisation that revelled in its own lust for experience. Foremost amongst these places was the city of Commoragh, which grew from a mere port within the webway to the centre of the hedonistic culture that had come to dominate Eldar society. Cults of Sensation thrived within the labyrinthine realm of the webway, hidden from prying eyes and the lingering, puritanical elements of Eldar society.

As the psychic mass of coalesced decadence gathered, horrific Warp storms wracked the galaxy. Preferring to use the webway, the Eldar scarcely noticed the oncoming storm. Those few who did perceive the danger fled the homeworlds to try to escape the unknowable doom that was to come. Most, however, remained willfully oblivious to this burgeoning terror, the slumbering god created in the image of the darkest part of the Eldar psyche. The cataclysm that followed was the awakening of that god, a moment when the collective debauchery of the Eldar race emerged as an entity in its own right, and devoured its creators with its first breath.

In a matter of moments, the psychic vortex annihilated vast majority of the Eldar species, wrenching their souls from their bodies and subjecting them to an eternity of torments in the maw of a newly-born Chaos god. The few who remained, scattered across the galaxy, were the last survivors of a species on the verge of extinction, and would forever face the inescapable peril of She Who Thirsts, the Ruinous Power known as Slaanesh and the doom of all Eldar.

## THE DARK CITY

The isolated nature of the alternate dimension within which Commoragh and the thousands of other settlements in the webway existed spared those Eldar living there from the instant demise that grasped so many of their kin. Instead, they faced a different peril altogether—She Who Thirsts would eternally draw upon their souls, leeching them away slowly. Whereas other Eldar have found ways to deny She Who Thirsts her desires, those who dwell within the Dark City of Commoragh were required to find some other way to counteract the endless curse of the god they birthed.

These Eldar of the webway found that the suffering of others could nourish their hollow spirits, renewing their withered souls with the pain and terror of others. Provided they surrounded themselves with the most vile and decadent acts, these Eldar could abate the curse of Slaanesh, keeping them vital and strong and eluding the passage of time. So it was that the Dark Eldar were born, a race of sadistic murderers who feed upon the anguish of others in order to prevent the slow







death of their immortal souls. For the ten millennia since the Fall of the Eldar, the malicious denizens of Commorragh have raided and plundered their way across the galaxy, terrorising and enslaving those they regard as lesser creatures.

Individual Dark Eldar are cruel, fiercely intelligent creatures, their bodies and minds honed by long lives of survival in the cutthroat environment of the Dark City. The least of them are vicious beings, desperate for even the tiniest motes of suffering to slake their desperate and unnatural thirsts. The greatest, the warrior castes who embark upon raids into realspace and make up the dominant members of the Kabals and Wych Cults, are tall and lithe killers, with athletic physiques and lightning-fast reflexes. They grace the spires of the Dark City and battlefields across the galaxy with the confident poise of predatory gods, their majesty concealing the rotted, hollow desolation of their souls. To those able to perceive the Warp, they appear vile and ghoulish, more closely resembling what they truly are: horrific beings that hunger for the torment of others.

Over the millennia, Dark Eldar society has become stratified and divided, fragmenting into cults, sects, and factions, warring for prestige, power, and the slaves whose suffering is the lifeblood of the Dark City. The mightiest of these are the Kabals, grand institutions forged in bloodshed and savage politics, dominated by Archons—masters of political intrigue and personal combat alike, deadly foes both within the courts of High Commorragh and upon the battlefield. No less necessary to Dark Eldar society are the Wych Cults, whose

members are gladiators extraordinaire, masters of the savage spectacle, creatures both beautiful and deadly and adored by the common populace for their bloodthirsty performances. The Covens of the Haemonculi are ancient and terrible circles of depraved geniuses, masters of impossible sciences and keepers of the secrets of immortality.

Beneath these are numerous smaller groups, lower in prestige but no less significant. Reckless gangs of Hellions haunt the skies between the spires, descending to murder and torment any that catch their attention. Enigmatic, deadly Incubi sell their lethal craft to the highest bidder. Winged Scourges flit from their barbed eyries and soar amongst the courts of the Kabals, serving as messengers for the paranoid Archons. In the depths, savage Mandrakes skulk between the shadows, rending the flesh of the unwary with ice-cold talons.

The majority of Dark Eldar are born artificially, grown rapidly in vitae wombs and amniotic tubes. Only those with power and wealth have the luxury of raising children naturally, and these Trueborn are raised to rule, taught from a young age the secrets of vicious courtly intrigue, and truly believe themselves to be superior to all those half-born around them. These mighty few are beyond even death, for the wealth and infamy of those who rule in the shadows allows them to secure the services of the Haemonculi, whose vile sciences allow them to resurrect the dead from scraps of flesh and the agony of the tortured.





## DARK ELДАР IN THE CALIXIS-KORONUS REGION

The Calixis Sector and Koronus Expanse are regions that have some significance to the Eldar, and while it has been many millennia since they have had any major presence there, the worlds of that great frontier are still laced with many thousands of webway passages and tunnels connecting worlds and systems. Today, these tunnels are twisted, stretched, and torn by the psychic pressure of the Warp storms dividing the Calixis Sector and Koronus Expanse. While the mysterious rites of the Harlequins long ago sealed many of these passages, others still remain open to the tides of the Warp, infested with vile and ephemeral creatures.

This region of damaged tunnels is centred across the Warp storm known as the Screaming Vortex. The Vortex is home to teeming hordes of daemon-worshippers and mutants, living and dying at the whims of warlords and sorcerers intent on murder and subjugation in the name of their dark gods. While this a ready source of slaves and victims for the raids of the region's Kabals, it is a realm largely inhospitable to the Dark Eldar, so strong is the presence of She Who Thirsts within the storm. However, suspended at some point between the Screaming Vortex, the Koronus Expanse, and the webway is an island of relative stability where numerous groups of Dark Eldar have formed a twisted haven. Here floats the Nexus of Shadows, a Dark Eldar outpost built upon an ancient and massive technological relic.

Three major Kabals dwell in the tunnels and passageways that cross the Calixis Sector, the Koronus Expanse, and into the Screaming Vortex. The foremost of these, at the heart of the Nexus, is the Kabal of the Splintered Talon. The others, the Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns and the Kabal of the Crimson Woe, are of a more mercenary inclination due to their lesser status, often selling their murderous skills to other races in exchange for resources or opportunities to grasp at power. The Kabal of the Crimson Woe operates in the Calixis Sector more than in the Koronus Expanse, in part to avoid directly competing with the Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns and thus drawing their ire. Numerous other groups exist alongside these, from the Cult of the Withered Blade, which controls the Bloodspine Pits on the Nexus of Shadows, and The Sutured Helix, a coven of Haemonculi that operates from the Nexus of Shadows, to numerous smaller factions that raid and scavenge for scraps of the might and prestige.

The Dark Eldar operating near the Nexus of Shadows are frequently on the move, either carried within fleets of ships or travelling in smaller groups on light skimmers through the winding and impossible labyrinth of the webway, returning to the Nexus of Shadows only periodically to trade their cargo of tormented victims for supplies and to replace slain warriors. These itinerant raiders often cross paths with pirates and reavers of other species, particularly the Chaos-aligned flotillas that hail from the Screaming Vortex and isolated bases like Iniquity. A select few of these have been shown the location of the Nexus, so that they may trade in slaves, dark lore, and abhorrent technologies, but these are relatively rare.



# THE SOUL REAVER

*"They are a scourge upon our galaxy, the most vile and sadistic of all our xenos foes, and a peril to any who would ply the void in search of profit or gain. Whatever happens, should the shadow of their ships darken your path, pray you die fighting at the helm of your vessel, lest 'fortune' favours you and they take you alive..."*

—Magos Domos Agnelain, Explorer

**T**he Dark Eldar are a plague upon the Koronus Expanse; raiders, slavers, pirates, and even Rogue Traders suffer at their barbed lashes and blades. Any who cross the Maw and sail the void of the Koronus Expanse learn to fear the wicked silhouettes of their ships and their seemingly endless cruelty towards all life, including their own. Only vigilance and firepower keep the worst depredations of these terrible raiders at bay, though from the dens of Footfall to the commerce halls of Port Wander there are countless tales of crew lost and ships savaged in their sudden attacks. Within the Calixis Sector, the Imperial Navy keeps the Warp routes and sector worlds protected against the worst of these raids, and while some outposts and lone vessels still disappear at the hands of the foul xenos, most citizens sleep soundly, never even knowing that such a depraved species haunts the stars above their heads.

In the Koronus Expanse it is different, as that lawless place has neither a fleet capable of guarding the uncharted wastes nor a tightly controlled network of worlds that can call upon one another in times of need. The Expanse is a playground for the Dark Eldar, where along with the myriad of other alien menaces they can raid worlds and take ships with relative impunity, slipping away into the night from whence they came. The power of the Dark Eldar is compounded by the fact that no one knows precisely where they come from or where they go, nor can they explain the aliens' uncanny ability to appear from nowhere and then vanish with their stolen cargos of goods and slaves just as quickly. Some Rogue Traders believe there must be a Dark Eldar world somewhere in the Expanse from which they launch their raids, though where exactly it is and how it could have evaded detection for so long remain a mystery that has yet to be unravelled.

## GAME MASTER'S BRIEFING

**THE SOUL REAVER** is an adventure in three parts that focuses on the Dark Eldar of the Expanse and the power struggles between its leaders. It takes the Explorers on a Grand Endeavour into the heart of a Dark Eldar city deep within the webway, where they must undertake a daring heist to steal an artefact of immense and ancient power, elevating their allies and casting down their enemies in the process. It brings the Explorers into direct contact with the Dark Eldar and their twisted ways, exposing them to both the risks and the profits of making pacts and deals with such dangerous xenos. It also gives them a chance to gain a stake in the Dark Eldar's vast trade networks (dealing largely in slaves) that extend throughout the Koronus Expanse, the Calixis Sector, and far beyond, promising huge amounts of profit for those without the burden of strict morals. However, it is no easy task to complete such an Endeavour, and as the Explorers discover, Dark Eldar are just as treacherous allies as they are enemies.

This adventure takes place in the Koronus Expanse and the ruins of the Eldar webway. The core setting for the adventure is the Dark Eldar city known as the Nexus of Shadows, which sits atop a vast artificial planetoid trapped in the webway and has become a centre for trade between dozens of xenos races and the Dark Eldar themselves. Because the adventure takes place largely in the Nexus of Shadows, the GM can set it almost anywhere and is not restricted to the Koronus Expanse. If he so chooses, he can have his players enter the webway from another point or discover a way to the Nexus from another part of the sector or segmentum, or even elsewhere in the galaxy. **THE SOUL REAVER** presents the Nexus of Shadows as a complete setting, which allows the GM to use it beyond the remit of this adventure, especially should the Explorers succeed, and they can return again to its shadowed streets and dark spires to trade and have their dealings with the Dark Eldar.

The three sections of this adventure form a Grand Endeavour that provides the GM with a framework to gauge the progress and success of the Explorers as they delve into the Nexus of Shadows and tackle the plots and schemes of the Dark Eldar. This Endeavour can be modified to suit the GM's needs, and broken down into smaller sections or padded out with new goals depending on the actions of the Explorers. A detailed breakdown of the Grand Endeavour's objectives can be found at the end of each chapter of the Adventure.

## GM GUIDANCE

Throughout this adventure there are numerous GM Guidance sidebars offering the GM advice and further details on how to run an encounter or respond to the actions of the Player Characters. These sidebars may give suggestions and solutions to the outcome of an encounter or an insight into the design behind an event that should aid the GM in running the adventure. The GM Guidance sidebars also offer details on scaling the power level of the adventure to the GM's group of Explorers. Given the open nature of the adventure and the huge number of possible outcomes and confrontations, there is no set or predetermined Rank or Profit Factor requirements for **THE SOUL REAVER**. Instead the GM can adjust the difficulty of encounters to match the abilities of the Player Characters.

## ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

**THE SOUL REAVER** takes place over three distinct chapters, each one following on from the events in the preceding section. The adventure begins when the Explorers meet Salaine Morn, Archon of the Shadowed Thorns and an exile from Commorragh and now the Nexus of Shadows in the wake of treachery of a former comrade. Forming an alliance with her, the Explorers must then infiltrate the Dark Eldar city and steal the core of its power, an ancient alien ship known as *The Soul Reaver*. Unfortunately, Salaine's plan is flawed in a way even her devious alien mind cannot predict, and her miscalculation costs the Explorers their freedom, as they are captured and dragged into the Shadowspine Pits to serve as slave gladiators. In the second chapter, the Explorers must rally the slaves of the pit to their cause and start a full-blown uprising to escape. Finally, in the third chapter, the Explorers must make their way across the war-torn Nexus of Shadows to



reach *The Soul Reaver* once again, steal the mighty vessel, and then fend off enemies seeking to claim their prize even as a dark intelligence begins to stir aboard the cursed ship.

## Chapter I: Queen of Shadows

The first part of the adventure deals with the Explorers' first encounter with Archon Salaine Morn, and the details of the deal they strike with her. It is not easy to secure such an alliance, but there are numerous ways in which the Explorers can meet the Dark Eldar, and for the two parties to find a shared motive strong enough to work together. Once the Explorers secure a deal, they join Salaine's renegade fleet and take their place in her plot to capture the Nexus of Shadows for herself. The heart of this plan involves the Explorers and Salaine infiltrating the city and stealing *The Soul Reaver* from the palace of her arch-rival Zaergarn Kul, leader of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon and ruler of the Nexus of Shadows. An ancient alien ship fuelled by the power of death itself, *The Soul Reaver* is the cornerstone of Zaergarn's power and without it the city's defences will fail, allowing a full-scale invasion from Salaine and her renegade fleet.

The Explorers must use either their cunning, stealth, or might to make their way to the Archon's palace, likely becoming embroiled in the plots and schemes of the city's many factions along the way. Once they reach the Archon's palace and sneak or force their way inside, they must then begin the process of preparing *The Soul Reaver* for transit, setting charges to blast it free of its moorings so their own ship might latch onto it and rip it free of the palace, dragging it out of the webway and back into realspace. However, things do not go as the PCs predict. Drecarus, a Haemonculus nominally in the employ of Zaergarn who has been ruling his empire from the shadows since the real Archon's demise, is prepared for their infiltration. As they reach their goal, Drecarus intervenes, leading to imprisonment and slavery for the Explorers and a major setback to Salaine's plans.

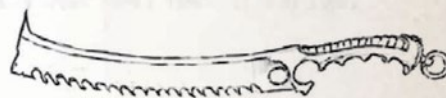
## Chapter II: Blood, Steel, and Sand

The second part of the adventure follows the Explorers' trials as slave gladiators of the Withered Blade Wych Cult, the second most powerful faction in the Nexus, and close allies of the Splintered Talon. Even as slaves, the PCs still have a chance to see Salaine's plans through and complete their lofty goal of conquering the Nexus of Shadows. As gladiators, they need to work their way towards freedom by earning favour and prestige within the dark society surrounding the cult and win battles in the arena so that they can engineer an escape. The slave pits are also a place to make new allies: humans and aliens captured by the Dark Eldar and forced to fight in their endless, sadistic games. Along with these allies, the Explorers must make plans to win their liberty, gathering the resources and support they need. However, what begins as a simple bid for freedom by the PCs quickly escalates into a full-scale uprising, and with the aid of the Explorers, the gladiators and slaves of the Nexus cast off their bonds and turn on their wicked masters.

## Chapter III: Maelstrom of Souls

The third part of the adventure begins as the fires of uprising set the Nexus of Shadows ablaze. During this chaos, the Explorers resume their mission to steal *The Soul Reaver*, and thus allow Salaine's renegade fleet to invade the Nexus of Shadows. The Explorers are not the only ones who take advantage of the carnage caused by the uprising, however, and other factions within the city may well rise to the opportunity to seize power or settle old scores. Though all this madness, the PCs must make their way to the Archon's palace and finish what they started. Tearing *The Soul Reaver* free has unforeseen consequences, as its dark energies awaken and the dead Archon leads the countless legions of screaming souls trapped within *The Soul Reaver* on a rampage against everyone who has wronged him and anyone unfortunate enough to be nearby. Ultimately, the Explorers must vanquish the echo of Archon Zaergarn Kul and *The Soul Reaver* before it can burn the Nexus of Shadows to ash—and their chance at promised profits along with it!

Once the dust settles, if the Explorers have succeeded, *The Soul Reaver* lies dormant once again and the faction they have chosen to back (be that Salaine Morn, the slaves, or even themselves) has won total mastery of the Nexus of Shadows. The Explorers receive a healthy reward for their efforts, as well as a chance to tap into the profits of the city and its thriving trade networks. Whether or not the Grand Endeavour proves profitable for the Explorers, they must perform great deeds to survive this adventure, and tales of their insane ambition echo between the stars of the Koronus Expanse.



## GM GUIDANCE: DARK ELДАР PCs

**THE SOUL REAVER** introduces the option for players to play Dark Eldar Kabalite Warrior characters in their games of **ROGUE TRADER**. Dark Eldar Explorers can join the Explorers in numerous ways, either as agents of Salaine Morn sent to aid them in their efforts to steal *The Soul Reaver* or as allies encountered during the Explorers' adventures in the streets and towers of the Nexus of Shadows. The GM might choose to allow his players to create Dark Eldar characters just for this adventure, either as an alternative to their normal characters or as additional characters. At the end of the adventure, each individual player can then decide if he wants to pursue his Dark Eldar character beyond the scope of this adventure, and, provided the GM approves, that character can become part of the *Rogue Trader's* crew, accompanying them on further adventures (see **Chapter IV: The Treacherous Path** on page 96 for more details on creating and playing Dark Eldar characters in **ROGUE TRADER**).



# GAZETTEER: THE NEXUS OF SHADOWS

*"One day all that will remain of the Imperium will be places like the Nexus; the scoured bones of a forgotten race infested with alien cities and corrupted xenos cults who know nothing of the great empire that once ruled their galaxy."*

—Anja Shen, Lord-Captain of *The Hostile Transaction*

The Nexus of Shadows is a dark and dangerous artificial world the Dark Eldar controlled and partially developed, and populated with some of the worst xenos to ever crawl out of the Expanse. In the years since Salaine Morn discovered its location hidden within the webway and then, in alliance with Archon Zaergarn Kul, seized and settled it, the city has festered and grown into a common port for the Dark Eldar and those who trade with them. As a base, it provides an excellent and well-hidden locale to raid the nearby Koronus Expanse, Calixis Sector, and even the Screaming Vortex, while its place within the webway gives it access to hundreds more worlds scattered across the Segmentum Obscurus and beyond. Even slavers from the Dark City of Commorragh buy and sell their wares at the Nexus or pass the time watching the blood sports of its arenas. It has earned a reputation among the Dark Eldar as a city rich with slaves from the weakly defended worlds of nearby Imperial Sectors and the numerous scattered human worlds of the Expanse cut off for so many years from the safety and protection of the Imperial battlefleets. For many Imperial citizens taken from these sectors bordering the Halo Stars, the Nexus is a final, terrible destination, where they will end their lives as slaves working in its bone-pits or spilling blood in its arenas.

While Rogue Traders who listen carefully can hear rumours of the existence of the Nexus of Shadows at many ports across the Koronus Expanse and even in some places within the Calixis Sector, its actual location is a closely guarded secret. Even those xenos that trade with the Dark Eldar must be guided to its location by the city's scouts through the shattered and perilous twists and turns of the webway. Few aliens understand the webway, and the Craftworld Eldar are loath to utilise more than a fraction of the decayed and fractured network around the Calixis Sector and Koronus Expanse. The Dark Eldar, especially those outcast from Commorragh, are more adventurous and willing to risk ships and slaves to find ways through its shadowed links and dark corners, but even they must tread with care, and only a handful have the skill to routinely reach destinations like the Nexus of Shadows. The Nexus is in a particularly unstable portion of the webway, prone to Warp intrusions and reality collapses, and those Dark Eldar in good standing



in Commorragh largely avoid it. This very danger makes the Nexus an ideal destination for the outcast, however, and exiles from Commorragh such as the Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns find it an excellent based of operations. After all, what is the risk of reality itself falling to pieces at a moment's notice compared to the agony that the great Archons of Commorragh promise to those who have offended them?

Quite apart from its secrecy and the difficulty required to reach its gates, the Nexus is heavily defended against attack from orbit. Even if a fleet reached the Nexus, it would find itself facing a complex network of defence towers and shadow fields with the ability to utterly disorient attacking vessels and scour the sky clear of enemies in a blaze of light and ordnance. For centuries, this network has defended the Nexus and repelled would-be invasions from other Dark Eldar Kabals and xenos raiders alike. Control of the network remains the mark of the master of the Nexus, and the faction that holds the keys to its activation controls every vessel that wishes to land—or to leave.

Combined, these factors have kept the Nexus of Shadows hidden for centuries on the doorstep of the Imperium; a shadowed secret from which the Dark Eldar might plunder the worlds of man for their own dark pleasure.



## THE GAELAN SPHERE

The Gaelan Sphere, upon which the Nexus of Shadows was built, is an ancient relic of a long-forgotten age of technology. The size of a small moon, covered with towers and antennae, the sphere was crafted around a solid core, the remnants of some mineral rich asteroid that its automated systems are slowly eroding away as it adds more and more levels to the sphere. Neither the Gaelan Sphere's alien inhabitants nor those few explorers from the Imperium who have had a chance to study it know its true purpose. Some speculate it was crafted for the purpose of lengthy study of a system or sector, its primary goal the gathering of information over thousands of years. The little knowledge that anyone has uncovered about the sphere's largely self-sustaining systems and repair functions and the numerous sensors and communication arrays dotting its surface suggest that this theory has some merit. There are also those amongst the Adeptus Mechanicus who claim to have found a record of the Gaelan Sphere in an ancient binaric pictogram encoded in a damaged cogitator on the Lathe Worlds, and debates between techno-lexographers rage over whether this record suggests that it is of human origin, describes a date when the sphere was merely encountered by the Adeptus Mechanicus in the past, or is a blemish on the cogitator's most august memory caused by a coolant spill in M.38.

How the sphere came to enter the webway is also a mystery. Abandoned for untold ages, the sphere could have drifted through a web-gate or even been drawn towards one by the ancient programs and protocols of its cogitators seeking to study a breach in the webway that it perceived as a celestial phenomenon. Alternatively, it is possible that some unknown force moved it into the webway for some inscrutable purpose. Once it entered the webway, the sphere spent aeons drifting from one region to another before becoming trapped in a confluence of ancient forces and alien powerfields. Now, it floats in a relatively stable position, more debris of a forgotten age of enlightenment.

## DISCOVERY BY THE KABAL OF THE SHADOWED THORNS

It was Salaine Morn and her Kabal that first rediscovered the Gaelan Sphere and decided to put it to use. After being exiled from Commorragh, the Archon spent years wandering the webway with her fleet, raiding worlds and looking for a place to claim as her own. The sphere, with its well-hidden location and ancient technology, presented the perfect place for a new home. Unfortunately for Salaine, the sphere's defences and legions of servitor guardians were too numerous and powerful for her Kabal alone to overcome. Thus, Salaine forged an alliance with Zaergarn Kul and his Kabal of the Splintered Talon, and together they purged the city of its ancient human defences, destroying that which they could not control and sealing away the areas that they could not inhabit.

Even though their forces had secured a landing zone and deactivated the aging orbital defences, it was to take years for the Dark Eldar to carve out the areas where they would build their city.

As more Dark Eldar came to the Nexus,

new sections would be cleared of their ancient automated defences. Often the Dark Eldar would drive thousands of slaves into an area to identify these dangers, or simply to exhaust a turret's ammunition so it could be destroyed. Other xenos races were also allowed to settle in the Nexus as part of trading missions, though these aliens had to clear their own areas for inhabitation. The lasting result of this wanton conquest by the Dark Eldar and their allies is that many areas of the Nexus still show signs of battle, and the stripped remains of the combat machinery of the sphere is a common sight along its shadowed streets. Occasionally, the Nexus' old defenders rear their heads once again, but the Dark Eldar usually put them down swiftly.

## A CENTRE FOR SLAVERY

Almost immediately after the arrival of the Dark Eldar and its establishment as a port, the Nexus began to operate as a hub for trade and a base for raiding. Close to the Koronus Expanse and the Calixis Sector, it opened up fresh opportunities for slavers and worlds that before had been out of reach or too dangerous to raid using the fractured remains of the webway. The Nexus of Shadows quickly grew in size and wealth on the backs of its slaves, despite the fact that most Dark Eldar of Commorragh at least openly shun the cursed place and the outcasts who live there. The xenos of the Koronus Expanse and the renegades of the Screaming Vortex have no such compunctions, however, and have found the Nexus to be a useful place to trade and congregate, a place far from the reach of the Imperium and utterly hostile to its agents. Salaine welcomed such factions into her city on account of the wealth and influence they offered, as well as the added protection it afforded her against those who would try and take the city from her. Unfortunately for Salaine, it was not an outside force or an alien that was to oust her from power. In the end one of her own, Zaergarn Kul, usurped her, and exiled her once more into the webway before she could do the same to him. For many of the inhabitants of the Nexus this change in power meant little, especially for the slaves, to whom one Dark Eldar Archon is much the same as another.





## DENIZENS OF THE NEXUS

The Kabal of the Splintered Talon controls the Nexus of Shadows, though it cannot hold power without the aid of the Withered Blade and its leader, Anyalra. The influence of the Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns, Salaine's Kabal, also lingers in the city, and the mercurial loyalties of many Dark Eldar who inhabit the city could easily shift to back Salaine's faction again if her return to power seemed imminent.

### KABAL OF THE SPLINTERED TALON



*"Treachery is the birthright of our people, and the nature of our existence. Our grasp upon the things we desire, then, must be so tight that our nails split and our very talons bleed."*

—Zaergarn Kul, Archon of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon

Zaergarn Kul was a favoured son of Commorragh for many long centuries, but eventually the wheel of fortune inevitably turned against him and he angered a number of more powerful factions within the Dark City. He led his Kabal into exile instead of seeing it destroyed, and immediately began seeking a new refuge from which he could consolidate his power. To this end, he sought Salaine Morn, whose Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns had recently uncovered the Gaelan Sphere, and offered her much-needed strength of arms to help claim it. When Zaergarn joined with Salaine, he brought with him a substantial number of warriors and slaves, and a raiding fleet of numerous vessels easily the equal of what Salaine already possessed. Soon after, Zaergarn even enticed a Haemonculus named Drecarus and his coven, The Sutured Helix, to settle in the Nexus of Shadows and provide their unique services to the Kabals. Together, these forces were more than sufficient to carve out a portion of the Gaelan Sphere for their new home.

Since then the Splintered Talon has only increased in strength, especially in the aftermath of Salaine's expulsion and the destruction of much of her Kabal, when Zaergarn's forces took complete control of the Nexus. The Splintered Talon absorbed many of the warriors and slaves of the Shadowed Thorns, and many of Salaine's allies and contacts beyond the Nexus found new partnership with Zaergarn. As a result, this Kabal represents the single largest force within the Nexus and effectively controls its streets and the skies above its twisted towers. Practically every Dark Eldar the Explorers encounter within the Nexus are part of the Kabal, or closely allied with it, and present only at its pleasure.

Zaergarn's absolute orders are handed down to his Kabal from within his ziggurat, though he has not been seen by any outside of his fortress since Salaine sent an assassin to strike him down during their first conflict over the Nexus. Still, there are numerous lords and captains who act in his name in the Shadowed Arteries, the Bonespires, and other parts of the Nexus. Drecarus in particular is the face of the Kabal, and when important business needs to be dealt with, it is this Haemonculus who usually appears.

The warriors of the Splintered Talon are distinct from the other denizens of the Nexus in their blood-hued armour and their use of specially modified and bladed splinter weapons. Where they travel, locals and visitors alike take heed and stay out of their way, lest they suffer the xenos' cruelty. All members of the Splintered Talon, and even those slaves bound to their service, know it is their Archon who rules the Nexus, and treat all others accordingly. Anyone the Explorers encounter outside the Kabal will warn them that it is never a wise idea to challenge the warriors of the Splintered Talon, since there is no one brave or foolish enough to stop them from doing as they please. Still, despite their dominance over the Nexus of Shadows, the Kabal of the Splintered Talon can hardly be bothered to police every part of the city, and rarely deign to set foot below the surface of the sphere or at the outskirts of the settlement.

### CULT OF THE WITHERED BLADE



*"I have been on a quest for perfection since before you existed, and the quest will go on long after you expire. The only question is, will your death be another step on the road to the consummate kill?"*

—Anyalra, Succubus of the Cult of the Withered Blade

Standing in the shadow of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon is the Cult of the Withered Blade and its Succubus, Anyalra. This Wych Cult forms the backbone of the slave trade, and has seen its rise and prosperity since being brought into alliance with Salaine and Zaergarn in the early years of their settlement on the Nexus. Though less numerous and influential than the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, the Cult of the Withered Blade is no less vital to the running of the city, and it is the games of the Shadowspine Pits, along with the beasts and slaves that they keep, that draw much of the trade that keeps the Nexus alive and keep the wicked



urges of the Dark Eldar residents of the Nexus sated. Unlike Zaergarn and his Kabal, the Cult of the Withered Blade does not overly concern itself with what occurs outside the walls of its arenas, and is interested only in traders and the acquisition and preparation of slaves for combat. Part of this is offering the sadistic entertainment that the Dark Eldar find so vital to their existence, and which other inhabitants of the Expanse are also drawn to out of morbid curiosity. Anyalra has no true appetite for the politics that drove a wedge between Zaergarn and Salaine (though at the time she did find herself caught up between the two warring Archons), and is now more than content that Zaergarn chooses not to leave the ziggurat and that the Kabal of the Splintered Talon takes no active role in her affairs.

What does interest the Salaine and her Cult of the Withered Blade is the blood sport that the Cult hosts within the Shadowspine Pits, and the acquisition of suitable slaves and beasts for these games. The Cult is more than happy to trade with the Explorers if they can offer such fighting stock, and invites them to witness their goods in action if the Explorers engage in business with the Cult. However, Anyalra is generally unreceptive to the idea of Salaine returning, or any ambitions to depose the Zaergarn, simply because it would be a change in the status quo. As with many Dark Eldar leaders, Anyalra prefers to wait and see who is near to triumph before casting her lot with anyone hoping to command the Nexus, and does not make a play herself as long as her slave trade and precious games are left undisturbed.

## KABAL OF THE SHADOWED THORNS



*"Plan for a century if you must, but strike in the blink of an eye. Once you move, you can never stop until you reap your victory. Or you die."*

—Salaine Morn, Archon of the Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns

Zaergarn took most of the Dark Eldar of the Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns and added them to his own forces after Salaine's defeat and her escape into the void. However, there still a few lurking within the city who have the remnants of allegiance to the Shadowed Thorns and would still hold fealty to Salaine should she return. Whether or not these elements come into play during the course of the adventure is up to the GM, and he can use these lingering sentiments of loyalty, in

both Dark Eldar or the other inhabitants of the Nexus, to aid the Explorers if they are in need, or if they seek them out for help. Such loyalists will usually be individuals, some in the service of the Splintered Talon, keeping quiet and hiding their true

feelings about the rule of the nexus. Such individuals will also be unlikely to go out of their way or put their lives at risk (they would not have survived this long with such noble ideals, which are anathema to the treacherous Dark Eldar anyway) but could provide information or subtle assistance (such as opening portals within the ziggurat or sneaking the Explorers weapons if they are captured) if offered the right incentives.

## LESSER FACTIONS

The Nexus is also home to a smattering of aliens and humans, all with their own agendas and reasons for seeking a dark corner of the galaxy. The GM can use any or all of these factions to aid or hinder the Explorers' ambitions in the Nexus. To make this task easier for the GM, each faction has a section detailing its goals and how they might interact with the Explorers both as allies and as enemies.

GM can also include other groups in the politics and trade of the Nexus, as it is possible that almost any race with a stake in the Koronus Expanse might also have a hand in the Dark Eldar city. This could include more trade-focused factions like the human reavers or slavers, or even agents of heretical tech-cults, risen from the Screaming Vortex to study the Gaelan Sphere and harness its power.

## CULT OF THE FALSE DAWN

The proximity of the Screaming Vortex and its tainted worlds means that the Nexus is host to followers of the Dark Gods, come from the depths of that cursed place looking for slaves or wealth, or keeping alliance with the Dark Eldar for more nefarious purposes. The Kabal of the Splintered Talon has no particular love or hatred for the denizens of the Vortex, and allows them to enter the city if they are willing to trade and do not undermine its power. It does nothing to regulate their behavior so long as they do not make war on the Kabal, and so there are more than a few dark corners of the Shadow Arteries where the walls are daubed with obscene symbols and Chaos cults have taken root.

Among these renegades are the followers of the False Dawn, a ragtag Chaos cult led by a disposed Scintillan noble named Henaris Tinis, drawn to the Nexus by stories of *The Soul Reaver*. Henaris believes that *The Soul Reaver* contains spirits trapped in its crystalline hull, and wants to sacrifice them as morsels to the Dark Lord of Pleasure. His cult has grown since arriving in the Nexus, at first only comprising of a number of ragged exiled Calixian nobles and their servants. Over the years, its numbers have swelled in small but steady increments as wanderers and heretics, some of them from the worlds of the Vortex, others fleeing persecution in the Imperium, have found a haven in the Nexus. Even so Henaris lacks the strength to reach *The Soul Reaver*, let alone destroy it in the ritual that he believes will send its ethereal prisoners into the Warp and the waiting arms of Slaanesh. Thus far, his grand plan has remained purely conceptual, in part because his cult is fractious and divided in its loyalties to the Ruinous Ones and in part because, for all his heretical dabbling, he lacks any true sorcerous power.



When the Explorers arrive he sees them as a gift from the Keeper of Secrets and a path to his goal and the glory of his god, making efforts to harness their power and ally himself with them. Even if he does not learn of their intent right away, he is interested in their status as Rogue Traders and any ties they might have to the Calixis Sector. Explorers with any kind of lore relating to Scintillan or Calixian nobility will probably recognise the name of the House of Tinis, and might know more about Henaris and the reason for his exile than he would like.

**Goals:** The Cult of the False Dawn wants to sacrifice the spirits in *The Soul Reaver* to Slaanesh, to earn favour and bring the gaze of their god upon them. To do this, they need to loot the vessel of the crystals and stones containing its many spirits and then destroy them in an intricate ritual. The Cult of the False Dawn is also particularly interested in Neija Tromejien, and Henaris believes her to be just the mystic lynchpin he needs to perform the ritual, though she is largely uninterested in his schemes and does not share his loyalty to the Ruinous Powers.

**As Allies:** Henaris is no great warrior, only a thin, ageing man with the bearing and dilapidated finery to prove his noble heritage but few of the resources his family once possessed. His cult is hardly a military organisation, and contains sundry unpleasant individuals who have rejected Imperial society to live on the outskirts of the Nexus of Shadows where they can freely worship their dark gods. Henaris' greatest asset to the PCs is that he has lived in the Nexus for years and knows many of its secrets. Winning Henaris' support requires at the very least passing a **Challenging (+0) Charm Test**, though Explorers openly affiliated with the Imperium suffer a -30 penalty to this Test and Explorers openly devoted to Chaos receive a +30 Bonus to the Test. Henaris offers his support no matter the results of the Charm Test (or their other social interactions with him), but if he is not convinced of the Explorers' piety to the Ruinous Ones, he plans his betrayal from the start.

**As Enemies:** This cult is driven to recover *The Soul Reaver*, and though Henaris wants the glory for his cult alone, he might be driven to call upon aid from the Vortex and other followers of the dark gods if it looks like his prize is slipping through his fingers. This can bring some very nasty individuals and creatures to the Nexus, which will cause problems for both the Explorers and Henaris himself if he is brought face to face with a true champion of Chaos.

**Assets:** Henaris has roughly 20 ragged cultists at his beck and call, plus another 200 who nominally pledge fealty to him but will only obey so long as it is convenient and in their own interests as well. These forces are scattered throughout the Nexus of Shadows, mostly occupying the Shadowed Arteries, and hear a great deal that might otherwise be ignored or forgotten. He can gather this rabble into a small army over several days, although few are trained soldiers. Henaris and his followers use the statistics for Renegades from page 373 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook, though Henaris receives a +10 bonus to his Fellowship and Intelligence Characteristics and training in the Common Lore (Dark Eldar), Common Lore (The Nexus of Shadows), and Speak Language (Dark Eldar) Skills.

## SONS OF COMMORRAGH

While the Kabal of the Splintered Talon is the dominant power in the Nexus, covert trade with Commorragh and other Dark Eldar settlements means that many agents of Kabals and Cults from beyond pass through the Nexus of Shadows. Most of these are minor servants of Archons with no personal power of their own. Some, though, are nobles who like to do their business themselves, or pirates who have no fixed bases and moor their ships at the Nexus to refuel and refit. These Dark Eldar are free agents within the web of xenos politics, who may aid or hinder the Explorers depending on their own petty goals and ambitions.

The GM can use these aliens as a lesser faction in their own right and a source of NPCs to influence the actions of the PCs allies and the other Dark Eldar within the city, and also to reinforce the notion that the Dark Eldar do not represent a single unified race with a single leader or motivation. Among these xenos can be nobles who still favour Salaine, or who Zaergarn had wronged in the past and might be willing to offer some small aid to the Explorers to see him removed from power. Equally, some might be interested purely in profit, appearing as a dark reflection of the Explorers' own ambitions—captains and pirates with no masters or oaths but those they make aboard their ships.

## CONSORVANA RING

The trade in alien artefacts and forbidden tech is a very profitable one, and there are numerous individuals and organisations within the Expanse that ferry these items into the Imperium, usually via the Calixis Sector. In the Nexus, these powers are collectively known as the Consorvana Ring, as they are led by a woman named Sirissa Consorvana, an ex-Imperial Navy master of ordinance and a veteran pirate. In conjunction with contacts in Footfall, Sirissa has been living in the Nexus of Shadows for several months, after following the slave trail to its location and realising the wealth in alien technology and ancient artefacts that it offers. In this short time, she organised the various scavengers and other traders into a loose alliance and began the shipping of goods back to Footfall while also eliminating several Cold Traders peddling goods from the Nexus who have refused to join her "association of friends."

Although Sirissa has been able to strip out technology from the sphere and trade with the Dark Eldar, she has yet to make a really big score, and has been looking for something to make the hardships of living in the Nexus worthwhile. Recently she learned about *The Soul Reaver* and the stories of its power, though she does not know it is a ship, only that it is hidden somewhere in the ziggurat. She has set her sights on stealing *The Soul Reaver* as an end game to her time in the Nexus, once she has plundered what wealth she can from the ruins of the sphere and its Dark Eldar inhabitants. With such an artefact, she believes she could set herself up for life, buying a moon or a ship for herself, and has no interest in the item itself, only the coin it offers.

The arrival of the Explorers prompt her to advance her plans if she learns they are also after *The Soul Reaver*. Out of all the denizens of the Nexus, she is the most likely to recognise the Explorers if they have visited Footfall



before or made any kind of name for themselves in the Koronus Expanse. Even if she does not know them, it is likely, given her long list of contacts, that they share friends (or enemies).

**Goals:** The Consorvana Ring is after wealth, plain and simple, and Sirissa wants the payday that *The Soul Reaver* can bring. If things go badly and she is unable to take sole control of the alien vessel, she will settle for a piece of the reward for taking *The Soul Reaver*. Sirissa also wishes to help liberate her colleague in the Cold Trade, Anja Shen, from the Shadowspine Pits to clear an old debt she owes Captain Shen. Of course, she would prefer to do this without angering the Dark Eldar of the Nexus (at least until such time as she decides to make her final departure from the Nexus with as much of their treasure as her ships can carry).

**As Allies:** Sirissa only has limited information on the Nexus to offer the PCs, given her short time living there. However, her resources are quite considerable given her connections to the Koronus Expanse, and she can offer much in the way of outside support. As an ally, she can get things for the PCs from beyond the Nexus or help them to move about the city undetected aboard the transports and ships of the Consorvana Ring Agents—for a price, of course. Sirissa offers information freely enough, but winning her support enough for her to commit real resources requires passing a **Difficult (-10) Charm Test**. If the Explorers fail this Test (or their other social interactions with her), Sirissa offers her support anyway, but merely sees the Explorers as another set of marks to trade with and then rob at her convenience.

**As Enemies:** The Consorvana Ring values the chance to make profit above all else, and if it looks like they can make more thrones turning the Explorers in or betraying them, then this is the course they will take. They are averse to excessive risk, however, and usually retreat in the face of substantial force.

**Assets:** Sirissa uses the profile for a Void Pirate Captain from page 373 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook. At her disposal, she has two Sword-class Frigates and a single Jericho-class Pilgrim Vessel (profiles for these vessels can be found on 194-195 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook). She also has two squads of five Oathsworn Bodyguards who protect her person and carry out her tasks across the Nexus of Shadows (the Oathsworn Bodyguard profile is on page 372 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook).

## THE REAVERS' MOON

The Nexus of Shadows is a completely fabricated planetoid, its surface a complex web of structures, towers, and supports reaching down to a core of churning machines and grinding engines. Designed by forgotten architects, its once ordered surface and chambers, purposeful towers and sensor farms, and its symbiotic collection of manufacturing facilities have fallen into decay and disarray over the long ages it spent floating alone in the void. In this time, it has strayed from its ancient purpose, whole sections of the artificial world going dark and falling into ruin or becoming twisted and warped by machines gone mad or the flawed programs of cogitators that endlessly fabricate and assemble unnecessary sections with no purpose but to add to the maze of chambers and towers already cluttering up their sectors. On top of the sphere's own damaged systems and

the cancer of time that steadily eats away at its structures and systems, it has sustained damage during its long and lonely voyage through the void. Impacts from asteroids and debris have punched holes in its surface or toppled its towers, radiation and celestial energies have scoured areas clean of life making them deadly to any who stray into them, and in some areas the sphere has picked up alien passengers, creatures that arrived on floating debris or drifting hulks and have since multiplied and flourished in the dark corners of the sphere.

The greatest change to the Gaelan Sphere has been, of course, the arrival of the Dark Eldar. Before these sadistic xenos arrived to make the moon their own, it was little more than a ghost ship of ponderous size, adrift in the void and haunted by mindless beasts and half-mad machines. It was Salaine and her Dark Eldar who saw the potential of the cursed world, and so they overcame its initial defences, carved out a place for themselves in the most intact region of the sphere, and thus created what was to become the Nexus of Shadows. They then took over the numerous towers and other structures, adding to them and building their own until they had planted the first seeds of a city. From there, they moved outwards and downwards through the disused and empty spaces of the sphere, driving the aimless machines and alien predators before them. Where they encountered strong resistance or came into contact with a zone toxic to life or too heavily defended by automated defences, they turned in another direction. After all, the sphere contained thousands upon thousands of kilometres of chambers, corridors, and levels to explore and claim, and there was no need to expend unnecessary resources on overcoming a particular area or zone. The result of years of this expansion has been a strange meshing of the Dark Eldar city into the ruins of the Gaelan Sphere. The Dark Eldar twist many existing structures and systems for their own ends while completely ignoring others, leaving many untouched and abandoned even in the heart of their settlements. The arrival of other alien races further expanded the borders of the Nexus, and these new species and factions claimed their own areas amongst the ruins, frequently far from the Dark Eldar city, in remote regions that provide better protection and, above all, privacy. Even with the decades of expansion and settlement by the Dark Eldar, the majority of the sphere remains unexplored and ignored, especially the lower levels, where the ancient machines still hold sway and only the foolish delve too deep.

## ZAERGARN S ZIGGURAT

The grandest and most powerful fortress in the Nexus of Shadows is the palace of the Archon Zaergarn Kul, chosen by Salaine and Zaergarn when they first claimed the sphere and still the most impressive structure in the Nexus. This is the centre of power for the Kabal of the Splintered Talon and the heart of Dark Eldar rule on the Nexus. It is heavily guarded and fearsome to behold, its dark towers jutting up above the city, festooned with curved, bladed buttresses and crowned with jagged spikes. Only the most favoured of the city's inhabitants are invited into the palace, and only the most fortunate are given the chance to leave again. Most who live in the shadow of the Archon's palace need not concern themselves with direct dealings with the rulers of the Nexus, making their trades with lesser Dark Eldar or other xenos, and staying clear of the lethal machinations of Dark Eldar politics.



The palace of Zaergarn Kul is a terrible sight, and is as much a mark of his domination over the Nexus as it is a seat of power. Though he rules beside the Cult of the Withered Blade and relies upon them for their slaves and the games they oversee, he commands the true military power within the Nexus. Zaergarn Kul also holds the key that powers the Razor's Web, the Nexus' potent orbital defence network of armed towers and deadly arrays, giving him complete control over all shipping in and out of the Nexus. The ziggurat is also the Splintered Talon's primary garrison and armoury in the Nexus, and thousands of Kabalite Warriors fill its lower levels along with the scores of jetbikes and Raiders that can sail forth and crush any resistance within the city at a moment's notice. Those who enter the ziggurat must pass through the garrison to reach the inner chambers if they wish an audience with ruler of the Kabal. This is a carefully rehearsed routine Zaergarn planned long ago, so that any who deal with him have to first see up close the extent of his military might and the number of troops and machines he can unleash should he so choose.

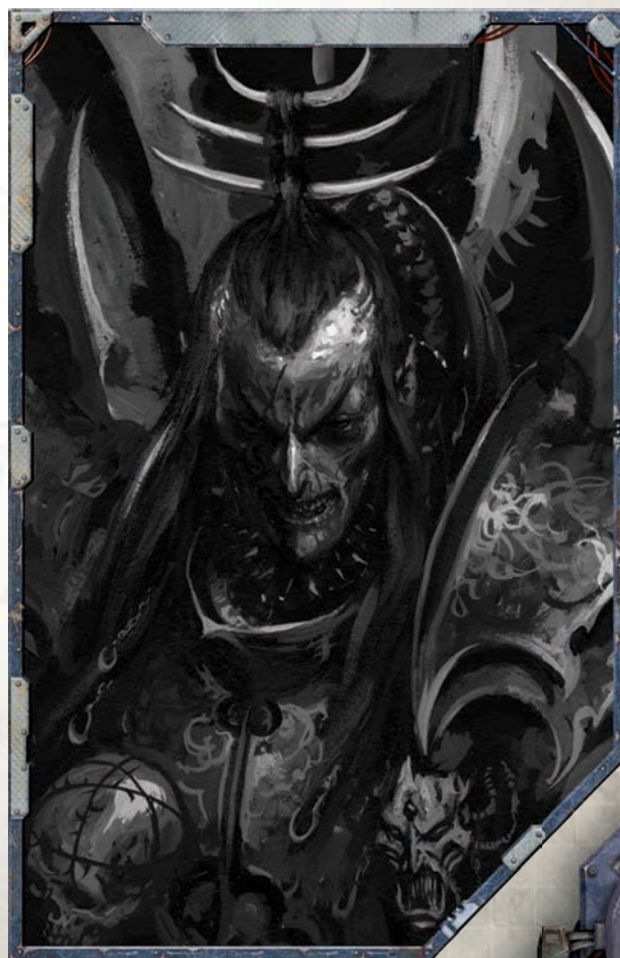
The ziggurat towers over the Nexus, and can be seen from almost any point in the Dark Eldar holdings on the sphere, a grim reminder of the gaze of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon and its power over everyone who dwells in his shadow. Zaergarn chose it for both for its size and the defences it already had in place. Shaped like a broad, blunt tooth and now festooned in Dark Eldar spires that completely obscure its original form, the ziggurat is one of three vast command bridges those who originally created the Gaelan Sphere built to house its officers and captains and guide the sphere through space in the same manner as a ship. In this way it shares many of the characteristics of the bridge of a voidship, only on a much larger scale. When Salaine first encountered the sphere, she noted the three ziggurats as likely places to settle her Kabal and create a centre for her new city. However, upon closer inspection when she returned with Zaergarn to found a Dark Eldar settlement, she noted that of the three, one was mostly destroyed and had collapsed internally into the depths of the sphere, while another was too close to an irradiated zone to make a good location for a city. This more than any other factor determined the location of the Nexus of Shadows on the Gaelan Sphere.

Originally both Salaine and Zaergarn shared the ziggurat between their Kabals. In the early days of the Nexus, there was enough space for both forces to comfortably spread out throughout the structure without needing to cross paths too often for comfort. As the city grew with the Dark Eldar's influence over the sphere, the control of the ziggurat became more of a problem, especially in those regions with functioning links to the sphere's defence network. At first both Archons expanded their zones, building towers and extending chambers, turning the ziggurat into a nightmare of twisting corridors and towers linked by spidery catwalks. Eventually tensions and shadowy politics and tactics turned into open conflict, and Zaergarn forced Salaine and her Shadowed Thorns from both the ziggurat and the Nexus.

When Zaergarn took over the ziggurat, he expanded and moved into those areas the Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns once controlled. Now, years later, his Kabal has cemented its power and control of the structure, turning it into the most

defensible part of the Nexus, almost impregnable to any form of external attack. The outer layers of the ziggurat, as well as its lower levels, form the Splintered Talon's garrison and are a vast collection of training pits, living quarters, slave pens, and weapon stores. Tightly controlled and well-patrolled, intruders and interlopers are generally attacked on sight. Even slaves who become lost trying to complete their master's wishes are shot should they encounter a patrol, as the Dark Eldar do not wait for an explanation and are usually happy for some target practise. In these areas, Drecarus has also reactivated and augmented many of the sphere's original defences, especially in the lower levels where the Kabal's minions do not deign to spend too much time. These range from turrets to caches of creatures modified by Drecarus' mad art to cover many blind spots in the ziggurat's defence. Even without defences and patrols, the outer skin and lower levels of the ziggurat are a confusing maze to those not familiar with their layout. In addition to the new corridors and chambers added by the Dark Eldar, many others have been sealed up or were destroyed during the initial fighting to take the structure and have never been repaired. The only sure way to find a way to the inner chambers is to follow a patrol or somehow tap into the ziggurat's ancient control systems, which still slumbers in some of its damaged consoles.

The upper levels of the ziggurat were once a collection of sensor arrays and vox towers that guided the sphere through the void. Since the arrival of the Dark Eldar, most of these towers and viewing domes have been turned into mansions for the Archon's favoured nobles or garrisons for his airborne troops. The Dark Eldar have built their own signature spires, as well





as a complex network of bridges across the entire crown of the ziggurat, giving it the appearance of a skeletal claw wrapped in a spider's web reaching for the inky sky. The towers are also where the ziggurat's defences are strongest. In addition to the sky-borne troops that garrison them, there are dozens of turrets and gun-domes armed with weapons capable of hitting ships in orbit. For the Dark Eldar, the towers and their mansions are a playground where the Kabal of the Splintered Talon entertains important visitors and holds special private games high above the city. The largest central tower is also home to the Deathworld Gardens, a collection of some of the most dangerous and aggressive plants from a dozen worlds all carefully selected to create a beautifully fatal arboretum and tended to by Drecarus and others from his Coven. From gantries above the gardens, guests of the Kabal watch the fearsome flora in action as they devour, poison, or dissolve terrified slaves set loose in the elegant hellscape. Other towers house countless other grim collections, including both an extensive menagerie and grotesquery gathered over many years of raiding and experimentation by Drecarus.

The deep chambers beneath the ziggurat are the most difficult to access and are protected with numerous checkpoints and defence layers The Sutured Helix installed. There are few slaves in these chambers except those of the Haemonculi's making, and those unfortunates sent to serve there inevitably end up on the Haemonculi's experimentation tables. Zaergarn's inner chambers sit in the heart of the ziggurat, several kilometres above the shadowy domain that the Kabal of the Splintered Talon cedes to The Sutured Helix. *The Soul Reaver*, the greatest prize of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon and the

key to their dominance over the Nexus of Shadows, also rests here. Long ago, Zaergarn tore a hole in the ziggurat and built around the ship, sealing it into the city and hiding it away. It was *The Soul Reaver* that gave Zaergarn the edge to defeat Salaine (see **A Mournful Tale** on page 31) and it provides the ziggurat with the power it needs to run its extensive network of defences. *The Soul Reaver* powers the Razor's Web, without which the Nexus would be largely defenceless. Almost seven kilometres in length and several kilometres across, *The Soul Reaver* takes up a large portion of the inner chambers, the corridors connecting to the ship and its prow forming the foundation of Zaergarn's central tower that reaches up above all the others. The transition from the ziggurat into the vessel is distinct and unmistakable. Cold, grey plasteel walls with blunt pressure doors and heavy bulkheads covered with Dark Eldar accoutrements and spires give way to blackened, rotting arches, fluted supports pock-marked by twisted carvings, and jewelled fixtures that pulse with a sickening glow, marking the shift from one nightmare domain into another.

It is here in the heart of this alien ship that Zaergarn is said to reside, where the sound of whispers permeates the air and a strange sense of disquiet lies heavy on the ground. Only the most favoured of his followers may set foot upon *The Soul Reaver*, and Drecarus' loyal Wracks guard every entrance, standing vigil with orders to kill any who might disturb the Archon. As a result, there are few who know what the interior of the ship holds, and fewer still who have seen more than a fraction of its chambers and rooms. Those who dwell in the ziggurat's inner chambers do, however, know that there is a power in the ship that any who must live near it can feel. It is even whispered that the ancient vessel somehow it has a hold on the Archon himself.

## THE SOUL REAVER

Discovered in forgotten depths beyond the Halo Stars, *The Soul Reaver* is a vessel of alien design and ancient, eldritch power. Zaergarn first came upon the ship when he was seeking allies to use against Salaine. The Archon had dealings with all manner of aliens and creatures of the void, trading everything from slaves to secrets to look for an edge to use against his rival or a weakness to exploit. One such deal was with a Stryxis trader who offered him the location of an alien vessel discovered far beyond the Halo Stars. The Stryxis described how the ship was somehow possessed and housed a great angry spirit that the Archon could use against his enemies, though he claimed own crew had been too afraid to try salvaging the ship for themselves. Upon hearing the tale, Zaergarn suspected what this lost ship might be and sent out vessels to recover it. When they returned with the ship, his suspicions were confirmed as he stepped on board and inspected the ship's graceful design and the thousands of faintly glowing stones that studded its interior. The ship was too badly damaged to traverse the void effectively, corrupted and diseased from untold ages afloat in the darkness, but for the Archon's own purposes it was perfect. With the aid of his Haemonculus Drecarus, Zaergarn was able to harness the energy within the ship and turn it to his own ends, naming it *The Soul Reaver* in honour of its dark new power over the energies of death.





*The Soul Reaver* is a conduit for souls, and gives those that understand it the ability to channel energy from death. It is also a great store of spiritual force, and its thousands of strange, glowing stones can be tapped for power to fuel Dark Eldar technology, especially in the webway where such energies flow more freely. During his struggle with Salaine, Zaergarn used *The Soul Reaver* to fuel the ziggurat's defences and the Razor's Web, giving him the edge he needed to defeat her even after she had disabled the generators that normally granted the Razor's Web its killing power. Afterwards, he integrated the damaged vessel into his palace and linked its power to the rest of the city, giving him unprecedented control. The Kabal of the Splintered Talon uses the twisted the crystal and bone structure of *The Soul Reaver* as a conduit for spiritual energy that gains power from every death that occurs in the Nexus, giving the ruling Kabal a near limitless supply of power and an iron grip upon everything that transpires in his city.

## THE SHADOWSPINE PITS

Beyond the great ziggurat from which the Kabal of the Splintered Talon rules the Nexus, the towers and great shadowed metal canyons of the Dark Eldar city sprawl out in all directions. Among them is the second largest cluster of structures inhabited by the xenos: the Shadowspine Fighting Pits. This is the domain of the Cult of the Withered Blade and the centre for their cruel games and the thriving slave trade that keeps the Nexus alive. The Withered Blade has reshaped the pits set around the sphere's gravity-maw into a series of descending levels, dropping deep into the heart of the artificial moon. On each level they host games, house slaves, and train gladiators. Some levels are also given over to wild beasts and the breeding of monsters. These areas are separated from the rest of the pit by vast ancient blast doors and bulkheads, though accessible should the Withered Blade choose to release the monsters within. The Dark Eldar have incorporated many of the old mechanisms of the gravity-maw into their fighting pits, allowing them expand or combine their arenas with the pull of a lever or open gateways deep into the burning heart of the sphere to drop slaves and beasts screaming to their deaths.

The gravity-maw was originally constructed so that the Gaelan Sphere might devour asteroids to feed its deep furnaces and turn them into raw materials. Several kilometres across, it is a vast opening in the side of the sphere, surrounded by a wall of suspensor arrays and mag-grapnel towers which the Dark Eldar have largely converted into living quarters or places from which to view the games. Given that the asteroids

that the sphere once consumed would vary dramatically in size from only a few hundred metres across to more than a kilometre or two in diameter, the gravity-maw is not constructed as a single gate covering the tunnel into the sphere's interior. Instead it consists of dozens of gates, each able to open independently, with even more gates at lower levels all the way down into the heart of the Gaelan Sphere. The gates are all set into the superstructure of the sphere with steep sloped sides (often surrounded with teeth to catch debris) making each gate a natural pit and perfect for arena combat. The Cult of the Withered Blade makes extensive use of these gates and levels to create dozens of arenas, including a single central arena (known as the Bloodgate) that can be opened, closed, and otherwise manipulated at will.

The ancient systems that allowed the sphere to trap and devour asteroids and other huge space debris are still largely intact, and over the years the Withered Blade has learn to use these systems to control the gravity within the arena. This allows them to move objects from lower levels to upper levels without the need to transfer them through internal corridors and chambers. This function has

proven especially useful for the transportation of wild beasts, allowing the Dark Eldar to literally levitate them into the midst of gladiatorial combats.

It also allows the Withered Blade to stage unique matches where gravity is either increased or decreased. This can mean fighters struggling around the arena as the weight of their bodies increases to the breaking point or allowing them to leap across its surface in long, slow arcs as they hack at each other midair. In some of the "events," slaves are simply hurled into the arena to be battered by rapidly changing gravity conditions, flying about and crashing into each other and anything else the Dark Eldar choose to throw into the maelstrom of bodies and debris. Bets are then placed on which slave will live the longest or whether a vicious beast can catch a preset number of slaves as it flails about in near weightlessness, trying to close with its equally disoriented prey.

As with the Archon's ziggurat, the spires surrounding the gravity-maw and the levels beneath its many gates are filled with Dark Eldar warriors. In this case, it is the Wyches and beasts of the Withered Blade that fill its halls, training and patrolling their domain. Unlike the Archon's palace, the arenas are filled with huge numbers of slaves, far more than anywhere else in the Nexus. The Shadowspine Pits are often the first place slaves are brought when they arrive in the Nexus, and the pits are the location of much of the slave trade





between the Dark Eldar and other xenos. Anyalra oversees much of this, and certain levels and gates are reserved for the trading of slaves, with places for buyers to spectate as the Dark Eldar display their wares and take them through their paces. The most dangerous of the slaves or beasts are kept to the lower levels to keep them away from the Dark Eldar and the business of the arena until they are ready. Being held in the lower gates also means that should Anyalra decide a slave or beast is too much trouble, she can always open the gate and drop it into the blazing heart of the sphere.

## THE BONESPIRES

The Dark Eldar city has spread across a significant portion of the sphere and the aliens have turned the designers' original works to their own advantage. Among these modifications are the Bonespires, so named by the Dark Eldar on account of their broken and ruined appearance, like the rotted bones of a beast poking up through a carcass of desiccated flesh and decaying skin. Once part of the huge array of sensor towers, vox relays, and pict arrays that allowed the Gaelan Sphere to study the void around it, the Bonespires are now the domain of the most powerful and prosperous of the Dark Eldar. Those that have not yet earned the honour of joining the Archon in his ziggurat must make do with residing high above the shadow streets of Nexus in gardens and manors purpose-built to suit their own dark designs. Like the towers above the ziggurat, the Bonespires have a dark and hateful appearance, covered in bladed balconies and twisted spikes and needles jutting from their black plasteel stems. Bridges like strands of glittering razor wire reach out between the Bonespires, linking them together, and some towers rise up in tight knit clusters; these are the domains of powerful lords and traders, cut off from the rest of the city below.

Many important visitors to the Nexus never see more than the tower gardens of a given lord, making their contracts and securing their goods without ever descending into its depths or setting foot in the Archon's ziggurat. The Bonespires are not without their dangers, and though the lords of the towers might not play for the fate of the Nexus itself, they can be just as vicious as any Archon when it comes to trade or control of the best spires. Given that the effort to clear out and refit a tower is extensive and costly, many lords prefer to take towers from their rivals to expand their holdings. For the most part, there is little open war between lords, as the Kabal of the Splintered Talon is quick to respond to anything that would cause too much disruption to his city, but any and all other means are accepted. Thus, a lord may spend years undermining a rival with assassination, trade disruption, and sabotage before he is in a position to subjugate his foes without excessive overt violence or damage to the Nexus.



## SPIRES OF DEATH

When Salaine and Zaergarn first created the Nexus of Shadows, they had to overcome the Gaelan Sphere's automated defences. A squad of Salaine's specialist warriors his was achieved this through destroying the power relay stations that supplied the energy to the network and creating an undefended area around the ziggurat and the future site of the Dark Eldar city. After the city had been established and the ziggurat's system corrupted, the Dark Eldar repaired the power relay and used the network to defend the city. Over decades the network was then augmented, and many of its damaged or depleted armaments were replaced with Dark Eldar technology. While Salaine and Zaergarn ruled together, they shared joint control of the defences, and their tenuous alliance required them to only be able to activate the power relay together. When conflict between the Archons finally came into the open, Salaine took no chances—her elite lieutenants once again disabled the generators, and thus she considered herself safe from the defences and brought her fleet in close to the city to provide support. Unknown to her, Zaergarn had already acquired a new source of power for the defences: *The Soul Reaver*. The result was the destruction of much of Salaine's fleet and the ascendance of Zaergarn to power.

The Kabal of the Splintered Talon still uses *The Soul Reaver* to power the network, known as the Razor's Web due to its lacerating effect on vessels caught within it, and he has complete control over its activation and direction. The actual turrets, batteries, and launchers of the Razor's Web are spread



out across the city, though the bulk of the defences are still centred around the ziggurat. To date, the Splintered Talon has used the Razor's Web only a handful of times, and usually only as an object lesson or to create a more favourable deal by making a show of power, but its threat remains very real and has kept all but the most foolhardy of raiders at bay.

## SHADOW ARTERIES

Hidden in the shadow of the Bonespires and far beneath the lofty heights of the Archon's ziggurat are the debris-choked streets of Nexus. Known as the Shadow Arteries, they are the secret paths in and out of Nexus, where aliens and humans alike can exist away from the constant gaze of the Dark Eldar or the machinations of their lords and nobles. However, it is a mistake to think that the Arteries are less important to the life of the city than the Bonespires or arenas, and as the name suggests a great deal of vital information and goods flow into and out of the city through them. It is also the perfect environment for visitors to conduct business without interference from the Dark Eldar or from other outside agencies; few places are further from the eyes of the Imperium than the ruined streets of a city controlled by a hostile xenos race and hidden in a fold in space. As a result, aliens brush shoulders with worshippers of the Dark Gods, and exiles, men and women who can find no other safe harbour or are wanted for unspeakable crimes, wander free. Here the worst of vices and pastimes can go unnoticed. The Shadow Arteries are completely lawless, the rulers of the Nexus caring little about what transpires there as long as it does not damage their trade or cost them too many of their troops. Those who walk the Arteries do so at their own risk and accept they might not walk out again.

Physically, the Shadow Arteries are just below the surface of the Gaelan Sphere, in the uppermost chambers and filled with atmosphere either by the wheezing bellows of the sphere, salvaged components from voidships, or xenos machines of bizarre and arcane manufacture. There is no starlight in these places of shadow, the passages lit only by the occasional lumen pad of the sphere or the guttering fires of those who dwell there. When the Dark Eldar founded the Nexus, they settled the towers and upper levels of the sphere, ignoring the lower levels and the "streets" between the raised structures—areas where chambers sunk deep into the hull of the sphere or had little or no presence above ground. In time, as more races and inhabitants arrived in the Nexus, these areas were taken over and a clear divide was created between those in the towers (which became known as the Bonespires) and those below. This was the birth of the Shadow Arteries and became the first port of call for anyone reaching the Nexus who did not have the favour of a Dark Eldar lord or noble and could land on a tower rather than the sphere's surface. In the decades since their first habitation, the Arteries have spread out below the city, its areas seized and

controlled by different factions, and crude borders established. Much of the place has also been cannibalised for scrap, and along with the already ruined state of the Arteries, this means that in the areas beyond those controlled by a faction or powerful individual, the tunnels are filled with debris and rubbish or overrun by vermin brought to the Nexus in the holds of cargo ships. These areas are also filled with thieves and brigands, the cast-offs of the Nexus who survive on the waste thrown down from above and on those travellers foolish enough to stray into their nests or too close to their hunting grounds. Below the Shadow Arteries, the sphere's corridors are a true wilderness, filled with all manner of horrors as one passes beyond the smoky haze of the Arteries.

## OUTLANDS AND BONEYARDS

The majority of the surface of the Gaelan Sphere and the vast artificial caverns below remain outside the control of the Dark Eldar. These dark zones stretch out from the alien city on all sides for hundreds of kilometres and comprise vast areas where no living soul has wandered for thousands of years. While some visitors to the sphere have led expeditions into these ancient wilds, the Dark Eldar have largely ignored them, expanding out from the edges of their domain as needed and focusing on the protection and trade of their city. As a result, what lies out in these dark regions is unknown, though it can be surmised that there are areas where the ancient systems of the sphere still hold sway and their archaic machines continue to clank and grind away at their endless tasks. It is also likely that solar damage, strong radiation, or virulent toxins have rendered some zones completely impassable to any living thing. Likewise, some areas have become overrun with parasites, collected by the sphere during its millennia of drifting through the void and can be just as deadly to casual trespassers as an area bathed in poisonous vapours or corrosive lakes.

The result is a dark wilderness in which the Nexus stands out as a guttering flame of civilisation, albeit of the most twisted variety. Visitors to the Nexus seldom have need to venture into the outlands, as any chance of profit that might be found in long-forgotten halls or vaults are outweighed by the dangers which plague such regions. However, there can be many reasons to leave the city, either to escape the Dark Eldar or find a secret path that requires using old tunnels or hidden chambers. Occasionally individuals might be exiled into the outlands as a punishment, though this is usually reserved for Dark Eldar, and only if the lord or noble passing the sentence would find it amusing to see their kin cast out. Most transgressors are simply killed, and the exile of slaves is considered a waste when their death will occur unseen and unheard by the Dark Eldar. It is also possible to stray into the outlands by accident, as the Nexus has no clear boundaries or walls (especially in the depths of the Shadow





Arteries). A traveller might well become lost and wander for days, meandering far from the city if luck is against him and only realising his error when he stumbles into an irradiated zone or falls prey to some deep, dark predator. A trip into the outlands, intentional or otherwise, could easily provide material for an entire (if highly dangerous) separate Endeavour, and any sort of xenos horrors that the GM chooses could be present, waiting within the wastes.

## THE SUB-LEVELS

The majority of the Gaelan Sphere's workings sit below its surface, and hundreds of levels of tunnels and chambers reach down deep into the core. Many of these are completely inaccessible to travellers, and exist only to keep the sphere's great machines working, while others are incomplete, still yet to be finished by the armies of fabricator-engines that fill the sub-levels. Of those shafts that remain, though, there are still countless of kilometres of rooms and corridors stretching all across the sphere and connecting all of its major components and regions. The greatest concentration of these sub-levels exists around the three great command ziggurats, and each is connected by a subterranean highway with central corridors large enough to fly a ship through. Connected to these are thousands of additional junctions and tunnels, which link the ziggurats to other regions and zones, making it possible for a person to get to almost any point on the sphere from one of the great command pyramids, given enough time.

Time and age have taken their toll on the sub-levels, and many have collapsed or become sealed, ancient protocols closing heavy blast doors or purging sections to the void to protect the ziggurats against infection, radiation or infiltration by parasites. This has made what was already a confusing maze of tunnels and crossroads even more of a labyrinth, and almost impassable without at least some idea of the network's original layout. Once, the ancient builders may have used the sphere's systems to guide them through the tunnel system, the sphere's great engine governing all transit between the ziggurats and beyond, but now only the most skilled can coax the wizened systems to life and get it to point the way. Even then the machine's functionality has degraded and is largely incomplete. Like the mind of an old man, it remembers some things but has forgotten others, and using it as a guide comes with its own perils, such as the risk of being sent into a zone without air or gravity or one where the tunnel no longer exists at all.

In addition to the confusing layout and vast distances found in the sub-levels, the chambers and tunnels are also filled with other dangers. While a traveller might be misled into thinking they are deserted, it is only their size which makes them appear so, and they can prove just as deadly as the crowded streets of the Shadow Arteries or the courts of the Dark Eldar lords. The primary peril of the sub-levels is the sphere's own ancient defences, which its builders put in place to protect the sphere against invasion and infiltration.

Though they have fallen into disrepair and the systems are but a shadow of their former strength, there remain many zones where deadly machines still lurk in sealed compartments or gun turrets still

scan corridors for foes. Alien parasites and predators have also come to call the sphere their home over the centuries. Some of these have claimed hunting grounds where they prey on each other or subsist on the detritus cast down from the Nexus of Shadows. These beasts and vermin vary wildly in size and shape, having drifted in on space debris or in the holds of hulks that have crashed into the sphere's surface, but all are dangerous to the unwary traveller.

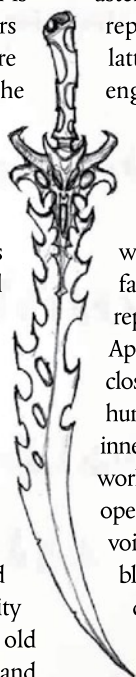
## FUSION CORE

The core of the Gaelan Sphere is hollow, a vast, open chamber of astronomical scale, surrounded by a shell of machines, engines, and generators wrought into the original asteroid from which the sphere was hewn. Some of the tunnels, and most notably the gravity-maw that the Cult of the Withered Blade uses as its arena, lead down into this core, and it is possible for an individual to come out of a corridor to find himself standing on the edge of a great abyss looking down into what first looks like a blazing sun. This "sun" is the fusion core itself, where ancient machines break down asteroids and other debris for usable minerals to fuel the repair and construction of the sphere. Held together by a latticework of suspensor arrays and mag-gantries, a dozen engines each with the power to drive a star ship direct their white hot flames into a single point, melting and burning rock and debris to dust and vapour.

Even the Dark Eldar are only passingly aware of the significance of the fusion core, having no interest in its workings as long as it poses no threat to their settlement. In fact, the core keeps the sphere alive and slows its decay by repairing its systems and maintaining its structural integrity. Approaching the core unshielded is not unlike trying to get close to a tiny star, and even standing on the viewing gantries hundreds of kilometres away where the outer shell meets the inner void, the heat is almost unbearable. To access the intricate workings of the core or study them, an Explorer would need to open the gravity-maw and approach in his vessel, even then his void shields would be pushed to their limits as he neared the blazing heart of the sphere. For these reasons, on top of the difficulty of locating and reaching the sphere, it has been untold aeons since human eyes fell on the core and were able to comprehend its grand and terrible design.

## CORPSE PYRES

When Salaine and her Kabal carved out the region that would become the Nexus, they fought scores of battles against the local defenders: armies of ancient machines tasked with protecting long-dead masters. The sluggish and rusted defenders were no match for the advanced technology and tactics of the Dark Eldar, and thousands were destroyed as the aliens swept clean the tunnels and rooms that would become the Nexus. The aftermath of the battle saw piles of broken machines in almost every part of the Nexus, clogging up pathways and choking doors. Eventually, the Dark Eldar used slaves to move this detritus out of the city, to areas now known as "the Corpse Pyres," the dumping grounds for the denizens of the Nexus.





The Corpse Pyres also attract scavengers. Though searching the rubble is dangerous work, for the bodies and rubbish are prone to shifting suddenly and drowning the unwary in the husks of the dead, it promises great rewards. Functioning weapons and technology lie hidden in the pits, beneath the shifting landscape of corpses. Xenos predators also flock to the Corpse Pyres, which creates yet another threat to those who would remain overlong hunting for treasure. While these opportunists dig for ancient technology and treasure, hungry eyes and slaving jaws may well be following their every movement.

## THE CENTRAL CONSTELLATION

The Gaelan Sphere was created to be largely automated, its millions of machines guided by global systems, perhaps to ease the burden on its living crew, allow its captains to focus on the task of studying the stars, or perform some other forgotten task. Time and decay, not to mention the damage the Dark Eldar have done, have destroyed much of the cogitator network that once governed the sphere, while in many areas the machines slumber awaiting the return of the sphere's strangely missing crew. The central cluster of governing systems, called the Central Constellation by some hereteks who inhabit the sphere, still works to a degree, and maintains the primary functions of the sphere, such as its repair and maintenance and the control of the fusion core. There is no single location where the constellation is located. Rather, it uses systems where and when they are needed, activating regions only for a time until its tasks are complete. If the constellation were to have access to more power, it could awaken more fully and restore control over the sphere, though to do so it would need fresh fuel for the fusion core (such as a sizeable asteroid or voidship) and the Dark Eldar have severed all its connections to the gravity-maw.

The constellation is aware of the presence of the Dark Eldar and their city and recognises them as intruders, though it lacks the means to expel them. For their part, the Dark Eldar do not see the constellation as a thinking machine, but rather a set of preordained responses to their presence, and consider it no threat. When an undiscovered automated defence system suddenly appears in a "safe" zone and kills some warriors, they see it only as the random fits of an ancient and failing machine, which was flawed in its creation. Thus far, it remains outside the means of anyone, Dark Eldar, human, or alien, to master the constellation, its vital systems hidden away in secret rooms across tens of thousands of kilometres of tunnels and rooms.



# NEXUS OF SHADOWS ENCOUNTERS

The Nexus is a vast place. From the lofty towers of the Bonespires to the dark depths of the sub-levels and outlands, it covers kilometres of tunnels, chambers, and zones. Wherever the Explorers go, the GM should try and impress upon them the contrast between the areas ruled by the Dark Eldar, which incorporate a mix of alien and human design, to those beyond their control where ancient decaying corridors give way to dust and debris-choked rooms often untouched by the living for centuries.

The GM can use **Table 0-1: Nexus of Shadows Encounters** for ideas and inspiration any time the Explorers are travelling through the Nexus of Shadows during the adventure and beyond.

TABLE 0-1:

## NEXUS OF SHADOWS ENCOUNTERS

| 1d100 Roll | Encounter               |
|------------|-------------------------|
| 01-12      | Active Defences         |
| 13-18      | Alien Scavengers        |
| 19-24      | Ambush                  |
| 25-27      | Blood Pit               |
| 28-41      | Dark Eldar Patrol       |
| 42-45      | Dark Eldar Hunters      |
| 46-50      | Disrepair               |
| 51-58      | Elite Dark Eldar Patrol |
| 59-64      | Elite Wych Cadre        |
| 65-69      | Escaped Beasts          |
| 70-73      | Escaped Slaves          |
| 74-79      | Forgotten Defences      |
| 80-82      | Noble Visitors          |
| 83-88      | Outland Predators       |
| 89-92      | Rad Zone                |
| 93-00      | Wych Hunting Party      |

## ACTIVE DEFENCES

Beyond the reaches of the city, the Gaelan Sphere has extensive defences against intrusion, many of these still perfectly operational. If the Explorers are on the alert for traps, they detect them by passing a **Challenging (+0) Awareness Test**, and can disable them with a **Challenging (+0) Tech-Use Test**. If the Explorers do not act quickly to disable the defences, they open fire with a number of guns equal to the number of Explorers. Each automated gun uses a Ballistic Skill of 30, and ceases to function when hit by an attack from one of the Explorers. The guns use the following profile: (Heavy; 90m; -/-/5; 1d10+7 I; Pen 2; Clip 50; Reload 2 Full).



## SCAVENGERS

The Nexus is full of those feeding off the slave trade and the waste discarded by its merchants. The Explorers encounter a group of scavengers (which can be of any race, even human) hunting the sub-levels for anything of value. These scavengers pose no real threat to a party of Explorers, and make a scrabbling retreat if attacked. However, if the Explorers choose to deal with them, especially if they offer trade for the rubbish these unfortunates carry, they may be able to discover information that will aid them in goals such as reaching *The Soul Reaver*. These scavengers could be unaffiliated, or be a group of either Sirissa's crewmen scavenging for artefacts for the Cold Trade or of Henaris' False Dawn cultists performing some clumsy ritual (see **Lesser Factions** on page 12 for more information on the sub-factions of the Nexus of Shadows).

## AMBUSH

A group of thieves and brigands have ambushed the Explorers looking for easy loot, though sorely underestimating their targets. This is a group of scum that is twice the number of the Explorers (or three times their number if they are Rank 4 or above), who will try to surprise the PCs by picking a good place to lie in wait before attacking. Cowards, the scum flee if more than half of their number perish. See the profile for Scum found on page 371 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook for desperate characters such as these.

## BLOOD PIT

There are places in the Nexus where the Dark Eldar pile the butchered remains of household slaves or those who fought in the arenas for later disposal. The PCs have found such a place, a pit filled with the dead. The GM can use this encounter to introduce NPCs, such as half-dead slaves buried in the corpses, or offer up information, something on a corpse that helps them find their way through the Nexus of Shadows. Additionally, the GM should have every Explorer make a Fear Test against a Fear Rating of 1 upon discovering one of these massacre scenes.

## DARK ELДАР PATROL

A cadre of Splintered Talon Kabalite Warriors (see page 122 for the Kabalite Warrior profile) is either patrolling an area for the Archon or on its way to another part of the city. There should be twice as many Kabalite Warriors as there are Explorers, or three times as many if the Explorers are Rank 4 or above. For especially powerful groups of Explorers, the GM can add heavy weapons and vehicles to the patrol. These Dark Eldar are not inherently hostile to the Explorers unless they have been told to look for such a group, but question the presence of any aliens on the Nexus. The Explorers must pass an **Ordinary (+10) Charm, Deceive, or Blather Test** to avert the scrutiny of the patrol or else make an Opposed

Silent Move or Concealment Test versus the Awareness of the Dark Eldar to avoid their notice. If the Explorers fail either Test by more than 3 Degrees of Failure, the Kabalite Warriors open fire.

## DARK ELДАР HUNTERS

Dark Eldar sometimes venture beyond the boundaries of the city in search of sport, hunting down escaped slaves or trying their skill against the sphere's defences. This is a group of Splintered Talon Kabalite Warriors (see page 122 for the Kabalite Warrior Profile) or Withered Blade Wyches (see page 124 for the Wych Profile) equal in number to the Explorers and accompanied by two Khymerae used for hunting (see page 134 for the Khymera profile). These Dark Eldar are not inherently hostile to the Explorers unless they have been told to look for such a group, but question the presence of any aliens on the Nexus. The Explorers must pass a **Difficult (-10) Charm, Deceive, or Blather Test** to avert the scrutiny of the patrol or else make an Opposed Silent Move or Concealment Test versus the Awareness of the Dark Eldar to avoid their notice. If the Explorers fail either Test by more than 3 Degrees of Failure, the Dark Eldar or their beasts attack.

## DISREPAIR

The Explorers encounter area where the sphere has been damaged and Dark Eldar never repaired. This could be collapsed floors or ceilings, wedged doors, or massive piles of debris clogging a tunnel. On their own, the Explorers would usually be able to navigate these areas given a bit of time. However, if they are being pursued or are otherwise in a hurry, this could become a significant obstacle. To pass the obstacle in a timely manner, each Explorer must pass a **Challenging (+0) Climb, Contortionist, or Acrobatics Test** as appropriate to get through, or a single Explorer with appropriate equipment must pass a **Routine (+20) Demolition Test** to blast away the debris or an adjoining wall (though, obviously, an explosion makes a great deal of noise).

## ELITE DARK ELДАР PATROL

The Explorers encounter a cadre of Kabalite Trueborn from the Kabal of the Splintered Talon (see page 123 for the Kabalite Trueborn profile) either patrolling an area for the Archon or on its way to another part of the city, which may or may not attack on sight depending on the actions of the Explorers. There should be as many Kabalite Trueborn as there are Explorers, or twice as many if the Explorers are Rank 5 or above. For especially powerful groups of Explorers, the GM can add extra heavy weapons and vehicles to the cadre. These Dark Eldar are not inherently hostile to the Explorers unless they have been told to look for such a group, but question the presence of any aliens on the Nexus. The Explorers must pass a **Hard (-20) Charm, Deceive, or Blather Test** to avert the scrutiny of the patrol or else make an Opposed Silent Move or Concealment Test versus the Awareness of the Dark Eldar to avoid their notice. If the Explorers fail either Test by more than 3 Degrees of Failure, violence ensues.

## ELITE WYCH CADRE

The way is blocked by a group of Withered Blade Hekatrix Bloodbrides (see page 124 for the Hekatrix Bloodbride profile), which may or may not attack on sight depending on the actions of the Explorers. There should be as many Bloodbrides as there are Explorers, or twice as many if the Explorers are



Rank 5 or above. For especially powerful groups of Explorers, the GM can add extra special weapons to the group. These Dark Eldar are not inherently hostile to the Explorers unless they have been told to look for such a group, but question the presence of any aliens on the Nexus. The Explorers must pass a **Hard (-20) Charm, Deceive, or Blather Test** to avert the scrutiny of the patrol or else make an Opposed Silent Move or Concealment Test versus the Awareness of the Dark Eldar to avoid their notice. If the Explorers fail either Test by more than 3 Degrees of Failure, the Wyches attack.

## ESCAPED BEASTS

A creature or number of creatures which have escaped (or been released) from their cages are wandering the tunnels of the sub-levels. This encounter can include single Khymera (see page 134 for the Khymera profile), or one Khymera for each Explorer if the Explorers are Rank 3 or higher.

## ESCAPED SLAVES

The Explorers encounter a group of 3d10 escaped slaves (see page 129 for the Tormented Human profile) who have been living in hiding. Fearful of discovery, they are willing to help the PCs in any way they can if they are not turned in, offering up what little they know of the Nexus of Shadows and the Dark Eldar to protect their freedom. Alternatively the Explorers could use them to gain favour with the Dark Eldar, sending them back to their masters for punishment. However, the slaves are unlikely to go back to a life of torment willingly.

## FORGOTTEN DEFENCES

Within the Nexus there are areas where battle has damaged the sphere's ancient defences, but they still function just enough to pose a temporary threat to passersby. These weapons are usually strewn around a site of obvious conflict, and the Explorers detect them if they pass a **Challenging (+20) Awareness Test** when entering the area. Unfortunately, given the damage that these turrets have suffered, they require an **Arduous (-40) Tech-Use Test** to disable. If the Explorers fail this Test, or linger too long after triggering the attention of the guns, they open fire with a number of guns equal to the number of Explorers. Each automated gun uses a Ballistic Skill of 25, and ceases to function when hit by an attack from one of the Explorers or after 1d5 Rounds. The guns use the following profile: (Heavy; 90m; -/-/5; 1d10+7 I; Pen 2; Clip 50; Reload 2 Full; Unreliable).



## NOBLE VISITORS

These are a delegation of humans or aliens come to trade with the Dark Eldar. It is likely that they want nothing to do with Explorers who the Dark Eldar are hunting, though the PCs might be able to use them as cover or hostages. If they are human, the GM can use them to bring in NPCs from the Koronus Expanse or Calixis Sector, or have them connected to Imperial organisations the party has dealt with before. Alternatively, if the GM does not have an NPC prepared for such an occasion, either Sirissa or Henaris can be a part of the meeting (see **Lesser Factions** on page 12 for more information on the sub-factions of the Nexus of Shadows).

## OUTLAND PREDATORS

More dangerous than the beasts that escape the arenas are those that live permanently beyond or below the Nexus. These horrors can take many forms, and the GM can use either the profile for a Khymera to represent it (see page 134 for the Khymera profile, and add +20 to Weapon Skill, Strength, and Toughness and +10 to its Wounds to reflect its feral status) or use a creature of his choosing, like a Warp Predator (Ebon Geist) from page 378 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook.

## RAD ZONE

Many areas in the sphere are toxic to life and dangerous even to enter. When the Explorers reach this zone, they become aware of high levels of radiation (void suit indicators or auspexes alerting them). Passing through such a zone requires a **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test** every hour to resist gaining a level of Fatigue that can only be removed by medicae treatment and ritual cleansing. The curative process requires an **Ordinary (+10) Medicae Test** and at least one full day outside of Rad Zones. A character who falls unconscious from this kind of Fatigue succumbs to the radiation and dies.

## WYCH HUNTING PARTY

The Explorers run across a cadre of Dark Eldar Wyches (see page 124 for the Wych profile), marauding through the lower depths of the city, which may or may not attack on sight depending on the actions of the Explorers. These Dark Eldar are not inherently hostile to the Explorers unless they have been told to look for such a group, but question the presence of any aliens on the Nexus. The Explorers must pass a **Difficult (-10) Charm, Deceive, or Blather Test** to avert the scrutiny of the patrol or else make an Opposed Silent Move or Concealment Test versus the Awareness of the Dark Eldar to avoid their notice. If the Explorers fail either Test by more than 3 Degrees of Failure, the Wyches immediately initiate hostilities. The patrol numbers twice as many Wyches as there are Explorers, or three times as many if the Explorers are Rank 4 or above. For especially powerful groups of Explorers, the GM can add additional exotic weapons.



# Nexus of Shadows

◦ THE ARCHON'S PALACE

CORPSE PYRES

HOLDINGS OF THE CULT OF  
◦ THE WITHERED BLADE

THE BONESPIRES

◦ SLAVE PENS

◦ THE SHADOWSPINE PITS

◦ THE SHADOW ARTERIES

THE SUB-LEVELS

THE FUSION CORE ◦





THE  
QUEEN OF  
SHADOWS

THE THORNS OF  
COMMORRAGH  
•  
INTO THE NEXUS  
•  
A DARK TWIST OF  
FATE



# CHAPTER I: THE QUEEN OF SHADOWS

*"The politics of my people are as the desires of kings compared to the selfish needs of children when measured against your 'empire' of man. However, even a king, or a queen, may from time to time find herself in need of childish things..."*

—Salaine Morn, Archon of the Shadowed Thorns Kabal

**T**he **Soul Reaver** centres on Archon Salaine Morn's plan to take back the Nexus of Shadows and destroy her rivals for control of this Dark Eldar outpost. For the GM, this means that how the Explorers meet Salaine, their relationship with her, and the kind of deal they strike with her and her Kabal have an overarching effect on the plot and its final outcome. The first part of the adventure therefore focuses on the PCs' meeting with Salaine, the formulation of a plan to take back her city, and the creation of some kind of accord between the Explorers and the Dark Eldar Archon. The GM can then use this foundation to influence other aspects of the adventure and the reactions of Salaine and other important NPCs, not to mention the final outcome of the adventure and any rewards the Explorers might garner for themselves.

There are numerous ways in which the Explorers can encounter Salaine Morn and her Kabal, and the GM should choose one that suits the nature of his group and plays to their ambitions and the desires of their characters, whether they are driven by the need for wealth, vengeance, or faith in the God-Emperor. Because Salaine is an alien, and a dangerous one at that, some groups of Explorers might have trouble dealing with her or find it difficult to trust her enough to even entertain anything she has to say, preferring instead to shoot first and praise the God-Emperor for their handiwork later. Therefore before the adventure begins, the GM should consider the best way for Salaine to meet the group and how a measure of accord, if not true trust, might be fostered between the Archon and the Explorers that can lead to them helping her further her plans and thus launch the adventure.



## THE THORNS OF COMMORRAGH

*"Humans employ subtlety when they lack the power to take what they want, but the Eldar are always infuriatingly subtle., no matter the power they wield. Forget this at your own peril."*

—Inquisitor Isamira Tiraske

**T**he adventure begins with the Explorers meeting the Dark Eldar Archon, Salaine Morn, and forming some manner of alliance or deal with her. How and where this occurs and why the Explorers would choose to make any kind of deal with a xenos pirate depends greatly on their own motivations, but Salaine is a cunning negotiator and driven by a deep desire for vengeance against her rivals. When she decides the Explorers are the people to help her get what she wants, she will make sure they come around to her way of thinking.

Presented here are a number of different ways in which the Explorers could come into contact with Salaine and the kinds of deals and offers she might make with the Player Characters. To help the GM decide the best way for his players to become involved with Salaine, these various possibilities are divided into ways in which the Dark Eldar could be encountered and the kinds of motivations Salaine tries to exploit to get the Explorers to help her in her plans. The GM should consider each of these encounters and motivations before the adventure begins and choose the ones that best suit his group. He can also use them as inspiration for his introduction to the Dark Eldar as a whole, altering them as necessary to suit the needs of his campaign or incorporating his own existing NPCs into them.

### DARK ENCOUNTERS

The Koronus Expanse is a vast and dangerous place, and during the Explorers' travels there are numerous ways in which they might encounter Salaine. She might engineer an encounter with the PCs upon hearing of their prowess, or others might offer up the Rogue Trader and his ship to the Archon. Several specific encounters that might be used to bring the Explorers' into Salaine's plot are listed below:

### AN ANOMALOUS ENCOUNTER

Immediately after translation out of the warp, the Explorers' vessel becomes trapped in a celestial anomaly that seems to be a swirling well of light in the void. A number of other vessels have been snared by this phenomenon, and are also locked in an orbit around it. This includes Salaine Morn's vessel, a Dark Eldar Torture-class cruiser, the *Promise of Agony* (see page 137 for the profile of a Torture-class cruiser). The GM must be careful throughout in this kind of scenario never to have Salaine truly at the mercy of the Explorers; she always has warriors on hand and she never seems quite as trapped by the situation as the Explorers, though a fair amount of this will be her natural confidence (see the **Roleplaying Salaine Morn** sidebar on page 29. Salaine offers her assistance in escaping the phenomenon; she has the knowledge required to break



both vessels free. Unfortunately, there are also several pirate vessels trapped in the anomaly's pull who hope to raid new ships to have entered their prison, and the Explorers must work with Salaine to disable these ships (either by boarding action, ship-to-ship battle, or some of both) so that they can steal one key component from each pirate vessel that Salaine needs to execute the escape plan. The pirate vessels use the profile for Hazeroth-class privateers found on page 194 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook.

If the GM wants, Salaine could even have engineered the situation that forces the Explorers to rely on her aid to escape. Perhaps she lured their ship into the anomaly, and remains in control of events despite her apparent predicament. If the GM does choose to have Salaine behind the Explorers' problems, then he should make sure that her duplicity only becomes apparent much later in the adventure rather than giving the Explorers the chance to discover they have been duped early on and derailing their chances of ever getting to the Nexus of Shadows as they turn on the Archon.

Salaine makes her deals with the Explorers before they are freed from the anomaly or returned to their ship to ensure that they understand that she is doing them a favour and expects one returned in kind. While it is possible that the Explorers might help the Archon out of mere kindness, Salaine is not so trusting nor so naïve and will make sure they understand the price of her aid before she gives it. The GM should not feel he needs to force the issue, though. If the Explorers are willing to go along with Salaine, or at least hear what she has to offer, he need only remind them of any agreements they might have made if they start to get cold feet. Once Salaine has the Explorers' ears, she then tries to seal the deal by making them an offer (see **Dark Desires** (page 29 for some of the methods and temptations that she might use to motivate them).

## DARK DEEDS REMEMBERED

Every Rogue Trader has a reputation either for good or ill, and it trails him like a vessel's warp-wake everywhere he passes. This reputation is more far-reaching than many a Rogue Trader even realises, and falls on the most unexpected of ears. For whatever reason, Salaine Morn has heard of the Explorers and their deeds and has decided they are precisely the kinds of individuals she needs to take back the Nexus. This could be because out of all the denizens of the Koronus Expanse, Salaine considers the PCs just right for the task, their past endeavours and the nature of their dealings with others meaning that they possess the proper mix of potential sympathy to her cause and the skills to complete it. Equally it could be that amongst all the members of her renegade fleet, she still lacks both a ship and a crew with the ability to crack the defences of the Nexus of Shadows and rip out *The Soul Reaver*, and the Explorers are merely the closest vessel on hand that might possibly come to her aid. Whatever the reason, Salaine attempts to set up a meeting with the Explorers to try and make a deal with them.

Salaine is as wary of the Explorers as they are likely to be unsure of her, and she first wants to assess her potential allies before she meets them. As such, she sends a human intermediary, Skallag Egil, a pirate captain from her renegade fleet who approaches the Explorers with a mysterious offer when they set in at an appropriate port. Skallag invites them



to a seedy local establishment to find out if they are suited to this task. The Explorers have the chance impress Skallag, and can do this by succeeding at a **Challenging (+0) Charm Test** to win him over with their words or an **Arduous (-40) Carouse Test** to prove their mettle otherwise. If they succeed on one of these Tests, the Explorers convince Skallag of their worthiness. If they fail, he insists upon inspecting their vessel first, and the Explorers must demonstrate its power to him in a suitable fashion. Once Skallag has been convinced, one way or the other, he brings them to Salaine to discuss the specifics of the job. Skallag does not volunteer the fact that Salaine is a Dark Eldar Archon, but makes no particular secret of it if asked once the Explorers are in his good graces.

The GM can also use this method of introduction to link the Endeavours within **THE SOUL REAVER** to another adventure. It could be that one of the Explorers' previous Endeavours was in fact a task set for them by Salaine (in which case, she might approach them more directly). Alternatively, she might ask an intermediary like Skallag to observe the Explorers while they complete a short Endeavour (either created by the GM and Explorers or as part of another adventure entirely). At the end of the adventure, the intermediary then tells the Explorers of an interested party who has observed their skill and wants to meet with them.



## BROTHERHOOD OF BLOOD

The Explorers' encounter with Salaine might not have anything to do with the Archon's plots and plans. The GM could use an existing NPC, either an ally or a rival, to draw the PCs into joining the renegade fleet and only then have them meet with Salaine. For years, the Archon has been gathering forces to take back the Nexus, at first recruiting Dark Eldar allies and then looking further afield when these sources have dried up. With her own Kabal still greatly reduced after the battle with the Kabal of the Splintered Talon that ousted her from the Nexus, she needs troops and ships to see her plans come to fruition. She has been manipulating and recruiting pirates and renegades from across the Expanse for some years now, selecting only those strong enough to be of use to her plan. While many of these vessels and captains are barely worthy of the name, being merely bloodthirsty aliens and degenerate humans looking for profit, some powerful individuals may have sensed true potential for wealth in the alliance.

The NPC with connections to the Explorers is one such individual, and along with his ship (either his own or one acquired in some other way), he has joined with the Archon. He offers an invitation to the PCs, perhaps as a favour returned, bringing them into what he perceives as a chance at great wealth. If he is a rival, it might instead be a subtle ploy to see the Explorers in the vanguard of the assault on the Nexus and claim their Dynasty when they fall in battle. The NPC can be almost anyone the Explorers have previously come into contact with, though it should be either someone they trust or someone of significant power (like another Rogue Trader) whose offer is more difficult to refuse.

Once the Explorers join the renegade fleet and make their first meeting with Salaine, she instantly recognises their potential for her plans and makes them a favourable offer. She also sees them as the final piece she needs to begin her attack on the Nexus and pushes her plans into action. The GM can then have the NPC who brought them to Salaine either fade into the background, or more interestingly, use him to complicate matters as the adventure progresses. Certainly, if the NPC is a fellow Rogue Trader, he probably insists on being party to the plan to steal *The Soul Reaver* and seeks to join the Explorers as they try and infiltrate the Nexus. This can lead to all manner of complications, not least should the NPC choose to side with the Kabal of the Splintered Talon once he sees the reigning Kabal's power first hand.



## THREATS AND TREATIES

While Salaine is more inclined to coax the Explorers into an alliance with offers of wealth and power, in certain circumstances she might decide to get their aid through coercion. The GM should only consider this path if making any kind of

alliance with the Dark Eldar would be completely against the motivations of the group. If for instance the Explorers have close ties to the Ministorum or Puritan elements of the Inquisition, they might never consider willingly working for a xenos, and certainly not one as dangerous and repulsive as a Dark Eldar Archon. In this instance, the GM can present a situation in which the players must do the Archon's bidding because it represents the lesser of two evils.

The means of coercion should be such that it prompts the Explorers to action but also does not simply provoke them to attack Salaine directly. No group of players likes being told what to do or feeling that they are powerless to alter their fate, and so the GM should go to lengths to engineer a situation in which they believe that doing Salaine's bidding will lead them to a chance to both achieve a tangible goal for themselves or a greater good. The GM can achieve this in a number of ways: Salaine might know the location of something of value to the Explorers that they have lost and refuses to reveal it until they have stolen *The Soul Reaver*. This should be something of immense value to them (like their Warrant of Trade, a lost loved one, or a holy relic of St. Drusus, for example) and it should also be essentially out of their reach without the Archon's help. She could alternatively hint at a future attack by the Kabal of the Splintered Talon upon one of their worlds, which threatens to massively impact their Profit Factor, but again withhold the key information until the Explorers assist her. Whatever it is, the GM should maintain the impression that if the Explorers travel to the Nexus and try to steal *The Soul Reaver*, they eventually get their chance to both get what they want and repay Salaine for her manipulation. Particularly zealous Explorers might also be tempted with the chance to destroy the Nexus of Shadows, or at least disrupt the Dark Eldar's trade networks.

## TEARS OF THE MACHINE GOD

The Adeptus Mechanicus has long had an interest in the Gaelan Sphere, and has over the centuries dispatched Explorators into the Koronus Expanse to find it. The most recent of these was Magos Domos Agnelain, who though he found the location of the long-lost sphere but also fell prey to the Dark Eldar who inhabit it and was enslaved. Domos' expedition is recent enough to still live in the memories of the Adeptus Mechanicus of the Calixis Sector, and there are numerous Magos on the Lathe Worlds and beyond who still wonder at his disappearance. The GM can use this plot hook to lead the Explorers to a meeting with Salaine and an alliance to infiltrate the Nexus, whether as fully-fledged members of the Archon's renegade fleet or as part of a mission from the Adeptus Mechanicus to recover Domos and locate the Gaelan Sphere.

The GM can start by having the Explorers receive an invitation to the Lathes from the Mechanicus, and from there have a meeting with high-ranking members of the Calixian Machine Cult. The Explorers then need to follow clues and piece together Domos' trail as he left the Calixis Sector and ventured into the Expanse, which requires a **Challenging (+0) Inquiry Test** on a Mechanicus world or a **Difficult (-10) Logic Test** with Domos' logs and then a **Hard (-20) Navigation Test** to actually reach his last known destination (though the Explorers receive a +20 bonus to this Test if they



## GM GUIDANCE: ROLEPLAYING SALAINE MORN

Archon Salaine Morn is a prominent NPC throughout this adventure and how she deals with the Explorers, and is dealt with by them, will have a significant effect on how events occur. The key thing to remember when running Salaine is that she is an alien who hails from a self-involved and sadistic species that shares few if any of the morals with humanity. While she can be trusted not to betray the Explorers unless it is directly and unquestionably to her own benefit, she never regards them as her equals, either. Despite the fact that she needs their assistance, she always views them as tools to complete her task and never as true allies. Salaine is completely consumed with her desire to recover control of the Nexus and enact her vengeance on Zaergarn Kul, and this remains at the core of all of her motivations. She is willing to risk personal danger and discomfort, and might even adopt a certain degree of humility if it means achieving this goal, though she will not sell her life for it. As long as the Explorers are useful to her (which they should be for the majority of the adventure) she treats them as valuable tools, with exactly as much respect and cordiality as required to get them to dance to her tune.

When roleplaying Salaine, the GM should try to repeatedly remind the Explorers just how alien she is to them, in case they forget they have made a pact with a Dark Eldar. Apart from her cruel beauty and elegance, which no human could hope to emulate, she also only has a limited grasp of human culture. The GM can use this to have “lost in translation” moments where she misunderstands or is misunderstood by the Explorers. This will be most obvious when it comes to matters of morality, considering that Salaine sees nothing wrong with torture and killing or enjoying the suffering of others. In fact, many human concepts like compassion and mercy are lost on her, and she might even think the Explorers are trying to make a joke should they speak against slavery or cold-blooded murder. Such culture clash incidents can help to reinforce that Salaine’s ambition and sadism are not deviant characteristics, as they would be in a particularly wicked human, but are ingrained in her on a normative and even physiological level. She, like all other Dark Eldar, does not merely enjoy the suffering of others, but actively requires it to sustain herself. Whether these misunderstandings draw the players’ interest, hatred, or even pity, they can provide interesting opportunities for roleplaying during the campaign.

succeeded on both of the previous Tests). These Tests may be repeated as necessary, but the Explorers should encounter complications, resistance, or other snags after each failure. The advantage of using this method of introduction is that it allows the GM to introduce information about the sphere before the PCs reach the Nexus, and makes the players more sympathetic to Domos when they finally meet him. It can also be spun out into an adventure in its own right and makes for a good way to segue a campaign that is currently based in or near the Calixis Sector into the Koronus Expanse.

Once the Explorers follow the trail into the Expanse, they encounter Salaine, either stumbling on the location of the renegade fleet or drawing her attention when they start asking a few too many of questions about the Gaelan Sphere. From this point, things can proceed depending on the nature of the Explorers and could lead to either a change in their plans—forsaking the search for Domos to seek profit through alliance with the Archon—or using such an alliance as a means to an end to rescue the lost Magos. This path might also be useful for groups loathe to work with xenos, since recovering the lost Tech-Priest is an admirable goal for those faithful to the God-Emperor or the Omnisiah, and Salaine’s presence and plot would be a necessary evil to achieve it. Another NPC, either from the Explorers’ own histories or from those trapped on the Nexus of Shadows and described in this book, could serve in Domos’ place as a similar impetus to launch the adventure.

## DARK DESIRES

Salaine Morn has dealt with dozens of alien races, including humans, and has a keen understanding of what can motivate such creatures, even if she does not always understand why. She offers the Explorers just enough to get them to do what she wants, whether or not she ever intends on delivering.

## BLOOD MONEY

The most straightforward way to entice the Explorers into a deal with Salaine is profit. By taking over the Nexus and destroying the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, Salaine will be able to offer the PCs a substantial amount of wealth (provided they are not too picky about its source). For many crews, this is probably enough, and she need not go much further, and even if she does need to convince them to aid her in a different way, money is still likely to be a part of any deal. Exactly how much and what form this profit takes is up to the GM (see **Profit and Achievement** on page 94 for more guidance on Profit Factor rewards for stealing *The Soul Reaver* and helping Salaine take power), though it will most likely be rooted in the lucrative slave trade of the Nexus.





## A FEAST OF VENGEANCE

All Rogue Traders have enemies and scores to settle, whether it is against an individual or organisation that has wronged them personally or someone that slighted their dynasty in centuries past. Salaine can offer assistance in completing this vengeance once she is in control of the Nexus of Shadows. With its resources and the aid of the restored Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns and Cult of the Withered Blade, she will be able to lend a substantial force, or exceptionally skilled assassins, to the Rogue Trader's cause. The GM could even have had her research the Explorers and their enemies and have some names on hand when she makes the offer. This can be especially appropriate if the GM has an NPC or two who have been causing the Explorers pain in their campaign, and the offer to assassinate those individuals or destroy their power-base might be more of a draw than simple money alone. Of course, once Salaine is in control of the Nexus and the assassins dispatched, what happens next is up to the GM, and could even be an adventure in its own right.

## FORBIDDEN TECH

Dark Eldar do not have the same restrictions on their use and understanding on technology as the Imperium and the generally close-minded notions of its citizens. The GM can use the opportunity to gain of powerful alien technology (be it personal weapons, void ship components, or something else) to bribe the Explorers into action if raw monetary wealth alone seems too hollow a reward. This can be a good way for the GM to introduce technology into his campaign or enhance the Explorers' vessel if he wants, and as with all things touched by xenos, brings with it its own set of problems and adventure possibilities. If the GM chooses, he could even offer the Explorers something they would never otherwise have a chance to obtain, like a functioning Dark Eldar vehicle or ship, which they can then add to their dynasty and use in future Endeavours. However, even possessing such a device, let alone using one, is a heavily proscribed act, and the Explorers should be warned not to bring it into Imperial space.

## WORLDS UNCHARTED

Salaine has travelled far and wide across the Koronus Expanse and beyond, visiting places no human ship has ever seen. During this time she has gathered hundreds of star charts and secret routes through the webway. She might offer some of these charts to the Explorers if they are not overly concerned with wealth or are averse to profiting from the slavery of the Nexus. What these charts show and where they lead is up to the GM, though they could conceivably mark out many unsettled worlds ripe for profit or the location of ancient and forgotten treasures. The charts might also shed light on the webway within the Expanse, and with the right Eldar technology alongside the maps, might even allow the Explorers to use the webway to reach certain far-flung destinations, cutting down their transit time and even reducing their exposure (and therefore danger) from the warp.

## AN ALIEN ALLIANCE

Archon Salaine Morn has gathered to her a small army of Dark Eldar, alien mercenaries, and human pirates to aid her in her recovery of the Nexus. The size and make-up of this fleet is up to the GM and can be as large or small as he chooses. The purpose of the fleet is to give Salaine the strength to oppose the Kabal of the Splintered Talon and have a suitably spectacular battle in the final chapter when her fleet clashes with the forces defending the Nexus. It also gives Salaine more presence and power when dealing with the PCs while also allowing her own Kabal to appear diminished and struggling to survive. The renegade fleet should be a motley band of vessels and crews, which can have representatives from almost any of the denizens of the Koronus Expanse or beyond. The GM can also use the fleet to reintroduce races or NPCs that might have appeared earlier in his campaign, or which he wishes to use later as plot hooks for further adventures. The Explorers should stand out among the fleet, however, as individuals of power and means (this is, after all, why Salaine has chosen them to infiltrate the Nexus) with the most impressive ship and the most capable crew.

## THE RENEGADE FLEET

Once the PCs have become acquainted with Salaine (through one or more of the ways detailed above) she invites them to a council of her allies (which includes the remains of her Kabal and the fleet of pirates and renegades she has gathered) and tells them of her plans to take back her city, which was so foully taken from her. The GM can have this first meeting play out in a number of ways, depending on how the PCs have come to join the Dark Eldar fleet, though Salaine tries to make a memorable first impression and gives a display of power during this encounter by showing her dominance over her fleet, and demonstrating the reason why she should rule the Nexus. Thus, the meeting will most likely take place on her ship, *Aeon of Torment*, in her audience chambers. The GM can read or paraphrase the following when the PCs are first ushered to these chambers by her bodyguards:

*You are ushered into a huge vaulted chamber by masked alien guards, their wickedly curved power glaives and black, pitiless eyes carefully following your movements. Under a grand dome of shadows and cold, hard stars, a lithe alien warlord sits upon a throne of thorns and blades, her ghostly pale skin and graceful beauty standing in stark contrast to the darkness and twisted carvings of tormented faces adorning the floors and walls around her. Flanked by two tall, armoured guards she gazes imperiously down upon you and those around you; glancing about the audience chamber, you can see other captains and ship-lords gathered in groups before the Archon, equally unsettled by the presence of the Dark Eldar, but ready to make an alliance with this woman and her race for the chance at profit, glory, and great reward.*

In this first formal encounter with Salaine, the GM should establish the parameters of a deal with the Explorers and strike a pact between them and the Archon. Using the motivations and rewards mentioned above, the GM should make sure that by the time the Explorers depart they know why they are aiding



the Dark Eldar (what they are getting out of the deal, and how) and what they need to do for Salaine as part of her quest to reclaim the Nexus. This encounter can therefore be as long or as brief as the GM desires as long as it fulfils this purpose. In addition to establishing the Explorers' pact with Salaine, the GM can also use this meeting to give the players some back story on Salaine and the Nexus covered in **A Mournful Tale**. The GM should not feel he needs to tell the players the whole story right away, but can use any or all of it to give the Explorers an idea of what they are getting into and foster some level of understanding between them and the Archon. As part of making an alliance, Salaine also unveils her plan to take back the Nexus, and the role she wants the Explorers to play in this dark design. This is detailed below in **The Plan** on page 32.

## A MOURNFUL TALE

Archon Salaine Morn of the Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns was cast out from Commorragh decades ago after losing favour among her kin, and was forced into exile. She spent many years wandering the webway and the void in search of a new home for her Kabal. Eventually, she discovered an ancient artificial moon (a human artefact lost during long ages past and known as the Gaelan Sphere) trapped partially in the webway. She could not overcome the moon's defences alone, nor hold it against attack once she did, and so she made an alliance with the Kabal of the Splintered Talon and its Archon, Zaergarn Kul. Together the Archons took the moon, which they named the "Nexus of Shadows," and created a powerful base from which to raid and trade with the denizens of the nearby regions of the Koronus Expanse, Calixis Sector, and the Screaming Vortex.

Like any Dark Eldar with the ambition to rise to the lofty position of Archon, Salaine was not content to share her prize, however, and sought to absorb Zaergarn's Kabal into her own. Part of her plot involved inviting the Withered Blade Wych Cult to join the Archons in running the Nexus, under the pretence that the Cult would bring in more slaves and help organise games to draw more traders and allies. In league with the Cult of the Withered Blade, Salaine began to build her strength to oppose Zaergarn and destroy him. Zaergarn himself was not idle, and was aware that the time would come when Salaine would move against him, or he might be ready to move against her, and so began repairing and activating the sphere's network of powerful defensive towers, ostensibly to protect the Nexus from raiders (of which there were no shortage from the Screaming Vortex), but also so that he might have control over all ships entering and leaving the Nexus.

This build-up of power might have continued for many years, each side making minor attacks against the other, if something had not entered the Nexus that changed everything. As part of his quest for allies to use against Salaine, Zaergarn had dealings with all manner of aliens and creatures of the void, trading everything from slaves to secrets. One such deal was with a Stryxis trader who brought him news of something sitting dormant far beyond the Halo Stars, the hulk of an alien ship of graceful and incalculably ancient design, corrupted and sickened by the lonely millennia, but potent nonetheless. At its heart rested a device, studded with thousands of faintly glowing stones and bristling with terrifying power. Zaergarn recognized the ancient vessel immediately upon retrieving it, and installed it in the centre of his palace.



With *The Soul Reaver*, Zaergarn was able to channel energy from every death that occurred in or near the Nexus and turn it into raw power for his Kabal and, more importantly, the defence network he had been building. Unaware of this development, Salaine made her move and ordered her fleet to attack the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, assuming that the two Archons still shared control of the defence network. She also took the further precaution of using her elite soldiers to disable the generators that powered it. She made alliance with the Cult of the Withered Blade, and, as a final measure, dispatched a vile Mandrake to enter Zaergarn's palace and kill him.

Somehow, despite the thoroughness of her attack from all angles upon her rival Archon, the plan collapsed around her. When Salaine began her attack, the towers which her lieutenants and Wych Cult allies had told her were inactive suddenly sprang to life and carved a bloody swathe through her fleet. Worse still, somehow Zaergarn had seemingly survived her assassin, issuing his orders through the Haemonculus Drecarus. As the finely wrought plan fell to pieces, the Cult of the Withered Blade chose to change sides and made parley with the Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns before retreating to their own sections of the city. Outmatched and with no aid coming, Salaine was forced to retreat, leaving the Kabal of the Splintered Talon in command of the city. Even as she drew the remaining fragments of her host back into the shadows, Salaine Morn swore she would return to reclaim the Nexus, and to exact her bitter toll of revenge.



## THE PLAN

Salaine's plan is to retake the Nexus and kill Zaergarn Kul, though while he controls *The Soul Reaver*, the city and his fortress remain nigh impregnable. Salaine knows that if she were to launch an assault on the city with *The Soul Reaver* still active, Zaergarn could use it to not only power but also boost the output of the Razor's Web, and her fleet would be hard-pressed to make a landing, let alone win the ensuing battle. On top of the problem presented by the defence network, Zaergarn can use *The Soul Reaver* to awaken the Gaelan Sphere's own defences and power the weapons of his Kabal. Worse, as she has learned from her spies in the city after her first defeat, the more of Salaine's army that is killed and the more of Zaergarn's troops who die in the defence of the city, the more energy the Archon will have to use for his weapons as *The Soul Reaver* funnels the essence of the dead into raw power.

Because of the critical importance of *The Soul Reaver*, Salaine has devised a plan to take it out of the equation before she launches her attack, and thus swing the odds back into her favour. While it might be possible to destroy *The Soul Reaver*, Salaine has no idea what effects this might have, and regardless, she covets the power of the alien artefact for herself. Therefore, she wants to steal it, drag it away from the city, and turn it to her own ends once she understands how Zaergarn uses it to absorb the power of the dead. This is an audacious plan, as it amounts to nothing less than tearing a voidship free of its place built into the heart of Zaergarn's ziggurat, dragging it out of the city, and then out of the webway to guarantee that its connection to the sphere is entirely severed. Once it is removed, Salaine's fleet can strike—it must still contend with the voidships of the Splintered Talon, of course, but with surprise on her side, victory would be within her grasp.

To achieve this, Salaine tells the Explorers that they need to infiltrate the Nexus and find a way into the Archon's palace. *The Soul Reaver* stands at the centre of the palace, its hull secured amidst the towers that sprout from the ziggurat and make up the core of the Archon's palace. Charges must be set around the base and sides of the vessel to destroy the supports and web of walkways holding it in place and sever

it from the grid that powers the Razor's Web. The Explorers must also enter the lonely halls of the cursed ship itself to place a device that Salaine provides, which she claims can both scramble any automated defences the vessel may possess and give her critical information about *The Soul Reaver*. Salaine warns the Explorers from personal experience that the ship's twisting corridors and vast, empty chambers are both difficult to navigate and unsettling in the extreme, and asks may even openly question whether or not the Explorers are suited to the task, especially if she thinks they need an extra push to agree to the mission. Once they agree, she tells them to seek out a jeweled pedestal within a main chamber to which all routes should eventually lead, and place the device there.

Once the device and the charges are in place, the Explorers' vessel must make a run on the palace, slide through the Archon's defences, and grapple massive tow-cables onto *The Soul Reaver's* prow. Then it must tear the ship free and drag it away, robbing the Kabal of the Splintered Talon of the artefact's near endless power. At the same time that the Explorers are making their escape in their vessel, Salaine's renegade fleet can commence its attack.

Salaine has chosen the Explorers for such a daring and bold plan for two reasons: firstly they are among the only individuals with the power and skill to reach the Archon's palace and place the charges. Secondly, their ship is among the best in the renegade fleet, and the only one with the brute strength to successfully drag *The Soul Reaver* into the void.

Salaine and some of her finest warriors accompany the Explorers to the surface of the Nexus, and though they cannot help them sneak into the palace, they can assist the Explorers in the city if needed before Salaine goes off to complete other tasks, such as trying to manipulate the Cult of the Withered Blade into staying out of the ensuing battle and disabling the back-up power sources for the Razor's Web. However, if the Explorers draw too much attention to themselves, or become involved in any protracted combat encounters, especially against the forces of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, Salaine and her warriors might simply vanish into the shadows at the GM's discretion.





## I KNOW THAT YOU KNOW THAT I KNOW...

Salaine's plan, while solid in concept, is based in part on faulty intelligence. She, like virtually everyone else, assumes that Zaergarn is still in command of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, unaware that Drecarus in fact rules the Kabal, having betrayed his employer by leaving his spirit sealed within *The Soul Reaver* itself after it became trapped there during the assassination attempt years ago. Drecarus is no less arrogant or decadent than his former "master," but he is far more calculating, and has equipped *The Soul Reaver*—and its core—with devices that monitor it at all times, to make sure that the vengeful warp-echo of the Archon he betrayed never gets loose. When the Explorers accidentally rouse the spirit of Zaergarn later in the chapter, Drecarus immediately becomes aware of their infiltration. The GM should not reveal any of these facts to the Explorers until the end of the first chapter, but should keep them in mind, and might wish to use this information to seed hints throughout the story.

## INTO THE NEXUS

*"The Nexus of Shadows is not a bad place if you cannot go to Commorragh, or would find all too many 'old friends' waiting to greet you if you did. Here, you can while away the idle days away from the plots of great nobles and focus on what truly matters. Here, you can meet a plethora of fascinating new species and learn so many things about them: how they live, how they die, how to take them apart. And most importantly, how to wrench out their best screams."*

—Haemonculus Anasta Skaiene

Once the Explorers have finalised their plans with Salaine, they are ready to enter the Nexus of Shadows and begin their infiltration. The renegade fleet gathers and stands ready at the entrance to the webway, with only the Explorers' vessel (with Salaine and some of her warriors on board) making its way in. The transition into the webway is quite unlike entering the warp. As ever, the Eldar have found a method that is far more graceful and elegant than any used by humanity. As their ship slips through the gateway (hidden in the wilds of a remote system, which they reach only with Salaine's guidance), the endless night of the void changes slightly and the stars glitter and vanish, while an unnatural silence falls over the Explorer's ship. The journey to the Nexus of Shadows does not take long, though as their ship progresses, the Explorers get the sense that they are flicking between junctions and additional gateways, unseen in the dark but known to Salaine. Finally, hanging in the night before them, they see what appears at first glance to be a small moon.

As the Explorers approach the Nexus of Shadows, the GM should read or paraphrase the following:

*Like a grain of grey sand on a beach of darkness, the Nexus of Shadows hangs in the void, its coarse steel and shadowed surface studded with towers and crisscrossed by deep artificial canyons, and its face lit by an unseen sun. As your ship draws closer, the sheer size of the sphere becomes clear, many times larger than the greatest ship of the Imperial Fleet or the mightiest of the God-Emperor's space fortresses. Drawing closer still, you can now make out the Dark Eldar city sprawling across its surface; dark twisted towers and warped structures clustered together like carrion on a corpse. Though only occupying a small fraction of the sphere, the city still rivals the largest hives of Scintilla, with doubtless countless levels hidden beneath its shadowed streets. Above the city, in the airless vacuum of low orbit, your vessel joins dozens of others, most of them alien in design, entering or leaving the city.*

How the adventure proceeds from here depends on the tactics chosen by the PCs, and whether they want to stride in as merchants looking to trade, sneak in as quietly as possible, or simply try and blast their way to the palace. All three of these are viable options, as are any number of other possibilities that the Explorers may wish to attempt. **More Than One Way to Steal a Ship** on page 35 describes some ways in which the Explorers might use social cunning, stealth, or force to reach their destination, but the GM should not feel constrained to these options if the players have other ideas.







## Archon's Palace

- ③ Dreccarus' Laboratories
- Kabal of the Splintered Talon Barracks



## MORE THAN ONE WAY TO STEAL A SHIP

To reach the palace of Zaergarn Kul, the Explorers need to pass through the city. The Splintered Talon never allows any vessel not of their Kabal to land or dock anywhere close to the ziggurat. The outskirts of the Nexus, however, are largely unregulated, the rulers of the Nexus apparently not deigning to take a hand in such matters. Barring those that are openly hostile, there are few ships that cannot find a place to dock at the Nexus. Unlike an Imperial port, there are no official protocols or station masters waiting to meet the Explorers when they arrive, demanding their business or looking for coin. The sphere also has no atmosphere, so the Explorers can bring their vessel as close as they dare, though it is probably be more practical to set their vessel into a low geosynchronous orbit and make their landing in their lighter.

Once they have arrived, Salaine Morn and her warriors (a cadre of eight Kabalite Warriors, whose profile can be found on page 122) depart to complete their own goals but leave the Explorers with a means of contacting them and can come to their aid (within the city) if needed or at the GM's discretion. The Explorers might also encounter some of the factions of the Nexus of Shadows as soon as they arrive (see **Denizens of the Nexus** on page 11), depending on how careful they are about making their landing. The Explorers can then choose how they want to reach the palace and set the charges. The GM can use the guidelines presented below to guide the efforts of the PCs, using any or all of the encounters as he sees fit, or even using some of the encounters from the other approaches if they seem appropriate.

In this section, the Explorers should experience the Nexus, meet some of the minor factions (or at least become aware of them), and then make their way to the Archon's palace. This section can be as long or short as the GM and players desire, though the danger and lawlessness of the Nexus of Shadows should be plain for the Explorers to see, especially if they must travel through the Shadowed Arteries. Before running this section, the GM should take some time to become familiar with **Gazetteer: The Nexus of Shadows** on page 9. The GM should feel free to use encounters from the list provided on **Table 0-1: Nexus of Shadows Encounters** on page 21 during this and any other trip across the city.

## THIEVES IN THE NIGHT

Perhaps the easiest way to reach the Archon's palace, and the method recommended by Salaine, is to use stealth, attempting to pass through the city or through the outlands undetected. While this does not present the same dangers as going in guns blazing or trying to bluff an audience with a ranking member of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, it means sticking to out of the way regions and places like the Shadow Arteries that bring their own perils to the traveller. Like any city, the Nexus is a nest of rumours and lies, with spies and information brokers on every street, so passing unnoticed might prove more challenging than the Explorers anticipate, and they may be required to do more than simply keep to the shadows.



If the PCs elect to use stealth at any point to try reaching the Archon's palace, the GM can use any or all of these encounters along the way to challenge them in addition to some encounters from **Table 0-1 Nexus of Shadows Encounters** on page 21. Presumably, the Kabal of the Splintered Talon is not actively looking for them, and travellers come and go from the Nexus every day, so unless they make a great show of their arrival, or their ship is particularly remarkable or well known, the Explorers should be able to make a landing anywhere in the Shadowed Arteries or outlands without arousing suspicions.

## ENEMIES OF MY ENEMIES

The Explorers are not the only ones interested in *The Soul Reaver*, and both the Consorvana Ring and the Cult of the False Dawn are aware of its existence and eager to pillage it, though for very different reasons. New arrivals are always noticed by certain elements of the Nexus, and when the Explorers make their landing, informants will convey this news to both of the factions. The Consorvana Ring is interested in the Explorers initially because they are traders. Of course, if they find out that the Explorers are interested in *The Soul Reaver* and finding an entrance to the ziggurat, they will see this as an opportunity to finally lay their hands on the Archon's valuable xenos artefacts. The Cult of the False Dawn has long coveted *The Soul Reaver* and its store of souls as a sacrifice to their dark god, but have never been able to gain entrance to the



ziggurat, lacking either the favour of the Dark Eldar or the strength of arms or expertise to force or sneak their way in. When they become aware of the presence of the Explorers, they see it as a sign from the Keeper of Secrets that their chance has arrived, and try to forge an alliance with the Explorers and use them so that they might have a chance to take *The Soul Reaver* for themselves.

The GM can use either or both of these factions to complicate things and offer support to the Explorers. Shortly after their arrival, agents of both factions approach them in the Shadow Arteries, offering assistance or promising a chance at profit if they think wealth will sway the Explorers. If Salaine is with the Explorers, she is aware of the Consorvana Ring (they were a substantial presence in the city during her rule) and tells the Explorers to deal with them if they wish, since they have no love for the Archon and might prove useful. She does not know anything of the Cult of the False Dawn, though she can sense the taint of Chaos on them, even if the Explorers cannot, and advises them to be cautious when dealing with any who follow the Dark Gods. The GM should allow the Explorers to choose how to deal with both factions, and these groups monitor the Explorers once they are on the Nexus, looking for a chance to use the PCs' presence to their own advantage. While the Cult of the False Dawn does not betray the presence of the Explorers to the Archon, fearing the wrath of the Dark Eldar should they draw the ruling Kabal's notice, the agents of the Consorvana Ring are not so choosy. However, they have no formal alliance with the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, and might well pass information on to him should it get them closer to ransacking *The Soul Reaver* for artefacts.

Details of the Consorvana Ring and the Cult of the False Dawn, their leaders and goals, as well guidelines on how to use them, can be found in the **Lesser Factions** section on page 12.

## PREDATOR AND PREY

While Drecarus himself is not personally aware of the presence of the Explorers, their arrival and actions in the city being beneath his concern, there are those that might regard the PCs' demise as a favour to their master. The landing of the Explorers is likely to be noticed, no matter how careful the PCs are. Sensors detect the Explorers' ship and keen minds make connections as to why a Rogue Trader might come to the Nexus, and what old powers he might be in league with. One such mind is that of Ravyr Dysk, a Dark Eldar noble once allied to Salaine but now firmly on the side of Zaergarn (and thus Drecarus by default, even though he is unaware of his Archon's untimely replacement). Always eager to curry favour with his master, and to wipe away the stain of any past associations with Salaine, Ravyr has become a cruel and cunning opportunist. The arrival of the Explorers prompts him to action and he makes a habit of seeking them out soon after their arrival. Though not as wealthy or powerful as many of the other nobles of the Bonespires, Ravyr

does have his means and uses them to make the Explorers' mission more difficult.

The Explorers have already aroused Ravyr's suspicions,

and should have to succeed on at least a **Hard (-20) Charm or Deceive Test** to convince him that they are not affiliated with Salaine Morn (obviously, if he encounters them with Salaine, this Test should be considerably harder).

If Ravyr comes away from his encounter with the Explorers with a positive outlook on the group, he invites them to join him at one of the soirees held by the nobles of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon in the Deathworld Gardens (see **Banquet of Pain** on page 41). If they decline, or if he develops an unfavourable impression of the Explorers for another reason, Ravyr decides to claim their heads for his Archon and ask questions later, if at all. To this end, he employs a particularly ill-tempered and modified Ariadne Helspider that he calls Fleshflayer. Bought at significant expense from the Cult of the Withered Blade, Fleshflayer is a cunning killer, and has been outfitted with an experimental device created by the insane science of The Sutured Helix that compels it to doggedly hunt certain individuals. Not just a horror in combat, with the strength to pierce carapace armour like paper or the speed to dodge bullets, the beast is also an excellent tracker and extremely stealthy for its size. Ravyr unleashes it into the Nexus to hunt down the Explorers, planting their psychic signature in its mind before setting it to its task. The beast then vanishes into the city, descending down into the Shadow Arteries and the sub-levels to seek out the Explorers and complete its master's wishes. At the direction of Ravyr, this shall be no quick kill, though, as gathering the lives of the Explorers is only part of his gift to the Archon, and he wishes the beast to toy with these victims first, causing them pain, running them to ground, and terrifying them before finally moving in for the deathblow.

The GM can use the beast to dog the Explorers' journey from their landing to the ziggurat, and even into the palace's chambers if they have not resolved the game of cat and mouse by then. Initially the beast (which uses the profile for an Ariadne Helspider, found on page 133, but with a +30 bonus to Weapon Skill, Toughness, and Strength, and an additional 20 Wounds) will only strike once and then retreat, picking on lone Explorers or those who have strayed from the group, trying to inflict wounds with a sudden bite before vanishing as quickly as it arrived. The beast is both exceptionally swift and stealthy, and does its best to fade after striking. The presence of the beast is more to disrupt the Explorers' plans rather than pose a significant danger to them, forcing them to travel more slowly or try to hunt it down before it strikes again. To this end, the GM should use the beast largely in the background, its skittering gait heard from afar, its shadow glimpsed at the end of the tunnels before quickly vanishing, and its large webs blocking potential routes forward. Only if the Explorers have been seriously wounded fighting the Dark Eldar or some of the other denizens of the Nexus should the beast pose a real threat, attacking as they try to reach safety.





some point the beast, will make an all-out attack (probably once they are inside the ziggurat) giving the PCs a chance to slay it before events move into the second chapter. Ravyr continues to take an interest in the Explorers, and might try other ways of bringing them to his master should the beast fail.

## THE PATH UNTREAD

The ziggurat lies at the centre of the Nexus of Shadows, and the city sprawls out around it. This means that the most direct route to reach the ziggurat is to pass through the city, either travelling the Shadowed Arteries or the high gantries and walkways of the Bonespires, since approach from the air is practically impossible given the Razor's Web. The only other way to reach the ziggurat and remain undetected is to come from beneath, using the deep sub-levels that descend in a seemingly endless sprawl below the Shadow Arteries. While the Shadow Arteries go deep below the surface of the sphere, they only scratch the surface of the sub-levels, tunnels, and chambers reaching down for kilometres before reaching the fusion core and the great void in the centre of the artificial world. If the Explorers choose, they can try to find a way through the maze of tunnels below the city and then find a way back up again where it meets the ziggurat. This is not an easy task, as most of the tunnels leading down into the sphere have been sealed up by the Dark Eldar to limit the places that escaped slaves and other fugitives can hide, and to protect against the dangers of the sphere's ancient defences which might still send esoteric machines up from the depths. Thus, to find a path, the Explorers need to find a way in, survive the machines, predators, and defences of the deep levels, then find a way out again, ideally somewhere under the ziggurat.

Finding a way in either requires a significant amount of searching (an undertaking which Salaine may well advise against given the time sensitivity of their mission) or the favour of a faction that can lead them to one. This favour can be gained in a number of ways, as each faction has its own agenda and goals, some asking for thrones and others after service or secrets. Whichever group they choose to visit, there are consequences, as some groups are happy to keep the Explorers secret while others might immediately sell the information about their intentions to the Dark Eldar (see **Lesser Factions** on page 12 for details on the various factions of the Nexus and their agendas). An alternative to getting access to the sub-levels below the city from a faction is to make a landing outside the edges of the city and enter the sphere from there. If the Explorers do want to take this path, then it is more difficult to find their way to the ziggurat, since they are starting so far away and must navigate kilometres of tunnels and chambers to even find a way below the city. To begin this journey through the depths below, the Explorers must succeed at a **Hard (-20) Navigation (Surface) Test** to find their way down into the sub-levels. If any of the Explorers are intimately familiar with the Nexus of Shadows, or the Explorers can find a local NPC to guide them, they gain a +30 bonus on this Test.

Once the Explorers enter the sub-levels of the Nexus of Shadows, they then need to make their way to below the ziggurat. The GM can use encounters from **Table 0-1 Nexus of Shadows Encounters** on page 21 as well as details from

the Nexus of Shadows gazetteer to create challenges for their journey. The time the PCs spend trying to find their way through the maze of tunnels also provides a good opportunity for any factions or enemies wishing to ambush the Explorers to make their move, far from any aid from above. The greatest danger in the sub-levels is getting lost, and unless the Explorers take great pains to plot a course, bringing with them a powerful auspex (the kind that requires servitors to carry) or tap into the sphere's ancient systems to find maps, the individual scouting out the Explorers' twisted path must make a **Very Hard (-30) Navigation (Surface) Skill Test**. If the pathfinder passes this test, roll on **Table 0-1 Nexus of Shadows Encounters** and resolve the encounter before the Explorers reach the base of the ziggurat. If he fails, roll on **Table 0-1 Nexus of Shadows Encounters** and, after resolving the encounter, the GM should inform the Explorers that they are lost in the nest of tunnels for several hours before repeating the process, inserting any other appropriate challenges in the interim.

## MACROCANNONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

It is possible, and likely for some groups, that the Explorers might resort to force to reach the palace, blasting their way through opposition and blazing a path across the city before smashing down the Archon's door. Salaine strongly advises against a serious frontal assault, for after all, if her fleet was smashed by the Razor's Web, what chance would the Explorers' lone vessel have? Still, she accepts that a certain level of force could be used without attracting undue attention (at least until it is too late for the defenders to do anything about it). Provided the Explorers do not start an open war, and if they are clever about where and when they strike, they could get away with forcing their way to the palace gates.

If the Explorers choose to use some amount of overt force at any point to reach the palace (such as killing any Dark Eldar patrols they encounter in open environments, or without efforts to conceal the combat or its messy results) the GM can use any or all of the encounters set out below to handle the escalation of violence. Only serious attacks on the Nexus draw the Kabal's direct attention, and fighting in the Shadowed Arteries and the Bonespires does not prompt a direct reaction from the Splintered Talon unless it spills over into the arenas or ziggurat. In fact, the nobles of the Bonespires routinely fight each other and often use mercenaries to make raids on other towers. That said, attacks by voidships will obviously draw notice and a more direct reprisal, as lances and macrobatteries pose a danger to the whole city and, more importantly, the palace housing the Kabal of the Splintered Talon and *The Soul Reaver*. If ever the Explorers' vessel (or any other ship) draws the fire of the Razor's Web, it must dodge fire from the towers (see **The Razor's Web** on page 39).



## ARMED RESPONSE

If the Explorers start throwing their weight around and using substantial firepower to deal with their problems, they might eventually draw a response from the Dark Eldar, especially if they kill one or more Dark Eldar patrols without taking appropriate and successful steps to conceal what transpired. While a certain amount of damage is acceptable, especially against the other inhabitants of the Nexus or in the depths of the Shadow Arteries, both the Cult of the Withered Blade and the Kabal of the Splintered Talon have little tolerance for assaults against their warriors and domains. A simple way to chart this rise in response from the Dark Eldar is for the GM to roll for encounters twice as frequently than he normally would (see **Table 0-1: Nexus of Shadows Encounters** on page 21 for guidelines on creating random encounters for the Explorers throughout this chapter).

In addition to the increased chance of encountering hostile Dark Eldar hunting for the culprits who have slain their brethren, the GM can have the Dark Eldar lay an ambush for the Explorers. After two or more patrols from the Cult of the Withered Blade or the Kabal of the Splintered Thorn vanish or turn up dead, the Dark Eldar begin to seek out those responsible. Over time, information trickles back to the Dark Eldar unless the PCs are very diligent at covering their tracks (avoiding contact with any of the denizens of the Nexus, keeping to disused areas or the sub-levels, cleaning up bodies after combats, and taking other precautionary measures). This ambush can occur anywhere, but should involve at least three times as many Kabalite Warriors or Wyches (depending on which organisation decides to respond) as there are Explorers (see pages 122 and 124 for the profile for Kabalite Warriors and Withered Blade Wyches). If the Explorers are especially skilled (Rank 5 or above), have brought a substantial retinue with them, or are very well equipped (armed with a considerable

amount of heavy weapons and ordinance), the GM should make the ambushers into Splintered Talon Trueborn Warriors or Hekatrix Bloodbrides (see pages 123-124 for the profile for Kabalite Trueborn and Hekatrix Bloodbrides). The ambushing force of Dark Eldar choose their ground carefully, blocking off exits and setting up a crossfire or pincer manoeuvre with positions on either side of the Explorers.

If the Explorers are defeated in this or any other encounter with a Dark Eldar patrol, the Dark Eldar need not kill them, but should instead drag them before Drecarus for a brief questioning and a chance for the Explorers—and the players—to learn that the Haemonculus is now secretly the true lord of the Nexus. After this encounter, the GM can advance the plot to **A Dark Twist of Fate** on page 44. If they slay the Dark Eldar or escape the trap, then every Dark Eldar patrol that they encounter is extremely suspicious of them by default, and they will be hunted mercilessly all the way into the heart of the ziggurat.

## UNEXPECTED ALLIES

There are those within the Nexus who have no love for the Dark Eldar, and some who openly revile the aliens for their dark ways and callous natures. During a combat encounter with the Dark Eldar, one of these factions could come to the aid of the Explorers, or use it as an excuse to try to form an alliance with them. The GM can use this as an opening for factions like the Consorvana Ring or the Cult of the False Dawn, as detailed in the **Enemies of My Enemies** section on page 35, or to introduce other new allies and NPCs. Everyone in the Nexus has an agenda, and naivety is short-lived in the dark and twisted city, so anyone who does aid the Explorers will do so for their own ends. A list of the **Lesser Factions** and their goals and ambitions can be found on page 12. Any one of these groups could become embroiled with the Explorers' plans to try to further their own agendas. If Salaine is with the Explorers, she takes a keen interest in any allies who might help with the coming attack, weakening the position of her enemies and paving the way for her return to power.

The GM can use this encounter if the Explorers are having difficulty with a combat encounter or if their group is not made up of especially combat-oriented characters, giving them a source of NPCs to help them defeat any Dark Eldar they might encounter while trying to enter the ziggurat. If the GM wants, he could even have some of the gladiatorial NPCs who feature in **Chapter II: Blood, Steel, and Sand** join the PCs at this point, allowing the Explorers to get to know them before they are taken into slavery, and making alliances easier later on when plans of escape are formulated. While the aid of a faction or NPC within the Nexus helps them directly in this first chapter, such allies may prove a far greater boon to the PCs later on in the adventure when they are cut off from their vessel and their crew and must rely only on those within the Nexus for support. Unless the PCs go out of their way to avoid contact with the inhabitants of the Nexus, the GM should at least offer them the chance to gain the favour of a faction or make a temporary pact with those they meet. If neither of the factions detailed in the **Enemy of My Enemies** section on page 35 is one with which the Explorers can suffer to ally themselves, remember that the Nexus is filled with those looking for an opportunity to get ahead, at any cost,

## KICKING IN THE DOOR

The main gate of the ziggurat is a massive edifice accessible from the Shadow Arteries, just below the surface of the Gaelan Sphere. Though it is rarely used by the forces of the Kabal (who prefer to fly from spire to spire instead of deigning to soil their feet on the surface), it is guarded by no less than four gun emplacements, each with six Splintered Talon Kabalite Trueborn equipped with heavy weapons (see page 123 for the profile for Kabalite Trueborn). These nests overlook a flat courtyard, largely devoid of cover. On top of that, the door is multi-layered, and each of the three layers must be destroyed or breached individually (with a **Challenging (+0) Demolition Test** and appropriate equipment, or some other cleverness on the part of the Explorers). A group of five Grotesques is kept chained behind the doors to stymie any intruders (see page 127 for the profile for Grotesques). Finally, every 5 Rounds after the Explorers begin their assault, a Raider carrying 10 Kabalite Trueborn arrives from the garrisons to defend the entrance or expunge any intruders (see page 138 for the profile for Raiders). These warriors pursue the intruders into the fortress, abandoning their transports as necessary to chase the Explorers through the fortress.



and factions rise and fall daily within its shadowy domain.

Unexpected allies are also a great source of tension within the adventure, as the Explorers should never be entirely sure if they can trust those from whom they have accepted aid. Just as Salaine should always appear a moment away from betrayal, the GM should give the players plenty of leeway to theorise about the chance that the Explorers might be betrayed at any moment by those around them. He can even foster such ideas if the Explorers find themselves using the support of multiple factions or are seeking information concerning Salaine from the denizens of the Nexus, each one warning them about the untrustworthiness of the others. In essence the introduction of allies, whether they come to the Explorers' aid in a fire-fight or meet them during their journey to *The Soul Reaver*, is an excellent opportunity for the GM to reveal new directions or options within the plot as required, nudging the Explorers in interesting directions or offering them an alternative path should they find themselves stuck on a particular challenge.

## FULL FRONTAL CHARGE

A direct assault on Zaergarn Kul's ziggurat is almost certainly doomed to failure, at least from the air, where the power of the Razor's Web will quickly disable or destroy the Explorers' vessel. On top of the Razor's Web, the Archon's palace is always guarded by a pair of Torture-class cruisers (see page 137 for the profile for this vessel). The GM can use Salaine Morn and other NPCs to advise the Explorers about the slim chance of success of an aerial attack, and perhaps more importantly, the massive risk it poses to their most valuable possession—their voidship.

A slightly more feasible plan involves assaulting the palace on foot, disabling the Razor's Web, and then calling in a ship to rip out *The Soul Reaver* before the full might of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon can descend upon the attackers. While Salaine does not believe that brute force can crack this particular puzzle, and seeks to dissuade the Explorers from anything so foolhardy, it is still possible for them to try. If the Explorers can secure a landing somewhere in the city, perhaps as close as a few kilometres to the ziggurat, with a force at their backs, they can attempt to punch through the palace's considerable ground defences. Any obvious build-up of men and weapons draws the ire of the Kabal.

If the Explorers land with a lightning strike force of only a few elite troops, foregoing heavy weapons, tanks, and artillery, they can make it to the ziggurat largely unopposed. A smaller force like this can also move quickly enough that the Archon's spies and scouts might not notice its landing, and within the space of a few hours the Explorers could be launching their attack. Salaine does not take part in such an attack, though she does not stop the Explorers if they insist on such a course, and remains in the city to see its outcome and use it to her advantage. The focus of the battle should be on blasting open the main pressure doors which lead into the ziggurat's lower levels, and the GM should have the entrance guarded by a cadre of the Archon's finest Kabalite Trueborn.

If the Explorers defeat the forces defending the gate, they are then forced to engage in a running battle to reach *The*

## THE RAZOR'S WEB

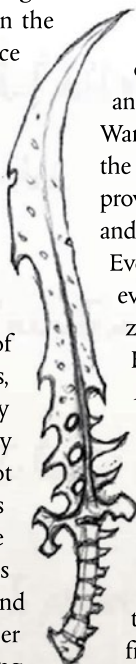
The Razor's Web is an extremely dangerous defensive network of ordinance weapons capable of stripping voidships from low orbit and annihilating anything that flies in the city without the Archon's permission. Fighting the Razor's Web is impractical—for each macrocannon a voidship can demolish, three more bristle from the spires of the Dark Eldar city and the ancient surface of the Gaelan Sphere. For each Strategic Round that a vessel is targeted by the Razor's Web, its pilot must make an **Arduous (–40) Pilot (Space Craft)+Manoeuvrability Test**. For every Degree of Failure on each Test, the ship suffers one hit from the Razor's Web, which uses the profile for a Disintegrator Macrocannon Cluster as described in **Chapter IV: The Treacherous Path** on page 137. These hits count as having a number of Degrees of Success equal to the Degrees of Failure from the Pilot (Space Craft)+Manoeuvrability Test.

*Soul Reaver* as the Archon's forces gather strength and more and more warriors flood in from every direction. During this dash for *The Soul Reaver*, the GM can also use encounters from Fortress of Blood and Shadow as the Explorers blunder into traps and patrols along the way (see page 42). Haemonculus Drecarus, the Arch-Agonist of T'saevoym and master of the Sutured Helix, heads the defence of the ziggurat and unleashes every creature at his disposal to stop the Explorers' progress.

## LORDS OF THE EXPANSE

The Explorers can always try to reach the palace using their cunning and guile, talking their way into the areas of the city controlled by the Dark Eldar and petitioning for an audience with the Archon. Dark Eldar do not respect the Warrant of Trade as the Imperium does, nor do they recognise the rights of a Rogue Trader, and so the Explorers need to prove they are powerful individuals worthy of the aliens' time and attention before they are given leave to enter the palace. Even then, they will be under guard most of the time, and may even be asked to relinquish their weapons when entering the ziggurat. With a skilled tongue and brazen confidence, the Explorers can use this tactic to get all the way to *The Soul Reaver*, though it is likely at some point they must resort to stealth or force to achieve their true goals.

If the PCs choose to try talking their way past the Dark Eldar to get into the palace at any point, the GM can use any or all of these encounters. Even if they announce themselves on arrival as grand and glorious Rogue Traders, Drecarus will not immediately take an interest in them (it takes a great deal to pull the Haemonculus away from his foul "artistic expression"). Instead, they have to earn the favour of a noble before they are invited into the palace, which means dipping their toes in the fetid pool that is Dark Eldar politics. A grand ship and a profitable cargo, though, can get them started along this path.





## CRUEL SPORT

Within the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, there are dozens of nobles with their own retinues and interests, all allied with Zaergarn and keeping watch over his city as directed by Drecarus, who they believe to be the trusted right hand of their Archon. From their fortresses in the Bonespires, they look down upon the city and profit from its slave trade while largely ignoring the non-Dark Eldar elements and the goings-on of the Shadow Arteries. Like lords anywhere, however, they are always interested in increasing their power and wealth, and the right words from the right people can open their doors to the Explorers to share in the promise of profit or a chance to expand their influence across the Nexus or beyond. As soon as the Explorers arrive, they can try to open negotiations with the Dark Eldar nobility, and if they ask for an audience with the Archon, are directed to his underlings.

The GM should have the Explorers deal with one of Zaergarn's nobles if they choose to try charming their way into the ziggurat to steal *The Soul Reaver*. The GM can use Dyrac Nyr, or he can create his own Dark Eldar noble as a first point of contact (see page 70). This is a chance for the GM to immerse the Explorers in the decadent lifestyle of the Dark Eldar, as well as to illustrate just how alien and completely devoid of any recognisable human morals these xenos truly are. To impress the Nexus' Dark Eldar aristocracy, the PCs must offer them something that they want, whether it is information, trade, slaves, or monsters for the arena. Making an offering of slaves is the most straightforward way to earn an audience, but may be morally objectionable to many Explorers. This is where clever negotiators come to the fore, and the GM should allow the Explorers to use social Skills to make a more favourable deal, or offer up something else interesting to gain entrance into the Bonespires if the players can come up with compelling tribute for their hosts (for example, promising the location of worlds ripe for raiding, information about Imperial defences in the Calixis Sector, a particularly rare and deadly xenos beast to fight in the pits or be kept as a lethal pet, or the location of Eldar ruins and webway portals).

Once they have made a suitable offering of tribute, the Explorers are invited to a trip to the Bloodgate in the Shadowspine Pits to witness combat between slaves, gladiators, and beasts. This is a brutal and horrific spectacle during which the Explorers can place bets or try and squeeze more information from their Dark Eldar hosts. The events conclude with the Dark Eldar setting a match between a Bloodbride and a champion chosen by the Explorers from their crew or from amongst the group. The purpose of the match is to seal their deal in the blood and pain of their champions; a long and vicious fight is considered an auspicious accompaniment to such negotiations. The GM should have the PCs play out the combat with their champion while they sit in the

stands, and have the Dark Eldar nobles appear to place great weight

on the outcome and every blow which is landed or missed. If the Explorers' champion is able to defeat the Bloodbride, they gain a +10 bonus to any social Tests made during the bargaining stage. Profit-minded Explorers may also use this as an opportunity to pursue trade agreements as they see fit, and each promise of co-operative profit that they are able to secure while at the arena provides a +10 bonus to the final Test to worm their way into the dark heart of the Nexus' high society. During this event, the Explorers may also make one **Hard (-20) Inquiry Test** for every hour they attend to learn a secret of the Nexus of Shadows or the Dark Eldar lords who rule it.

At the conclusion of the dealings, the Explorers can try to win an invitation to one of Drecarus' events or into the Bonespires. To do so, they must make a single **Hard (-20) Charm Test** with appropriate bonuses based on deals they have secured, the outcome of the fight, and the worthiness of their initial gift. If they fail, they may attempt this Test again after securing another gift that catches their hosts' soulless eyes.



## A SMALL FAVOUR

The nobles, lords, and ladies of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon are always in competition with each other for position and dominance. While some of the Dark Eldar the Explorers encounter should be willing to make trade deals with them or accept their coin, most see these alien outsiders and their ship as another pawn in the endless struggle for control of the Nexus and its wealth. Zaergarn has been oddly reclusive for some years, and some within the Kabal of the Splintered Talon who believe this heralds the time for a new Archon—though they dare not speak such treachery in the presence of Drecarus, who hands down many of Zaergarn's decrees. This event can occur either once the Explorers have made their introductions with the Dark Eldar or after they have started making deals or traded slaves or other goods, services, and secrets. The GM should have a Dark Eldar noble approach the Explorers, especially if he has learned of their interest in obtaining an audience with an official inside of the Archon's palace, and make them an offer. This might be Ravyr Dysk, or another, similar oligarch in the Kabal of the Splintered Talon (see page 36 for more information on Ravyr Dysk). In exchange for his favour and a word in the right ear, he wants the Explorers to dispatch one of his rivals, another Dark Eldar captain with a fortress in the Bonespires. He does not care how they complete their task, only that his enemy dies, opening the way for his own forces to take over the noble's holdings.

The GM can make the completion of this favour as simple or as complicated as he chooses, depending on the skills the Explorers possess and how difficult things have been for them up to this point. In its most basic form, this means somehow gaining entrance into one of the Bonespire towers and then slaying the lord and most of his personal guard. The Bonespires are guarded, but not by soldiers as elite or dangerous as those who defend the Archon's palace. To reach their target, the Explorers must bluff or sneak their way past no less than two groups of ten Kabalite Warriors in the spire unless they can find a pretence to meet with the aristocrat (see page 122 for the profile for Kabalite Warriors). Dark Eldar lords are very much in tune with the world of deception; words in the right ear and knives in the right back are the most powerful tools at their disposal, and thus most are paranoid and defended by skilled warriors at all times. Except in special circumstances, a Dark Eldar noble is always guarded by at least five Kabalite Trueborn (see page 123 for the profile for Kabalite Trueborn, which can also be used for any Dark Eldar noble in question).

This simple assassination can also be used by the GM as a lesson in the treacherous nature of the Dark Eldar. Unless they are careful and find a concrete way to guarantee that the noble who hired them upholds his end of the bargain, he at the very least attempts to extort them for another favour of some sort even if they kill the target, and may even expose the crime that he incited to Drecarus or another great lord for his own benefit. Clever Explorers can protect themselves against this situation by bringing in a third party, seeking out the favour of other nobles with vested interests in the Bonespires, or keeping

proof of the Dark Eldar's subterfuge. If the Explorers succeed and also manage to keep their noble contact true to his word, they take one step closer to winning an audience with the Archon—if they fail and are captured, or are betrayed and brought before the Archon, GM can take this opportunity to advance the plot to **A Dark Twist of Fate** on page 44 if he so chooses.

## BANQUET OF PAIN

Once the Explorers have made some inroads into their dealings with the Dark Eldar, either by currying favour with the nobles of the Bonespires or bringing trade to increase the wealth of the city, word of their presence reaches the aristocrats and individuals of rank within the Kabal of the Splintered Talon. Given their Archon's reclusive ways, these lords and ladies have taken to hosting elaborate events on their own, at which they can scheme, deal, and betray, all while taking in the suffering of their slaves and their rivals alike. The Explorers have been invited to an event in the Deathworld Gardens atop the ziggurat and is a grand affair involving numerous Dark Eldar nobles as well as any other powerful individuals from the city who the GM wishes to be in attendance (especially those who might already have ties to the PCs or the lesser factions). Each noble hopes to use the Explorers to his or her own ends, and can do this in a number of ways, including slipping the Explorers secrets or advice that might lead them into conflict with a rival.

The encounter begins with a meal, but after it concludes, the true feast of suffering begins. The nobles make their way over to the balcony overlooking the gardens and begin the evening's entertainment. Tokens have been hidden throughout the garden and slaves are sent in to find them. Each Dark Eldar noble has provided a slave, and the one whose slave can find the most tokens before the plants kill them all is the winner. The Explorers are invited to join in the contest, though they must offer up their own slaves or retainers. If they play the game, the nobles are suitably impressed, and may deem the Explorers worthy pawns in their labyrinthine schemes against one another, entrusting them with secrets that they hope may bring about the downfall of their rivals in the deadly court. The Explorers can gain extra favour by winning the game (even weighting the odds in their favour by sneaking their retainer a

weapon or auspex to assist him in the gardens, using psychic powers to help him survive, or coming up with some other subtle method of offering their aid). The Explorers can try to talk their way out of putting up one of their own for this task, but

it should require a suitably good reason backed by a successful **Ordinary (+10) Charm, Blather or Deceive Skill Test** to convince their hosts that their reasons are not mere sentimentality, loyalty, or softheartedness. During this time, the Explorers may also make one

**Challenging (+0) Inquiry Test** each

to attempt to dig secrets out of their wicked hosts. For each successful Test, the Explorers earn a scrap of information about the Nexus of Shadows, ranging from a particular lord's dark indulgence of choice to the location of a secret passage.





If the Explorers are aware of the secret entrance into the ziggurat hidden in the Deathworld Gardens (or become aware of it during the event), they might even talk their way into participating personally, though this requires some persuasion on the part of the Explorers, as their hosts are suspicious of all newcomers (and, indeed, even more suspicious of everyone else), and wonder why they would place themselves at personal risk. The Explorers must offer a compelling reason and make a **Hard (-20) Charm** or **Deceive Test** to convince an NPC such as Ravyr Dysk, if he is present (and not openly hostile to them) to let them into the Deathworld Gardens, though they receive a +20 bonus on this Test if they have managed to fit in with the moral degenerates at the party, and have not drawn undue attention to themselves or balked at the obscene cruelty of their Dark Eldar hosts. In either case, see **Garden of Death** section on page 42-43 for details on navigating this perilous greenhouse.

## FORTRESS OF BLOOD AND SHADOW

Whether they walk through the grand front gates of Zaergarn's ziggurat or skulk in through the under-tunnels, the Explorers become aware of the transition from the city as soon as they cross the threshold into the spires of the palace. Tarnished walls of ancient steel and stone are replaced with curved alien arches and strangely asymmetrical corridors. Everywhere, twisted runes and protruding blades add to the sense of danger and disquiet. The ziggurat is divided into three areas: the outer tunnels and chambers, the towers and spires, and the inner core where *The Soul Reaver* is housed. To reach *The Soul Reaver* and gain entrance to the ancient ship, the Explorers must navigate one or both of the outer regions, making it past patrols and Zaergarn's lieutenants. The method by which they make their way to the ziggurat influences how they proceed and whether or not they fight their way through, sneak past guards or claim to have an audience with Zaergarn (whether or not they actually do). The GM can use the **Table 0-1: Nexus of Shadows Encounters** on page 21 to generate random encounters as the Explorers make their way to *The Soul Reaver*, forcing them to deal with the various perils and obstacle in their path. In addition to these random encounters, there are two other encounters the GM can use depending on how the Explorers try to enter the ziggurat, either from below (using the city or the sub-levels) or from above (using the walkways from the Bonespires or arriving by air, invited or otherwise).

## LABYRINTH OF PAIN

The outer chambers of the ziggurat have been extensively modified by the Dark Eldar and bear little resemblance to their original design, the xenos covering the walls with dark steel and twisted architecture. In addition to the chance of the PCs encountering Dark Eldar patrols or slaves who might give away their presence, whole sections of these outer regions have been turned into madness-mazes and pain-traps. The GM can use both of these obstacles to make it harder for the Explorers to reach *The Soul Reaver*, especially if they are moving with haste and blunder into them while making reckless progress towards their goal.

## Madness-Mazes

Dark Eldar enjoy tormenting the weak minds of aliens as much as they enjoy torturing their flesh, and the madness-mazes are a prime example of this. They consist of a series of corridors and chambers that have been modified using false turns and hidden passages along with dangerous and disturbing imagery that is painful to look upon. A slave or intruder wandering into such a maze can become easily confused by the twisting walls and floors, his eyes tricking him into wandering into razor-sharp protrusions while he fails to spot places where a door or passage to safety is concealed by a curve of the wall, invisible from all but a certain angle. In this way, it is possible to wander for hours in such a place, walking in a circle through the same rooms again and again. If the Explorers wander into a madness-maze, they will need to make a **Very Hard (-30) Intelligence Test** to escape, unless they can devise a plan to circumvent the maze (such as cutting through its walls or using technology to overcome it—servitors and other mechanical entities, for instance, are not as affected by the mental tricks of such a maze). Failure means at least another half an hour of wandering before a Test can be made again, and an Insanity Point for each member of the group as the Dark Eldar architecture wears away at their minds. Failing by more than three degrees of failure means that one Explorer, chosen at random, has suffered physical harm from a spiked wall, hidden razor-wire, or other suitably dreadful hazard, and must make a **Hard (-20) Toughness Test** or suffer 1d5 Damage that is not reduced by Toughness or Armour.

## Pain-Traps

Pain-traps are another cruel addition to the ziggurat by the Dark Eldar, and can be found almost anywhere, especially in places where slaves must work, as the aliens enjoy watching their chattels stumble into them, and they drink in the constant fear such traps instil. The traps are usually disguised as normal sections of floor or wall, though they can also be incorporated into furniture or doors, the only tell-tale sign of their presence a fine web of silver visible on close inspection (requiring a **Difficult (-10) Awareness** or **Search Test** to find and a **Challenging (+0) Security Test** to disable). When touched, the pain-trap activates, sending impulses into the subject's brain that makes him spasm in agony. The effects of a pain-trap require a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** to resist, with failure inflicting 1d5 levels of Fatigue. The pain-trap works through armour and clothing, though the affected Explorer gains a +10 bonus to the Toughness Test for every 5 Armour Points (rounding down) on the location touching the trap. Apart from being extremely unpleasant, an Explorer affected by a pain trap screams out in agony unless he stifles himself (which could be important if the Explorers are trying to sneak into *The Soul Reaver*). A character may resist the urge to scream by passing an **Ordinary (+10) Willpower Test**.

## GARDEN OF DEATH

The upper reaches of the ziggurat are crowned with towers and defensive platforms, which host a number of Dark Eldar garrisons and also act as a playground for those most favoured by the Archon. While the Explorers are unlikely to come here unless

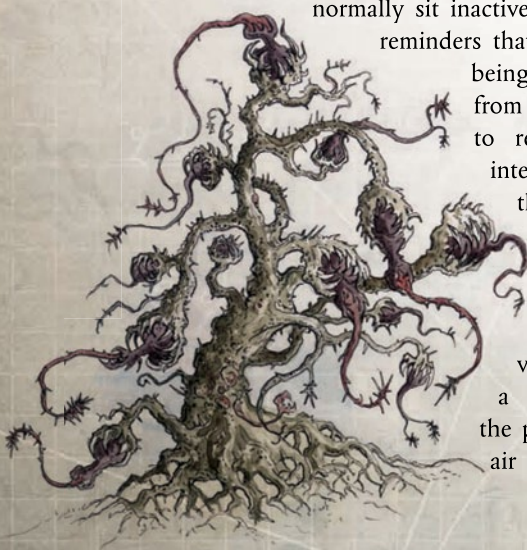




they are trying to talk their way into an audience with Zaergarn, they may discover through their contacts that there is a secret way down into *The Soul Reaver* from the Deathworld Gardens atop the spire that houses the gardens. If the Explorers can reach this platform, either by stealth using the covered gantries that connect many of the towers atop the palace or by invitation to witness one of the terrible events that takes place there, they can try to enter the gardens and find the hidden entrance.

The Deathworld Gardens live up to their name. They contain a collection of the most aggressive flora that the Dark Eldar can find, gathered from across the Koronus Expanse and beyond. To descend into the garden, the Explorers must breach the repression field which covers it (protecting spectators from its dangers), which requires a key unless they have somehow talked their way into entering the garden. Each member of the Spire Guard possesses a copy of the key. This cadre of Kabalite Trueborn is dedicated to protecting the Deathworld Gardens because of the entrance to *The Soul Reaver* there, and is equal in number to the Explorers plus one extra Kabalite Trueborn for each Explorer Rank 5 or higher (see page 123 for the Kabalite Trueborn profile). These guards are scattered throughout the balconies that hang over the Deathworld Gardens, but report remotely to each other every 1d5 minutes. Alternatively, the GM can allow the PCs to make a **Very Hard (-30) Tech-Use Test** to bypass the Dark Eldar gate-locks (the Test is reduced to a **Challenging (+0) Tech-Use Test** if the Explorer attempting it is intimately familiar with Dark Eldar technology or is a Dark Eldar himself). Failure sets off alarms, prompting a swift reaction from the Spire Guard, as well as a pair of Grotesques that

normally sit inactive on the balconies, reminders that Drecarus dislikes being called away from his experiments to resolve matters of internal politics in the Archon's name (see page 127 for the Grotesque profile). Once inside the garden, visibility drops to a bare minimum as the plants close in, the air becomes humid,



## A LONG WAY DOWN

To enter by stealth, the Explorers must first find a way into one of the adjacent towers then make their way past 1d5 patrolling wings of Scourges, who flit around the Archon's palace, watching all those who cross the thin bridges hanging in the space between spires. In these patrols, there is one Scourge per Explorer, plus one extra Scourge for each Explorer Rank 5 or higher (see page 126 for the profile for Scourges). Once they have bargained, bluffed, or fought their way past these feathered guardians, the Explorers must climb down to the Deathworld Gardens. This requires a **Hard (-20) Climb Test** for each Explorer. If the Explorers are wearing proper climbing equipment, failing the Test merely means discovery by another patrol of Scourges, with an extra Scourge for each Explorer who fails the Test. If any Explorer without a harness fails the Test by more than three Degrees of Failure, however, he may find himself facing a 100-metre free-fall into the gardens.

and insects crawl and fly everywhere. The GM can treat the garden as a single dynamic challenge that must be overcome for the Explorers to find a way through. In this case, each Round that the Explorers are in the garden, each one should make a **Challenging (+0) Awareness, Search, or Survival Test** to see if he can navigate its dangers. Any Explorers who fail this Test suffer 1d10+6 Rending Damage from aggressive and toxic plants, fungi, and insects that become hostile or predatory to the interlopers. Once the party has accrued a cumulative number of Degrees of Success on the **Awareness, Search, or Survival Tests** equal to twice the number of Explorers, they discover the secret entrance to *The Soul Reaver* and escape the deadly garden.

If the GM does not feel that this is enough of a challenge, he can also add specific plants to attack the Explorers or use those already detailed in other **ROGUE TRADER** supplements such as **THE KORONUS BESTIARY**. The greenhouse contains a vast number of plants, and so the Explorers might run across any suitably horrible flora from the Koronus Expanse and even possibly beyond. After the Explorers depart the Deathworld Gardens through the hidden shaft, they can descend into the ziggurat and climb down to the chamber that contains their target—*The Soul Reaver*.



# A DARK TWIST OF FATE

After navigating the ziggurat, the Explorers at last come to *The Soul Reaver*, which hangs like a great, desiccated moth in a spider's web of gantries and walkways, its elegant form diseased. The GM can read or paraphrase the following when they at last reach the core of the palace:

*Like a blade thrust into the heart of the ziggurat, The Soul Reaver rises from the darkness below up to the pointed apex of the palace. Its ancient alien hull is pitted and scarred from untold aeons drifting in the void, though the smooth lines and curved architecture is unmistakable, even beneath so many ages of corruption and decay. Easily six kilometres in length and several across, the vessel sits cocooned in a web of gantries and supports, several of which lead to rents and open portals in its hull that allow access to the ship. There is also a strange disquiet here, like the subtle murmur of a thousand voices babbling to each other but hidden from sight.*

All the Explorers feel uncomfortable in the presence of *The Soul Reaver*, though those with the Psyniscience Skill should become acutely aware of the vessel's potent psychic aura and the raw power rolling off it. From this point, any resistance or Dark Eldar patrols seem to vanish, and once they step onto *The Soul Reaver* itself, there seem to be no guards at all. This is because it is a trap. Unknown to the Explorers, and to almost every inhabitant of the Nexus, Zaergarn has been dead for decades, slain by Salaine's hired Mandrake, his soul held trapped in *The Soul Reaver*. Drecarus has been controlling the Kabal of the Splintered Talon since the demise of his master, and is one of the few who knows that the tormented spirit of the Archon still lingers. Insane and barely sentient, Zaergarn still whispers to Drecarus, making plots and issuing warnings. Drecarus largely ignores the spirit's ravings, but he has long studied what he calls the "Reaver Device" that has trapped the Archon's twisted echo, and has numerous specialised machines that constantly monitor the power output by *The Soul Reaver*'s mysterious core.

The Explorers must set their charges in three places in the inner complex to physically break *The Soul Reaver* free, and then board the ship itself to plant a mysterious "severing device" given to them by Salaine Morn that, supposedly, will cut off the power flow from *The Soul Reaver* to the Razor's Web.

To find each site for the three charges, the Explorers must pass a **Challenging (+0) Navigation (Surface) Test**. If they fail this Test, they encounter a madness-maze or a pain trap (see **Labyrinth of Pain** on page 42). Once they have reached the location, the Explorers must pass a **Difficult (-10) Demolition Test** to rig the charge to explode upon a remote command; if they fail this Test, the Explorers spend too long on the preparations, and while they do place the explosives properly, the Explorers are discovered by a group of Kabalite Warriors equal to their party in number. The Explorers must dispatch these foes swiftly and stealthily, lest they attract the attention of other Splintered Talon defenders.



After placing the charges, the Explorers must take the final step and board *The Soul Reaver* to plant Salaine's severing device. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the Explorers enter *The Soul Reaver*.

*As you slip through the open door that leads from the spined, treacherous hallways of Zaergarn's palace into The Soul Reaver, you are struck by a pervasive sense of wrongness. The material from which the hull was wrought is diseased, plagued by the noxious touch of the warp. While the Dark Eldar palace was a place of unspeakable horror, the graceful arcs and alien curves of The Soul Reaver's corridors have been wrenched to madness by its strange and lonely aeons in the void. You pass through the corridors for seconds or perhaps for years, time's gyre widening and collapsing upon itself with the twists and turns of the halls. Eventually, you reach a cavernous room that seems to be the termination of passage and matches the description given by Salaine Morn.*

Even once they reach the correct room, a massive, circular chamber roughly 200 metres across, the Explorers must locate the proper place for Salaine's device, which she described as "a massive pedestal, wrought with gemstones." Players with the Psyniscience Skill automatically detect the pedestal and get a distinct feeling of wrongness upon entering the chamber; if no player has the Psyniscience Skill, the Explorers can still find the pedestal by searching the room for it. Unless time is an issue, the Explorers locate the pedestal after 1d10+5 minutes of narrative time of searching.



As the Explorers approach the pedestal, they notice that it has grown to envelop the corpse of an Archon of the Splintered Talon—Zaergarn Kul. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

*Before you lies the corpse of a Dark Eldar, wearing the colours of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon and various decorations on his armour and wargear that mark him as an Archon. It is clear he has been dead for many years, his desiccated flesh hollow and grey beneath his barbed armour and cloak of flayed flesh. In places it appears his skin has fused with the pedestal upon which his corpse rests, the gemstones nearest to him glowing faintly in the ambient light. After you plant Salaine's device on the pedestal, the lighted stones go dark for a moment before suddenly flicking back to life. The Archon's eyes, now lit by the same ghostly light as the glowing stones seem watch you, the dark pits in his sunken features glowing with a spark of unnatural life. The malevolence that oozes from the corpse as surely as the sickening light suddenly but inexorably presses down upon you like a great weight. Even as you feel this spiritual weight take its toll, a wicked cackle cracks the air and you can hear the stamping of hurried feet approaching.*

In this combat, the Explorers are outmatched and outgunned by the forces of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, and Drecarus has ordered his soldiers to take these brazen interlopers alive rather than killing them, that they might suffer for their impertinence. Further, the presence of the Explorers or the integration of Salaine's device has roused the slumbering heart of *The Soul Reaver*, which saps their vitality rapidly so long as they remain in its presence. As a final complication, the only entrance to the chamber is the one that the Dark Eldar are using to enter—any others that exist are sealed by disrepair.

The Dark Eldar soldiers arrive in waves at the beginning of each Round, starting with the first, and continue to arrive indefinitely until the Explorers are defeated. The GM can use the waves in the order they are presented and then begin random rolls should they survive past five Rounds, or just randomise the sequence from the start by rolling on **Table 1–1: Splintered Talon Forces** on page 46. Further, *The Soul Reaver's* stirrings put a vast mental strain on the ones who woke it—namely, the Explorers. To reflect this drain, each Explorer gains one level of Fatigue at the end of each Round. See **Capturing the Explorers** for suggestions on running this combat encounter.

## GM GUIDANCE: CAPTURING THE EXPLORERS

The conclusion of this chapter calls for the Explorers to be captured by the Dark Eldar and given to the Cult of the Withered Blade. The second chapter hinges on the capture of the Explorers, and revolves around their efforts to liberate themselves and return to their mission. However, the GM should consider his particular group when deciding on the exact circumstances of the Explorers' (temporary) defeat. Some players may prefer simply being told that the odds are overwhelming once the hallway fills with the warriors of the Splintered Talon, while others may wish to struggle on to the bitter end, and only accept defeat when the last die has been cast and they lie drenched in the blood of countless foes, only beaten after climbing to the top of a mountain of broken corpses. Others still might seek—and even find—a clever solution to the dire predicament, such as a path to escape. Indeed, this endless range of possibilities is why roleplaying games need a GM. For this section, the GM should keep in mind that he is giving the players a bitter pill to swallow, and try to be flexible in delivering this setback in a way suitable for his specific group.

The GM should run the final combat with several key points in mind. First, he should avoid killing the PCs outright, and try to have their foes take them alive. Conveniently, this is highly justifiable in this battle; Dark Eldar prefer to capture their prey alive, so that they might draw the most possible sustenance from them. In the battle around *The Soul Reaver*, as the ship drains their essence and Drecarus and his warriors attack, the GM can have warriors coming from the sole entrance and cutting off escape, making it plain this is a fight the PCs cannot win, no matter how many warriors they send screaming to their deaths (though some groups may wish to try, and should be allowed to do so). If one or more of the Explorers is slain during this final battle, it is also reasonable that the Dark Eldar would use their technology to bring them back from the edge of death, so they might suffer further torments, and if a PC does die the GM should allow that Explorer to survive the battle without the need to burn a Fate Point (and, if necessary, any inherently fatal results of Critical Damage, such as a decapitation, should be undone by the dark sciences of the Haemonculi, albeit with possible consequences). Such capture can act as a sort of safety net for the first chapter, if the GM so chooses—at any point when the entire group would suffer defeat or death during their journey to *The Soul Reaver*, the Dark Eldar can drag them back to Drecarus. This could cause the second chapter to start earlier than intended, but that should not cause any major problems in the overarching plot of the adventure in this book.

While the adventure as written assumes that one way or another the Explorers will end up in captivity by the end of the **Chapter 1: The Queen of Shadows**, this does not always have to be the case. Stealing *The Soul Reaver* is impractical at this juncture, but it is still possible that they might escape the trap or somehow come up with a cunning plan that allows them to avoid their capture. The GM should allow the PCs to escape if they do come up with an especially good plan (such as if they send powerful minions into the ziggurat in their stead or if they plan out an escape route beforehand and ensure it is not compromised), bearing in mind that the strength of the Splintered Talon is considerable and Drecarus becomes aware of them as soon as they activate Salaine's device. If the players manage to overcome the odds, the GM will need to modify the events of Chapter II accordingly (see **GM Guidance: Free Men** on page 49 for more details).



With the defeat of the Explorers, Drecarus has them stripped of their weapons and dragged before the corpse of Zaergarn Kul. He thanks his former master for warning him of these aliens and their treachery, and begins a one-sided conversation with the corpse. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

*As you watch your hopes of escape slip away, the Haemonculus approaches you slowly. Even as he surveys you dispassionately, one of his hands works idly on an alien vital organ with scalpel, spurting blood across those around him. He turns towards the corpse slowly being absorbed by the strange material of the ship. "And, my dear Archon, how are you faring? I wish I could visit you more often, but I am most occupied with my research... and the governance of the empire you were kind enough to leave in my care. Of course, I was not expecting you to give me yet another gift in the these... individuals, nor do I need any of them for my current experiments, but I suppose it is the thought that counts. Still, I'm sure Anyalra will put them to good use in the pits, and I appreciate the forewarning that they sought to steal this fascinating vessel." The corpse sits stoically, its skeletal grin leering at you and the Haemonculus as the strange eldritch glow burns in its empty sockets. With a wave of one of his many hands, the Haemonculus signals a number of guards, who grab you and drag you off to your fate...*

This concludes the first chapter of the adventure, with the Explorers dragged off in chains to the arenas and the house of the Withered Blade, Salaine somewhere out of reach in the Nexus, and the Renegade Fleet waiting to begin their assault. However, though they will not have a chance to use it at this moment, the Explorers do gain Achievement Points towards their Grand Endeavour for their hard work in this section. They also earn experience for completing certain objectives in this chapter.

TABLE 1-1: SPLINTERED TALON FORCES

| 1d5 Roll | Foes                                                                                |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | One Splintered Talon Kabalite Trueborn for each Explorer (see page 123 for profile) |
| 2        | Two Kabalite Warriors for each Explorer (see page 122 for profile)                  |
| 3        | One Wrack for each Explorer (see page 126 for profile)                              |
| 4        | One Grotesque for every two Explorers (see page 127 for profile)                    |
| 5        | One Cronos Temporal Parasite (see page 127 for profile)                             |

### Rewards:

- 100 Achievement Points for securing an arrangement with Salaine Morn.
- 125 Achievement Points for achieving an entry into the Nexus of Shadows.
- 50 Achievement Points for each valuable secret unearthed about the Nexus or its inhabitants.
- 50 Achievement Points for each friendly contact established while exploring the Nexus.
- 100 Achievement Points for each trade agreement secured with a local organisation such as the Consorvana Ring, the Cult of the False Dawn, or Dark Eldar nobility.
- 250 Achievement Points for successfully reaching *The Soul Reaver* before being captured.

## EXPERIENCE

The Explorers have gone through a great deal to get here, and they will undergo more trials before they are finished. Here is a set of events the Explorers may have overcome, and the appropriate experience values to reflect their difficulty:

- Secured a deal with Salaine Morn: 50 xp
- Reached the Nexus of Shadows: 50 xp
- Overcame a challenge presented on **Table 0-1: Nexus of Shadows Encounters**: 100 xp (to a maximum of 500 for 5 encounters)
- Entered the Bonespires by trickery, stealth, or bravado: 50 xp
- Attended a match at the Shadowspine Pits: 100 xp
- Defeated a Dark Eldar Champion in the pits: 50 xp
- Performed a favour for a Dark Eldar Noble: 100 xp
- Attended the Banquet of Pain: 100 xp
- Passed through the Labyrinth of Pain: 100 xp
- Passed through the Deathworld Gardens: 100 xp
- Reached *The Soul Reaver*: 200 xp
- Negotiated a "peaceful" surrender inside *The Soul Reaver*: 100 xp
- Defeated at least ten Kabalite or Trueborn Warriors during the ambush at *The Soul Reaver*: 100 xp
- Defeated at least one Grotesque before being overwhelmed: 100 xp
- Defeated at least one Cronos Temporal Parasite before being overwhelmed: 100xp





BLOOD,  
SAND & STEEL

SLAVES OF THE  
WITHERED BLADE

•  
THOSE WHO ARE  
ABOUT TO SUFFER

•  
BROTHERS IN  
BLOOD

•  
THE  
SHADOWSPINE  
PITS



# CHAPTER II: BLOOD, SAND, AND STEEL

*"In the end, the Dark Eldar don't care how you die or even how well you have fought. Don't fool yourself into thinking there is anything noble or glorious about spilling your blood in their arenas; they are not marvelling at your prowess in battle when they cheer and hiss. It is the contorted expression of pain on your face when a blade bites into your flesh they truly crave."*

—Ludvos Tarn, Battle-Brother of the Imperial Fists

The curtain on **Chapter II: Blood, Sand, and Steel** rises with the Explorers in captivity, having been captured by the Kabal of the Splintered Talon in their interrupted attempt to steal *The Soul Reaver*. There are numerous ways in which the PCs can have run afoul of the Dark Eldar, though whether it is the result of falling in battle or walking into a trap, the end result is largely the same: they are stripped of their possessions and gifted by Zaergarn Kul (or rather, Drecarus acting in his name) to the Cult of the Withered Blade to begin their new lives as slaves. This section charts their efforts to escape from their new captors, and also provides the Explorers with a different and decidedly unpleasant perspective on the Dark Eldar, giving them a chance to see first-hand how their twisted society works and how it relies on slaves and the agony of others to function. It is also a chance to meet others who have suffered a similar fate to the Explorers and have borne harsh misfortune in the Nexus, either as travellers turned prisoners who came to the city with different ambitions or as cargo taken during a raid from the surrounding regions and sectors from a world far away across the void. These fellow captives can prove useful to the Explorers and offer them critical assistance when the time comes to make their break for freedom.

Despite the Explorers' new goal of escaping from slavery, their mission and reason for coming to the Nexus of Shadows remains the same. Escaping allows them another chance at stealing *The Soul Reaver*. Even as they languish in bondage, trying to find a path to freedom or using this new twist of fate to their advantage, events continue to unfold around them and outside of the Pits. Salaine, and her renegade fleet, continue to prepare for their invasion as they await the signal to attack. Coupled with the Explorer's natural desire to escape and the obvious ill effects a long tenure in the arena may have upon their health, Salaine's continued machinations and their integral role in her plan should be enough to spur the PCs into action.

## SLAVES OF THE WITHERED BLADE

The Explorers have been captured by the Dark Eldar, and now occupy the unenviable position of slaves in Dark Eldar society. Like countless others before them, the Explorers are now at the mercy of the sadistic aliens. How this capture occurred depends on their actions in **Chapter I: The Queen of Shadows**, the exact nature of their initial assault on the Nexus, and how close they came to stealing *The Soul Reaver*. This chapter assumes that either using their superior technology, numbers, or knowledge, the Dark Eldar outmanoeuvred the Explorers and forced them to surrender, though it is also possible that the PCs were defeated in battle and saved from death by the Dark Eldar so they could be tormented later for the amusement of the vile xenos. The end result largely remains the same, albeit with different specifics that may affect their situation in ways determined by the GM. The Explorers are now under the power of the Dark Eldar and at least at the start of this chapter, they must cede to the alien's orders and follow the path set before them until they can find a chance to make their break for freedom.

As slaves, the Explorers have all of their personal possessions taken. Further, thanks to the dominance ensured by the Razor's Web, the Explorer's ship cannot make a move to help them without being destroyed, or is driven from the Nexus by the deadly defence spires. Regardless, the Explorers' ship, and its crew, is not able to help them directly. Items and objects which the Explorers cannot physically give up, such as bionics, integrated weapons, or similar enhancements are left in place by the aliens, but any non-vital or exotic functions (integrated weapons systems, etc) they may have are deactivated if the Dark Eldar discover them. This causes no lasting harm to the device, but the Explorers will not be able to call upon its special qualities during their time in slavery unless they can find a way to replace the pilfered parts. In the case of any bionics the Explorers use to function, such as limbs or enhanced senses (such as eyes, ears, etc), the bionics remain operational.

### IN MEDIA RES

It is perfectly possible to run large portions of this chapter as part of a stand-alone adventure. Any situation in which the Explorers face Dark Eldar raiders—in the Nexus of Shadows or anywhere else—and are defeated could easily segue into this situation. The plan to steal *The Soul Reaver* in the third chapter could even be formulated by the Explorers during their time in captivity, though obviously this would take some work on the GM's part to introduce important characters from the first chapter, such as Salaine Morn, while they are enslaved and make sure that the narrative still flows cohesively.



Explorers with other dangerous natural talents such as psykers and Navigators will also have their wings clipped and their abilities curtailed lest they cause their new masters any trouble. The Dark Eldar have extensive experience dealing with those who can call upon the powers of the warp, and have developed a panoply of fiendish technology for dealing with such individuals. This restraining technology can take many forms, from arcane alien collars or sub-dermal implants to tattoos and bonds made exotic alien materials from beyond the light of the Imperium. Whatever device is used to stop a psyker from using his powers, it is designed in such a way that to remove it without the proper procedures might well critically injure the wearer. This could be because it has been grafted to his own skin or sewn into a vital organ, such as his heart or brain. It might even be somehow connected to the warp itself, funnelling off any power the psyker might try to gather before he can use it and opening him to possession and the full fury of the warp should he try and tear it off. Such devices are also rarely completely reliable, and the GM can have them work intermittently or only partially in some circumstances, allowing the psyker or Navigator to use his powers if the GM chooses, or in situations where there is an abundant of psychic energies for him to tap for power. The Dark Eldar also often have ways of circumventing their own devices, since they enjoy the anguish the warp can cause a psyker, and sometimes allow psykers to use their abilities in the arena for their own dark amusement. Usually, a specific psychic suppression device has a countermeasure that can

deactivate it remotely, and acquiring the key or a pass-phrase for the warp shackles of one's astropath or navigator might be a crucial part of an escape plan.

When the Explorers are taken into captivity, the Dark Eldar store their equipment and weapons with the rest of the slaves' possessions, locking them in a vault and once in a great while distributing particularly rare prizes to members of the Cult. It is a rare occurrence that any slave has anything in their possession which is of any real interest to the Dark Eldar. Even master-crafted weapons and rare examples of artefacts from the Dark Age of Technology are simply flawed human garbage to them, and inferior to their own weapons and armour. This gear can be recovered by the Explorers once more when they escape, or during the escape if they can locate it, but for the time being is unceremoniously dumped into a pile locked deep in the Withered Blade's holdings.



## GM GUIDANCE: FREE MEN

This chapter is designed around the premise that the Explorers have been captured by the Dark Eldar during their first abortive attempt to steal *The Soul Reaver*. There are many ways in which this can happen during the first chapter, and any point at which the PCs are defeated in combat or fail to reach the ziggurat of Splintered Talon can result in them becoming slaves. It is a measure of the Dark Eldar's contempt for all humans that they do not consider the Explorers a real danger (even if they manage to reach *The Soul Reaver* and come close to stealing it), and upon their capture send them to the arena with all the other newly captured slaves instead of treating them as a credible threat. Depending on the GM and his group, and if he wants to explore alternatives to capturing the PCs, he can make changes to this section to reflect an outcome in which the Explorers either evade capture in the first chapter or otherwise manage to free themselves from the Dark Eldar before they are brought to the arena.

This can play out in one of two ways: the first is that the GM can deviate from the majority of **Chapter II: Blood, Sand, and Steel**, allowing the Explorers to flee from the Archon's ambush and return to hiding in the city to formulate a new plan. The second way is to have the Explorers infiltrate the Cult of the Withered Blade by posing as slaves as part of a plan to take *The Soul Reaver*.

In the first instance the Explorers will need to formulate a new way to reach *The Soul Reaver*, no small feat against the legions of the Splintered Talon and the fully functional Razor's Web. This task will be made even more difficult because after the ambush in the ziggurat, the Dark Eldar will be on alert and actively searching for them. The PCs will also miss out on the aid from those they could recruit from the arenas and the distraction caused by the uprising they can start at the end of this chapter, and will need to gather allies and resources elsewhere. The GM can allow the players to pursue this path if they choose, formulating a new way to get to *The Soul Reaver*. Some, though obviously not all, of the NPCs detailed in this chapter could be repurposed to be members of the masses who eke out a living in the Shadow Arteries or the lower depths, and might be just as willing to rise up against the capricious and oppressive Dark Eldar as any slave gladiator.

The second outcome will play out in almost the same way as if the Explorers had been taken by force, except that they will have the advantage of entering captivity on their own terms, and with their own plans in place. Salaine Morn, or another NPC, might suggest this path to create a vital distraction for claiming *The Soul Reaver*. If the Explorers do decide to infiltrate the Cult of the Withered Blade as slaves, they should receive some advantage for this—concealed weapons delivered to them for the uprising, a contact loyal to Salaine Morn within the Cult, or any number of other small edges can help make it clear that the Explorers are masters of their own fate even as they endure the lash of the wicked Cult.



## INTRODUCTION TO PAIN



Once the Explorers have been captured by the Dark Eldar, they are sent to the Shadowspine Pits and the care of Anyalra and the Cult of the Withered Blade. Such is the contempt that Drecarus has for them that he does not even interrogate them, already aware of their involvement with Salaine from his spies outside the Nexus. In his overconfidence, he cannot conceive how they could be a threat to his power, despite how close they have come to stealing *The Soul Reaver*. As a result, once they have been removed from the ziggurat, the Explorers are thrown in with the other newly arrived slaves and sent to the arena for Anyalra to use in her blood sport. There they are placed in pens awaiting a decision by the leader of the Withered Blade as to their fate and the new life they are about to begin in servitude to the Dark Eldar. When they first enter or awaken in the custody of the Cult of the Withered Blade, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

*You have been stripped of your weapons and other possessions, manacled, and dragged along with dozens of other humans and xenos into a vast open pit surrounded by a crown of rusty bloody spikes. Still bearing the scars of your battle with Drecarus and his warriors, you are for the moment at least in the thrall of the Dark Eldar Wych Cult of the Withered Blade. As the crowd of prisoners moves and mutters restlessly to itself, some of the other humans cast furtive glances in your direction, noting the symbols and regalia of your dynasty. A dark shadow suddenly moves against the edge of the pit. Standing over you is the ethereal figure of a female Dark Eldar, her alabaster skin contrasting with the brass, teal, and black of her armour and the cold dark of her soulless eyes. Eyes which even as you watch scan the cowering mass of slaves before finally settling on you and your companions.*

Before she decides what to do with the Explorers, Anyalra wants to test their abilities to see if they will make a good show in the arena, or if they have other talents that the Cult of the Withered Blade might exploit. The Explorers stand out and are quickly separated from the rest of the slaves for their potential and skills—the bulk of those brought into the Shadowspine Pits are good for little more than menial physical labour (of the kind which the Dark Eldar would never lower themselves to undertake) or as scream-bags to die bleeding in the Pits. In spite of the obvious flaws possessed by humans, Anyalra has a good eye for talent and those with the potential to put on a good spectacle in the arena; qualities that she sees and wants to test in the Explorers.

When Anyalra meets the Explorers, she is solely interested in their ability to perform in the games to serve her Cult. She has no interest in any plots they might have been hatching and is only

### GM GUIDANCE:

#### ROLEPLAYING ANYALRA

Anyalra leads the Cult of the Withered Blade, governing its arenas and the warriors who fight there (willingly or otherwise). Since the days when Salaine still held sway in the Nexus, Anyalra has been in control of the cultivation and traffic of the bulk of its slaves. The first place a slave sees (and often the last) is the inside of the Withered Blade's fighting pits. Because of Anyalra's dominance over the ever-important commodity of pain in the Nexus of Shadows, she has remained largely immune from the worst of the Dark Eldar's politics and the struggles for rulership of the Nexus, her role being too valuable to usurp and her Cult too loyal to undermine or subvert. For her part, Anyalra is content to let the Archons play their games of power and squabble for an empty title of Master of the Nexus, while she continues to grow wealthy off the business of the arenas and gain plenty of fresh meat for her games and entertainment. A masterful warrior and connoisseur of battle, Anyalra is a complete professional in her own right, concerned only with her games and her endless search for the perfect kill.

passingly curious about their association with Salaine, an individual she considers no better or worse than Zaergarn, but has no interest in supporting if it jeopardises her own position. What the Explorers were before they came into her arena is of no consequence (something she reminds them of should they try and preach their pedigree to her) and she is only interested in them based on their worth in combat.

## THE FIRST RULE ABOUT SHADOWSPINE...

After they have been brought to the Shadowspine Pits and Anyalra has seen them and decided they might have more potential than the other new slaves, the Explorers are put through a series of trials to test their worth to the Cult of Withered Blade. These trials test their skill at arms, their mental strength, and the way in which their suffering influences the crowd. They are also singled out to see if they have any additional talents that might prove useful to the Cult, in or out of the arenas. Anyalra is not personally present to witness these tests, for the Explorers do not yet rate her attention from among the thousands of slaves she is currently training or preparing for their deaths in the Shadowspine Pits, but if they perform well, news will reach her and they will take their first steps on the road to gaining favour within the cult, and thus the additional freedoms and opportunities they need to effect their escape or infiltrate the ziggurat. Instead, the tests are overseen by Unarlan, a Hekatrix Bloodbride and one of Anyalra's favoured champions (see page 70 for details on Unarlan).

The first test that all slaves undertake is the Trial of Blood, to determine their merit as fighters. Those who distinguish themselves at this stage may catch the eye of the Cult, though whether this attention is a blessing or a curse is not always



clear. The Dark Eldar take all the new slaves and pair them up (each Explorer should be pitted against a random NPC slave, and none should have to fight each other for now). Guided by prods from above, the slaves are moved one pair at a time into a smaller adjoining pit, below the main pit where the other gathered slaves are able to watch. The GM can pair the Explorers with any of the other slaves, either from among the humans or the xenos. If the GM wants to make this encounter more challenging, he can choose a naturally tough xenos (such as a Kroot or Ork) to face the Explorer in question or he could have him paired with a familiar face, such as an NPC ally who he met earlier in the Nexus. Once the slaves are in the lower pit by themselves, their captors remotely release their manacles and command them to fight barehanded to the death (though, in actuality, the Dark Eldar separate the two and usually resuscitate the loser once one fighter has been rendered unconscious). Those who refuse to fight are first threatened with death (and told that only one slave will be allowed to leave the pit alive) and then incapacitated with ranged weapons if they persist in their pacifism.

To resolve the fight the GM has two options. He can either run a series of one-on-one, unarmed combat encounters, using the profiles for slave gladiators found on page 128 in **Chapter IV: The Treacherous Path**, or he can handle things in a less detailed manner. For this simpler approach, the GM should have each PC make an **Opposed Weapon Skill Test** against his opponent (again, using the profiles found on page 128). In the simple method, the GM should provide the Explorers with bonuses based on roleplaying (a player who describes his Explorer tricking a stronger enemy into smashing himself against the spiked rim of the pit might receive a +10 bonus to his Weapon Skill Test, for instance) or on appropriate Skills and Talents that improve their capacity to fight unarmed. Those Explorers who win the Opposed Test manage to beat their foe unconscious and are ushered away while another pair is brought into the pit. Those who are defeated are dragged from the pit unceremoniously by their Dark Eldar handlers and resuscitated elsewhere, regaining consciousness as their Test of Endurance begins. GMs may wish to know that it is also at this point that the combatants are reunited, and winners will realise that, in all likelihood, the losers of the battle have survived unless they were treated to a particularly brutal display during the Trial of Blood.

Regardless of which method the GM uses, each Explorer who wins his battle in the Trial of Blood earns the group one Favour, but may also find himself faced with more challenging foes in the pits (see page 56 for rules regarding Favour).

## IS THAT ALL YOU'VE GOT?

After they have been subjected to fighting the other slaves, the Explorers are then given a test of their will, to see how much punishment they can undertake and if they are good stock for torture and the worst kinds of entertainment the pits have to offer. The Dark Eldar choose only the best candidates for most games, and thus must learn exactly how far they can push a slave before it will perish and must be repaired or replaced. Regrouped in a new chamber and manacled once more, the Explorers are led into a grisly chamber that appears to have



once been some type of fluids reclamation facility for the sphere, its machines, funnels, and turbines twisted by the Dark Eldar for their own terrible purposes. Here, the Explorers are subjected to mental and physical torment to test their limits and gauge their worth to the Withered Blade. The test takes two forms: the Trial of Agony, a test of endurance and suffering, and the Trial of Terror, a test of mental fortitude and sanity in the face of fear.

The Trial of Agony involves subjecting the victim to the various common tortures carried out by the Dark Eldar. The Explorers are held underwater, subjected to electrical pulses, and scorched by heat and flame; their anguish is carefully noted by the Cult each step of the way. The GM should probably refrain into the specifics of these trials, and the PCs' exact reactions and tactics to overcome them should remain equally obscured; simply making a single **Very Hard (-30) Willpower or Toughness Test** to see how the Explorers fare is enough. As with the simplified version of the Trial of Blood, the Explorers can gain appropriate bonuses to this Test if they have any Talents that make them harder to kill, harm, or break, even if those Talents do not normally grant specific bonuses to enduring torture (some such Talents include the Die Hard, Unshakeable Faith, Duty Unto Death, and Hardy Talents). Those who pass remained conscious, and showed a measure of strength in the face of agony, while those who have failed have marked themselves out as limited in their uses to the Dark Eldar. Each Explorer who succeeds in the Trial of Agony earns one Favour for the group, but may also find himself singled out for ever-increasing torments in the arena (see page 56 for rules regarding Favour).



## MIND-KILLER

After the trials of physical anguish, the Dark Eldar captors move the Explorers to the Trial of Terror. This test was created by the Dark Eldar to measure the mental strength of their slaves, and see how far they can bend their captives' minds without shattering them entirely. It is a test of primal fear, in which the Explorers are exposed to something truly terrible. This torment can take any form the GM chooses, and if the Dark Eldar know anything about the Explorers (perhaps from their efforts to infiltrate the Nexus' twisted nobility) they use it against them.

Common examples of the Trial of Terror include dropping slaves down one of the gravity chutes to hang suspended by an arcane field above the fusion core or forcing them to witness the gruesome death of another slave. Equally, they might be dropped into a pit with a terrifying foe such as a Genestealer or Khymera, unaware that the creature is held on an invisible leash by its masters. The end result is that the Explorers must make a Fear Test (see page 294 of the **Rogue**

**TRADER** Core Rulebook) against a creature or event with a Fear Rating of 1. All bonuses from Talents or Traits that the Explorer would normally gain to Fear Tests apply to this Test, and bonuses and penalties should be applied based on the specifics of the Explorer and the object of horror.

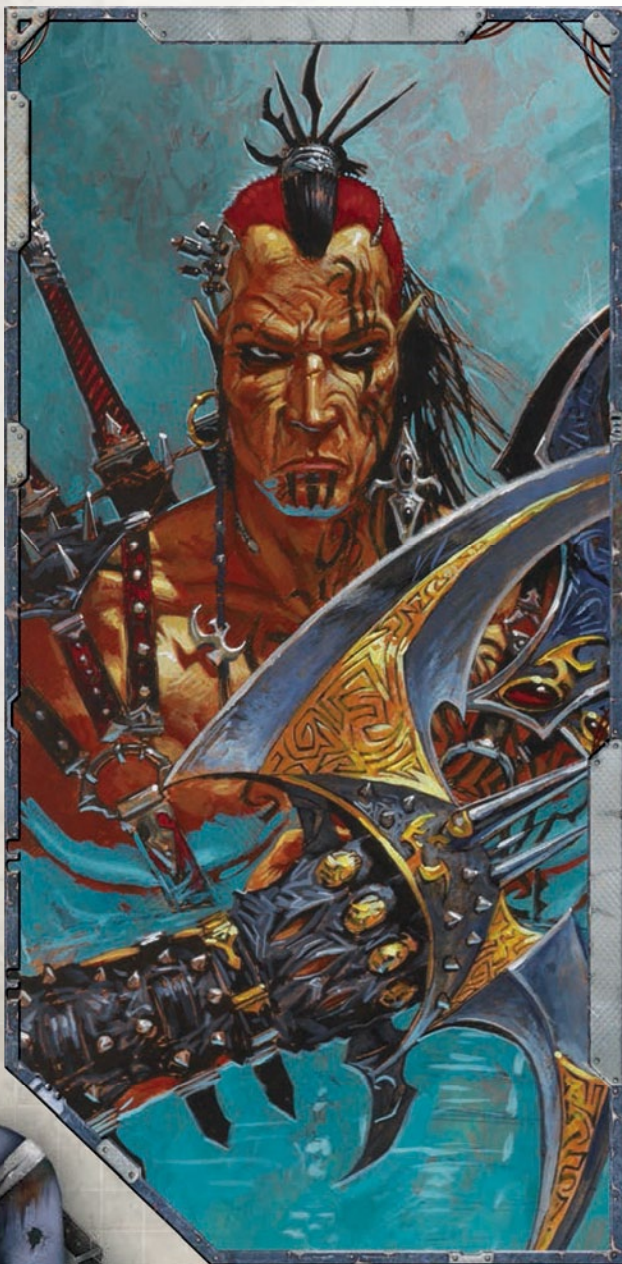
An Explorer who passes this Trial proves that even if his body is weak (if, for instance, he failed the Trial of Agony), his mind remains unclouded by fear. Explorers who succeed in the Trial of Terror earn one Favour for the group, but may find themselves thrown against increasingly horrific creatures, as the Dark Eldar watch with bated breath to see their vaunted courage shatter before some overwhelming source of fear (see page 56 for rules regarding Favour).

## THE BLOODY HAZE

After the horrors of the converted production facility, the Explorers are given their first taste of the arena and a chance to see how the crowd reacts to them. This is not an "honour" bestowed on every slave (many are not considered worthy of the arena), but the Explorers are obviously a cut above the rank-and-file who pass through the trials. Though the Dark Eldar spectators are far more interested in their suffering than their fighting prowess, there may be other xenos or even humans in the stands who take an interest in the strength, cunning, and panache that the Explorers display while in battle.

The Dark Eldar gather together each Explorer and slave who has been given the "privilege" of entering the arena in a group and sent into the arena. Once inside, each combatant is given the choice of weapons: a mono-sword (Melee; 1d10+2 R; Pen 2; Balanced), a great-maul (Melee; 2d10 I; Pen 0; Primitive, Unbalanced), or a mono-dagger (Melee; 1d5+2; Pen 2), xenos-craft bow (Ranged; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+2 I; Clip 1; Reload Half; Primitive, Reliable), and 12 arrows. The GM should send in at least two human slaves (use the profile for Tormented Human from page 129) along with the Explorers, and can add more depending on the combat abilities of the group. Those who enter the arena must face a fearsome Clawed Fiend (see page 134 for the profile of a Clawed Fiend), which they must defeat with their primitive weaponry. The Clawed Fiend should target the NPC pit fighters first, and focus on the Explorers only after it has slain the NPCs. If the Explorers are in danger of being overwhelmed, the GM might choose to usher in another wave of slaves to assist them, giving them a chance to catch their breath while the creature's attention is on the newcomers.

The Explorers earn one Favour for killing the beast, but two Favour if they can make it suffer above and beyond what is necessary to kill it (see page 56 for rules regarding Favour). If the group is ever fully incapacitated by the Clawed Fiend, they are removed from the arena, patched up as much as the Dark Eldar see fit (at the very least, they should be stabilised and have any immediately life-threatening wounds treated), and passed on to the slave pens.





ARENAS

THE CORPSE-TYRES

CULT OF THE WITHERED BLADE SPIRES

SUBTERRANEAN  
SLAVE PENS

THE SHADOWSPINE PITS

THE ZIGGURAT



# THOSE WHO ARE ABOUT TO SUFFER

*"Your fear, your pain, your anguish. These we claim."*

—Words of the Cult of the Withered Blade

With the Trials and introductory battle concluded, the Explorers' true life of slavery can commence. At this point, they have only had a chance to demonstrate (and rely upon) their martial prowess, but opportunities for characters whose skills lie more in verbal than physical persuasion have a chance to be very effective in the other roles that slaves fulfil for the Cult of the Withered Blade. The Cult of the Withered Blade takes perverse pleasure in subjecting skilled warriors to ritual humiliation, including performing menial tasks, and so they do not differentiate between slaves and gladiators except in the rare cases of warriors who cannot be controlled outside of the ring. Any warrior might find himself called upon drag corpses from the arena or scrub the blood from a rack, much as any slave with no martial prowess might find himself flung into the ring to slay a Carnosaur, armed only with the scalpel that he was cleaning when told to fight. As such, when not fighting in the pits, the Explorers have access to the bulk of the Shadowspine Pits, itself a massive prison, and to its occupants, and may be called upon to perform all sorts of odious tasks for their dark masters.

In this part of the adventure, the Explorers can pass fairly freely around the Shadowspine Pits, their Dark Eldar jailers only concerning themselves with the security of certain areas and the entrances and exits to the pits. Taking advantage of the influence they can acquire in and out of the arenas requires deft manoeuvring on the part of the Explorers.

The first thing the GM should do once the trials are concluded is introduce the Explorers to their new life as slaves of the Withered Blade, making sure they are aware of the details of their captivity and the problems and advantages it presents to completing their mission. Doubtless the players are eager for escape, and the opportunity to begin plotting their liberation arises almost right away. Meeting the NPCs already in the house of the Withered Blade, fighting in the pits, and performing various tasks for their captors will all speed this process along, and can allow the GM to impart information to the players that saves them from needing to make their own investigations about every tiny detail.

## A DREAM OF FREEDOM

The Explorers will almost certainly begin thinking of ways to escape as soon as they realise that they have fallen into the hands of the Dark Eldar. Their overarching mission for the adventure, however, remains the same: they must still "liberate" *The Soul Reaver* from the Splintered Talon's ziggurat before the renegade fleet can arrive and launch its assault. Without their success, Salaine's machinations cannot move forward, and they



risk losing any deal or profit to be reaped from their situation (to say nothing of recouping the losses they have suffered to get this far). The GM should be careful in this section to make clear that the players have not failed even though their first attempt was thwarted. This should be seen as a mere setback, a chance to attack the problem from a different angle and just another obstacle to overcome. Giving the Explorers opportunities to meet new allies, make new inroads, and form new plans to steal *The Soul Reaver* will help remind them that they are masters of their own fate even though they have fallen upon hard times.

One of the first steps on the road to freedom is meeting Domos Agnelain. Once the Explorers have become acquainted with the venerable Tech-Priest, they can seriously start to consider their escape, as he can offer them a wealth of information about the Withered Blade and present them with a number of decent plans. He also makes it clear to them that the sealed doors and high pits, not to mention the patrols of Wyches and Kabalite Warriors, make a frontal assault by unarmed slaves tantamount to suicide, and that they must prepare and find the right moment to strike.

Domos explains to the Explorers that he has long dreamed of freedom, especially the freedom to explore the Gaelan Sphere and its many techno-arcane mysteries, and has cogitated long upon a vast number of alternative paths to escape despite lacking the power to enact any of them. He tells the Explorers that to make any serious break for freedom they require weapons, the support of other capable slaves, and a large distraction.



## GM GUIDANCE: DOMOS THE BLOODSMITH

Domos Agnelain the enslaved Adeptus Mechanicus Magos, is a major NPC in this part of the adventure and is the foremost of the allies the Explorers can make amongst the gladiators and slaves of the Withered Blade Cult. Domos came to the Gaelan Sphere seeking ancient technology and the secrets of a lost age; what he found was only enslavement and pain, the worst of which is perhaps the knowledge that countless secrets and pieces of lost archeotech rest literally under his feet and yet he cannot explore them.

For years he has suffered in the service of the Withered Blade, his skills turned to mending their gladiators and subverting the machinery of the Sphere for the Dark Eldar, unable to escape alone and waiting for his chance to return to the Imperium—or, better yet, return to his research of the Sphere. Domos can help the Explorers become the catalyst for the uprising at the end of this chapter, and can provide substantial aid in leading the slaves against the Dark Eldar and setting the Nexus ablaze (also, incidentally, giving the PCs the perfect chance to try to abscond with *The Soul Reaver* again). When the Explorers arrive in the pits for the first time they meet him, and it quickly becomes apparent that he is among the oldest and most revered of the slaves here—and also one of the most deranged, albeit in a relatively harmless way, carrying on frequent “conversations” with his vanished mentor “Magos Pridius” even as he sutures a patient back together or constructs makeshift prosthetics for those whose limbs cannot be recovered.

Domos is the Explorers’ first and foremost contact and ally amongst the slaves of the Withered Blade, who may use him as a way to guide the PCs towards formulating an escape plan and helping them to unite the slaves against the Dark Eldar. He can also help the Explorers with weapons and alien technology, patch them up if they are wounded in the arena, craft certain commonplace items, and can even restore limbs and organs should they be damaged or destroyed, though for the PCs this means replacing mangled arms, legs, or eyes with strange devices cobbled together from whatever Domos can scavenge. Because of his terrible dearth of supplies, any items crafted by the Magos, including cybernetic replacements, count as being of Poor Craftsmanship. If Domos had access to better materials, he would be able to create better items.

Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

*The ancient pile of rust that might once have been a Priest of Mars stirs to life, animated by your mention of escape. He chatters rapidly, seemingly to himself. “What have we here, Pridius? Is this truly the path back to the Omnissiah’s glorious embrace—what? No, we have no time to cogitate upon those formulas now, my friend! We must act!” He begins to move with an unexpected pace, examining the Explorers, occasionally poking and prodding before he comes to a halt, apparently satisfied. “Indeed. As Pridius said, you have an auspicious look about you, and he has advised me that our chances of escape will probabilistically never be higher. My own cogitations on the matter are in accord. You could do it—you could engineer the uprising I have envisioned. Your odds of success are non-trivial. You shall have my help in your endeavours—and Pridius’ utmost aid too, of course, even if he can be a bit sour at times.”*

Domos elaborates, explaining some of their options. First, he explains that even though they are slaves, they can earn favour with the Cult of the Withered Blade, and use this influence to help them plan their rebellion. He has used his own usefulness to survive for decades despite the hellish conditions, and if the Explorers earn glory in the arena or favour in the devious social circles that surround it, they can use this social currency to move their plans forward in small but important ways.

Domos first suggests that they should rouse the slaves in a rebellion, which requires bringing certain key individuals to their side. He also offers the idea of securing access to weapons for the uprising itself, either by winning outside support from a patron of the arenas or ascertaining the locations of weapons stockpiles. Finally, he makes it clear that information is key to the success of their break for freedom, and though he can provide basic

information on the layout and organisation of the Shadowspine Pits, any codes to restricted areas, information about guard patrols, or ciphers to open the beast-pens could be pivotal in their victory.

Unfortunately, as Domos notes, all of this may take some time, and for the moment the Explorers need to play the wicked games of the Withered Blade to bring their plans to fruition. This section can therefore be as long or as short as the GM chooses, based on the actions of the PCs, culminating at a time when the Explorers feel that they are ready to make their move and have given themselves the best possible chance for success.

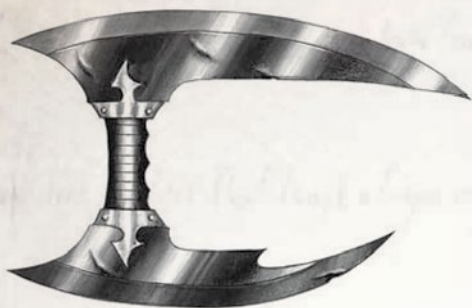
## GM GUIDANCE: SALAINE’S MOVE

After being captured by the Dark Eldar, the Explorers might rightly wonder where Salaine is now, and why she does not immediately rush to their aid. Of course, savvy Explorers may correctly guess that such heroics are anathema the Dark Eldar way, but those less knowledgeable of the devious nature of these xenos may wish to know why she is not rendering assistance to the Explorers, who are if nothing else critical to her plan’s success.

Through the machine they planted on *The Soul Reaver*, Salaine observed their defeat and capture, and she has begun adjusting her plans to deal with this new development. The GM can use her to give the Explorers aid while they are in captivity, sending tools or information to help them escape, though she is very careful not to put herself in direct danger. The GM can alternatively have Salaine go silent. They might spot her in the stands of the arena, trying to win over the support of one of the factions represented there, or they might not see her at all—either outcome could easily inflame their suspicions about her possible betrayal.



# FAVOUR OF THE WITHERED BLADE



Everything the Explorers are able to do while in captivity is ultimately subject to the cruel whim of the Withered Blade. Smuggling in weapons and gear, doing tasks for other slaves, or stealing codes for gates and machines all hinge on the mood of their captors. The Explorers gain Favour by proving their worth in the arena or outside of it, and must gather it so they can bend the rules of their enslavement enough to allow them to make their uprising a reality. The GM can use Favour as a guide to allow the PCs the chance to gain certain items and information vital to their escape plan. Once they have the weapons, codes, allies, and secrets they need, they can then commence their escape. Any member of the group may spend Favour regardless of who originally earned it.

## GAINING FAVOUR

Generally, the Explorers gain Favour in one of three ways (though special cases such as the Trials also award Favour):

### GLORY IN THE ARENA

If the Explorers can put on a vicious show in the arena, defeat powerful foes, and make impressive displays (ultimately causing their opponents—and possibly themselves—the maximum amount of pain) the Dark Eldar use them again for matches, and thus ensure their continued existence. Glory in the arena may draw the eye of other groups that attend the games (such as Kroot mercenary warbands, Ork Freebooters, human pirates and slavers, and a plethora of others). Unlike the Dark Eldar, these groups are interested in the fighting prowess of an Explorer as much as his suffering. These aliens can come from the Nexus or beyond, and can become useful allies and help the Explorers escape. Details on setting matches can be found on page 62 under **The Shadowspine Pits**. The GM should use the following guidelines for awarding Favour:

#### Victory or Death

Winning a fight in the pits grants the Explorers at least one Favour, even if only one of their number remains conscious (or alive) to walk away, provided they have vanquished all their enemies.

#### Close Quarters

When the Explorers win an arena battle in which they are only armed with melee weapons, or weapons with the Primitive Quality, they receive an additional Favour.

#### Outnumbered and Outgunned

When the Explorers win a battle in which they are significantly outnumbered or are facing enemies of a significantly higher calibre than themselves (such as veteran gladiators like Hekatrix Bloodbrides or a monstrous foes like Fleshwrought Drakes), they receive an additional Favour.

### SERVICE TO THE DARK MASTERS

Outside the arena the Explorers, especially those who do not excel in the arenas, can also make themselves known by meeting the needs of the Withered Blade and its honoured guests. This can mean completing any number of tasks (some as dangerous as fighting in the arena) to gain the favour of the Dark Eldar. Details on service to the house and how the Explorers can gain Favour in completing them can be found below in **Service to the Wicked** (page 70). The GM should use the following guidelines for awarding Favour:

#### A Job Well Done

Completing a task within the house for their Dark Eldar masters grants the Explorers one Favour.

#### Inspired Work

While the Dark Eldar do not usually reward initiative in their slaves, if the Explorers can complete a task with even better results than intended, they receive an additional Favour.

#### Agonising Outcomes

The Dark Eldar relish pain before all else and if the Explorers manage to cause somebody to suffer unnecessarily during the completion of a task, they gain an additional Favour.

### TREACHERY AND DECEIT

Either from their place in the arena or as household slaves, the Explorers can try to sway their captors through treachery and manipulation, using the secrets and alliances of the Dark Eldar against them. This is a very dangerous game, as the Dark Eldar are masters of betrayal and lies, and their politics are often deadly and final. Nonetheless, canny Explorers may attempt to learn secrets about their masters, or uncover stresses in alliances and compacts between Dark Eldar nobles to manipulate events for their own ends. See **A Game within a Game** on page 69 for details on tasks they might be called to perform and individuals they might meet during that time. The GM should use the following guidelines for awarding Favour:

#### Lies and Scandal

The Explorers can uncover a secret and use it against one of their masters or their guests to earn one Favour. They gain an additional Favour whenever they learn a secret that implicates a group or alliance.



## Wheels within Wheels

Some secrets take time to come to fruition and can be used to uncover even more secrets. Using what they have learnt against the Dark Eldar to uncover additional clandestine knowledge or dealings grants the Explorers an additional Favour on top of any granted by the new revelation.

## USING FAVOUR

The Explorers can use Favour to gain weapons, secrets, or manipulate events, eventually allowing the Explorers to escape. It can be imagined that the Explorers gain Favour in a variety of forms, and Favour does not necessarily equate to someone owing the Explorers a good turn or the PCs gaining extra privileges from their masters. Favour is always a form of “soft” power, and can stand for a plethora of different means to their end. Favour represents standing amongst the slaves of the pit, however it also represents the ability to slip a word into the right ear, the opportunity to overhear a piece of information, or sometimes simply the blind luck of being in the right place at the right time. The Explorers never gain the ability to control or directly demand things of their Dark Eldar captors, but the Explorers might use Favour for clever and highly subtle manipulation to get the results that they desire. For a specific list of items, services, and information that can be acquired through Favour, see **Table 2–1: Favour**.

## THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

Before the Explorers can escape the Shadowspine Pits and continue their mission to remove *The Soul Reaper*, they need to be adequately prepared. There is no set amount of Favour the Explorers must gain or expend before they can attempt their escape, and the GM should set this limit based on how long he wants to make this section of the adventure. Each point of Favour can be used to make their escape easier, and the GM should ensure that the PCs at least make allies within the slave population before they try a serious break for freedom, but the GM might also impose a set amount of Favour that the Explorers must earn and expend in service of their efforts before an opportunity to escape arises. 25 Favour is a reasonable level to set, and makes most groups of Explorers work for their freedom. The GM can present this as the amount of work the PCs are required to perform to create a major distraction that sets the uprising in motion or to create a chance at escape.



TABLE 2–1: FAVOUR

| Favour Cost | Effect                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2           | The Explorers gain one method for bypassing a single field, blast door, or other containment. This information can be used during the uprising to free more slaves and speed their escape, or to free beasts from their pens to create a distraction.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 2           | The Explorers acquire information about the layout of the Shadowspine Pits, including the location of a specific individual or item, the paths of patrols in an area, the location of a weapons cache, or the position of static defences.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 2           | The Explorers acquire a single item that ranges from Ubiquitous to Common Availability for immediate use, for themselves or for any NPC captive of the Withered Blade Cult.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 2           | The Explorers may choose to substitute one slave gladiator for any other in a given arena battle.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 3           | The Explorers influence who they are fighting in the arena next. Before the roll has been made, the Explorers may choose the result of a roll on <b>Table 2–3: Arena Foes</b> or <b>Table 2–6: Arena Hazards</b> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 3           | The Explorers can acquire a single item that ranges from Average to Scarce Availability for immediate use, for themselves or for any NPC prisoner..                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 5           | The Explorers use Favour to tap into what is perhaps the greatest and most unsettling resource of the Dark Eldar: the Haemonculi and their unnatural mastery over life and death. If an Explorer is killed in battle under sufficiently impressive circumstances and gives the crowd a particularly twisted death to relish, the group may spend five Favour if the late Explorer does not have a Fate Point left to burn to avoid death (or does not wish to burn a Fate Point). If they do, a the Explorer catches the eye of The Sutured Helix and for whatever inscrutable reasons, the Coven decides to return him to life—or something resembling it. The Explorer suffers 1d5 permanent Fellowship Damage and 1d5 permanent Damage to one other randomly selected Characteristic, and returns, disfigured and “gifted” with an odd new augmentation (see <b>Table 2–2: Gifts of the Coven</b> ). Favour used this way does not count towards the total that the Explorers must earn and expend on their escape efforts. |

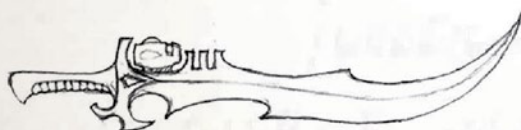


TABLE 2-2: GIFTS OF THE COVEN

## 1d5 Roll    Augmentation

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <b>Horrific Limb:</b> The Explorer gains a unique fleshcrafted limb, grafted permanently onto his body to replace one that was lost or simply because of the pique of the Haemonculi. Attacks made with this limb, which may be a hand, a bladed attachment, or something even more esoteric, have the following profile: 1d10 R; Tearing. However, the vile nature of this limb is obvious to all who see it, except perhaps its deranged creators.                              |
| 2 | <b>Eye of Dread:</b> One of the Explorer's eyes has been replaced with a bizarre, alien organ that shudders and pulses with an eldritch power. Any creature that makes eye contact with this eye must make a Fear (1) Test.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 3 | <b>Tox-Echo Organ:</b> The Explorer is implanted with an organ that allows him to replicate and secrete toxins from the palms of his hands. Whenever the Explorer suffers the effects of a poison, he may make a <b>Routine (+20) Toughness Test</b> . If he succeeds on this Test, his melee attacks gain the Toxic Quality with the effects of whatever poison he replicated (see <b>The Toxic Spectrum</b> on page 117) for the next 1d5 days or until he mimics a new poison. |
| 4 | <b>Drug Inductor:</b> The Explorer gains a small metal and flesh organ on his back that allows him to quickly add combat drugs to his system. The Explorer may load up to three doses of any combat drug into this organ before battle, and use them at any time as a Free Action. Further, the Explorer may use drugs meant for xenos with their normal effect, instead of having to make a successful Toughness Test to use them (see <b>Drugs and Poisons</b> on page 116).    |
| 5 | <b>Dermal Carapace:</b> One of the Explorer's body parts (chosen at random) is fitted with an experimental, shifting skin-armour that provides extra protection against attacks. The Explorer adds +3 AP to that body part. The Armour bonus is added to any other Armour for that location. However, many fitted with this enhancement find it very irritating, as the shifting plates constantly conform to new positions, seemingly of their own accord.                       |

## BROTHERS IN BLOOD



The Explorers' chances of escape are significantly greater if they manage to recruit some allies from among the slaves of the Withered Blade. These NPCs come from a variety of backgrounds, some staunch servants of the God-Emperor with faith in the Imperium, others servants of the Dark Powers plucked from the Screaming Vortex or aliens captured from the Koronus Expanse by Dark Eldar raiders. As slaves of the Withered Blade, the Explorers can be called upon to fight alongside this motley group of prisoners, or fight against them, forcing them to deal with their own ingrained hatreds or alliances regarding elements of the Imperium and its many enemies. Every one of these fellow slaves can help the Explorers, both to escape the Shadowspine Pits and also steal *The Soul Reaver*, if they can win them over. In many cases, the only common point the Explorers share with an alien or renegade NPC is a mutual desire to be free from slavery and exact some kind of vengeance on the hated Dark Eldar of the Cult of the Withered Blade or the Kabal of the Splintered Talon.

The NPCs detailed below form a pool of potential allies and enemies who can either help the Explorers escape or complicate their plans. Once they meet Domos and he calculates the odds, he decides that the Explorers are his optimal chance to escape. To this end, he suggests to them that they try to recruit some of the other slaves to their cause, and offers a list of those he believes to be the most able and skilled individuals who would increase their probability of victory. The GM can use Domos as a font of information about the slaves and their motivations, even making introductions (since Domos has been here longer than any other the slaves), though it is up to the Explorers to win them to their cause. Gaining the support of a slave can involve a number of different things, as each slave has his or her own agendas beyond just escaping. Each slave also brings specialist skills and access to different tools to aid in the escape, as well as additional support later to help with the theft of *The Soul Reaver*.

For better or for worse, each slave has brought his own hatreds and beliefs with him into captivity. This means that while the Explorers gather together allies and foment an uprising, they must contend with some slaves refusing to deal with others or even turning to the Dark Eldar if they feel they are being left out of the Explorers' plans. If the Explorers do not tread carefully, they may find themselves ostracised by the allies they have already made, or trapped between old grudges brought into the arena by stubborn individuals. This means that for every ally the Explorers make, they may also make a foe, who can turn out to be deadly to their plans for any number of reasons. These foes can be dealt with a number of ways, but often require a direct and permanent solution on the sands of the arena.



## LUDVOS TARN, CAPTURED BROTHER-SERGEANT OF THE IMPERIAL FISTS

Ludvos Tarn is a Space Marine, and the sole survivor on the losing side of a battle between his Imperial Fists squad and a Dark Eldar raiding force. Tarn is a veteran of lifetimes of war, and his face is covered in deep, biting scars but his eyes are still sharp. A great prize, he was first presented to Zaergarn and his Haemonculus Drecarus, though after the Haemonculus failed to break his will, he was sent to the pits and the care of the Withered Blade to die in the arena. His strength and stature are legendary among the denizens of the Nexus, and many xenos come to watch the warrior fight while buying and selling their slaves. The human slaves of the Withered Blade stand in awe of this giant, and he has become revered as an icon of hope and Imperial might by many of them. Tarn fights so that he does not dishonour his Chapter by accepting defeat, and hopes that one day he might escape and return to his brothers. Tarn is a fanatical servant of the Emperor and the Imperium, and while he represents a powerful ally for the Explorers, he can also become a dangerous enemy if they fraternise too closely with the xenos or converse with the servants of the Dark Gods. In these circumstances, he may well turn on those he considers unclean as soon as he has his freedom, cutting down aliens and other allies working with the PCs and placing them in the dangerous situation of choosing sides against a Space Marine.

Unlike most of the other gladiators, Tarn is kept confined near the arenas between bouts in the pits, held by Adamantium shackles that even he cannot break. The Explorers can visit his cell without too much difficulty, but releasing him from it is an entirely different proposition. The profile for Brother-Sergeant Ludvos Tarn can be found on page 130.

- **Recruitment:** Ludvos Tarn wants to escape as much as any of the slaves, and what he desires most to this end is the return of his power armour and personal weapons. These are being held in Anyalra's personal chambers as trophies; anyone who retrieves them earns his respect and greatly increases Tarn's effectiveness in combat.
- **Support:** Tarn is a combat machine, especially when armed and armoured, and though he is far from immortal, his strength could prove a tremendous asset. This makes escape from the Shadowspine Pits much more feasible, not to mention attempts to steal *The Soul Reaver*. His support also makes it easier to convince other Imperial loyalists to join in the rebellion, though it also unnerves dissidents and xenos who are familiar with the Emperor's Angels of Death.

**Allies and Enemies:** Tarn may stomach the Explorers making alliances with xenos until they have made their escape, but he does not tolerate the presence of Warp-wyrd Neija Tromea, let alone true agents of Chaos.



## GM GUIDANCE: ANGELS OF DEATH

GMs who make use of Ludvos Tarn should make sure that, while his presence is worthy of the mighty Adeptus Astartes, he does not overshadow the Explorers. There are many ways to handle this, but most of them boil down to simply separating him from the party whenever he would threaten to steal the Explorers' thunder. Tarn should, of course, still be very useful to the Explorers, like any other contact, but at no point should he make them feel marginalised within their own story. A few complications that could be used to remove Tarn from the picture at a critical juncture are listed below:

- If the Explorers have not yet returned his armour and weapons when the uprising begins, Brother Tarn informs them that he is duty-bound to retrieve these relics, and departs for some time to retrieve them.
- Magos Domos calculates that their odds of success in the insurrection are greatest if the rebels can draw the guard patrols away from the beast pens by creating a distraction in the household. After they free him from his cell, Brother Tarn offers to lead a small group to lure the enemy astray while the Explorers execute the plan.
- A powerful Incubus champion is visiting the Shadowspine Pits just prior to the rebellion, and one of their contacts marks him as a threat. Brother Tarn volunteers to face him alone and bring him down so that the Explorers can pursue other goals unimpeded.

## CAPTAIN ANJA SHEN, COMMANDER OF THE HOSTILE TRANSACTION

The Explorers and their ship are not the only vessel to have fallen afoul of the treachery of the Dark Eldar based on the promise of easy profit. Among those enslaved by the Withered Blade is Captain Anja Shen, of *The Hostile Transaction*, along with a good proportion of her crew. Captain Shen is a stout, middle-aged woman with rough manners, little tolerance for fools, and an eye for great profit. Like the Explorers, she was lured to the Nexus after hearing dark tales of the wealth that would be made trading with its aliens, and she has never held any reservations about involving herself in the Cold Trade. Setting out from Footfall, *The Hostile Transaction* followed the webway using ancient maps bought at great expense by Shen, eventually leading the captain and her crew to the Dark Eldar outpost. In spite of the dangers the Nexus presents, Shen might have made away with a fortune in xenos tech or slaves if she hadn't succumbed to her weakness for gambling. Much to her chagrin, Anyalra cut her champion down in the arena and cost her both her ship and her crew, the shadow of the Razor's Web preventing any thoughts of backing out of the wager.

Since that day, Shen has been struggling to survive in the Withered Blade's slave pens as her crew slowly dwindles around her. She dreams of her chance to be free, to reclaim her vessel, and exact her revenge on Anyalra. She is interested in joining with the Explorers, and it is even possible that they already share contacts in the Koronus Expanse or Calixis Sector. Once



they escape, Shen can also prove to be a valuable ally in later adventures, even creating a lasting alliance with the Explorers' dynasty in the interests of mutual profit. Captain Anja Shen's profile can be found on pages 129-130.

- **Recruitment:** Anja Shen wants a chance to exact her revenge on Anyalra, or at very least take the haughty xenos down a peg or two. If the Explorers can find a way to embarrass or hurt the pride of the Cult of the Withered Blade or better yet, Anyalra herself, then Shen agrees to join them.
- **Support:** Once Shen is free, she can be of great aid to the Explorers if she is reunited with her vessel, and can support them with her ship in the battle above the Nexus against the Splintered Talon. Her vessel can also be of use in helping the Explorers reclaim their own vessel or stage an escape into the void. *The Hostile Transaction* is a Havoc-class merchant raider vessel (see page 195 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook for the profile for these voidships).
- **Allies and Enemies:** Shen is fairly open-minded when it comes to making alliances, and though she does not truly trust anyone, she can work with virtually any other NPC the Explorers recruit. She is always wary around Eldar and Dark Eldar (two groups between which she, like almost all humans, sees no distinction) given her time in the pits.

## NASHRIK HAKH, SAVAGE KROOT

Among those enslaved by the Withered Blade, there are also numerous aliens, not least of which are several Kroot. The most prominent of these is Nashrik Hakh, a veteran of battles in the Jericho Reach and one of the few survivors of her clan after it fell into the grips of the Dark Eldar. Like all Kroot, Hakh cuts an imposing figure, but she has not escaped the pits without its scars: her green flesh is mottled by discolouration, her beak has a long chip cut from it, and she suffers from periodic twitches when she is not in battle. Hakh has adapted fairly well to her life of slavery and combat, though she suffers from the lingering physiological and psychological effects of consuming flesh ridden with vile cocktails of Dark Eldar chemical enhancements. Hakh's Shaper was also killed during the raid that saw her enslaved, and she feels the lack of direction and guidance she once had. An able warrior and a vicious foe, Hakh can be of use to the Explorers in their escape and in winning battles in the arena, though they must find a way to communicate with her, as she speaks only her native tongue and the language of the Tau.

If they can bring her to their side, Nashrik Hakh also brings with her a half-dozen other Kroot (the remains of her clan). Her clan can become a staunch ally to the Explorers even beyond the environs of the Nexus, provided that the Explorers treat them well and allow them to sup upon the flesh of many fallen foes. Nashrik Hakh's profile can be found on page 131.

Hakh's surviving kin use the Kroot Mercenary profile from page 377 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook, but use the same equipment list as Nashrik Hakh.

- **Recruitment:** Nashrik Hakh wants to eat her fill from the corpse of a powerful foe and complete the rituals of her people. Normally the dead are swiftly removed from the pits after a match and the gladiators are not allowed to linger. As such, the Kroot can only glut themselves on what flesh they have ripped away during combat, and this is often polluted by the various drugs the Dark Eldar employ. If the Explorers can kill or otherwise secure such a corpse for Hakh, and allow her the time to feed properly, she considers herself in their debt and throws herself behind their cause.
- **Support:** Hakh and her fellow Kroot add much needed muscle to any escape attempt, their savagery unmatched by any of the human slaves once battle is joined. The Kroot are also able to aid the Explorers later in their battles for the Nexus and *The Soul Reaver*, their loyalty is beyond question once they have been bought.
- **Allies and Enemies:** The Kroot do not have any ideological problem with any of the other NPCs the Explorers might recruit, unburdened as they are by excessive morals or religious dogma. They eye their allies (including the Explorers) with unmasked hunger from time to time, though, and should a worthy warrior die in battle, they may ask if they can honour the fallen by feeding on his flesh—much to the discomfort of many of the other NPCs.

## NEIJA TROMEAN, WARP-WYRD

Neija Tromean is likely the most ill-omened individual amidst the unfortunate rabble who populate the slave pens of the Cult of the Withered Blade. However, unlike most, Tromean's misfortune is not hers alone. In her wake, at least four Imperial vessels have been reduced to husks in the void and a frontier world found itself devastated by Dark Eldar raiders. Despite this impressive reputation, Tromean hardly looks the part—slim, with ragged black hair and one eye covered after she lost it in the pits, the Warp-wyrd does not stand out from the rest of the beleaguered human slaves except for the intricate alien device around her neck. She, like so many other outcasts, has found her way to the Nexus of Shadows as a slave of the Cult of the Withered Blade, to which she was gifted by a rival Wych Cult hoping to gain inroads into the Nexus. On top of her rather impressive reputation for bearing witness to disaster, Tromean is an unsanctioned psyker of some ability. Though she holds no particular love of the Imperium, she is hardly a dedicated servant of the Dark Gods either, and tends to side with those who show strength. While she is currently bound by suppressant shackles and restraining bolts to prevent her accursed powers from manifesting, she is a fairly capable fighter in her own right—and would be a terrifyingly powerful ally (or enemy) if unleashed. Neija Tromean's profile can be found on page 131.

- **Recruitment:** Neija Tromean wants the key that Anyalra holds so that she might use her powers properly. Like most things of value, Anyalra keeps the key in her personal chambers or on her person at any given time, though it might go unnoticed for some time if stolen given how infrequently she uses it.

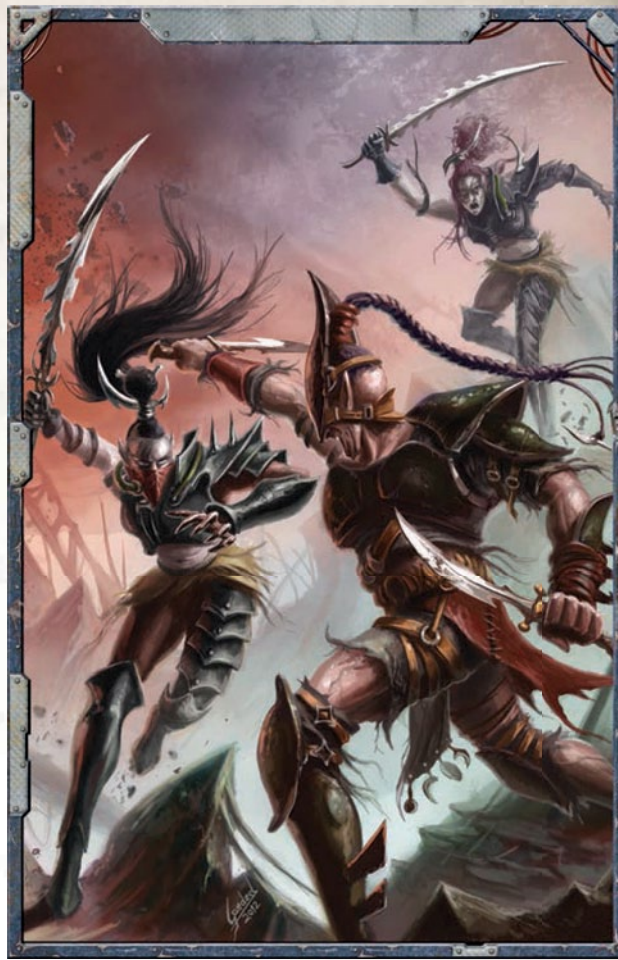


- **Support:** Tromean's powers can be useful in aiding the Explorers in their escape, either striking down their foes or finding a way out of the maze of tunnels below the Shadowspine Pits. Tromean is also a great asset when dealing with *The Soul Reaver*, as her connection to the warp allows her certain insights into the ancient machine.
- **Allies and Enemies:** Tromean distrusts the Space Marine Ludvos Tarn, given his strict stance on psykers, and distrusts all Eldar, though she will work with anyone in the struggle towards freedom. However, if she sees an opportunity to escape (once her shackles have been removed, of course), she takes it unless persuaded otherwise by the Explorers or their allies.

## RELHADHAR ANTARIEL, THE HAWK AT SHADOW S EDGE

Relhadhar Antariel, an Eldar Corsair and famed xenos pirate of the Koronus Expanse, has suffered long years of torment at the hands of first the Kabal of the Splintered Talon and then the Cult of the Withered Blade. Antariel's shaggy white mane falls around a delicate face usually split by a hateful grin, and his arms are badly scarred from some incident he refuses to mention. The pirate's solid black eyes are as unreadable as those of any of his kin, but the Hawk makes no effort to conceal the rage that nourishes him. Only by nursing a deep hatred and burning thirst for revenge has Antariel survived, doing whatever it takes to stay alive and one day see the open space of the Koronus Expanse again. He is the most wary of the NPCs that the Explorers encounter, having seen many slaves come and go, each one with unique but universally futile dreams of freedom. If the Explorers can win the Corsair over, he is a skilled pilot and fighter, and possesses an extensive knowledge of the Archon's palace from his time as a "guest" of Zaergarn Kul some years ago. He does not like any aliens very much, but is smart enough to know that the Dark Eldar make no distinctions between their slaves when it comes to dishing out tortures and torment. As such, he may find common cause simply in the fact that the Explorers suffer as he does under the boot of the Cult of the Withered Blade. His profile is on page 131.

- **Recruitment:** Antariel demands a display of the Explorers' power before he sides with them. They must defeat at least one group of Dark Eldar in the arena, showing no mercy. If they can slaughter these foes in a suitably bloody display, the Corsair approaches them, though more is required before he makes a solid and formal alliance. The Explorers must prove their skill and hatred of the Dark Eldar by killing a Dark Eldar noble while he is a guest of the Withered Blade. This can be done by goading or tricking him into the arena or through subtler means, so long as the noble dies. If they can do this, and get away with it, the Hawk can be convinced to throw in his lot with them.
- **Support:** The Corsair is an exceptional pilot and can help the Explorers reach the ziggurat in a stolen Dark Eldar vehicle once they escape. During the battle for the Nexus, if he has a fighter or escort at his command, he can aid them and the renegade fleet against the Splintered



Talon. He can also use some of the systems aboard *The Soul Reaver*, aiding them in its theft or destruction if he is with them when they board the ship.

- **Allies and Enemies:** Once he has pledged his alliance with the Explorers, Antariel accepts their other allies without question, provided none of them are Dark Eldar (though he might, grudgingly and with much complaint, tolerate a handful of Dark Eldar Explorers who share his predicament). If he ever discovers that the Explorers are in fact working for a Dark Eldar Archon, the Explorers must convince him to stay true to their cause, and not try to slay their Dark Eldar allies or simply depart on his own.

## OTHER NPC GLADIATORS

In addition to the NPC gladiators presented in detail in this section, the GM can add extra gladiators for the Explorers to fight against or recruit for their cause. Most slaves are human, and can hail from almost anywhere within the Koronus Expanse or the Calixis Sector, originating from any world or representing any faction, Imperial or otherwise. There are sundry aliens enslaved by the Withered Blade, including but not restricted to Eldar (of all varieties), Tau, Kroot, and Orks, all of which can make for interesting allies drawn together by the common foe of their oppressors. See page 128 for the profiles for each of the NPC slaves of the Withered Blade.



# THE SHADOWSPINE PITS

**T**he pits exist for a single purpose: the spilling of blood and the delivering of death for the sadistic nourishment of the Dark Eldar. The entertainment of their allies is a useful but entirely incidental by-product of this terrible goal. Every day, ceaseless rounds of contests and games are set within the arenas of the Shadowspine Pits. Some are organised to display the prowess of slaves for sale or the viciousness of beasts, others might be held to provide a diversion for visiting xenos, who can place bets on the gory entertainment, or so that the Dark Eldar might soak up the agony of the fighters. An almost endless stream of slaves pours into the Nexus for the sole purpose of suffering in the pits, and much of the economy and purpose of the city's existence hinges on their existence, making it a central location for many of the deals and meetings of those who visit the Dark Eldar outpost. It is possible that the Explorers themselves visited the pits when they first arrived, and sat in its arenas to witness the brutal games on offer. If this is the case, it provides a stark contrast to their current predicament, looking up through the fanged crown of spikes at the expectant faces leering at their pain.

A large part of the Explorers' time as slaves of the Withered Blade is consumed by the contests they undertake in the arena. There is a huge array of matches, perils, and foes that they might face, and the GM can present the players with a myriad of choices to keep the combats interesting and challenging for their characters. Since the Explorers must go about acquiring Favour to secure weapons, allies, and information, before they can escape, it is likely that they are called to enter the pits multiple times before they are free. Some of the matches can be short, brutal affairs with a single opponent and a few additional challenges or hazards to overcome. Others can be quite complex, involving dangerous environments, multiple foes, and elaborate victory conditions. The GM should try to create a mix of these, giving the PCs different obstacles to overcome and offering a chance for every member of their group to shine rather than just those who excel at combat.

## ORGANISING A FIGHT

When the Explorers are first taken into captivity and they meet with Domos, it should be made clear to them by the Tech-Priest that to escape they need to gain Favour, so that they can acquire the means to make their break for freedom. Part of this is completing fights in the arena, which draws the attention of the Withered Blade and the crowd and allows the PCs more privileges as gladiators. While the nature of a given fight is out of the direct control of the Explorers (as it is determined by the GM), they can influence it in certain ways if they so choose, via social interaction, the expenditure of Favour, or a bit of both. The GM should create a number of set fights,

either randomly generating them using the tables below or basing them on the abilities of the Explorers. Before a fight is to commence, the GM can allow the Explorers to engage in some amount of skulduggery to shift the results to their advantage. They might try to sway the decisions of the Dark Eldar or secretly change them by stealth (altering records or switching the contents of a beasts cage, etc.). This sort of activity should require appropriate Skill Tests (the Explorers might make a **Charm Skill Test** to convince Unarlan that an alternative match-up would be more exciting, or a **Sleight of Hand Skill Test** to rearrange the lots unnoticed), and have logical consequences for failure. Success on such a Test allows the Explorers a re-roll on either **Table 2-3: Arena Foes** or **Table 2-6: Arena Hazards**.

Whether or not the Explorers manipulate the composition of the arena combats, there are usually two major elements to a given battle in the pits: the foes the Explorers must fight, and the hazards that the arena itself presents. The foes that the Dark Eldar throw at the Explorers come from an extensive array of other slaves, captured beasts, machines, and Dark Eldar warriors such as Wyches. There is no concept of fairness or any great design by the Dark Eldar when it comes to these fights, as they keep no scores. While other aliens may gamble on the outcome and the Dark Eldar might occasionally engage in such activities, they are largely uninterested in who wins and who dies, so long as someone suffers. There is a horrifying purity to the reason that the Dark Eldar stage their games: their sadistic need to witness the pain which the gladiators inflict and which they suffer in turn. As such, the Withered Blade Cult tries to throw opponents into the pit together with this in mind. Many times, though, the selection process is random, and as long as the fight lasts for a decent amount of time, each side suffering wounds and spilling blood, the Dark Eldar find it satisfying.

The perils of the arena are a way for the Dark Eldar to further enhance the carnage of the arena and draw out the agony of the fighters. Without exception, all perils are included to make it more difficult or dangerous for fighters, forcing them to deal with the environment as much as they are dealing with their opponents. This can include a vast number of terrible contraptions, such as spiked pits and deadfalls, charged fields, walls of flames, spinning bladed flails, and spear traps. The Dark Eldar also enjoy altering the nature of the environment of the pits to make combats more deadly, adding knee deep water, manipulating the gravity (through the Gaelan Sphere's ancient mechanisms), or covering the floor in burning, corrosive sand.





## ENEMIES

When the GM wants to create an arena combat encounter, he can either roll on **Table 2-3: Arena Foes** or choose a group of foes from those below. If he wants to make a fight more challenging, he can increase the number of a selected foes the Explorers must face. The GM can also have the Explorers fight more than one foe, rolling a second time on the table and applying both results to the combat. Combat with more than one type of foe adds significantly to the difficulty of the combat, though larger fights could also become three-way combats as foes engage with each other even while they also fight the Explorers. A GM who wishes to challenge the Explorers might even roll multiple times on **Table 2-3: Arena Foes** and increase the numbers of such foes, though this could quickly become overwhelming for the PCs and more work for the GM. Alternately, if the GM wishes to make a fight easier, he might send the Explorers into the pit with NPC allies, to assist or to act as fodder for deadlier enemies.

TABLE 2-3: ARENA FOES

| 1d10 Roll | Foes              |
|-----------|-------------------|
| 1         | NPC Opponents     |
| 2-3       | Dark Eldar Wyches |
| 4-5       | Bestial Opponent  |
| 6-7       | Alien Adversaries |
| 8-9       | Pit Drudges       |
| 10        | PC Opponent       |

### Alien Adversaries

Human slaves and Dark Eldar Wyches are not the only sentient adversaries the Explorers might face in the arena. Though it is rare, the Explorers can come face to face with all manner of xenos warriors, the most common of which would be Orks (there being an abundance of them in and around the Koronus Expanse), but which could also include any of the aliens of the Expanse. Typically, there should be one alien

warrior for each Explorer if the Explorers are Rank 4 or lower, and two warriors for each Explorer if they are higher than Rank 4. Alternatively, if the Explorers are Rank 4 or higher, the aliens might be allowed to keep their original wargear while the Explorers are armed only with only Primitive or melee weapons and their ingenuity.

Profiles for the various aliens the Explorers might face, and the weapons they might use, can be found either in the fourth chapter (see page 96) of this volume or **Chapter XIV: Adversaries and Aliens** on page 364 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook.

### Bestial Foes

The Dark Eldar capture numerous beasts for their arena combats, going to great lengths to take vicious and deadly creatures alive so that they might pit them against each other and their slaves. The central location of the Nexus and the wealth of traders and travellers who pass through it mean that the Shadowspine Pits play host to a vast array of such beasts from across the Expanse and beyond. Anyalra's beast cages are usually full of exotic fiends, and the GM can have the Dark Eldar produce almost any creature imaginable to face the Explorers (adding to the suspense as they wait in the pit, nervously eyeing the gravity doors and wondering just what new horror might appear).

The GM can roll on **Table 2-4: Unleash the Beasts**, or, if the GM has other Rogue Trader books with beasts in them, such as **KORONUS BESTIARY**, he can use these as sources for alternate monsters.



TABLE 2-4: UNLEASH THE BEASTS

| 1d10 Roll | Foes                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-2       | One Khymerae for each Explorer (and one additional Khymerae for each Explorer Rank 5 or higher). See page 134 for the Khymera profile.                                      |
| 3-4       | One Ariadne Helspider for each Explorer (and one additional Ariadne Helspider for each Explorer Rank 5 or higher). See page 133 for the Ariadne Helspider profile.          |
| 5-6       | One Razorwing for each Explorer (and one additional Razorwing for each Explorer Rank 5 or higher). See page 134 for the Razorwing profile.                                  |
| 7         | One Chrono-gladiator for each Explorer (and one additional Chrono-gladiator for each Explorer Rank 5 or higher). See page 132 for the Chrono-gladiator profile.             |
| 8         | One Murderfiend Servitor for each Explorer (and one additional Murderfiend Servitor for each Explorer Rank 5 or higher). See page 135 for the Murderfiend Servitor profile. |
| 9         | One Clawed Fiend (and one additional Clawed Fiend if any Explorer is Rank 5 or higher). See page 134 for the Clawed Fiend profile.                                          |
| 10        | One Fleshwrought Drake (and one additional Fleshwrought Drake if any Explorer is Rank 5 or higher). See page 133 for the Fleshwrought Drake profile.                        |



TABLE 2-5: DARK ELДАР OPPONENTS

| 1d10 Roll | Foes                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-2       | One Hekatrix Bloodbride and one Wych for each Explorer (or one Hekatrix Bloodbride for each Explorer Rank 5 or higher). See page 124 for profiles.                                                                        |
| 3-4       | One Wych (on a skyboard) for each Explorer (plus one additional skyboard-riding Wych for each Explorer of Rank 5 or higher). See pages 124-125 for profile.                                                               |
| 5-6       | One Wych Beastmaster with one Razorwing and one Khymera (plus one Clawed Fiend if any Explorer is Rank 5 or higher). See pages 125 and 132-135 for profiles.                                                              |
| 7         | One Hekatrix Bloodbride on a Reaver jetbike (see page 139) for every two Explorers (rounded up) (or one Hekatrix Bloodbride riding a jetbike per Explorer if any Explorer is Rank 5 or higher). See page 123 for profile. |
| 8         | One Wych for every two Explorers (rounded up) and one Grotesque (plus two extra Grotesques if any Explorers is Rank 5 or Higher). See pages 124 and 127 for profiles.                                                     |
| 9         | One Fleshwrought Drake (plus one Wych Beastmaster for each Explorer Rank 5 or higher). See pages 133 (and 125) for profiles.                                                                                              |
| 10        | One Cronos Parasite Engine (plus one Wych for each Explorer Rank 5 or higher). See pages 127 (and 124) for profiles.                                                                                                      |

### Dark Eldar Wyches

Not content to merely watch, the Dark Eldar are often participants in their own arena combats. The Wyches of the Withered Blade are extremely skilled killers, and they refine their art in the pits. As a result, fights against the Dark Eldar should always be difficult, as the Explorers are outnumbered and poorly armed. These combats are not insurmountable, however. As much as the Dark Eldar enjoy slaughter, they also like to see their slaves put on a good show of blood and death, and they accept they must cull the weakest of their own in the crucible of the pit. When creating a match against the Dark Eldar, the GM can choose from the various kinds of Dark Eldar found in **Chapter IV: The Twisted Path**. Groups of opponents should vary from fight to fight, along with the arena perils, to create interesting and diverse challenges for the Explorers. If the GM does not wish to create groups of Dark Eldar on his own, he can roll on **Table 2-5: Dark Eldar Opponents** to generate groups of foes for the Explorers.

### NPC Opponent

At least one of the Explorers is likely to have to face one or more of the other slave gladiators from the Withered Blade slave pens. The GM can use these combats to either settle scores (giving the PCs a chance to kill off NPCs who are causing them problems with their escape) or as part of the machinations for the Dark Eldar and the other slaves (jealous or hateful NPCs or cunning Dark Eldar might pit them against newfound allies). These fights do not need to be to the death, however, and the Explorers can make plans with Domos to resuscitate or repair NPCs after such combats. Whether or not the Explorers want to fight to the NPCs they have been set against, these can be some of the most dangerous duels they undertake, as many of the NPCs possess skills on par with their own. When selecting NPCs to engage the PCs, the GM should consider the Explorers' escape plans, the alliances they have already made with the other slaves, and whether or not they have made enemies within the Withered Blade who might work against them. Most NPCs should be accompanied by several appropriate nameless

NPCs, though powerhouses like Ludvos Tarn could likely face most groups of Explorers without help.

Details on the skills and fighting style of each of the major NPC captives of the Withered Blade can be found above in the **Brothers in Blood** section, while their profiles and additional information can be found on page 58.

### PC Opponent

Just as it is possible for the Explorers to face NPCs in the arena, they might find themselves thrown against each other for the amusement of the Dark Eldar. These kinds of fights can be interesting for both the players and GM, as it gives them a chance to test the skills of their characters against each other without destabilising the group. These kinds of fights should be one-on-one, so as not to confuse matters or lead to Explorers ganging up on each other, as this could easily lead to dangerous imbalances in group dynamics. It remains up to the PCs whether they intend to truly try and kill each other or simply put on a show to placate the Dark Eldar. In the latter case, the GM should reward the PCs with an additional Favour if they do manage to work together and use their respective abilities to "stage" an impressive fight without the need for either to die. However, even if the two coordinate to survive the fight together, blood still needs to be spilled and some degree of pain inflicted.

### Pit Drudges

There are thousands of slaves within the Shadowspine Pits under the control of the Withered Blade, and though the majority are not worthy of the title of gladiator, they are still sent to the arenas to die at the hands of skilled warriors and rabid beasts. The Explorers might find themselves facing such a horde of pit slaves, given rudimentary weapons and sent against them in what is almost certainly to be a slaughter. The majority of pit slaves are humans, taken from worlds within the Koronus Expanse or on the edge of the Calixis Sector in raids, and could even come from the ranks of the Explorers' home worlds or vessels. These combats are not likely to present the Explorers with



a great challenge, but might make them question the cost of their Endeavour if they have to gun down and hack apart dozens of their own kind. To make an encounter with pit slaves more challenging, the GM could leave several Chrono-gladiators lurking in their midst (see page 132 for the profile for Chrono-gladiators). While these terrifying warriors are far more powerful than the wretched dredges around them, their power would likely not become apparent until it was too late. Pit slaves can also be used alongside the Explorers when facing some of the larger and nastier creatures of the arena, allowing the GM to show the Explorers “how the monster works” with the fresh corpses of scores of screaming humans before unleashing its full fury upon them.

The GM can use profiles (Anguished Eldar, Brutalised Tau Fire Warrior, Tormented Human) found on pages 128-129 in **Chapter IV: The Treacherous Path**. Most groups of Explorers Rank 4 or lower should be able to handle one to two of these wretches per Explorer, and groups of Rank 5 or higher can fight larger groups, especially if they come into possession of ranged weapons of any sort. Of course, gunning down pit drudges is hardly a challenge, and such a fate is too merciful for Dark Eldar tastes.

## GLADIATORIAL WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

The weapons, armour, and gear the Explorers can take with them into the arena is up to the GM, though he should allow them to influence their equipment through the use of Favour. At least in their first combats, they are restricted to what the Dark Eldar choose to give them, usually the scraps from weapons taken during their raids on human and alien worlds. This can be almost anything, from poorly made autoguns with rusted ammo and scrap metal fashioned into knives to arcane xenos blades and ancient but ill-functioning plasma guns. The GM should bear in mind that the Dark Eldar want to see as much carnage as possible during their arena combats, and so generally restrict weapons that are excessively powerful or capable of quickly slaying a foe. Instead they prefer weapons that wound or require repeated use to kill. They also prefer to give combatants melee weapons and primitive weapons over guns and advanced firearms, drawing out the process of killing and ensuring that as much blood is split as is possible.

Armour is also often restricted, since it exists to limit the amount of blood drawn in a conflict, and though the Explorers may be able to use their Favour to gain some rudimentary protection, it is likely that the Dark Eldar toss them to the arena with only the clothes on their backs (crafty and opportunistic Explorers may be able to scavenge, create, or steal better armour from fallen foes, and the Dark Eldar will usually allow slaves to keep some amount of personalised armour even though they strip their slaves of any weapons that they can find when they leave the arenas).

Apart from the use of Favour to gain better weapons and armour for their combats, the Explorers can always choose to eschew any ranged weapons they are given, choosing to take melee weapons instead, thus providing a better show for their dark masters and gaining more Favour (as detailed above) to



aid them in their escape. Further, the GM can use access (or the lack of access) to more powerful weapons and armour to regulate the difficulty of the Explorers' encounters in the pits.

## HAZARDS OF THE ARENA

In addition to selecting one or more foes for the Explorers to fight, the GM can also create the arena environment. While it is not mandatory that every arena have hazards, and some can be fought on the simple steel and sand at the bottom of the pit, using the perils makes the fights more memorable and keeps them interesting as the PCs gradually gain the Favour they need to escape. The GM can either roll on **Table 2-6: Arena Hazards** or choose one of the results from those presented below. Arena perils affect the whole arena and impede the PCs and their foes as described in their entries, usually indiscriminately. The GM can also add multiple perils to an arena in the same way as he can add multiple foes. Unlike foes, however, perils are relatively predictable in their effects, and though they increase the difficulty of a combat in some ways, they also create new opportunities for the Explorers that may make an unlikely victory against an overwhelming foe possible. Some perils are designed to work together and can create interesting effects when combined. The Dark Eldar are well aware of this fact and are happy to exploit it. Individual descriptions handle the effects of combined hazards.



TABLE 2-6: ARENA HAZARDS

| 1d10 Roll | Hazard            |
|-----------|-------------------|
| 1         | Burning Sand      |
| 2         | Cloak of Night    |
| 3         | Dragon's Breath   |
| 4         | Gravity Flux      |
| 5         | Lightning Field   |
| 6         | Liquid Hazard     |
| 7         | Maze of Shadows   |
| 8         | Scrap Yard        |
| 9         | Skyfall           |
| 10        | Spikes and Blades |

### Burning Sand

The floor of most of the fighting pits used by the Withered Blade is cold, stained steel covered in silt to disguise the crisscrossed folds and hatches where the hidden mechanisms of the Gaelan Sphere can open and close to the main shafts which led down deeper into the core of the artificial world. Sometime, to make the combats between their fighters more interesting, the Dark Eldar spread oils and chemicals across the pit, which slowly rot, burn, or melt their way through the feet of the gladiators, forcing them to down their foes more quickly or die a horrible death. When mixed with the sand, these chemicals are difficult to detect—until the fighters smell the burning soles of their boots (or feet). An arena (or some portions of it, depending on the whim of the Dark Eldar) with the Burning Sand hazard is corrosive to walk on, either because of its temperature or some toxic element which eats through the combatants' boots. After spending two consecutive Rounds of combat in a Burning Sand area, a combatant must make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or suffer one point of Energy Damage without reduction for Armour or Toughness to any body part that is in contact with the searing sand. Those wearing armoured boots (i.e. those who have Armour Points on their legs) gain a +10 to this Test for every AP their Armour provides, but also lose a point off the Armour on their legs even if they pass the Test. After another two Rounds of combat (four Rounds after entering the area), the Test becomes a **Very Hard (-30) Toughness Test** as the combatants' footwear is burned away by the blistering heat or chemicals. Combatants who are knocked down on a patch of Burning Sand must make an immediate Toughness Test or suffer 1d5 Energy Damage without reduction for Armour or Toughness, and lose a point of Armour on every location on their body. If there are patches of Burning Sand mixed into a largely normal arena, combatants may make a **Very Hard (-30) Perception Test** to detect if a specific area is caustic or not (this Test becomes Routine (+20) if the Explorer is already standing in the area in question).

Burning Sands does not work in conjunction with Liquid Hazard (the liquids quench the chemicals in the sand), but when combined with Gravity Flux or Skyfall, fill

the air with clouds of corrosive dust, making sections of the arena extremely hazardous (combatants entering these clouded areas count as if they had been knocked down in the Burning Sands for the turn they are in them). The GM can either have these dust clouds stationary, marking them out for the PCs, or have them move about, randomly checking each turn to see if one descends on an Explorer (this can be resolved by randomly selecting a combatant, and then allowing him a Dodge Test to avoid the cloud).

### Cloak of Night

Arenas covered by the Cloak of Night are pitch black or shrouded in shadows and it becomes practically impossible to see anything. Treat the arena as an area of total darkness (see pages 247 and 268 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook) with all the penalties and dangers that accompany these conditions. Sound and smell become even more important to the Explorers in these situations, and they must move slowly and cautiously to find their foes and then strike out blindly at them hoping to land a telling blow. This hazard can be made even more murderous if the Dark Eldar pit the Explorers against a creature with the Dark Sight Trait, or Dark Eldar with xenos devices allowing them to pierce the shadow field's inky veil.

The Cloak of Night can work well with most of the other perils, and especially ones such as Dragon's Breath or Lightning Field, as the discharges of fire and electricity can provide brief illumination while also presenting danger. Spikes and Blades is also extremely dangerous when used with the Cloak of Night as it becomes even more difficult to detect the traps and pitfalls, imposing a -30 penalty on Tests to detect or Dodge their attacks. A Cloak of Night completely overrides the effects of a Maze of Shadows, as nobody can see the tenebrous paths that it creates.

### Dragon's Breath

There are countless tunnels, pipes, and conduits within the Gaelan Sphere all feeding its great machines and devices. Some of these have been converted by the Dark Eldar to spew their deadly contents into the fighting pits. Dragon's Breath is such a peril, and though it usually takes the form of columns of fire, it can also represent streams of acid, toxic sludge, or scalding steam. Every Round before combatants take their actions, there is a chance that one of these openings vomits forth its deadly breath into the arena, affecting a random area 2d10 metres in diameter (the GM can use the Scatter table on page 248 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook to determine this location, using the centre of the arena as a starting point). Combatants in the affected area can make a Dodge Test to avoid the burst of flame, sludge, steam or acid, thus avoiding harm. Those who fail suffer 2d10 Energy Damage and, depending on the nature of the discharge, may have a chance of being set on fire. As a further complication, Explorers and

their opponents can try to use the exhaust points of the Dragon's Breath to their advantage. Fighters can make a **Challenging (+0) Logic or Tech-Use**





**Test** to try to predict where the columns of deadly spray will come from next (on a successful Test, roll the random target and size when the Test is made) and employ the Manoeuvre Action (as described on page 241 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook) to force opponents into these hazards.

Dragon's Breath can be used with most of the other arena perils, even with Liquid Hazard, where it can take the form of geysers of steam bursting up from below. When combined with the Scrap Yard peril, Explorers can use the wealth of wreckage in the arena to stopper up an exhaust port and protect that area. This requires a Full Action and an **Ordinary (+10) Strength Test**. If the Dragon's Breath then issues forth from their area, the junk clogs the port, preventing the discharge.

### Gravity Flux

The Shadowspine Pits were originally intended as pathways into the Sphere's fusion core for asteroids and other space debris. To aid in the snaring and transportation of these materials, each pit was ringed with gravity harpoons and suspensor fields so its ancient builders could manipulate the movement of the objects on their journey to be melted down into fuel and building materials. While most of the machinery of the pits is now inactive or disabled by the Dark Eldar, the aliens do still employ the suspensor fields for some of their combats. This allows them to alter the gravity within the pit, increasing it to weigh combatants down and make them struggle to raise their weapon, or reducing it to enable the fighters to leap about the arena in long strides or to ensure that the recoil of their weapons hurls them backwards. At the start of the combat, the GM can choose to have the Dark Eldar set the gravity to either high or low for the duration of the fight, or alternatively each Round the GM decide randomly whether it remains the same or switches. See **The Effects of Gravity** on page 269 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook for details on how different gravities affect the Explorers and their opponents.

Gravity Flux can work with most of the other perils without impeding their function, though it might create some unusual effects, like creating suspended globes of liquid that smash down with hurricane force a moment later in a Liquid Hazard, or causing spears and arrows from Spikes and Blades to travel shorter or longer distances. When used with the Scrap Yard hazard, it can cause junk to move around if the gravity shifts from high to low or vice versa, and Explorers might find themselves scrabbling out of newly made fire-lanes as cover floats away or being forced to dodge out of the way as a pile of twisted metal suddenly topples over.

### Lightning Field

Dark Eldar, like their Craftworld kin, are supremely skilled in the manufacture and operation of field technology, and are able to manipulate energies with a finesse and subtlety that few humans even dream of possessing. The fields they use to cloak the arenas in darkness are an example of this mastery, but they can also use it to create areas of the arena charged with electrical energy. Illuminated by arcing light, these appear as a chequerboard of shapes on the pit floor that periodically move and shift, forcing the fighters to constantly relocate along with them lest they be caught

by the deadly charge. The GM should divide the arena up into a grid, or a similar set of shapes numbered 1–10. At the start of each Round, he should roll 1d10 three times. Each number that the GM rolls on these dice causes the corresponding area of the grid to activate. For example, if the GM rolls 3, 5, and 7, the squares with those numbers activate (duplicate rolls are discarded). The charge can actually be seen moving, so fighters have a chance to get out of the way, if they can make a successful **Challenging (+0) Dodge Test** and they are near enough to the edge of the affected section. Those caught in the Lightning Field suffer 2d10 E Damage with the Shocking Quality.

A Lightning Field is especially deadly when used with a Liquid Hazard, as many kinds of liquid conduct electricity and spread it over a much wider area. In this case, the entire arena is affected by the Lightning Field, but its Damage is reduced to 1d10 Energy Damage with the Shocking Quality. The other slight advantage to the presence of water is that if a fighter can somehow get above the water (such as standing on a large corpse or debris from the Scrap Yard hazard, provided it is not conductive), he is not affected by the field even if he is in the section where it has appeared, the water dissipating the crackling energy below him.

### Liquid Hazard

Filling a pit with liquid, either water or some similar fluid, is another favoured trick of the Dark Eldar. Knee or waist deep water impedes movement, and makes Charging and Running impossible. It also grants concealment to waterborne creatures. Water also brings with it the danger of drowning, something that the Explorers and their opponents can use against each other if they choose. The GM can choose to have the liquid be shallow (in which case it counts as a Treacherous Environment, as described on **Table 9–32: Agility Modifiers for Running Through Treacherous Environments** on page 266 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook), or as waist or chest deep water (in which case he can use the rules for Swimming from page 267 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook). If it is deep water, then there are likely islands (possibly peaks of junk from a Scrap Yard) on which fighters can try to defend themselves, though as the fight progresses the water may rise, especially if there is some aquatic horror the gladiators must fight, perched on their islands and watching its fangs and tentacles getting closer and closer. The GM can also have the water be dangerous in its own right, whether it is deep or shallow, and it can represent sewage, putrefied corpses or noxious chemicals. In addition to the normal rules, a Liquid Hazard with this unpleasant addition makes all attacks count as having the Toxic Quality as wounds burn with its vile fluids.

For a truly surreal encounter, the GM can combine a Liquid Hazard with Skyfall to create a vortex of water spheres wobbling and drifting around the pit. Explorers must fly or swim their way from one side to the other and some water spheres might contain aquatic beasts, lashing out against those who come too close.



## Maze of Shadows

Dark Eldar enjoy tormenting their slaves not just with physical pain, but also by twisting their minds and subjecting them to psychological attacks. It gives them much pleasure to see slaves blundering about unsure of their fate. The Maze of Shadows is a specially constructed maze that is layered over a fighting pit, forcing the fighters to find their way to each other while trying to avoid becoming lost. From above, the spectators can see where all the combatants are, and take great amusement watching them wander past each other unaware or taking turns that lead them into the waiting blades of their foes. The GM can represent the Maze of Shadows in one of two ways: either by drawing an actual maze (the full layout of which he keeps secret) or having the Explorers make Intelligence Tests to find their way through the twisting paths. If the GM draws a map, he can have the Explorers choose their path from turn to turn until they blunder into their opponents, and then use the map if the combat turns into a running battle, with foes striking and running away to hide or lay ambushes. The simpler method is to represent the maze as a challenge which must be overcome for the Explorers to find their way. As a part of any Movement Action, an Explorer may make a **Difficult (-10) Intelligence or Perception Test** or a **Ordinary (+10) Tracking, Navigation (Surface), or Logic Test** which, if passed, allows the Explorer to either find another PC or ally, or uncover an enemy. If the Explorer fails, he blunders around lost for his Turn. In both, cases the GM should have the Explorers enter the maze from different points.

The Maze of Shadows works especially well with Spikes and Blades, where the dead ends, blind corners, and twisting passages are perfect for hiding traps. In these conditions, Explorers suffer a -10 penalty to their Dodge Tests to avoid these traps.

## Scrap Yard

The Nexus of Shadows has no shortage of junk and debris scattered across its surface and filling its chambers and tunnels. This is the result of centuries of neglect and decay as well as the battles fought by the Dark Eldar against its automated defences. The Withered Blade Cult sometimes uses this junk to create unstable and dangerous platforms for their arena battles, covering the floor of a pit with twisted metal and broken rubble. Fighting in such conditions means clambering over bent girders and crawling through rusted tunnels of scrap to get to foes, or hiding in among the rubble to set off ambushes. The Scrap Yard counts as Rubble (see page 266 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook) and also provides 8 Armour Points of cover against ranged attacks due to its numerous barricades and wrecks. The GM can also allow an Explorer to try to scavenge from the Scrap Yard as a Full Action, making a Search Skill Test to find an something of use. What the Explorers find is up to the GM, but they can dig up almost anything, such as examples of Imperial personal weaponry, partially functioning servitors, or components that can be turned into arms or explosives with the Tech-Use Skill.

If the Dark Eldar combine the Burning Sands and Scrap Yard hazards, the Explorers gains a +20 bonus to any Toughness Tests made to avoid being seared by the chemicals in the sands in anywhere the two overlap.

## Skyfall

Just as the Dark Eldar are able to manipulate the gravity of a pit to make it heavier or lighter, they can also negate the gravity altogether. When they decide such twist is in order, the Dark Eldar usually open the base of the pit, so that the fighters might battle in mid-air above a seemingly bottomless shaft with a fearsome eerie glow somewhere in the distance (the Gaelan Sphere's fusion core). Above, a repulsion field prevents combatants from drifting off out of the arena and into the stands or beyond, but below there is nothing to stop them being hurled down the shaft. Combats in zero gravity usually involve opponents that can fly or are dextrous enough to push themselves off from one edge of the pit to another and make attacks, though it does sometimes amuse the Dark Eldar to send in a land-bound beast and watch it thrash about, biting and clawing at anyone with the bad luck to drift too near. The rules for movement in zero gravity can be found on page 269 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook.

Combining Scrap Yard with Skyfall can make for an interesting combat, as it is akin to fighting in a miniature asteroid field; pieces of twisted metal and torn wreckage swirl around the fighters, obscuring vision, providing temporary cover, and generally changing the face of the battlefield without warning. The junk provides cover as normal, and can additionally be used to aid movement, giving the fighters extra objects and surfaces to push off from or stop their weightless leaps.

## Spikes and Blades

Arenas are often filled with fiendish and gruesome traps to add to the danger of the fights, and kill or maim the unwary. These come in a myriad of shapes and sizes, but usually involve hidden blades or sprung spears, arrows, and spikes. Anyone who wanders into such a trap only has a moment's warning before blades suddenly spring up from the pit floor or shoot out from the wall. At the beginning of the fight, the GM should place a number of secret traps equal to the number of combatants in the arena, marking their location such that it is known only to him. At the beginning of each Explorer's turn, he may make a **Challenging (+0) Awareness Test** as a Free Action or a **Routine (+20) Search Test** as a Half Action to try to detect any traps within a number of metres equal to his Perception Bonus. Traps may be disarmed with an **Ordinary (+10) Security Test** made as a Half Action or traversed with a **Challenging (+0) Acrobatics Test**. Additionally, a the attacks that traps trigger may be Dodged if the Explorer is aware of the trap. If an Explorer is hit by the trap, he suffers 2d10+2 Rending Damage to a random location. Some traps are also be poisoned (at the GM's discretion), gaining the Toxic Quality. Once a trap has been triggered, it has no effect for the remainder of the encounter.





## A GAME WITHIN A GAME

Favour is a way in which the GM can track the Explorers' progress without the need to go into great details as to the how and why of it all. However, the arena is a hotbed of politics, and countless powerful and influential individuals grace its pits. It also has a pivotal place within the power struggles of the Nexus. If the GM so desires, he can flesh out the arena by adding more NPCs, creating additional Dark Eldar nobles along with their own plots and plans, or using some of those from **Finding an Enemy**. It is entirely possible that an aspiring Dark Eldar noble, such as Ravyr Dysk from the first chapter, might have his own designs on the position of Archon of the Nexus and try to use the Explorers to undermine his enemies. The GM can have the Explorers come across information about such power-hungry xenos and use it to their advantage, trying to inflame their ambitions or ire by thwarting their plans or framing their rivals.

## SLAVES OF THE WITHERED HOUSE

As important the struggles and spilled blood in the pits are, the thousands of slaves who wait on the Dark Eldar and their honoured guests are not without significance, even if each one is highly expendable. These are the slaves who keep the city alive and thrumming with trade and productivity, undertaking all the jobs that the aliens would never lower themselves to perform or consider fit for beings of their dread lineage. Within the tunnels and chambers below the fighting pits, the Withered Blade household sprawls out to the edges of the Nexus of Shadows and down numerous levels deep into the shell of the Gaelan Sphere. When the Wyches of the Cult are not training, fighting, or watching fights within the pits, it is here that they conduct their business and pass their time with dark amusements. Anyalra has cultivated a domain of hedonism and excess in which Dark Eldar from far and wide across the Nexus of Shadows and beyond frequently indulge, and it is her desire that any who come to the Shadowspine Pits should find whatever vice they desire, that she might forge strong alliances and trade for the best gladiators for her pits.

The House of the Withered Blade is a nightmarish place, where life is cheap and pain is a currency exchanged by capricious aliens like coin. To survive and prosper in such an environment, the Explorers need to be cunning and careful, keeping themselves out of harm's way while completing their objectives. Their position in the house also brings with it unique opportunities, as the PCs potentially have access to the Dark Eldar nobles and their guests, who have information that can greatly aid the group in their escape attempt. From their position in the house, they can also influence the kinds of games and combats in which they may fight, even gaining the ear of one or more of the Dark Eldar and using this favour to send weapons and specialised equipment into the slave pens. When the time comes to make a bid for freedom, those Explorers who have excelled at serving in a household are uniquely placed to open portals, lower barriers, and subvert defence systems.

## HIERARCHY OF THE PITS

In the arena, opponents are judged by their prowess in combat. Every foe the Explorers face is likely intent only on their

personal destruction. In the household of the Withered Blade, opponents can come in many forms, and their power and influence is judged by their position in Dark Eldar society or their standing with Anyalra as well as by their combat abilities. To win Favour and get the materials and tools needed to make an escape, the Explorers must also overcome these opponents, or turn them against each other for their own ends. Each foe has particular strengths and weaknesses, which the Explorers must uncover and exploit. These foes can be combined with the encounters detailed in **Dark Pastimes** to complicate otherwise straightforward encounters. Not all the adversaries are Dark Eldar, either, and the Explorers may find that a slave is far more dangerous to their plans than one of their captors.

## FINDING AN ENEMY

The GM can choose a personality from amongst the ones below and combine him or her with any encounter from **Table 2-7: Dark Pastimes** on page 70 to create opportunities or obstacles for the Explorers serving in the household of the Withered Blade to overcome in order to gain Favour. As with combat encounters, the difficulty of overcoming a social challenge should dictate how much Favour it awards, with additional unforeseen complication also increasing the ultimate reward for success.

### Obedhiaus Fyst (Human Slave)

Scarred and bitter, Fyst has been a slave of the Withered Blade for many years and worked his way up into a position of prominence among their human captives. His meaty fists and thick brow hide a cunning intelligence and a strong will to survive no matter the cost. Despite the tortures he has undergone at the hands of the Dark Eldar, he has a twisted kind of loyalty to them, like a whipped dog, eager to please even if it means more pain from his masters. He is a dangerous opponent for the Explorers, as he notices many things to which the Dark Eldar themselves pay no heed, and he might seek to stop the PCs if they threaten the Cult of the Withered Blade. Fyst also has many of the other human slaves under his control, who are nearly as afraid of the scarred slave as of the Dark Eldar. Obedhiaus Fyst uses the profile given for a Tormented Human on page 128, but with a +5 bonus to all of his Characteristics and training in the Intimidate Skill.

### Reave-Captain Coronnia (Human)

A close ally of the Kasballica crime bosses of Footfall, Coronnia has been trading slaves and xenos artefacts as part of the Cold Trade for many years, though only recently has she started visiting the Nexus. It is possible that the Explorers might know something of Coronnia, or have allies and enemies in common with her, and she might well know them. Regardless, she has taken to the life of the Dark Eldar and enjoys the pleasures they can offer, along with the cold hard coin in slaves she makes for each trip. She might well recognise the worth of the Explorers and want to buy them, ransoming them back to their dynasty, or removing them from the picture on behalf of their enemies. She is smug and arrogant, and enjoys seeing the Explorers suffer, having suffered at the hands of Rogue Traders in the past. Coronnia uses the profile given for a Void Pirate Captain on page 373 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook.



### Dyrac Nyr (Dark Eldar)

Once of Zaergarn Kul's favoured lieutenants, Dyrac Nyr spends much of his time in the Shadowspine Pits after his Archon began what Nyr sees as an over-long period of seclusion, either watching the games or partaking of the pleasures of the house to pass the time. His shaved head and unmarred face bear a number of tattoos of dedication to the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, and he wears a distinctive suit of armour adorned with the bones of countless victims. Cruel and fickle, Nyr likes to test his combat skills or wet his blades on any slaves that wander too near should the mood take him, usually in the pits where all can see. He is a dangerous and unpredictable element that the Explorers must deal with, and can complicate any of their plans. The only way to placate the sadistic noble is to offer him some sport or diversion he finds amusing, inevitably involving the spilling of blood. Many slaves have suffered lasting scars at the hands of Nyr and it would take little prodding to get them to exact their vengeance on him. Dyrac Nyr uses the profile given for a Kabalite Trueborn on page 123, but with his Weapon Skill and Strength Characteristics increased by +15. He is equipped with suit of ghostplate armour (see page 115).

### Hobhyoos Gies (Stryxis)

Among the customers of the Withered Blade is Hobhyoos Gies, a Stryxis merchant and slaver from the depths of the Koronus Expanse who is notorious for having told Zaergarn Kul the location of *The Soul Reaver*. Small for a Stryxis, Gies stands considerably shorter than most of the Explorers. Many slaves who find their way to the remote alien empires and renegade human worlds of the Koronus Expanse come through Gies, and the greedy alien has his hands in many pockets when it comes to the slave trade. However, this is not his true purpose on the Nexus of Shadows. Gies may treat with the Dark Eldar of the Cult, but his mysterious hatred of the Eldar burns as hot as in any of his ilk. The Explorers can sway Gies with sufficient promises of the artefacts that the Stryxis hoard, but can also appeal to his shrouded but potent desire to see his hosts—and the entire Nexus of Shadows—burn.

### Unarlan (Dark Eldar)

Unarlan is a Hekatrix Bloodbride in the service of Anyalra, and oversees most of the Cult of the Withered Blade's daily affairs, from keeping the slaves in line to seeing that the guests of the house are kept comfortable (and monitored). Unarlan wears the customary armour of the Withered Blade's Hekatrix Bloodbrides, but can easily be spotted from a distance by her shock of white hair, which stands in contrast to dark tones of her armour. If the Explorers want to get access to control arrays to aid their escape, then they likely need to deal with Unarlan, though she has little time for slaves and is quick to use her favoured agoniser lash. Her first and foremost duty is to her Succubus, and this is where the Explorers might gain some leverage. If they can convince her that Anyalra would favour an action or that the mistress of the Withered Blade might punish a lapse of duty, they might find an opening to get information from her. Unarlan can never be openly threatened or blackmailed by a mere slave (her response is swift and

violent), so if the Explorers wish to pursue a plan involving her, they need to be subtle. Unarian uses the profile given for a Hekatrix Bloodbride in **Chapter IV: The Treacherous Path** on page 124, but her Weapon Skill and Strength Characteristics are increased by +15. She is equipped with a Best Quality agoniser lash and a Common Quality mindphase gauntlet (see pages 112-114).

## SERVICE TO THE WICKED

The cult of the Withered Blade is a cesspit of hedonism and excess where the Dark Eldar indulge in all manner of vile pastimes. Like the battles in the arena, these depraved forms of entertainment are largely focused on the harvesting of pain to fuel the Dark Eldar's hunger for the agony of others, and the despicable aliens never seem to tire of tormenting their slaves. They are also adept at putting on shows for visitors, both alien and human, in the course of buying and selling slaves and xenos goods. These displays can take many different forms depending on the whims and desires of their guests, but the Dark Eldar are usually more than accommodating when it comes to sacrificing a few slaves for everyone's amusement (not including that of the slaves in question, of course).

The GM should use the encounters from **Table 2-7: Dark Pastimes** to create challenges for the Explorers in the same way he creates arena combats for those fighting in the pits. Completing these encounters can either reward the Explorers with Favour (which they can then use as a generic commodity to gain the materials they need to escape) or if the PCs have a specific goal in mind, an encounter can be used as the challenge required to complete a particular goal. All of the encounters can use one or more of the NPCs from **Finding an Enemy** on page 69, pitting the Explorers against one of the other slaves, guests, or masters of the household.

TABLE 2-7: DARK PASTIMES

| 1d10 Roll | Event                 |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1-2       | Bloody Hunt           |
| 3         | Never Split the Party |
| 4-6       | Conflict of Interests |
| 7         | A Game of Blame       |
| 8         | The Sphere Stirs      |
| 9-10      | Specialised Expertise |

### BLOODY HUNT

The Explorers are told by their captors that they must descend into the tunnels beneath the Withered Blade's holdings (under the guard of a group of their captors) and participate in a hunt. Unarlan, who leads the cadre of Wyches observing the affair informs the Explorers that they can either find and slay a worthy creature, or else become the prey of the Wyches themselves. The Explorers' quarry can be any of the arena beasts presented in this book (see **Beasts of the Arena** on page 132), or alternatively, any other appropriate xenos creature that might dwell deep within the Gaelan Sphere. To find the creature, Explorers need to successfully use the



Tracking Skill, and once they have found it, they must also kill their prey—doubtless no small task. Making an impressive kill is worth a single point of Favour, but the dead beast does not speak for itself. Once they have killed the creature and brought it back, the Explorers must use their knowledge and social Skills to present the creature and the tale of the pain that they inflicted upon it (or suffered themselves while slaying it). If they can impress their jaded captors at all with the creature they find, the Explorers earn another two Favour.

### NEVER SPLIT THE PARTY

One of the Explorers has caught the eye of a slaver, and the Dark Eldar have begun negotiating to have the Explorer sold off and sent back to some remote world in the Koronus Expanse (presumably to live out a miserable life working mines or harvesting toxic fields). The Explorers need to stop the sale somehow, either by presenting the buyer with a more suitable purchase or making the PC in question seem flawed in some way. Knowledge and Fellowship-based Skills are crucial here, and the Explorers must Deceive and Charm their way through the challenge, possibly even engineering demonstrations of their comrade's "unworthiness." This can be a dangerous game, as if they make their fellow Explorer seem too worthless, he might be thrown into the arena as pit fodder. If they fail to dissuade the buyer (or accidentally convince the Cult of the Withered Blade that their friend would make better nourishment for a Clawed Fiend than a slave), the Explorers must call in debts, expending three Favour to manipulate events in the arena such that their companion is not lost. Favour spent this way does not count towards the total required to escape the pits. The Explorers earn two Favour if they can overcome this challenge without diminishing their position by spending Favour.

### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The Explorers are ordered by one of the guests of the Withered Blade, or a lesser captain or noble, to do something which goes directly against what they have been told by Anyalra. This could be entering a forbidden zone, removing an item without permission, or even killing another slave. The Explorers must decide how to complete the task without Anyalra and the rest of the Withered Blade discovering it or must turn down the individual giving the order in a way which does not invoke immediate retribution. Clever PCs can turn this to their advantage and frame or blackmail the individual, or try to gain Favour from Anyalra by turning him in.

### A GAME OF BLAME

Something has been stolen, a slave has been killed or damaged without the Dark Eldar's consent, or there has been a trespass into a forbidden area. Whether or not the Explorers are connected or responsible for this infraction, they must try to move the blame to another in some convincing way, such as planting evidence or extracting a false confession. Investigative Skills such as Inquiry and Interrogation are key to revealing the truth, while social Skills like Deceive and Intimidate are crucial to obscuring it. If the Explorers can successfully pass the blame to another individual or party (justly or not), they gain one Favour. If they can put the blame on an enemy or otherwise

turn events to their advantage, the Explorers gain two Favour and might even be able to remove an opponent or obstacle. If they fail to implicate somebody else, however, the Explorers suffer the punishment for the transgression and, what's more, lose two Favour as their standing falls. Favour lost this way does not count toward the total required for their escape.

### THE SPHERE STIRS

The systems that once controlled the Gaelan Sphere's operations within the Shadowspine Pits have been all but stamped out, but a few glimmers and tendrils of the Sphere's influence remain, in cracked consoles and damaged panels sporadically provided with the power to operate. Other slaves have mentioned feeling the presence of the Sphere while completing their duties, and using this information the Explorers can try to trace the tendrils of its power and find a place where they can tap into it within the pits. This likely requires the PCs entering forbidden zones and sneaking or tricking their way past Dark Eldar guards, or using others to secretly do their work. If they can find an active conduit to the governing systems of the Gaelan Sphere, they can use it to learn vast amounts of information about the ancient infrastructure underlying the Shadowspine Pits, and perhaps even manipulate some of the systems within the pits to their own ends. They must slip past one patrol of Wyches either by stealth or trickery, navigate their way to a console, and make a **Challenging (+0) Tech-Use Test** to access its knowledge. It takes a number of minutes equal to ten minus the sum of Degrees of Success the Explorers can score on any Tech-Use Tests, plus an extra minute for each Degree of Failure on this Test. Depending on how they slipped past the patrols, this delay might mean that a patrol of one Wych for each Explorer passes the console—with all of the complications and risks that being caught in a restricted area involve, including at the very least a fight, a loss of Favour, or both.

### SPECIALISED EXPERTISE

One of the Explorers has a special skill which Anyalra wants to use, and so she calls the group to her personal chambers because of some specialised knowledge, information, or experience, or a skill, or simply because of a quirk of his physiology or race. This is a chance for the Explorer to gain access to Anyalra and her quarters, though it might also place them in harm's way if the task is dangerous (such as trying to decipher a Chaos tome or conduct a vivisection of an especially ornery Genestealer). Because of the specialised nature of this challenge, the Skills and abilities needed to complete it vary based on the Explorer who catches Anyalra's dark gaze. The Explorer, likely with the aid of his companions, must try to work his own agenda into the task he has been given, completing it to Anyalra's satisfaction while getting what he needs to escape. All of this needs to be done without making Anyalra overly suspicious or annoying her, lest she turn her ire on the Explorer. If the group can fulfil Anyalra's request and complete her task, they gain three Favour, but if they fail or provoke her wrath, they lose two Favour and may even find themselves on a direct trip to an especially cruel bout in the arena.



# SLIPPING THE SHACKLES

Once the Explorers have gathered weapons, made some allies, and concocted an escape plan (with the aid of secrets uncovered about the Shadowspine Pits and its layout) they must be ready to launch their escape. During their preparations, Domos aids them as much as he can. Whether or not the Explorers choose to incite a major uprising, the old Tech-Priest is ready to direct the ire of all of the Withered Blade's captives toward revenge against the Dark Eldar, and at the very least this may help cover their escape. If the GM feels that the Explorers are hesitant to attempt an escape, even once they have weapons and allies, he can use Salaine, or any of the PCs' other allies from outside the pits, to try to spur them into action, reminding them of the impending arrival of the renegade fleet. When the Explorers are ready, the GM can begin the escape and the inevitable consequences it brings, which plunge the Nexus into a sea of blood and fire, ending this chapter and transitioning into **Chapter III: Maelstrom of Souls**.

As in **Chapter I: The Queen of Shadows**, the Explorers have made little in the way of tangible financial gains over the course of their tenure in the pit. This does not mean that they do not receive Achievement Points towards their Grand Endeavour, and they have secured valuable alliances and contacts.

## REWARDS:

- 250 Achievement Points for completing their preparations to escape the Shadowspine Pits.
- 200 Achievement Points for claiming the weapon caches.
- 50 Achievement Points for each notable NPC ally won over to the rebellion (such as Magos Domos, Brother Tarn, Captain Shen, and the rest of the listed potential NPCs allies).
- 50 Achievement Points for each NPC enemy discredited or slain (from **Finding an Enemy** on page 69).



## EXPERIENCE

As the Explorers end their time in the pits, they have likely had enough practice in battle to last a lifetime, though this hardly marks the end of their travails in this adventure. Below is a list of experience values the ordeals they may undergo in the Shadowspine Pits:

- A fight in the pits is worth 50 xp by default, even if the Explorers are defeated, and an additional 50 xp if they are victorious. Further, each group of enemies beyond the first and each peril from **Table 2-6: Arena Hazards** added to an encounter grant the Explorers an additional 50 xp for fighting in the battle. Finally, a battle is worth an additional 100 xp if it includes at least one named enemy NPC or monstrous creature (Grotesques, Fleshwrought Drakes, or Cronos Parasite Engines).
- Secured the aid of an NPC from the **Brothers in Blood** section : 50 xp (to a maximum of 150 xp)
- Performed a service for a member or guest of the Withered Blade to gain Favour: 50 xp (to a maximum of 200 xp)
- Discredited or slew one foe from **Finding an Enemy**: 100 xp





## MAELSTROM OF SOULS

UPRISING

•  
SHADOWS AND  
FLAMES

•  
RETURN TO THE  
ZIGGURAT

•  
BATTLE FOR THE  
NEXUS

•  
REAPING THE  
REWARDS



# CHAPTER III: MAELSTROM OF SOULS

*"There can be no greater power than that over life and death. How complete will be my control when the lives of men are mine to toy with not just while they breathe and walk cloaked in flesh, but when they are no more than whispers in the Warp. The Soul Reaver is that power, and like the Nexus of Shadows it shall bow to my will in the end!"*

—Archon Salaine Morn

The third and final chapter of the adventure follows the Explorers' escape from their captivity at the hands of the Cult of the Withered Blade, the slave uprising they help incite, and their second attempt to steal *The Soul Reaver*, and the consequences of the heist. From this point, events begin to move rapidly, and Salaine begins her attack on the Nexus. Whether or not the Razor's Web is completely disabled, the renegade fleet attacks and Drecarus and the Splintered Talon respond by throwing everything they have at Salaine's forces. Amidst the chaos, the Explorers play a pivotal role in determining the victor and have the opportunity to help numerous minor organisations and individuals of the Nexus realise their goals. This is the time to call in any favours they have left, as the Explorers are also hard pressed to survive Drecarus' wrath. When he finally realises the extent to which they have contributed to Salaine's return, he singles them out for special attention and destruction by his warriors. Finally, the PCs have to deal with *The Soul Reaver* itself, and the ancient vessel becomes as much a peril to Drecarus and the Kabal he controls as to any of the other hapless inhabitants of the Nexus.

Depending on the actions of the Explorers up to this point, there are several different ways in which the battle for the Nexus of Shadows can take place, and a variety of antagonists who can complicate the PCs' ambitions or help them to realise their victory. By this point, the Explorers may have fallen out with Salaine, their deal gone sour or their suspicions running rampant after their capture and time as "guests" of the Withered Blade. The GM should feel free to change the major players and those who come to the aid of the Explorers during this final battle to reflect the group's particular allies and enemies within the Nexus of Shadows. Ultimately, the factions fall into three groups: those that have allied themselves with the Explorers, those that have allied themselves with Drecarus and the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, and those that favour no side, and may change their allegiances even during the final conflict. Complicating this is the unleashed *The Soul Reaver*, powered by Zaergarn's vengeful spirit, which is beyond such mortal concerns as alliance and merely wishes to see the Gaelan Sphere and everyone present burn. Even at this late stage of the adventure, the Explorers may yet gain support for their cause from strange places.

Hated foes can become allies of necessity if the situation grows desperate enough, and if the Explorers make an effort to win them over. Details on the motivations and roles each of these enemies and allies play in the battle for the Nexus, and how the actions of the Explorers can change the battle's outcome, can be found in each section of this chapter.

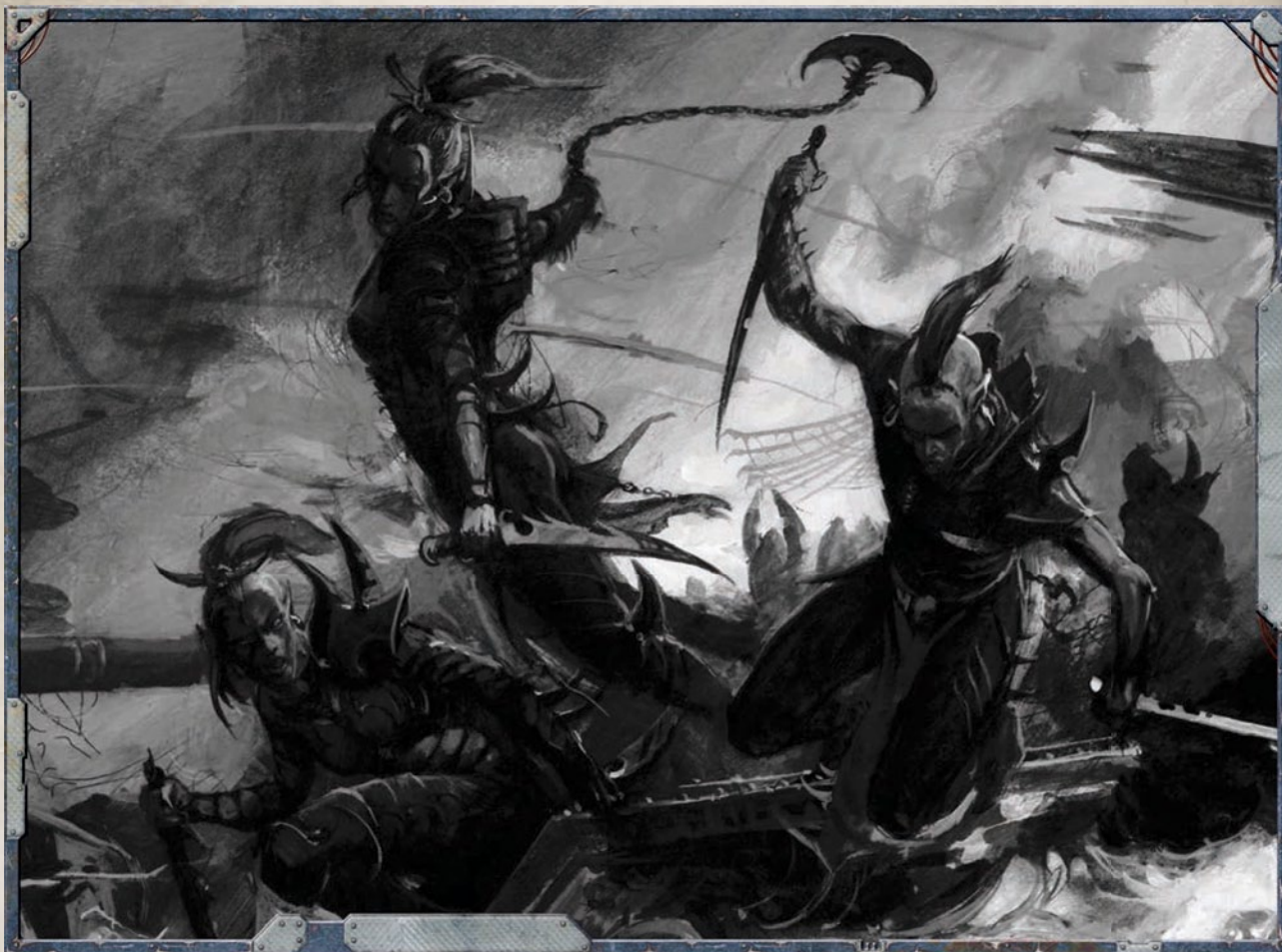
## ESCAPE!

Having bled in the arena and fought for their survival as slaves of the Withered Blade, the Explorers have now won the chance to escape their bonds and make their bid for freedom. Whether or not they explicitly include their allies in the attempt, Domos also uses their efforts to make his own long-awaited escape, leading to a slave uprising and casting the first stone in the battle for the Nexus. The Explorers can be part of the uprising if they choose, and the GM should make them feel like it would surely fail without their assistance if they decide to participate once they have escaped the slave pens. However, while their chances of success are slim without the Explorers' assistance, the slaves attempt their uprising with or without their aid so long as they visited the pits. The Explorers' arrival in the Withered Blade slave pens sparked Domos' passion for freedom aflame once again and motivated him to break free, leading an army of slaves behind him. In either case, the GM should consider the Explorers' escape as parallel to the uprising, and while the uprising can certainly aid them, they still have to face their own perils and overcome the challenges that their original mission still poses.

## THE TICKING CLOCK

There is no set timeline for Salaine's attempt to conquer the Nexus, and throughout the adventure the GM can have events progress as quickly or as slowly as he chooses. During the Explorers' period of slavery, weeks or even months could pass before they have the chance to launch a decent escape attempt. If the GM chooses, he can add an additional level of suspense by placing a time limit on the actions of the Explorers once they escape (or even shortly beforehand). Salaine can contact them, informing them of the imminent arrival of the renegade fleet thanks to the impatience of some of the reckless pirates and raiders under her command. Though the Dark Eldar are masters of devious plans that require inhuman patience, many of the humans and other aliens she has allied with are not willing to wait an eternity for their chance to strike at the Nexus and claim some of its wealth. This news should remind the Explorers that it is vitally important that they disable the Razor's Web before the fleet arrives. Events in the Nexus of Shadows can also prompt the Explorers' to act as the uprising boils over into other parts of the city and spreads out of control, inciting a harsh reprisal from the Dark Eldar and making it clear to the Explorers that if they do not act swiftly, the rebellion may founder and be crushed, their new allies—and their chance at a second attempt on *The Soul Reaver*—dying along with it.





## OUT OF THE PIT

The first part of any plan for the Explorers to escape requires them to gather in the pits. Whether it is before or after the uprising has begun, they need to make sure each of their number is free and ready to escape. In the course of their normal duties, the Explorers should all be able to get in contact with each other, and have likely been working together to get weapons and allies for their escape. The GM can therefore have them already together when the chapter opens and the great escape begins. Alternatively, the GM might choose to throw in a last-minute complication, forcing the Explorers to re-evaluate their best laid plans in the face of new information. The first few minutes of the escape are also the most crucial, and when they make their break, the Explorers must overcome several initial obstacles. The GM can use any or all of the encounters below for the PCs to overcome as they gather together and try to establish a force of their allies with which to launch their escape.

## A FITTING DISTRACTION

The Explorers' chances to escape increase if they can manage to create a distraction to draw the attention of Anyalra and her Dark Eldar guards. If the Explorers do not have a specific ruse in mind, Domos can suggest manipulating the gravity in one of the fighting pits during a beast display, hurling the monsters into the crowd and causing mayhem. To make this happen, one or more of the Explorers need to access the

suspensor fields, either by tapping into the Gaelan Sphere's systems from within the restricted areas of the household, or by killing the Dark Eldar pit-master and taking over the controls themselves. Once they have reached a console in a forbidden zone (by stealth, deception, or some other clever scheme), turning the governing systems to their own ends requires a **Hard (-20) Tech-Use Test**, though the assistance of an individual with the Forbidden Lore (Archeotech) Skill reduces this Test to a **Challenging (+0) Tech-Use Test**. The GM can also complicate this by having patrols searching for any Explorers who are attempting to subvert the gravity fields, forcing them to work rapidly against time. Taking on the Dark Eldar pit-master for control of the pit is even harder, and requires getting past at least one group of eight Wyches and a patrol of eight Kabalite Warriors, as well as penetrating the sealed chamber overseeing the pit. If the Explorers succeed at breaching these defences, however, it only requires an **Easy (+30) Tech-Use Test** to get the result they desire. The carnage the rampaging beasts cause is impressive, but the creatures could well become an obstacle later, as they hardly discriminate between prey, whether or not that specific prey happened to release them from their captivity.

## WELCOME TO THE PARTY

The Explorers can use the escape attempt to try to eliminate the Dark Eldar associated with the Cult of the Withered Blade, killing or disabling some of the Dark Eldar leadership in a single surprise attack. The most likely place for this to



## GM GUIDANCE: SETTLING SCORES

Though the Explorers face Anyalra and overcome her on their way out of the pits, they are not required to hunt down every individual who has wronged them. That said, the GM should consider allowing them opportunities to wreak their vengeance upon any particularly hated individuals during the chaos of the uprising. These NPCs either join the rest of the Withered Blade in defending the Sphere or flee for their lives. In the case of those slaves who sided willingly with the Dark Eldar, now that the tables have turned, they might plead to join the uprising. The GM can also use the PCs' desire for vengeance to complicate matters, as it may well be difficult or dangerous to hunt down one of their hated enemies. If the Explorers go after minor NPCs, then the challenges are less intimidating, and the GM might want to give them the opportunity to take them on without jeopardising their escape plans. More important NPCs mean larger problems, though, and the Explorers may have to make difficult decisions when choosing between revenge and liberty.

happen is at one of the gatherings within the house, at which the Dark Eldar entertain their guests and indulge their dark pleasures. If the Explorers can sneak weapons in, they can spring a surprise attack, gaining one or more Rounds of fire on the Dark Eldar before their captors have a chance to take up weapons or call for help. Cunning Explorers could even take advantage of one of the matches the Dark Eldar stage with their gladiators, giving them real weapons which they can then turn upon their masters. They could also try to poison the Dark Eldar's banquet, or somehow sabotage their torture devices to turn back upon them. The GM should allow the Explorers to plan out an ambush using whatever ideas they have, and at very least give them the first Round of combat against the Dark Eldar before they react, with a potential to gain more Rounds to attack without reprisal depending on their success. Anyalra, in her cruel practicality, is unlikely to be drawn in by such ambushes, and even if surprised by such a combat, she leaves her guests to die so that she might retreat and muster warriors to her before striking in force.

## NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

While the Explorers can fairly easily gather together before their escape attempt, it might be that one of their new allies, or even a member of the party, is locked away for punishment (for some transgression in the previous chapter, or due to poor luck) and must be freed. This can either be the spark that begins the escape, or be dealt with as part of their breakout. The Explorers can use stealth, guile, force, or some combination of the three to find their way down into the deepest cells of the Shadowspine Pits, where they have to overcome numerous guards to open up the cells and find their friend. The deep cells that hold the most important or dangerous prisoners are guarded by an elite cadre of Hekatrix Bloodbrides equal in number to the Explorers (see page 124



for the profile for Hekatrix Bloodbrides). Further, there are no less than three barriers that the Explorers must overcome, either with codes obtained through Favour, a **Hard (-20) Tech-Use Test**, or brute force (such as explosives). Obviously, openly breaching the barriers brings down the wrath of the Cult of the Withered Blade, and the Explorers may find their revolution starting ahead of schedule if they are not careful.

## ONE FINAL CONTEST

As the Explorers execute their escape plan and Dark Eldar mobilise to put down the threat, there are those from the Withered Blade who seek out the chance to join in combat again with the Explorers. The GM can have the route to freedom force the Explorers to pass through the pits, where a group of Wyches (or Hekatrix Bloodbrides if the Explorers are Rank 5 or higher) of the Withered Blade equal in number to the Explorers await to make a stand against them. The GM can set this encounter up as an arena combat using the guidelines from **Table 2-6: Arena Hazards** on page 66. The GM should have the Dark Eldar change the fighting conditions to suit their needs from Round to Round, providing themselves with lower gravity for greater mobility or dumping scrap into the pit to provide cover. As long as the Dark Eldar control the pit, traps and random effects (like Dragon's Breath) only affect the Explorers and their allies.



## BRINGING DOWN THE BARRIERS

The final barrier the Explorers need to breach is the set of containment fields and blast doors sealing the Shadowspine Pits off from the Shadow Arteries. By the time the Explorers reach this point, the Dark Eldar are fully aware of the extent of their escape attempt and have rallied to try to stop them. This is also where the PCs face Anyalra and any of the enemies they might have made during their time in slavery. This combat takes place across several tunnels and large chambers, with plenty of cover and places to hide or gain good vantage from. The Explorers must reach one of the main blast doors and either disable or destroy this final obstacle to complete their escape. The Dark Eldar should be well prepared in their defence, requiring the Explorers to fight their way up towards the central portal against Wyches, Kabalite Warriors, Hellions, and Beast Masters and their foul pets, such as Khymerae. Domos and the escaped slaves are there to help, and the GM can run the encounter as a massed combat, (if he wishes to use the rules described in **BATTLEFLEET KORONUS**), where the leadership of the Explorers is as important as their fighting skills. Otherwise, he can treat it as a challenge in which the Explorers must succeed at a number of **Challenging (+0) Command Tests** to resolve various crises as they occur (such as groups of Bloodbrides striking at a weak flank in their lines, or attempting to flood the complex with a paralytic agent that will incapacitate the rebelling captives). If the Explorers succeed at their Command Test, their followers bring the situation under control; if they fail, their allies cannot deal with the problem, and the Explorers themselves must intervene to save the day. There are countless problems that might require their personal attention in this way, but groups of elite soldiers like Hekatrix Bloodbrides or Reaver Pilots with jetbikes equal to the number of Explorers, doors that have been soldered shut, and hallways filled with deadly traps (drawn from **Table 2–6: Arena Hazards** on page 66) all provide an appropriate challenge (see page 123–124 for the profiles for these NPCs). The GM should reward clever tactics in this section, such as the PCs manipulating the Gaelan Sphere's systems to activate defences against the Dark Eldar, using stealth to sneak past the outer defenders, or creating a stampede of arena beasts to clear the way ahead of them.

On the other side of the blast doors waits Anyalra, accompanied by a cadre of her most elite Hekatrix Bloodbrides in a group equal to the number of Explorers plus three. She has anticipated the Explorers' move and intends to finish the rebellion herself with a single decapitating blow. During this encounter, the Explorers must face her head-on; their reinforcements will be tied down by the other guards, and champions such as themselves are needed to break through an elite force like the one blocking their path. NPC allies should generally be occupied performing critical tasks elsewhere at this point (such as holding the flank, directing the efforts of the liberated army, or fighting another champion who

threatens to overwhelm them from behind) so that the Explorers can achieve this victory on their own. This also means that the Explorers have control over the way that the fight ends, provided of course that they win; they can try to kill Anyalra, force her to retreat, or even offer her a deal if they spare her life. This battle allows for a clear end to the Explorers' time as slaves of the arena, and gives them a much-needed chance to repay the Succubus for her "hospitality." Anyalra's profile can be found in **Chapter IV: The Treacherous Path** on page 121, and the Hekatrix Bloodbride profile can be found on page 124. Read aloud the following when the Explorers breach the blast doors and step outside:

*Before you stands Anyalra, flanked by several of her elite Hekatrix Bloodbrides. "I admit, I was angry at first that you wretches had dared to waste my time with yet another tedious uprising. But indulging too long in raw anger is kind of waste as well, and you have performed much better than I expected. Revel in your small victory, for you have now provided me with an end to my boredom, however brief it may be. And for your efforts, I will grant you the highest reward I ever offer a slave: I will sully my hands with your blood when I tear out your hearts myself."*

Anyalra attempts to engage the Explorers in melee combat one at a time, using her Bloodbrides to separate the Explorers and prevent those who might interfere with her duels from getting too close. Although Anyalra usually prefers not to take great risks, now that the Explorers have engaged her in personal combat, she feels the joy of bloodshed close at hand and seeks the thrill of the fight. She first targets the PC who she considers to be the most worthy melee opponent (the one who made the most impressive melee kill or kills in the pits). She focuses exclusively on her chosen target until she has either incapacitated or slain that foe, before moving on to the next most potent fighter. Her Bloodbrides work in concert to provide her the opportunities to fight these one-on-one battles, harassing and separating the Explorers, and all focusing on different targets unless there is no other option. Anyalra accepts a request for her to surrender if she loses to a PC opponent in hand-to-hand combat, and her Bloodbrides stand down as well, allowing the army to pass, though she fights to the bitter end if she does not believe that the Explorers will (or even can, given the angry army of former slaves) spare her life.

Once the Explorers are united, with their allies in tow and Domos spurring them on towards a full-blown uprising, they can try to escape the Shadowspine Pits. At this point the escape and uprising are contained to the Withered Blade, and Drekarus and the Splintered Talon do not play a part, nor do the other factions of the Nexus of Shadows. As the Explorers enter the city proper, Salaine also makes her move, summoning her renegade fleet and plunging the city into open warfare as the Dark Eldar attack each other in the skies above and on the streets below.





# UPRISING

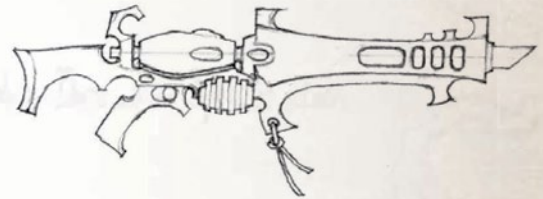
Parallel to the Explorers' own escape attempt is the slave uprising, and the aspiration to escape the Nexus of Shadows that many of the NPCs hold. Depending on the actions of the Explorers, the GM can have the PCs central to the uprising, even pivotal to its success if they are focused on freeing as many slaves as possible and stirring them to action with rousing speeches and promises of vengeance. However, regardless of their involvement, the uprising begins when the Explorers begin their escape, and continues to escalate while they try for a second time to steal *The Soul Reaver*. Inspired by the Explorers, Domos and his web of allies in the Shadowspine Pits make their bid for freedom.

## THE SLAVE ARMY

Throughout this chapter, there is a steadily rising tide of slaves tearing the Nexus apart, growing in number as Domos and the slave gladiators break into new sections of the city and liberate those enslaved there. The Explorers can involve themselves as heavily as they wish in the uprising, or they can focus completely on their own goals. At least in its first stages, help from the Explorers allows the uprising to escalate faster, spreading more disorder and giving the PCs a better chance at stealing *The Soul Reaver*. Once in full swing, it rages out of control until it is eventually put down, or until the Explorers make a real effort to restrain it so that the Nexus

of Shadows—and the profits they might extract from it—do not burn to ash around them. The slave army can consist of pretty much any human or xenos slaves the GM chooses, risen up from the countless houses and pits controlled by the Dark Eldar as their fellow slaves free them. There are many, many more slaves in the Nexus than there are Dark Eldar or free men (or free xenos), and though they are under-equipped, they are highly motivated and, with the guidance of Domos and other leaders, able and willing to fight to the bitter end.

For the GM, the slave army represents a way to plunge the Nexus of Shadows into chaos, having mobs of freed slaves running rampant in the tunnels and towers of the city, attacking Dark Eldar and tearing down the aliens' defences. In combination with the attack by Salaine and the renegade fleet, it adds to the general carnage and sense that the Nexus is fighting for its life. Slaves can be used to help the Explorers by distracting the Dark Eldar or covering their attack on *The Soul Reaver*, and make a useful tool which the PCs can, if they so choose, exploit. The slave army also presents the PCs with a choice that raises moral and practical questions, about whether or not they help the slaves in their bid for freedom, or simply focus on their own goals.



## DARK ELДАР RESPONSE

The Dark Eldar are swift and ruthless in putting down the slave uprising, having no qualms about wiping out any slaves who turn against them. In fact, the uprising leads to a purge targeting all slaves in the Nexus of Shadows, which in turn fuels the revolting slaves' will to keep fighting and inspires more slaves to join the fight for freedom, as they realise they have nothing to lose by doing so. At first, Dark Eldar patrols try to contain the slaves, putting down isolated groups as they find them, though once it becomes clear to the Dark Eldar that their normal enforcers are not sufficient against hundreds of rioting slaves, they begin to mobilise for a full-scale battle. This occurs an hour or two after the Explorers have escaped the Shadowspine Pits, giving the slaves a chance to spread out into the surrounding zones before the Dark Eldar realise the extent of the danger and gather their forces. From this point on, things quickly escalate as Domos organises the slaves and accrues more heavy weapons and vehicles, and those choosing to ally with the slaves throw their lot in with the Tech-Priest.

The GM should have these events play out in the background depending on the actions of the Explorers. The PCs are aware at first only of the fighting around the Shadowspine Pits. Then more and more Dark Eldar arrive to crush the uprising, until eventually Raider transports and heavy weapon squads arrive on the scene. This has a distinct effect on the rest of the city; the garrisons of the Splintered Talon begin to converge on the uprising as Kabalite Warriors are drawn away from their posts to help put it down. Over the





course of several hours, there are secondary slave breakouts in other parts of the city (some of them orchestrated by Domos or other NPC leaders). Large sections of the Shadow Arteries fall to slaves, and defensive lines are established around the Bonespires and the ziggurat, with the Shadowspine Pits already in the control of the slaves. While the Razor's Web remains active, it cannot fire upon the surface of the Sphere where the uprising is taking place. Still, any vessels that attempt to launch to make an assault from above are quickly shot down by the defensive towers. Once the renegade fleet attacks, the rulers of the Nexus find themselves fighting a war on two fronts. The slaves make another push to take the towers, and the true battle for the Nexus begins.

## UNEXPECTED AID

Throughout the uprising, during the Explorers' final attempt to recover *The Soul Reaver*, the GM can provide the PCs with aid from any of the NPC allies or organisations with which they have so far come into contact. While each of these individuals and groups is using the chaos of the uprising to complete their own goals and agendas, they could help the Explorers out if they run into trouble or find themselves facing overwhelming odds. Unless the PCs specifically go out of their way to seek out these allies and enlist their help, the GM can have them waiting in the wings as a ready reserve, using them whenever needed to swing the situation and prevent the party from meeting a violent and unpleasant end before their final confrontation with Zaergarn Kul.

## GM GUIDANCE: NO REWARD IS WORTH THIS!

It is possible and within the Explorers' power that once they escape the Shadowspine Pits, they might decide to cut their losses and leave both Domos and Salaine to their fates, simply making for their vessel and trying to escape the Nexus of Shadows. Even if they choose to do this, giving up the chance for profit and whatever promises Salaine has made to them, they still need to fight their way free of the city and take back their ship. Before they flee, the GM can use Salaine, Domos, or any other NPC to make a final offer of spoils or plea for help, perhaps even improving the terms of the deal if they complete their mission. If the GM doesn't want them to leave just yet, he can always have the power of the Razor's Web remain too strong for them to overcome, trapping them in orbit for fear of being destroyed if they make a break for the void, and forcing their hand to take care of the *Soul Reaver* so as to allow them to escape. The forces of the Splintered Talon can also play a part in motivating them to finish what they have begun, threatening the Explorers and promising carnage and death upon their dynasty as long as the Kabal survives.





# SHADOWS AND FLAMES

*"The fury of war burns away all pity."*

—Reaver Captain Banras Kaz

Escaping the Shadowspine Pits is only the first stage of the Explorers' exodus, as they now have to cross a city awakening to the threat of the slave uprising and penetrate Zaergarn's ziggurat once more. Getting from the pits to *The Soul Reaver* can be broken down into three parts: their flight from the Shadowspine Pits into the Nexus of Shadows, their journey across the city avoiding or confronting the Dark Eldar defenders, and finally their assault on Zaergarn's ziggurat and their fight to reach *The Soul Reaver*. To successfully stealing the vessel, they also need to have their vessel on standby to

anchor onto *The Soul Reaver* and tear it free of its moorings. This means taking it back and moving it into position beyond the reach of the Razor's Web before making their run. Once they are free of the Shadowspine Pits, Salaine gets in contact with them again, and depending on their feelings towards her (whether or not they think she has betrayed them and resent her for it), she may join with them again. If Salaine's promises and urging is not enough to prompt the PCs to try for *The Soul Reaver* again then Domos also tries to convince them of its importance. The Explorers should be aware that everything still hinges on removing *The Soul Reaver* from the ziggurat and ejecting it from the webway, thereby cutting off the Razor's Web from its power source and opening up the skies over the Nexus for either the renegade fleet or the slaves to conquer the city.

At this stage the Explorers should decide just how they are going to remove *The Soul Reaver*, as they can do so either by stealth or by force, though with the slaves rising up against the Dark Eldar, there is likely to be a bit of both involved. The Explorers also need to figure out how to contact their vessel to have it ready to tear out *The Soul Reaver*. Their best options are to fly it through the Razor's Web to *The Soul Reaver*, or to find a way to hail it before infiltrating on foot to *The Soul Reaver* and disabling the Razor's Web so their ship can move in safely. In either instance, their flight from the Shadowspine Pits and journey across the city remains the same, as whether they are aiming for the ziggurat or their vessel, they must first get past the growing number of Dark Eldar opposing them.

## FLIGHT FROM THE SHADOWSPINE PITS

Striding over the broken bodies of Withered Blade Wyches, the slaves stream out of the Shadowspine Pits and into the Shadow Arteries. The Explorers are carried along with them in a raging tide. Two things should be apparent to the PCs at this stage (spelled out by either Domos as he musters his forces, or Salaine as she re-establishes contact): the uprising

### GM GUIDANCE: HEROES NO MORE

At this point, the Explorers may choose to leave the slaves to their fate, in which case the GM can proceed to **An Overlooking View** on page 82. Doing so means that the rebellion is doomed, but the Explorers did not come to the Nexus of Shadows as liberators and they are not obligated to help others. As such, at this point they receive a message from Salaine Morn (by communications device if they possess one, or by Scourge messenger if they do not) urging them to meet her atop a tower near their location. If they do wish to assist in the uprising, they may take part in any or all of the following encounters, about which Magos Domos (or any other prominent NPC involved in the uprising) informs them. Though the uprising may be peripheral to their interests at this point, it does provide an excellent distraction, and without it the Splintered Talon can focus all of its forces on fighting the war against Salaine's alliance—which includes the Explorers.





must spread as quickly as possible in these first few hours lest it be put down, and the Explorers must still remove *The Soul Reaver* from the ziggurat or there can be no hope of a final victory over Drecarus and the Splintered Talon. The GM should allow the Explorers to formulate their own plans to reach their vessel and *The Soul Reaver*, reminding them that time is of the essence and that travelling on foot through the vast distances of the Sphere's tunnels is not fast enough. Once they have come up with some kind of plan, the GM can play through the encounters below, modifying them depending on the tactics taken by the Explorers.

## BLEEDING ARTERIES

As the slaves enter the city proper, pandemonium breaks out amongst the populace, and the Dark Eldar's initial response is to shoot everything that moves. Unless the Explorers want to slink away into the shadows, they can help the slave army to claim a part of the Shadow Arteries as a staging ground by neutralising the Dark Eldar present and securing its entrances and exits. Unfortunately, a squad of Scourges (one for each Explorer, and one additional Scurge for each Explorer Rank 5 or higher) with heavy weapons holds a series of positions overlooking this area, and the Explorers must eliminate them before the slave army can effectively advance without being torn apart by their withering fire. The Explorers must spot, track, or predict the position of each individual Scurge even as they rain death down upon the advancing force, and locate each one with a **Hard (-20) Awareness Test** or a **Challenging (+0) Tracking** or **Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis) Test**. Once the Explorers find a Scurge, they also determine a way to slay or drive off the winged menace. See page 126 for the Scurge profile.

## A CHANCE AT GLORY

Once the staging ground has been established, the Explorers can help by sealing off avenues of counterattack by the Splintered Talon. There are five portals through which the primary Dark Eldar reinforcements are coming, and these need to be sealed so that the slave army can gather for a push on the Bone Spires. Each one is guarded by a Kabalite Trueborn and a contingent of Kabalite Warriors equal in number to the Explorers, plus one extra Kabalite Trueborn for each Explorer Rank 5 or higher (see pages 122-123 for these profiles). Every three Rounds, two Kabalite Warriors (or two Kabalite Trueborn if any Explorer is Rank 5 or higher) arrive in the junction from each portal. Once the Explorers have sealed a portal by making a **Challenging (+0) Tech-Use Test**, by destroying the tunnel with a **Ordinary (+10) Demolitions Test** and the appropriate equipment, or by some other ingenuity on their part, reinforcements from that portal cease to arrive. Once all five portals have been sealed, the Explorers must only contend with the remaining Dark Eldar.

## WAR OF VENGEANCE

The slaves tear the city apart and engage in open war with the Dark Eldar throughout the battle. Before, during, or after the Explorers deal with Zaergarn and *The Soul Reaver*, they can influence the outcome of this conflict. If they make

their presence known in the city, Damos makes one or more pleas for their aid to swing the battle in the favour of the slaves. The GM can use any or all of the following encounters to represent the uprising and the Explorers' chances to alter its outcome. If the Explorers fail to attempt and complete at least one of the following encounters, the uprising founders and is quashed. If the Explorers complete all of the following encounters successfully, the slaves gain full control of the Nexus of Shadows (see pages 93-94 for the consequences of this development).

## CRACKING OPEN THE ARMOURY

Damos and the slaves need to get heavy weapons if they are to challenge the Dark Eldar for the Nexus of Shadows. Throughout the Archon's palace and around the base of the ziggurat, there are garrisons and armouries that the Splintered Talon uses to equip its Kabalite Warriors. There are also other caches of weapons held by various aliens, either arms traders or paranoid xenos who distrust the Dark Eldar's hospitality. The Explorers can help the slaves break into one of these armouries and plunder its goods. The armouries are always heavily defended and shielded, and require both stealth and brute force to breach. The Explorers must provide the stealth while the slave army provides the brute force. Each armoury is a veritable fortress, but has some sort of vulnerability that the Explorers can exploit to open the defences from within. To break into a Splintered Talon weapons depot, the Explorers must ascertain the armoury's particular weakness by making a successful **Challenging (+0) Tech-Use Test** while at a console attached to the sphere's governing systems. Then, they must slip past or quietly slay a patrol of Kabalite Trueborn equal in number to their group or twice the number of their party if any Explorer is Rank 5 or higher (see page 123 for the Kabalite Trueborn profile). Becoming embroiled in a prolonged fire-fight (more than 5 Rounds) against the first group of sentries alerts a second patrol of Kabalite Trueborn equal in number to the first. After overcoming these challenges, it is a simple task to disable the defences and let the slaves into the armoury. Each Explorer may also select a single Dark Eldar armament with an availability up to Rare to take for himself.

## INSPIRED LEADERSHIP

Even though the slaves are hungry for vengeance, they are generally poorly led and poorly trained, the majority taken from remote worlds along the edges of the Calixis Sector. The Explorers can help them by giving them suitable leadership and inspiration. The Explorers must score a combined 5 Degrees of Success on any number of **Challenging (+0) Command** or **Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis) Tests**, modified by bonuses from Talents, equipment, and knowledge as appropriate (however, each Explorer may only make each kind of Test once during this challenge). If the Explorers score more than three Degrees of Failure on any two of these Tests before accumulating the required Degrees of Success, however, order breaks down and the Explorers have wasted their efforts.



## THE BEASTS OF WAR

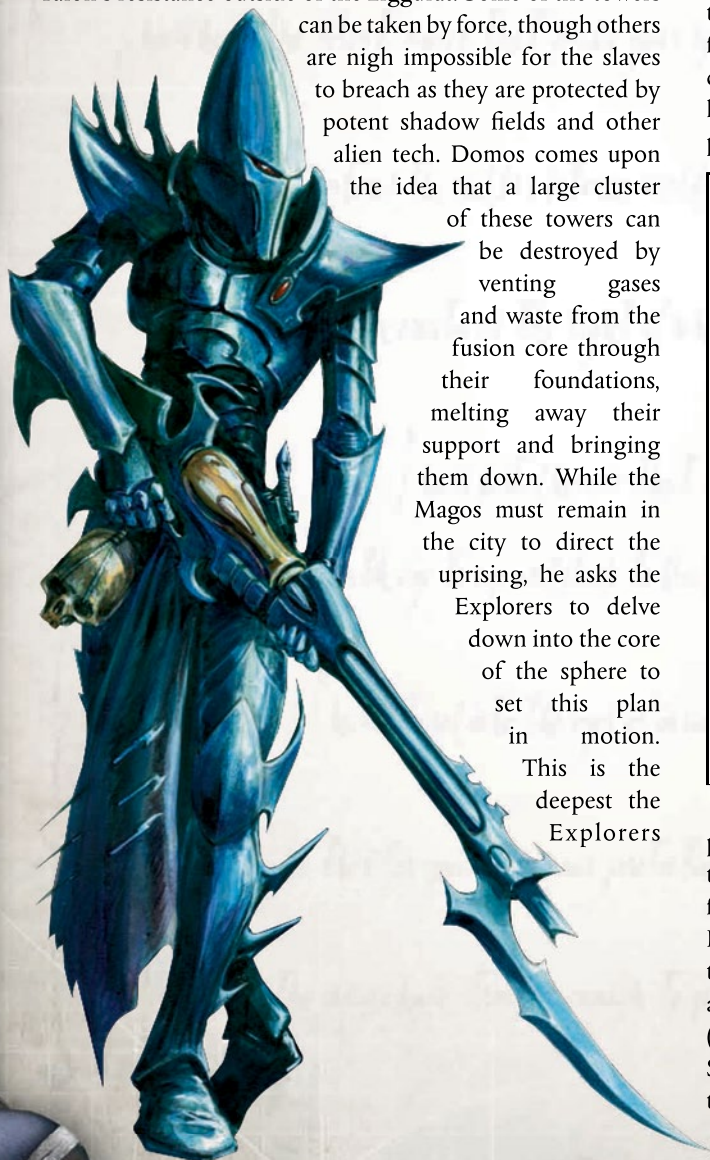
During the fighting, scores of beasts escape from the arena, most of which are now rampaging around attacking indiscriminately. As the Dark Eldar retreat to their towers, the beasts become more and more of a problem for the slaves. Each beast (or group of beasts) must be tracked down with an **Ordinary (+10) Tracking Test** and slain. The beasts running rampant are as follows: one flock of Razorwings (with two Razorwings for each Explorer), one Clawed Fiend, one pack of Khymerae (with one Khymera for each Explorer), and one Fleshwrought Drake (see page 133 for the profile for these beasts). The Explorers must eliminate these creatures within two hours of narrative time (or one hour if the Explorers are of Rank 5 or higher), before they too badly deplete the forces of the rebellion.

## TOPPLING THE TOWERS

Before the slaves can defeat the Dark Eldar in the city, they need to capture the Bonespires, the centre for the Splintered Talon's resistance outside of the ziggurat. Some of the towers

can be taken by force, though others are nigh impossible for the slaves to breach as they are protected by potent shadow fields and other alien tech. Domos comes upon the idea that a large cluster of these towers can be destroyed by venting gases and waste from the fusion core through their foundations, melting away their support and bringing them down. While the Magos must remain in the city to direct the uprising, he asks the Explorers to delve down into the core of the sphere to set this plan in motion.

This is the deepest the Explorers



have descended and the most dangerous journey they have made into the sub-levels. Navigating the sub-levels is dangerous work, and successfully reaching each of the three ducts that must be opened requires a **Challenging (+0) Navigation (Surface)** or guidance by a local of the Nexus of Shadows. On the way to each vent, the Explorers are also put at risk by the perils that await in the lower depths. For each Degree of Failure on a given Navigation Test, the Explorers run across one encounter from **Table 0-1: Nexus of Shadows Encounters** (see page 21). If the Explorers open all three vents, they destroy several of the strongest towers within the Bonespires and greatly increase the slaves' chances of claiming the Nexus.

## AN OVERLOOKING VIEW

For the Explorers, climbing a tower also means the chance to get some faster transportation or hail their ship. This is an opportunity for the Explorers to settle any grudges against Dark Eldar nobles such as Ravyr Dysk that they may have accumulated over the course of the adventure. It is also the time of their reunion with Salaine Morn, who is waiting for the Explorers at the top of the tower. Once they have dispatched any residents of the tower (or if the residents have already fled) and reached the top of the spire, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

*Salaine Morn stands before you, flanked by a cadre of her warriors and overlooking the Nexus of Shadows as the fires of revolution begin to spread. On the platform beside her are a number of Reaver jetbikes and a Venom transport. She turns her head to you, and then gestures towards the burning city. "Beautiful, isn't it? Excellent work. We will have to restore the proper order eventually, of course, but for the moment this chaos is most pleasing. I knew you were the best choice to be my champions in this endeavour—you outsiders may lack our cunning, our grace, our wit, but let it never be said that you are without the stubborn resolve to keep resisting even in the face of overwhelming might. Your little escape plan should never have worked, and yet here you stand.... Just as I predicted." She motions curtly to the transports she has prepared for you. "Of course, you could always return to your ship and leave—if you can slip past the Razor's Web. But you'll stay. For the treasure, but for that stubborn pride, too. The plan moves forward inevitably, and we draw closer to the end. Take The Soul Reaver and it is over. Take The Soul Reaver, and we win."*

Salaine Morn is accompanied by eight Kabalite Warriors, plus another eight hiding in the shadows of the tower in case the Explorers decide to vent their frustrations on her (the profile for Salaine Morn can be found on page 119, and the profile for Kabalite Warriors can be found on page 122). Assuming that they do not choose this as the time and place to make a stand against Salaine, however, the Explorers depart on the transport (one or two per Reaver jetbike or up to six per Venom) and Salaine slips back to her place with the fleet to prepare it for the initial assault, bombarding the Nexus from beyond the effective range of the Razor's Web to soften the Splintered Talon's forces as much as possible before the final push.



## DEATH ABOVE, FIRE BELOW

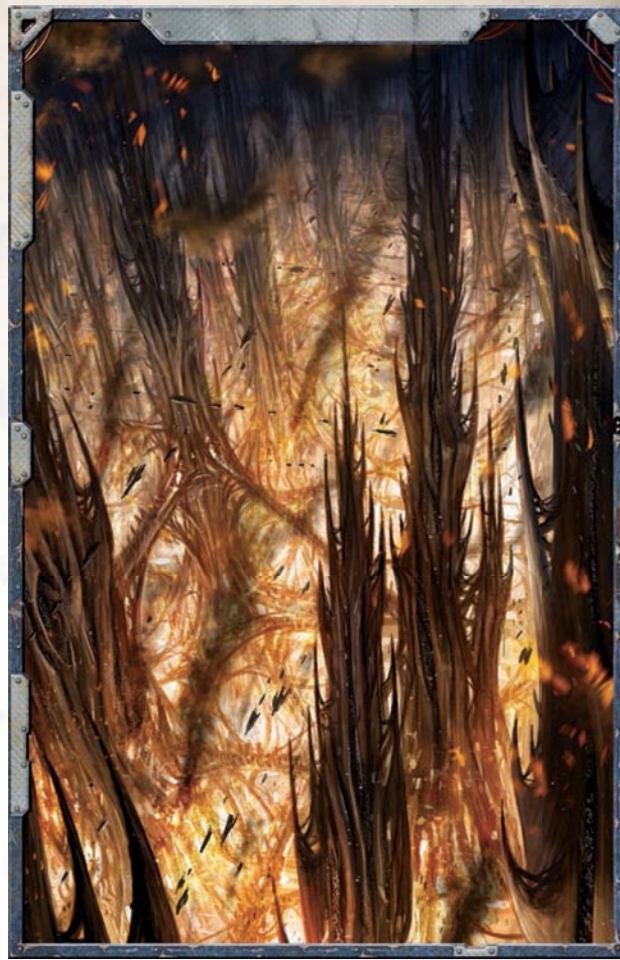
Having secured transport and escaped from the Shadowed Arteries, the Explorers now need to cross the city, either to reach the ziggurat or their vessel. This is a dangerous prospect, as the skies have been locked down by the Dark Eldar, who are shooting down everyone who is not a member of the Splintered Talon or under Drecarus' direct control. There is also the added danger that the Razor's Web is fully active, and though it cannot target ships flying low among the towers of the city, it creates a deadly ceiling that all non-Dark Eldar airborne craft cannot cross. By this point, unless the Explorers have focused on keeping a low profile in the rebellion, Drecarus has identified them as a real danger to the Splintered Talon and dispatched hunters to bring them down. The GM can use the encounters below to map the Explorers' fight across the city and determine how close they can get to their destinations before they are forced down or resistance becomes too fierce to continue.

### UNDER THE RAZOR

To cross the city, the Explorers need to stay below the effective targeting field of the Razor's Web, weaving among the towers and hugging the surface of the sphere. The Razor's Web cannot target personal craft, but with Salaine's fleet in a high orbit just outside of its optimal range, many of the guns have begun to sound, and their discharge can easily vaporise anything unfortunate enough to be near the muzzle of one of the great macrocannons. Any time a vessel passes into the airspace covered by the Razor's Web, its pilot must make a **Hard (-20) Pilot (Flyers) Test** or the craft suffers 4d10 Energy Damage as gargantuan weapons discharge around it. Flying at low altitude has its risks as well, however, as it means that there is always a danger of collision, and unless the pilot is focusing solely on flying the craft, he must make a **Challenging (+0) Pilot (Flyers) Test** each Round in addition to any other actions he takes. Failing this Test means he must quickly correct his course to avoid harm which requires the rest of his Turn, while failing by four or more Degrees of Failure means he has clipped an obstacle and his craft suffers 2d10+5 Impact Damage, and on the following Round he must pass another **Challenging (+0) Pilot (Flyers) Test** as his sole action or crash.

### HUNTERS HUNTED

As soon as the Explorers leave the tower and head for the ziggurat, a group of Reaver Pilots on jetbikes and Hellion Gangers on skyboards targets the group (see pages 123 and 125 for the profiles for these foes). Seeing the carnage in the streets, these sadistic killers have decided to join in the fun, striking at anything that catches their attention. The Explorers are attacked by a group of two Hellions Gangers on skyboards per Explorer or one Reaver Pilot on a jetbike per Explorer (or one group of each if any Explorer is Rank 5 or higher). The GM can play this out as part combat, part chase, with a few furious Rounds of combat before the terrain separates the combatants and the Explorers must use their piloting skills to outdistance their pursuers. The GM should reward clever tactics by the Explorers during this encounter, such as using



trying to ram the enemy jetbikes into obstacles, attempting to lose them through fancy flying, swooping down into the crust of the sphere through tight tunnels and churning machinery, or even tricking their pursuers into flying into one another.

### TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY

While the Explorers are crossing the city, they might also have the chance to help out the uprising by hitting some targets of opportunity. These consist of Raiders and other vehicles carrying Kabalite Warriors from the ziggurat to the Shadow Arteries. The GM can blend these targets into the chase across the city, possibly having Domos prompting the PCs from afar for help if they come near an area of the fighting. These should only be brief encounters, each a Round or two in length, as the PCs scream past, unleashing dark lance or splinter cannon fire, and suffering a Round or two of return fire. The GM should keep track of these attacks, and they can add to the overall success of the slaves' uprising, and can improve the aid that Domos might be willing to offer later. Alternatively, they can become full-blown engagements if the Explorers choose, as they abandon their journey to the ziggurat for a moment to give a group of slaves close air support. Each Raider carries 10 Kabalite Warriors (or 10 Kabalite Trueborn if the Explorers are of Rank 5 or higher). See page 139 for the profile for a Raider and pages 122-123 for the profiles for Kabalite Warriors and Kabalite Trueborn.



## GM GUIDANCE: GETTING A BIGGER BOAT

For the next stage of their plan, the Explorers will need their ship to tear the *Soul Reaper* free. During their stay in the pits, the Explorers' vessel remains at the Nexus of Shadows, forced to stay in a low orbit just beyond the limits of the city, but prevented from leaving by the trained guns of the Razor's Web. This means that the Explorers need to contact their vessel and bring it down to assist them—without getting it torn apart by the Razor's Web. To achieve this, they have two options:

First, the Explorers can attempt to reach their ship and pilot it down through the defences, hoping to get it through amongst the confusion of the attacking fleet and the rebelling slaves, or anything else the Explorers can unleash upon the Nexus of Shadows. To do this, they need to secure transport up to their ship before invading the ziggurat (they might steal a small Dark Eldar craft, or call upon allies such as Salaine Morne for assistance). Once aboard their vessel, they must make it through the Razor's Web (See **The Razor's Web** on page 39).

As another option that requires less risk to their vessel but more risk to themselves, the Explorers could attempt to raise their ship remotely, telling it to join them at the Archon's palace once they have sundered the *Soul Reaper* from its mooring with their charges, as soon as they have disrupted the Razor's Web. However, this means that they give up the opportunity to return to their ship to resupply before the final battle, and more worryingly, means that they may have to hold the line on their own for some time against the Kabal of the Splintered Talon's forces before their ship arrives.

## RETURN TO THE SOUL REAPER

**A**fter the trials and tribulations of crossing the city, the Explorers need to break into the ziggurat and make their way to *The Soul Reaper* for a second time. They also need to get their ship into position and anchor it onto the alien vessel to tear it free. These are no small tasks, but the Explorers have a golden opportunity to accomplish them with the chaos raging in the city. Though the ziggurat's defenders are on high alert, they are scattered, still reeling from the blow the uprising has dealt. Even as the Explorers arrive, the Kabal of the Splintered Talon is in the midst of mobilising to put down the rebellion in the city.

### SMASH AND GRAB

There are still a number of ways in and out of the ziggurat (such as those used by the Explorers in the first chapter), though resistance is more organised and Drecarus is personally waiting for the PCs. The GM can use the encounters below to play out the Explorers' assault on the ziggurat, depending on the path they choose and the tactics they use. At the very least, they should be forced to fight their way through Drecarus and his minions, so that they can redress their grievances with the scheming Haemonculus who engineered their first defeat.

### SECRET IN THE GARDEN

Provided the Explorers do not get shot down crossing the city and have to proceed on foot, the easiest and quickest way into the ziggurat is through the Deathworld Gardens at the top of its central spire. Abandoned by the guards as they respond to the uprising, the Explorers find the gardens deserted, though no less deadly. If they did not use this route the first time, and were unaware of its existence, Salaine might offer it as an option to break into the palace. The GM can use the guidelines found on page 43 of **Chapter I: The Queen of Shadows** to play out the Explorers navigating the gardens and

finding their way down into *The Soul Reaper* chamber. If the Explorers passed through the Deathworld Gardens during their first, ill-fated trip to *The Soul Reaper*, the GM should add additional elements like Dark Eldar pursuers landing just after them and following them in. Having visited the gardens before, however, the Explorers now have the edge in the deadly maze. They should receive a +10 bonus to any Tests to navigate or survive the hazards of the Deathworld Gardens, and should be able to use their past experience to take advantage of the terrain to overcome their pursuers.

### BREAKING THE SEALS

Aware of their attack and having surmised their objective, Drecarus has sealed the central chamber containing *The Soul Reaper* against all intrusion. To break these seals, the Explorers either need to subvert the sphere's machine-spirit and override the locks, or blast them open using explosives stolen from the armoury lower down in the ziggurat. Both options require the PCs to travel down deeper into the ziggurat, either seeking out ordnance or looking for a link to the sphere's ancient core cogitator, either of which requires an **Arduous (–40) Navigation (Surface) Test** to find. Each time the Explorers fail this Test, they stumble upon a group of foes from **Table 1–1: Splintered Talon Forces**, on page 46 in **Chapter I: The Queen of Shadows**. They must then repeat the Navigation Test, but gain a cumulative +10 bonus to the Test each time they fail.

Once they find the chamber, the Explorers must pass a **Hard (–20) Tech-Use Test** to disable the doors, or a series of three **Routine (+20) Demolition Tests** to use their ordnance to blast through the doors. Each time the Explorers fail one of these Tests, they must fight off a group of guards from **Table 1–1: Splintered Talon Forces** before they can attempt it again.





## DRECARUS LABORATORIES

Now that the Explorers know that Drecarus is the true mastermind controlling the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, they have the option to attempt to seek out his laboratory to put an end to the cruel artisan of pain who was responsible for their first defeat. During their journey through the palace, the Explorers spot the Haemonculus fleeing into an darkened chamber. Drecarus is a canny foe, and seeks to draw the Explorers deeper and deeper into his twisted lair before engaging them. Drecarus' experimentation chambers are arranged in a pattern that only the Haemonculus' deranged genius can fully comprehend, connecting in counter-intuitive or nonsensical ways as he sees fit. Thanks to the extraordinary technology of the Dark Eldar, some doors seem to lead only into darkness, while others vanish as soon as the Explorers cross the threshold. Each chamber the Explorers enter while chasing the Haemonculus has a wave of enemies from **Table 1–1: Splintered Talon Forces** (see page 46) or some other horrid creature of the GM's choice and one peril from **Table 2–6: Arena Hazards** (see page 66). Each time the Explorers wish to choose a new doorway, they must make an Opposed Intelligence Test against Drecarus himself to find the method to his madness. Once the Explorers succeed on three of these Tests, they reach the chamber Drecarus has chosen.

Drecarus awaits with one Wrack for each Explorer and a Fleshwrought Drake (plus one Grotesque for every two Explorers if any Explorer is Rank 5 or higher). When Drecarus is first wounded, the Haemonculus falls back yet again, taunting the Explorers as he goes and leaving his minions to keep them occupied. If he is able to escape, Drecarus seals the chamber and floods it with a deadly toxin before making his way to his voidship to deal with Salaine and her fleet. This airborne poison is a paralytic neurotoxin; each Explorer who inhales it during a given Round must make a **Difficult (–10) Toughness Test** or suffer 1d10 Agility Damage. For every 10 such Agility Damage a character suffers, he loses the use of one randomly selected arm or leg for 1d5 minutes. Once away from the toxin, this Damage heals at the normal rate for Characteristic Damage (see page 251 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook). Opening any of the doors requires a **Hard (–20) Tech-Use Test**, or an appropriate show of force, such as a **Hellish (–60) Strength Test** or a **Challenging (+0) Demolitions Test** with proper supplies (perhaps scavenged from the lab itself). If the Explorers prevent Drecarus from escaping by slaying him (or other means), he still springs the trap, his final spiteful cackles echoing in the poisoned air.

## SOUL TEARING

Once the Explorers reach *The Soul Reaver*, they are faced with the problem of breaking *The Soul Reaver* free. The charges that they planted in **Chapter I: The Queen of Shadows** are still in place, but they have been dismantled and the Explorers must make an **Ordinary (+10) Demolition Test** to repair their remote detonators—it takes 5 minutes to reset each charge, minus 1 minute for each Degree of Success on the Test, but if they fail the Test, the Explorers trip an alarm that alerts a patrol of Kabalite Trueborn equal in number to the party (see page 123 for the profile for

Kabalite Trueborn). Further, each charge is guarded by one Wrack and a Grotesque (or two Grotesques if the Explorers are of Rank 5 or higher). See pages 126–127 for the profiles for Wracks and Grotesques. When the Explorers arrive in the great gantry-filled chamber surrounding *The Soul Reaver* to reset the charges (or otherwise find a way of breaking the vessel free), the read or paraphrase the following aloud:

*Once again the great curved hull of The Soul Reaver rises before you, its faded bone hull pitted and scarred by years in the void and the slow decay of time. It stands held in the gantries and supports of the ziggurat, immobile and wrapped in metal bonds, bonds which must be broken if it is to be freed. Even as you approach, you can see the Warp energies pulsing around it, arcing out to strike the walls, and flashing and fading from its crystalline edges. It certainly seems more volatile than when you last laid eyes upon it, as if it is drinking deep of the deaths unfolding in the city below and somehow growing in strength...*

## HOLD THE LINE!

Once the charges have been detonated, the Razor's Web falls silent and the Explorers' vessel can move in. Unfortunately, the destruction of the supports alerts the Splintered Talon's forces to the presence of the Explorers, and the full might of the Kabal descends upon them once again. After the Explorers' vessel moves into position and fires its grappling cables onto *The Soul Reaver*, the PCs need to take a position from which they can keep the lines attached. The GM should draw this encounter out over 10+1d5 Rounds, plus an additional





Round for each Explorer, during which time they must face the Splintered Talon's defenders. A new wave of enemies from **Table 1-1: Splintered Talon Forces** (see **Chapter I: The Queen of Shadows**, page 46) appears every third Round, starting with the first. The purpose of this battle is not for the Explorers to defeat all their enemies (a staggering task, given the size of the Splintered Talon's forces), but to survive until the grapnels are completely set and then get aboard a lander from their ship to escape. If Drecarus is still alive, he should also appear at this battle accompanying the second wave of enemies (see page 120 for Drecarus' profile). During this time, the GM can throw any or all of the complications detailed below at the Explorers in addition to successive waves of Dark Eldar enemies:

### BETRAYAL

The battle for *The Soul Reaver* is also a good place for any treacherous NPCs to turn on the Explorers, or at the very least to try to leave them behind once they make their escape. This can involve any of the NPCs from the arena or the city who the Explorers have wronged, but who have decided to work with the PCs until they find an opportunity for revenge. If Henaris Tinis, the leader of the Cult of the False Dawn, is aiding the Explorers, he and his cultists turn on the Explorers as they board the lander, trying to force it to leave prematurely, stranding the Explorers in the ziggurat or forcing them to board *The Soul Reaver* and be dragged along. If there are no Explorers on board their landing craft and Tinis manages to intercept it, he uses brute force or his powers of persuasion to take control of the bridge of the Explorers' vessel. He then drags *The Soul Reaver* out of the Nexus and heads for the Screaming Vortex. Needless to say, Zaergarn still triggers the Maelstrom of Souls, and the Explorers might find Tinis suddenly begging for their aid once again as he too tries to dispose of the dead Archon. The Consorvana Ring, or any other group that covets *The Soul Reaver* for itself, might also commit similar treachery.

### RIISING STORM

Throughout the battle for *The Soul Reaver*, the alien vessel draws in more and more power from the hundreds of deaths occurring in the city and the ziggurat. Those with the Psyniscience Skill can see souls torn from the bodies of the dead to be consumed by the vessel. This creates an area of highly unstable energy, as the veil between reality and the warp becomes thin to the point of breaking. All those fighting within sight of *The Soul Reaver* suffer a -10 penalty to any Willpower Characteristic and Skill Tests as the psychic energy saps their will and chills their souls. Psykers may only use their powers at the Push Psychic Strength. In addition, at the beginning of each Round, the GM rolls on **Table 6-2: Psychic Phenomena** (see page 160 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook) and applies the result to the entire chamber surrounding *The Soul Reaver*.

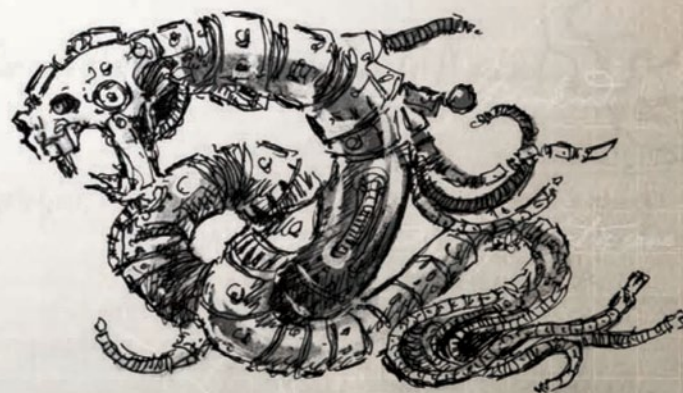
Where the table indicates the psyker as the centre of the effect, or suffering the effect, every living creature in

the area counts as being the psyker who triggered the effect. These effects cannot trigger Perils of the Warp, and if a result indicates rolling on **Table 6-3: Perils of the Warp**, then there are no psychic effects that Round.

### LOOSE GRAPNEL

The attaching of grapnels can occur in the background as the Explorers fight off the successive waves of Dark Eldar. Numerous voidsmen from the Explorers' vessel handle this task for them while they defend against the forces of the Splintered Talon. However, things can easily go wrong during this rushed process, forcing the Explorers to intervene personally in order to fix the problem or risk delaying their escape. This includes grapnels coming loose, due to a stray shot from the Dark Eldar attackers or simple bad luck. In addition to continuing combat, at least one of the Explorers needs to reach the area and fix the problem by making a **Challenging (+0) Climb Test**, and then a **Challenging (+0) Tech-Use Test** or an **Arduous (-40) Strength Test** to set it right. Failure to solve the problem in a timely fashion (within three Rounds) adds 1d5 Rounds to the length of the encounter.

The Explorers can attempt an escape once the grapnels are in place, though this has to be at the last minute to stop the Dark Eldar from severing the cables. The Explorers make their own escape via shuttle before reuniting with their voidship. The landing craft must then make its way out of the collapsing building, which begins to fall to pieces as *The Soul Reaver* is wrenched free. The character piloting the lander must avoid the falling detritus, and also try to evade the attacks coming from the Dark Eldar on the ground and in the gantries. If the GM owns a copy of **INTO THE STORM**, he can use the vehicle rules from that book to manage this encounter. Alternatively, the situation can be handled more abstractly. The character piloting the landing craft must make a **Hard (-20) Pilot (Flyers) Test**, and if he succeeds, the craft clears the collapsing fortress and the oncoming fire without incident. If he fails, however, one randomly chosen Explorer suffers 2d10+6 Impact Damage plus an additional 2 Damage for each Degree of Failure on the Test, as a piece of debris smashes through the lander's hull or a shot from a heavy weapon sprays the unlucky victim with deadly shrapnel. In either case, the lander reaches the voidship and the Explorers return to their vessel.





## FRIENDS, FOES, AND OTHERS

During the battle for the Nexus, the Explorers might receive aid from allies they have made along the way, or find their plans complicated by the appearance of enemies. Even those fighting with the Explorers have their own agendas, which they want to pursue while the Nexus burns and there is no one to oppose them. The GM does not have to include the actions of every NPC, but can use them to steer the plot as he needs, or to add complications to the Explorers' plans.

### CULT OF THE FALSE DAWN

These Chaos worshippers try to take the *Soul Reaper* for themselves the first chance they get. Even once Zaergarn is defeated, they still want to return the vessel to the Screaming Vortex. Until this time, though, they fight against the Splintered Talon if it means getting closer to their goal.

### CONSORVANA RING

Interested only in profit, the Cold Traders embark on an expedition of proactive looting during the uprising and help the Explorers only if it helps them work towards this goal. They might even be convinced to help with the assault on the *Soul Reaper*, provided that the Explorers offer them a chance to pillage its alien treasures.

### RENEGADE CAPTAINS

There may be those among the renegade fleet who have their own agendas, especially those with ties to the Explorers or organisations within the Koronus Expanse. Like the Cold Traders, these captains are out for profit and might choose to abandon the battle for the Nexus to loot the city, or to aid the Explorers if it is worth their while.

### NEUTRAL DARK ELДАР

Not all the Dark Eldar are allied with either Salaine or Zaergarn, and some are interested in only escape as the slave uprising threatens their lives. They can become potential allies for the Explorers or avenues of profit if the PCs choose to offer to help them get out of the Nexus alive.

## THE RENEGADE FLEET STRIKES AT LAST

With everything in place, the Explorers are able to tear *The Soul Reaper* free of the ziggurat, hauling it into the sky in a shower of debris and dust. At this same moment, Salaine orders the renegade fleet to move its assault to the next phase, ceasing the long-range bombardment and moving her vessels in to directly attack the holdings and ships of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, even as the power is fading from the Razor's Web. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

*As fragments of the broken ziggurat rain down around it, The Soul Reaper is hauled into the sky by your vessel, Warp energy and flames bursting out in a gigantic plume that lights up the night. At the same moment, dozens of ships, both xenos and human, begin to descend on the city to begin their raid in earnest now that the Razor's Web has been severed. Rising up to meet them are the sleek vessels of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon. Beyond the ships racing towards battle hangs the ragged portal back to the Koronus Expanse, blocked by a few score enemy vessels and the first salvos of a titanic space battle.*

Even with *The Soul Reaper* no longer connected to the Razor's Web, the Splintered Talon strikes in full force and a fierce battle erupts above the Nexus between the Dark Eldar fleet and Salaine's renegades. The Explorers need to fight their way through the space battle and make for the exit from the webway to realspace, as per the original plan. Salaine, now aware of her rival Archon's connection to the ancient vessel, pushes her forces into battle before Zaergarn can find some way to use the power of *The Soul*

*Reaver* against her fleet. The run to the exit from the webway requires the Explorers to slip their vessel past the forces of the Splintered Talon as the Kabal's voidships rise from the Nexus to meet Salaine's fleet, and then to cross the gap between the two forces, avoiding fire from both sides until they pass their allies and can make for the webway portal.

## BREAKING THROUGH THE DARK ELДАР

The Explorers can engage any of the Dark Eldar vessels as they break through to head for the portal out of the webway. The Kabal of the Splintered Talon's fleet is substantial, but it is also unprepared for the Explorers' vessel swooping in from behind with its prize. To break through the enemy lines, the Explorers travel 45 VUs, during which time they must deal with two Torture-class cruisers and two Corsair-class escorts. One of the Explorers can make a **Challenging (+0) Scholastic Lore: Tactic Imperialis (or Imperial Navy) Test** to pinpoint a weak spot in the enemy fleet; on a success, the Explorers may choose whether they wish to contend with to one Torture-class cruiser and three Corsair-class escorts or two Torture-class cruisers and one Corsair-class escort instead. The Explorers need only escape these vessels by surviving to travel 45 VUs towards Salaine's fleet, but the vessels become hostile as soon as they detect the Explorers and their dark prize.

As they pass through the Dark Eldar fleet, Drecarus targets the Explorers' vessel with a boarding action if he is still alive, and he directs the attack himself (see page 120 for Drecarus' profile). The boarding party consists of Drecarus, one Wrack per Explorer, and one Grotesque for every two Explorers, plus one Cronos Parasite Engine if any Explorers are Rank 5 or higher (see pages 126-127 for these profiles). This boarding



action has two objectives: first to claim the bridge of the Explorers' vessel, and then to detach *The Soul Reaver* from their ship by destroying the grapple array. The PCs have to personally fight the raiding party; if they are not aboard their ship, the raid automatically succeeds. If more than half of his minions are defeated trying to achieve one objective, Drecarus withdraws and attempts to complete the second objective or wreak some other havoc aboard the Explorers' vessel before trying to escape back to his own craft. If the Explorers fail to stop the raiding party from succeeding at either objective, *The Soul Reaver* crashes down into a random part of the city, and then shortly thereafter reawakens the Razor's Web targeting the renegade vessels in orbit as Drecarus uses his arcane science to bring the twisted ship under his control.

### CROSSING NO MAN'S LAND

Once beyond the Dark Eldar fleet, the Explorers need to close with their "allies" in the renegade fleet. This is almost as dangerous as breaking through the enemy Dark Eldar vessels, as the PCs are flying straight into a crossfire of ordinance and battery fire between the renegade fleet and the enemy Dark Eldar. This requires them to traverse another 35 VUs, dodging not only the fire of their pursuers but also the stray shots from their allies (if they cross between a firing ally and an enemy). At this point, if the PCs have made any fast friends or foul enemies in the renegade fleet, these individuals make their play. The Explorers may hail their allies to try to convince them to hold their fire—the Explorers can make a **Challenging (+0) Charm Test** or other appropriate Fellowship-based Test, and on a success convince a single allied vessel to take the risk of momentarily ceasing its barrage. This may be repeated for any number of vessels who might hit them during their desperate flight. Of course, if there are captains in the renegade fleet who hold a grudge against the Explorers for whatever reason, they might choose to deliberately target the Explorers.

Once they enter the gap between the fleets, *The Soul Reaver* (driven by the malevolent essence of Zaergarn) sends out streams of raw energy in all directions. This affects not just the speed and manoeuvrability of the Explorers' vessel, but also its shields. The Explorers' vessel suffers a –10 penalty on all Tests for Manoeuvre Actions while it is dragging *The Soul Reaver*. Equally dangerous are the lashing tongues of energy coming from *The Soul Reaver*, and at the beginning of each Strategic Round, these tendrils make 1d5–1 slashing attacks at random vessels within 10 VUs of *The Soul Reaver* (this includes the Explorers' vessel) with the profile of a Disintegrator Macro Cannon Cluster (see page 136 for this weapon profile).

### THE MIRROR CRACKS

When the Explorers have cleared the city and the space battle, there is a very brief moment of calm as it looks like they might actually make it away. *The Soul Reaver* suddenly and inexplicably grows dim and quiet, the light fading from its hull, the chattering of its maddened spirits dying down. Suddenly, there is an explosion of warp

energy as Zaergarn exerts what remains of his will to unleash the spirits trapped within *The Soul Reaver*. The GM should read or paraphrase the following:

*Your vessel shudders suddenly and pitches to one side as if struck a blow by a massive object. The sound of tortured metal and snapping plasteel echoes around the ship, and for a moment you are sure the bulkheads are about to part, sending you tumbling out into the void. Then you notice a blazing light from below, flaring up across the vista panels and blinding your sensors. As it dies down, you see that The Soul Reaver has broken free and is drifting back down towards the city, surrounded by a burning nimbus of Warp energy. In your mind you can hear Zaergarn Kul cackling madly, along with a thousand, thousand other souls all screaming out in silent agony.*

At this moment, *The Soul Reaver* breaks free of the Explorers' vessel and begins to drift back towards the city on a river of psychic energy. A chaotic cloud of enraged spirits is freed, filling the void around the alien vessel, and a clear stream of souls is visible coming from the city and the space battle as *The Soul Reaver* harvests the Warp energy of the dead, turning it into raw power. Some of the Razor's Web also reactivates, and it becomes apparent that Zaergarn is attempting to return *The Soul Reaver* to the Nexus and use its power to destroy the renegade fleet, his own Kabal's forces, and anything in range of the guns his wretched and vengeful Warp-echo now controls. The Explorers must destroy Zaergarn and silence *The Soul Reaver* once and for all lest its unchecked power cost them any chance of salvaging a profit.

## BATTLE FOR THE NEXUS

When *The Soul Reaver* finally stirs from its haunted sleep, the ultimate battle for the Nexus begins. On the streets of the city, the slaves are fighting for their lives against their former masters, while in the skies above, Salaine is trying to destroy the vessels of the Splintered Talon. Both of these conflicts take place in the background as the Explorers try to destroy *The Soul Reaver*, though the PCs can still play a vital part in turning the tide of battle and choosing who is victorious. The events of the battle continue to unfold even after the Explorers defeat Zaergarn and destroy *The Soul Reaver* (just because the "dead" Archon is actually now deceased does not stop his Kabal from fighting). The events and encounters detailed in this section can therefore take place either during the Explorers' attempts to destroy *The Soul Reaver* or afterward, when they determine the final victor in the war for the Nexus. If the Explorers are initially unsuccessful in destroying *The Soul Reaver* after Zaergarn awakens (see **Assaulting The Reaver** on page 90), the GM can have the ship come to rest in the city to feed off the souls of the dead. This forces the Explorers to pass through the space battle and then into the midst of the slave uprising, dealing with potential enemies and dangers along the way.





## WAR IN THE VOID

Just as Damos is fighting in the streets below, so too is Salaine fighting in the skies above. Until the Explorers can finish off *The Soul Reaver* and cut its power to the Razor's Web, her fleet takes a pounding from the ground defences, and though numerically superior to the vessels of the Splinter Talon, it is slowly losing the engagement. The Explorers can help influence the outcome of this battle by engaging the Dark Eldar with their own ship and by helping Salaine win key combats, launching boarding actions or taking out important enemy vessels. The GM can use any or all of the encounters below to allow the Explorers a chance to participate in the space battle. Though Salaine does not reject their help, until they have taken out *The Soul Reaver*, she still insists that this is their primary priority. If the Explorers do not complete at least one of the following Encounters, the Kabal of the Splintered Talon defeats Salaine's renegade fleet.

### REPEL BOARDERS

During the fighting, Salaine's own Torture-class cruiser, the *Promise of Agony*, comes under attack from several Splintered Talon escort vessels, and an elite squad is sent to board her ship in an attempt to kill the Archon (see page 137 for the profile for a Torture-class cruiser). The Explorers notice the situation as they pass, and though Salaine would never stoop to asking

for their assistance, they can come to her aid by driving off the boarding vessels or boarding her ship themselves and fighting their way to her side. Salaine's vessel is under attack by a pair of Corsair-class escorts (see page 137 for Corsair-class escort Profile). The elite squad of killers consists of a group of Wracks twice the number of the Explorers and a Cronos Parasite Engine (see pages 126-127 for the profile for these creatures). The GM should allow the Explorers to resolve this encounter in a number of ways, perhaps by using their own vessel to scatter the boarding ships, leading a counter-assault to stop the boarders, or conducting boarding attacks against the enemy escorts to try to set off their reactors or disable their weapons. If the Explorers do not come to Salaine's aide, her own forces drive off the attack, but not before her ship is crippled and removed from the battle for the Nexus. Further, if the Explorers do assist Salaine and drive off the attackers, they have a chance to show her their effectiveness firsthand. While few Dark Eldar honour their debts, Salaine is no fool either, and does not making a habit of lightly betraying allies who she does not believe she can dispatch easily. The Explorers gain a +10 bonus to all social interactions with Salaine Morn for the remainder of the adventure if they win something vaguely resembling her grudging respect in this encounter.



## A CROOKED HAND

Among the allies of the Dark Eldar is *The Crooked Hand*, a human slaver ship that aids the Splintered Talon against Salaine and the Explorers. A powerful converted Lunar-class cruiser, the *Hand* is a serious thorn in Salaine's side until it can be neutralised (the profile for the Lunar-class cruiser can be found on page 196 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook). The Explorers can help the renegade fleet by dealing with it, either taking it on with their own vessel or trying to board and destroy it. As a human vessel, there is also a chance they might turn it to their cause, and persuasive PCs might try reasoning with its captain, Maranor Fel (a distant relation of the Fel Dynasty). Maranor hails the Explorers' vessel when his ship enters the scene, and offers to turn his coat for the PCs if they offer him a suitable tribute. Maranor tells the Explorers that if they promise him a significant portion of the escaped slaves (once the uprising has been put down), he could be convinced to switch sides. It falls to the Explorers, however, to offer the merciless captain an explanation of how

they can get any NPCs they have sold out in this way across to Maranor and back into slavery, and then to execute this plan or risk retribution from Maranor and his mighty vessel.

## COUP DE MAIN

The final part of the battle to defeat the Splintered Talon's fleet involves taking out its flagship, the Torture-class cruiser *Voidterror*. Salaine wants to personally lead an attack against the ship once it become clear that the renegade fleet is winning, and plans to strike hard and fast onto the vessel's bridge with a contingent of her best. If the Explorers assisted her when her vessel came under attack, she offers them the privilege of joining her in this glorious victory; if they ignored her plight, she demands that they use their ship to ferry her troops from her own crippled cruiser to the *Voidterror*, and does not stop them from accompanying once they begin the assault. Before this final assault can begin, however, the Explorers need to knock out the *Voidterror's* shadow field, the device which keeps its exact location masked from ordinance and boarding craft. This means crippling the ship in void combat, and chasing it through the mass of debris and burning hulks which now dominate the skies above the Nexus of Shadows. Once the Dark Eldar ship is crippled, Salaine launches an assault craft and makes her landing, and the Explorers can choose to support her. If the Explorers have not permanently dealt with Drecarus yet, this is the point to have him make a final stand. The boarding force must cut a swath across *Voidterror*, facing the finest of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon (four random waves from **Table 1-1: Splintered Talon Forces** on page 46 of **Chapter I: The Queen of Darkness**) before reaching Drecarus, who is backed by one Wrack for each Explorer and a Cronos Parasite Engine (plus one extra Cronos Parasite Engine if the Explorers are of Rank 5 or higher) (see pages 126-127 for the profiles for these creatures).

Before the encounter begins, Drecarus makes an offer to the Explorers (and to Salaine) to slay the other in exchange for his clemency. Salaine refuses Drecarus' offer unless the Explorers have drawn her ire by trying to kill her, subverting her authority, or making a truly excessive number of snide remarks about her in her presence.

During the combat, Salaine attempts to engage Drecarus in single combat, but the Haemonculus eschews close combat when possible, instead putting his minions in between the himself and the Archon while he whittles down the Explorers, starting with those who seem weakest or most vulnerable (see pages 119-120 for the profiles for Salaine Morn and Drecarus). As Drecarus falls, he gives a final order to his crew to annihilate the intruders and his ship veers violently towards the surface of the Nexus. The Explorers must escape within 4d10 minutes or be trapped aboard the crashing vessel.

## ASSAULTING THE REAVER

Fuelled by the souls of the dead, Zaergarn has managed to gain control over the entirety of *The Soul Reaver*. His spirit is enraged at all that is happening around him, and especially at the one behind his assassination (Salaine Morn) and his treacherous ally (Drecarus, who has failed to revive him as their compact dictated). He now moves to direct the power







of the dead into the city's defences from the central chambers of the alien vessel. A side effect of his "awakening" is that a storm of Warp energy and insane spirits have also been released, creating a powerful Warp barrier around the xenos vessel and lashing out in all directions with their unpredictable energies. The dead Archon is not truly alive, and is no more than a dark reflection of the individual he once was. The only way to stop him from using the power of *The Soul Reaver* to destroy every ship in orbit with the Razor's Web is to destroy *The Soul Reaver* or enter the dread ship and banish his twisted memory. The Explorers have two options. First, they can either engage *The Soul Reaver* in a brutal ship-to-ship battle (see page 138 for *The Soul Reaver's* profile). This takes place as part of the space battle, and *The Soul Reaver* prioritises defending itself from direct threats like the Explorers while it focuses now reactivated Razor's Web on the voidships of Drecarus and Salaine. Alternatively the Explorers can force an entry by boarding *The Soul Reaver* and fighting their way to Zaergarn's chamber once again. Now, however, the halls of *The Soul Reaver* are not merely ominous, but are filled with the screaming echoes of the dead that vent their infinite pain on the living. The GM can play out the following encounters in order as the Explorers battle to reach the centre of *The Soul Reaver* and destroy its dark master.

## UNTO THE BREACH

The Explorers need to somehow get aboard *The Soul Reaver*, which steadily moves into a low orbit over the Nexus of Shadows after breaking free of their voidship, and then remains there as it trains the guns of the Razor's Web upon anything in range. This means using shuttles, boarding craft, or assault boats, unless they wish to close the distance between the alien vessel and their own ship to attempt docking. In either case, *The Soul Reaver* reacts with the utmost hostility to any vessel that draws within 10 VUs, and the Explorers must reach it even as its roaring guns seek to tear their vessel from the sky.

## ANIMATED AND DEADBORN

Aboard *The Soul Reaver*, the air is filled with the semi-sentient remains of thousands of spirits, their Warp energy tearing at the air and weakening the fabric of the materium. Navigating this storm means dealing with the animated remains of the dead and debris littered throughout the ship. These are not actual corpses come to life, for the Warp energies animate anything at hand, be it a corpse, fragments of a broken wall, or the shattered remains of the crystalline matrix, forming it into a weapon against the Explorers. There is also no coordinated attack by the animated objects—the enraged and thoughtless souls lash out at everything around them. The GM can deal with the storm in one of two ways: first, some of the animated remains can be fought as foes chosen by the GM from **Chapter IV: The Treacherous Path**, and count as Kabalite Warriors, Khymerae, or anything the Explorers might have slain over the course of the adventure; alternatively, he can treat the storm as a physical challenge must be overcome, in which case it requires a cumulative 12 Degrees of Success on any number of **Challenging (+0) Weapon Skill, Ballistic Skill, Strength, Toughness, or Agility Tests** representing the Explorers smashing, weaving, and shooting their way through the maelstrom of malevolent debris. Each Degree of Failure that the Explorers score on these Tests while trying to reach the requisite Degrees of Success inflicts 1d10+3 R Damage on each Explorer. Once they break through into the centre of *The Soul Reaver*, they enter the eye of the storm where Zaergarn waits. The stirring souls also affect the wills and psychic powers of the Explorers as detailed in **Rising Storm** on page 86.

## BLOODY MEMORIES

In addition to the random storm of souls and animated debris, the Explorers come face to face with the remains of those they killed early in the adventure (and consequently were devoured by *The Soul Reaver*). These are not whole spirits or even recognisable in any real way, but rather the impression of the dead as part of the Warp storm, only brought to the fore by their thirst for vengeance against the Explorers. During the **Animated and Deadborn** challenge, a shade of one of these fallen NPCs assaults an Explorer. Only the Explorer under attack is aware of the Warp echo trying to invade his mind. This attack should be resolved with an **Opposed Willpower Test** between the Explorer and the NPC (using the NPC's Willpower characteristic). The character who loses the





Opposed Test suffers 1d10 E Damage (with no reduction for Armour) for each Degree of Success that the winner scores. This continues once per Round until either the PC is slain (his soul sucked into *The Soul Reaver*) or the NPC suffers 25 points of Damage. Only the PC being attacked is aware of the assault, and only he immediately senses it is the shade of an old enemy. Other Explorers with the Psyniscience Skill may make a **Difficult (-10) Psyniscience Test** to determine what is happening. Explorers with True Faith Talents or the Psyniscience Skill can assist the affected Explorer's Willpower Test, but also suffer any Damage that the affected Explorer suffers from the Tests.



## THE UNLIVING ARCHON

In the centre of *The Soul Reaver*, in the same chamber where they were first ambushed by his spiritual attack and captured by Drecarus in **Chapter I: The Queen of Shadows**, the Explorers finally face Zaergarn Kul—or rather, what remains of him. Animated by his formidable strength of will, his corpse has become the centre of the Warp energy coursing through *The Soul Reaver*. He mocks them and Salaine for their feeble attempts at trying to take over the Nexus. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the Explorers enter Zaergarn's chamber:

*Before you stands the familiar altar, the stones embedded in it glowing with new, hateful purpose. However, the corpse that once slumped atop it is now upright in front of the pedestal, the body held aloft by a twisted cord of the material that makes up the whole ship. Though not long ago claimed the corpse, eldritch energy now fills the long-empty sockets of its eyes and crackles along its warped bones. Though the abomination's mouth hangs agape, a chilling voice sweeps through the room, resonating from the walls and floor: "Salaine! Drecarus! Traitors, traitors, all of you! None can be trusted, and all must burn!" With that, a burst of crackling light erupts from the gem-encrusted mound and the corpse snaps forward like a puppet on a string, trailed by the twisting column binding it to the pedestal.*

Zaergarn is a powerful foe, and death has made him crueller and more twisted than ever. In addition to fighting him and trying to dismember his corpse, the Explorers also have to smash the crystals of *The Soul Reaver's* spiritual matrix. Until they do this, every time Zaergarn is reduced to 0 Wounds, he immediately heals completely as he draws power from one of the stones, destroying it (his healing process should be visually apparent to the Explorers as *The Soul Reaver* feeds its very hull into his body to repair it, and even the results of lethal Critical Damage are undone). There are 20 stones in the altar, each with 5 AP and 5 Wounds, which shatter when reduced to 0 Wounds. Once Zaergarn sees that the Explorers have figured out his connection to the stones, he tries to protect them, forcing the Explorers to fight past him to reach them, or making them place themselves in his striking range if they lower their guard to attack a stone. Further, Zaergarn can call other raging, trapped echoes to assist him, and for every fourth stone destroyed, Zaergarn inflicts the effects of the **Bloody Memories** challenge on a single Explorer. The Explorer affected by **Bloody Memories** can take no other actions while afflicted by the ethereal assault from some NPC who he slew, justly or otherwise, during the course of the adventure. Zaergarn finally falls as the last stone shatters, and so too does his control over the devoured souls, which flee into the Warp to whatever final fate awaits them. Meanwhile, the walls and crystals of *The Soul Reaver* go dark and dead, and the ship either begins to drift in the webway or crashes down into the surface of the Nexus of Shadows, depending on how close to the Gaelan Sphere it is when the Explorers banish Zaergarn. The profile for Zaergarn Kul can be found on page 122.



# CONCLUSION

After the Explorers have saved the Nexus of Shadows (and themselves) by vanquishing Zaergarn and rendering *The Soul Reaver* silent, they have the opportunity to participate in any number of encounters in either the **War of Vengeance** (see page 81) or **War in the Void** (see page 89) sections as they and the GM see fit.

At a certain point, however, it comes time to count the red tally of war and see who stands atop the pile of corpses as master of the Nexus:

- If the slave uprising was put down and the renegade fleet was also vanquished, the Kabal of the Splintered Talon maintains its cruel grip on the Nexus of Shadows. The Explorers share in this dark victory if they sided with Drecarus (or another living lord of the Splintered Talon).
- If the slave rebellion succeeded but the renegade fleet was scattered to the stars (or was victorious but Salaine Morn is dead), the slaves hold uncontested control of the Nexus. The Explorers share in this victory so long as they assisted the rebels with at least two encounters in the **War of Vengeance** section (see page 81).
- If the slave rebellion failed but the renegade fleet was victorious and Salaine Morn is alive, then Salaine Morn succeeds in her ambitions. If the Explorers did not openly betray her, assisted her with at least one encounter in the **War in the Void** section (see page 89), and did not provoke her to betray them, they share in her victory.
- If the slave rebellion, the renegade fleet's assault, or both succeeded, but the Explorers have eliminated or removed any NPCs who might contest them for control of the Nexus (Salaine Morn, Drecarus, Anja Shen, Magos Domos, and any

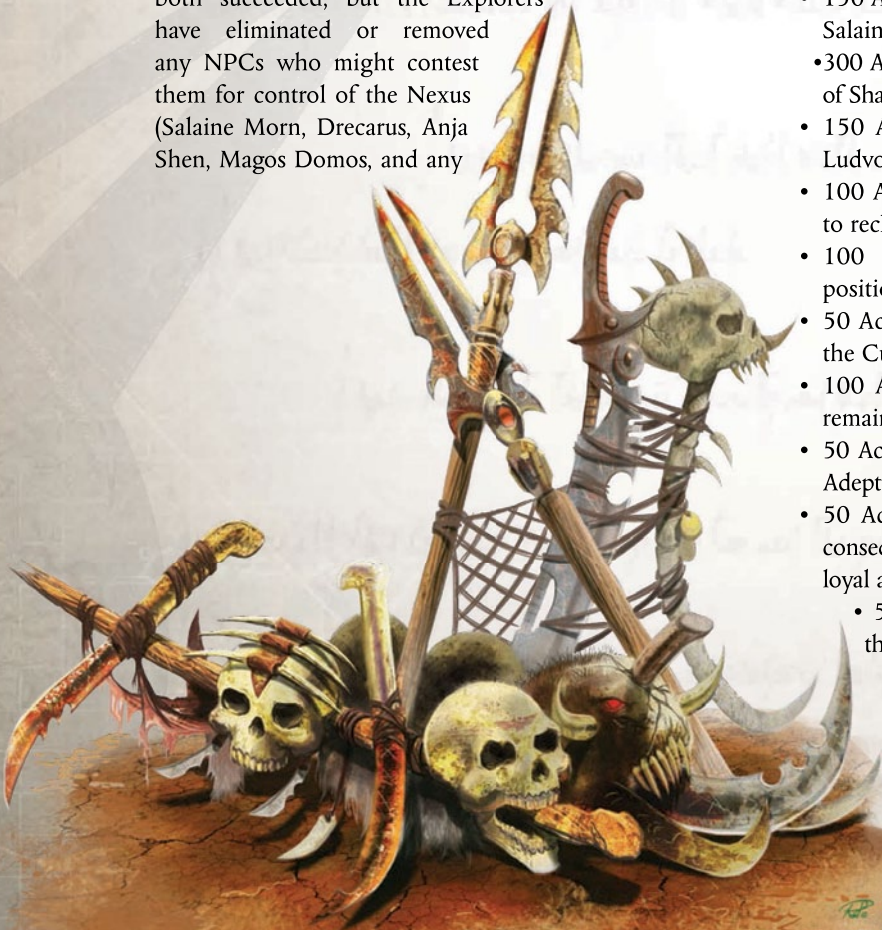
prominent Dark Eldar nobles who have been introduced, at the very least), then they claim sole mastery of the Nexus of Shadows, with all of the prestige and danger that such a coup entails.

- If the slave rebellion succeeded and the renegade fleet won the battle against the forces of the Splintered Talon, then the two factions contest control of the Nexus (see sidebar **An Uneasy Peace** on page 94 for more details).

However the adventure concludes, and regardless of the success or failures of the Explorers, the GM can continue to use the Nexus of Shadows as a locale for his adventures. Its position within the Koronus Expanse, hidden away in the webway, makes it an ideal place to trade (most notably for those goods that even Footfall does not stomach), rest, and re-equip for the PCs while travelling the void, regardless of who is its master at the end of the day (though, depending on their actions, some masters are more amenable to the Explorers than others).

## REWARDS:

- 200 Achievement Points for sparing Anyalra's life, leaving her in the Explorers' debt.
- 200 Achievement Points for stealing *The Soul Reaver*.
- 300 Achievement Points for helping bring about the defeat of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon.
- 300 Achievement Points for helping a single faction to gain full control of the Nexus of Shadows.
- 300 Achievement Points for disabling *The Soul Reaver* without destroying it.
- 150 Achievement Points for maintaining an alliance with Salaine Morn.
- 300 Achievement Points for selling their stake in the Nexus of Shadows to Salaine Morn or another interested buyer.
- 150 Achievement Points for helping to return Brother Ludvos Tarn to the Imperial Fists.
- 100 Achievement Points for helping Captain Anja Shen to reclaim her voidship.
- 100 Achievement Points for securing themselves a position in the Nexus of Shadows Cold Trade.
- 50 Achievement Points for securing trade channels with the Cult of the False Dawn.
- 100 Achievement Points for helping Magos Domos to remain and study the Gaelan Sphere as a free man.
- 50 Achievement Points for returning Magos Domos to the Adeptus Mechanicus (in lieu of allowing him to stay).
- 50 Achievement Points for each other surviving ally of consequence (any of those not listed above) who remains loyal at the end of the Endeavour (to a maximum of 250).
  - 500 Achievement Points for claiming sole mastery of the Nexus of Shadows for themselves or their dynasty.





## PROFIT AND ACHIEVEMENT

If the Explorers earn at least 2500 Achievement Points over the course of the Grand Endeavour within this book, they are considered to have made a profit—if they fall short of that goal but survive, they should still gain 2 Profit Factor to reflect their fame growing in the Expanse as other traders spread the tales of their insane ambition, but generally their trip was a financial catastrophe and their losses, while recoverable, equalled or outstripped their gains. If they succeed, however, they gain 6 Profit Factor for the completion of this Grand Endeavour, plus an additional 1 Profit Factor per 100 Achievement Points beyond the 2500 required. Further, if they choose to hold a stake in the Nexus of Shadows (either by sharing victory with the slave rebellion, or by claiming it for themselves alone), the Explorers permanently count their Profit Factor as being 5 higher while within the Nexus of Shadows, to reflect their influence there.

### EXPERIENCE

The Explorers have faced daunting challenges and terrible foes, but if they have survived the worst that the Nexus of Shadows could throw at them, their suffering and tribulations have certainly made them stronger:

- Led the planned uprising from the pits: 100 xp
- Defeated Anyalra in battle: 200 xp
- Returned to the *Soul Reaver*: 200 xp
- Defeated Drecarus (or Salaine) in battle: 200 xp
- Destroyed the *Soul Reaver*: 100 xp
- Defeated Zaergarn Kul in battle: 250 xp
- Mediated between the winning factions: 50 xp



### AN UNEASY PEACE

It is possible that both the slave uprising and the Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns under Salaine Morn achieved their primary objectives during this adventure. However, these two groups hold some goals that are mutually exclusive; first and foremost, the former slaves wish to remain free and most of them wish to find passage off of the Nexus of Shadows, while Salaine would prefer to see them return to captivity so that she may profit by their servitude and suffering. Convincing Salaine to let the freed captives leave is no easy task, and neither is gathering the ships required to move them off of the Nexus. Further, some factions amongst the former slaves may see the city that they helped claim as theirs by right, but no Dark Eldar, least of all Salaine Morn in her ascendancy, would share rule with a group of aliens. The entire situation is complicated and dangerous—allies of opportunity, such as the Cold Traders, captains amongst the renegade fleet, and even the Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns and Salaine Morn might betray the Explorers if it is to their advantage, and most of the liberated slaves would die in battle long before they went back to their chains quietly.

Mediating between these two factions is a grand opportunity for the Explorers, but also a great risk, for it is impossible to completely please everyone. Negotiations, wheeling and dealing, and treachery as the political war for the Nexus progresses could provide material for Endeavours far beyond the scope of this adventure. As a general rule, however, the more that each faction owes the Explorers, the more likely it is that they are able to convince (or strong-arm) their way to a solution favourable to themselves and to their dynasty.





## THE TREACHEROUS PATH

DARK ELДАР  
EXPLORERS

•  
DARK ELДАР  
ARMOURY

•  
DENIZENS OF  
THE NEXUS OF  
SHADOWS

•  
VESSELS AND  
VEHICLES

•  
DARK ELДАР  
CHARACTER SHEET



# CHAPTER IV: THE TREACHEROUS PATH

*"Never trust what you have observed observe when dealing with the Dark Eldar. The only certain truth is that you saw exactly what they wished you to see."*

—Relhadhar Antariel, Corsair

**D**ark Eldar are swift, perceptive, cruel, and accustomed to violence. Each of them is a survivor, having endured an early life in a cut-throat environment where murder is endemic, and each seeks to dominate those around him through a combination of violence and subterfuge. This chapter contains information on creating Dark Eldar Kabalite Warrior Explorers, and also on the many Dark Eldar NPCs who inhabit the dreaded Nexus of Shadows.

## DARK ELДАР

*"We are the lords of despair, masters of terror. Dread and agony are our meat and wine, and they are plentiful indeed!"*

—Attributed to Asdrubael Vect

**B**ecause of their cruel nature and strange biology, Dark Eldar characters are recommended for experienced players familiar with the Warhammer 40,000 universe, and do not follow the normal rules for character generation described in the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook. In order to create a Dark Eldar character, a player must obtain the GM's permission. GMs should consider carefully the kind of campaign and adventures they intend to run before allowing players to use Dark Eldar characters. This is because, quite aside from their inhuman agility and unnatural hunger, Dark Eldar characters are habitually cruel, violent individuals who seldom regard other species as anything other than tools or prey, and thus may not be well suited to particular types of campaigns. Furthermore, being aliens, their presence might not be tolerated by more puritanical characters within the crew, creating complications and conflicts that might be interesting in some campaigns but simply disruptive in others. The adventure contained within **THE SOUL REAVER** is designed with opportunities to include a Dark Eldar character, and with their particular strengths and foibles in mind.

## ALIEN BIOLOGY

Eldar anatomy differs from that of humans in a great many ways. To represent their most significant differences, a variety of Traits and Talents have been provided, covering their inhuman speed, their hunger for the pain and suffering of others, and so forth. However, there are potentially a limitless variety of ways in which the particular genetic and biological makeup of a Dark Eldar reacts differently from that of a human. A few examples of these differences are covered below. All other possible issues that come up should be discussed with the GM.

## MEDICAL ATTENTION

Eldar anatomy is more than a little different from that of a human, and while many equivalent organs exist, the details of their functions differ. Given that the average medicae will be trained first and foremost to treat humans, treating a xenos creature of any kind is a challenge, particularly when dealing with a physiology as complex as that of the Eldar. All attempts by a non-Eldar character to use the Medicae Skill on an Eldar character of any kind suffer a –10 penalty, though study of xenos physiology, represented by training in Forbidden Lore (Xenos), removes this penalty.

This issue also extends to the use of drugs and stimulants: with a different physiology, human-made stimulants may not have any effect on Eldar, and may in fact have a completely different effect, much as Eldar-made drugs are unlikely to affect humans correctly. For simplicity, assume that human-made drugs have no effect whatsoever on an Eldar unless the Eldar passes a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test**, though the GM can rule differently at any time for a particular drug.

Similarly, bionics and implants can be problematic. Simply put, a bionic built for humans won't necessarily function properly, if at all, when fitted to an Eldar character, and all examples of bionics and implants of human manufacture should be subject to the GM's final decision. The Dark Eldar tend to favour the fleshcrafter's art to crude metal augmetics anyway, and most would sooner pay a Haemonculus for surgical augmentation than settle for ungainly human-made implants.

## APPEARANCES

Although Eldar and humans look far more similar to each other than either does to any other alien species common to the Koronus Expanse, this does not mean that Eldar merely look like tall, thin humans with pointy ears. Eldar are taller, more slender, and more poised than humans, moving with a fluid, easy grace that is exceptionally difficult for a human to mimic. Their features are more tapered and pointed, and in the case of Dark Eldar, subtly touched by a savage aspect that makes them appear predatory. The Eldar eyes particularly stand out, and can be described as dark, crystalline pools within which an ageless and utterly alien mind dwells. In all, it is quite difficult for an Eldar to pass as a human, or for a human to pass as an Eldar, at least up close. At a distance, when robed and hooded, such a deception may be easier, but it is unlikely to fool anyone for long. An Eldar or a human attempting to pass as the other suffers a –30 penalty to any uses of the Disguise Skill he makes against the Scrutiny Skill of a member of the race he is impersonating.





## ARMS AND ARMOUR

While the Eldar can employ weapons and armour designed for humans, most prefer not to—Eldar technologies better suit their sensibilities and physical proportions, and most regard human-made war gear as crude and ungainly. There are no particular penalties involved in Eldar employing human-made equipment, but human armour will not fit the Eldar comfortably, while human-made weapons generally seem unwieldy.

## TRAITS AND ABILITIES

All Dark Eldar characters possess the following Traits, Skills, Talents, and abilities:

### COMMON SKILLS

All Dark Eldar are familiar with the environment and culture that has surrounded them since birth, whether that birth was natural or otherwise. All Dark Eldar characters gain Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int), Speak Language (Dark Eldar) (Int), and Intimidate (S) as Trained Basic Skills.

### KEEN SENSES

The Eldar perceive and experience existence with an intensity and clarity beyond that of other creatures, and they can discern the tiniest details with little difficulty. Dark Eldar are accustomed to the perpetual gloom and hidden perils of the Dark City.

All Dark Eldar characters begin with the Heightened Senses (Sight, Hearing) and Paranoia Talents and the Dark Sight Trait.

### MATCHLESS GRACE

All Eldar are inhumanly quick, capable of astounding feats of agility; there are few things that are as swift of body and mind as an Eldar.

All Dark Eldar characters begin with the Catfall and Sprint Talents and the Unnatural Agility (x2) Trait.

### NON-IMPERIAL

This character was not raised amongst humans, and knows little about the culture and history of the Imperium. The laws, traditions, religion, and superstitions of mankind are unfamiliar and alien to characters with this Trait.

The character suffers a –10 penalty on all Common Lore, Forbidden Lore, and Scholastic Lore Tests relating to the Imperium of Man.

### SOUL'S NEMESIS

Slaanesh is the bane and doom of the Eldar. Known to the Eldar as She Who Thirsts, this Chaos God is their greatest enemy and the greatest terror the universe holds for all Eldar. To the Dark Eldar, She Who Thirsts is the constant leech upon their souls. Because of Slaanesh, sensation, most especially the suffering of others, tantalises the Dark Eldar, but never truly fills their hollowed spirits. Compared to the threat of oblivion and the horrors their own souls have created, little holds any dread for the Dark Eldar; the destruction of their souls in the maw of the deity they created is a greater peril than any mortal danger.

Dark Eldar begin play with the Jaded and Dark Soul Talents.



## AN ALIEN MIND

Just as an Eldar body is different in many ways to a human one, so is an Eldar mind is different to that of humans. The Eldar perceive existence differently to humans, viewing the universe with greater intensity and clarity than the human mind can easily comprehend, and their minds operate at a speed that would be bewildering to a human. They can also reach far greater extremes of emotion and sensation than a human can. The two most significant differences are described below. All other possible issues that come up should be discussed with the GM.

### SHE WHO THIRSTS

While the Eldar understand the threat of all the Chaos Gods as being dire, no single entity poses a greater threat to Eldar existence than Slaanesh. With the Dark Eldar, this manifests itself as a leeching of their spirit, a perpetual drain upon their fundamental essence that cannot be stopped, only delayed. Dark Eldar gain Corruption Points as normal, but do not gain mutations or malignancies; instead, a failed Malignancy Test adds +1 to the number of Pain Tokens the character requires in order to gain an additional Fate Point. This is accompanied by a greater appearance of age and greater frailty when not able to feed—for every failed Malignancy Test, a Dark Eldar Explorer nominates a single Characteristic other than Willpower or a Characteristic that he has nominated in this way before. At the end of any session in which the Dark Eldar character did not gain at least one Pain Token, he suffers 1d5 Willpower Damage, plus 1d5 Damage to any other Characteristics that he has chosen from failed Malignancy Tests. This Damage does not begin to heal until the character has gained at least one Pain Token in a subsequent session.

### DEPRAVED PSYCHE

Unlike Corruption, Insanity is of no concern to the Dark Eldar. The concepts of sanity and insanity are no longer a consideration for these twisted xenos. For them, the indulgence of desires and the unnatural hunger within their souls are primary concerns. Dark Eldar characters do not gain Insanity Points—their outlook on existence and their normal behaviour are already completely beyond the realms of what a human would consider sane.

## SPEAK NOT UNTO THE ALIEN

This creature is a member of an alien species that is viewed with a mixture of fear and loathing by those of other species, and different enough in form and thought as to make any kind of social interaction a greater challenge.

This creature suffers a –20 penalty on all Fellowship-based Tests when dealing with humans, and imposes the same penalty on humans. These penalties do not apply when dealing with individuals who have become familiar with him. Finally, the presence of any xenos aboard a human vessel is unsettling for the crew. The continued presence of one or more xenos player characters aboard a ship reduces its Morale by 2. Furthermore, because of their dark reputation, if a Dark Eldar character inflicts suffering on the crew of a vessel to gain Pain Tokens (or for any other reason unjustifiable in the eyes of the crew), the ship's Morale is reduced by 1 for each incident.

## POWER THROUGH PAIN

To stave off the slow dwindling of their own withered souls, the Dark Eldar must sup upon the tormented essence of others, devouring their pain and suffering to invigorate the body and renew the spirit. When glutted upon the suffering of others, Dark Eldar are almost unstoppable, gaining supernatural might and becoming heedless of peril.

A Dark Eldar character gains a single Pain Token whenever one or more living creatures (in other words, things that are not machines, daemonic, or otherwise “non-living”) within a number of metres equal to his Perception Bonus are killed, Stunned, suffer non-lethal Critical Damage, suffer Blood Loss, fail a Fear or Pinning Test, or are otherwise subjected to excruciating pain (gaining a single Pain Token after a set

amount of time, depending on the nature and intensity of the pain, at the GM's discretion). Each time a Dark Eldar character accumulates eight Pain Tokens, he immediately expends them to gain a single temporary Fate Point, which may be spent as normal and vanishes at the end of the session if it goes unused. A Fate Point gained from accumulated Pain Tokens cannot be “burnt.”

A character may not gain more than one Pain Token from any Action or non-Action event (such as the effects of the Crippling, Flame, or Toxic Weapon Qualities, or environmental effects) except as noted by certain Vile Pleasures and Talents. For example, non-lethal Critical Damage that also Stuns a creature only grants a single Pain Token, and even a Multiple Attacks Action or thrown grenade that harms several enemies simultaneously (or the same foe repeatedly) only yields a single Pain Token for the Action.

At the end of any session in which a Dark Eldar character did not gain at least one Pain Token, he suffers 1d5 Willpower Damage (in addition to any other Characteristic Damage from Malignancies as described above in **An Alien Mind**), which does not begin to heal in subsequent sessions until he gains at least one Pain Token.

## XENOS ORIGINS: VILE PLEASURES

Different Dark Eldar derive different amounts of vigour and satisfaction from the myriad flavours of pain and dread, and each chooses to focus their talents to those ends. Choose one of the following options upon character creation.



### Artful Torment

The long, slow, precise agonies cultivated by the finest of bladework are delicious, creating a deep and pervasive taste of uncomprehending terror blended with the most carefully-wrought physical suffering. In addition to the usual conditions for gaining a Pain Token, this character gains a Pain Token whenever he deals Damage to living creature that is Stunned.

### Bountiful Slaughter

The last breath of a dying foe is exquisite, and the searing pain of an injury is bliss. When this character kills or causes Critical Damage that inflicts Blood Loss upon a living target in melee combat and gains a Pain Token, he gains an additional Pain Token.

### Cruel Demise

This Dark Eldar has become attuned to the particular agonies of those slain by his own skill at a greater distance, and is able to draw upon that power more

readily. Whenever one of this Character's own Ranged Attacks slays or Stuns a living creature, or causes a living foe to suffer Critical Damage, Blood Loss, or fail a Fear or Pinning Test, he gains a Pain Token from the event if the foe is within a distance equal to his Perception Characteristic in metres.

### Lingering Dread

The promise of pain is as sweet a torment as the pain itself, and fearful anticipation is a potent elixir. When the character gains a Pain Token from a nearby creature failing a Fear Test or being Stunned, he gains an additional Pain Token.

### Sadistic Joy

The Dark Eldar care not who suffers or where pain comes from, only that agony abounds. Whenever this character gains a Pain Token from the suffering of an ally, so long as the character was not the cause of that suffering, he gains an additional Pain Token.

## DARK ELДАР CHARACTERISTICS

As with human characters, characteristics are generated one at a time for Dark Eldar. However, where human characteristics are all generated in the same way, by rolling 2d10 and adding 25 to the total, Dark Eldar have different basic values for each characteristic. These are detailed on **Table 4-1: Dark Eldar Characteristics**.

**Starting Wounds:** Dark Eldar characters roll 1d5+1 and add twice their starting Toughness Bonus to the result to determine their starting number of wounds.

**Starting Fate Points:** All Dark Eldar characters begin play with 1 Fate Point.

TABLE 4-1: DARK ELДАР CHARACTERISTICS

| Characteristic  | 2d10+ |
|-----------------|-------|
| Weapon Skill    | 25    |
| Ballistic Skill | 25    |
| Strength        | 25    |
| Toughness       | 20    |
| Agility         | 30    |
| Intelligence    | 25    |
| Perception      | 30    |
| Willpower       | 25    |
| Fellowship      | 20    |



# SKILLS AND TALENTS

*"Raw ability alone is worthless. Through strife, we grow strong."*

—Valstran Doomblade, Incubus

## NEW SKILL GROUPS

The following new skill groups are intended for use with Dark Eldar characters and those familiar with the Nexus of Shadows.

### COMMON LORE (ADVANCED, INVESTIGATION)

**Intelligence, Skill Group:** Dark Eldar

The Common Lore Skill allows the Explorer to recall general information, procedures, divisions, traditions, famed individuals, and superstitions of a particular world, group, organisation or race. The following additional Skill Group has been added to those available. The manner in which this Skill functions is unchanged.

**Dark Eldar:** Knowledge of the social and political structures of Dark Eldar society, covering the Kabals, the Wych Cults, the Haemonculi Covens, and outsider groups like the Incubi, the Hellions, and even the dreaded Mandrakes. This also comes with an understanding of Dark Eldar nature and history.

### FORBIDDEN LORE (ADVANCED, INVESTIGATION)

**Intelligence, Skill Group:** Webway

Forbidden Lore Skills represent knowledge usually hidden, veiled or proscribed by an organisation or society. The following additional Skill Group has been added to those available. The manner in which this skill functions is unchanged.

**Webway:** Knowledge of the secrets and hidden nature of the labyrinth dimension of the Eldar, typically known only to the mysterious Harlequins of the Laughing God and to a select few extremely learned Eldar.

### NAVIGATION (ADVANCED, EXPLORATION)

**Intelligence, Skill Group:** Webway

The Explorer uses the Navigation Skill to plot a course between two points. The following additional Skill Group has been added to those available. The manner in which this Skill functions is unchanged.

**Webway:** This Skill permits an Explorer to determine the safest and quickest route to a location using the myriad passages and pathways between worlds known as the webway. As many routes through the webway are blocked, sealed or simply closely guarded secrets, and because the webway itself does not connect to every world, there may be many destinations that simply cannot be reached in a single trip, if at all.

## SPEAK LANGUAGE (ADVANCED)

**Intelligence, Skill Group:** Dark Eldar

Speak Language is used to communicate with others using the same language. The following additional Skill Group has been added to those available. The manner in which this Skill functions is unchanged.

**Dark Eldar:** A harsh and clipped dialect of the ancient language of the Eldar, particularly common amongst the streets and wastelands of Commorragh and outposts such as the Nexus of Shadows, notable for its immense variety of terms for types of pain and fear.

## NEW TALENTS

The following new Talents are intended for use with Dark Eldar characters:

### AGONY FROM AFAR

**Prerequisites:** Dark Eldar, Deadeye Shot, Perception 45, Power Through Pain

The confusion of a foe slain from afar, the panic of prey caught within a hail of fire—these things are joyous to behold. This character gains a Pain Token whenever a Ranged Attack that originated from within a number of metres around him equal to his Perception Bonus inflicts Critical Damage upon, Stuns, or slays a living creature, or causes it to fail a Fear or Pinning Test. This is cumulative with Pain Tokens gained from the Cruel Demise Vile Pleasure, if he is eligible to benefit from both.

### CRUELTY

**Prerequisites:** Dark Eldar, Pity the Weak, Weapon Skill 40

The Dark Eldar is vicious in battle and relishes the savage thrill of violence, as well as the sense of power derived from butchering those weaker than himself. When making a Melee Attack or a Ranged Attack at point blank range against an enemy that is Stunned or prone, the attack gains the Proven (4) Quality.

### DISCIPLE OF SHIAMESH

**Prerequisites:** Chem-Use +20, Scholastic Lore (Chymistry) +20

The Dark Eldar have an appreciation for poisoning as an art form, and some choose to master that art, becoming the deadliest and most skilful of poisoners. This character may spend a Fate Point to automatically pass a Chem-Use Test, succeeding by a number of Degrees of Success equal to his Intelligence Bonus. In addition, when wielding any weapon which has the Toxic Quality, the Dark Eldar adds his Intelligence Bonus to the weapon's Damage. He also adds the Felling (1) Quality to the weapon if it does not already have that Quality, or increases its Felling Quality by 1 if it does.



## KABALITE WEAPON TRAINING

**Prerequisites:** Kabalite Warrior

This Dark Eldar is familiar with the deadly tools of the Kabals, and can use them effectively in battle. The Kabalite Warrior is proficient in using the weapons of his organisation, which include splinter weapons and all Primitive Melee Weapons.

## PITY THE WEAK

**Prerequisites:** Strength 35, Willpower 35

Despised are the weak, for they cannot stand alone against the mighty. The character has nothing but contempt for those less powerful than himself and gains a +10 on Command, Commerce, Deception, and Intimidation Skill Tests when opposed by someone with either a Strength or Willpower Characteristic lower than his own, or whose Profit Factor or apparent social status is beneath his own. Unfortunately, the character also has trouble hiding his contempt for such people, and suffers a -10 to Charm Skill Tests when dealing with these individuals.

## SIPHON PAIN

**Prerequisites:** Power Through Pain, Corruption 10+

The Dark Eldar's need for suffering increases, and he grasps further and further afield to sate his vile hunger. The character adds the first digit of his Corruption points in metres to the range at which he can gain Pain Tokens.

## SURGICAL PRECISION

**Prerequisites:** Medicae, Intelligence 30

The Dark Eldar often take prisoners alive, and many study hard to perfect the art of inflicting pinpoint cuts or shots that disable foes without slaying them, that they might eke more suffering from the wretches they fight. This Explorer has mastered the art of bringing down foes non-lethally, and whenever he deals Critical Damage to an opponent, he may make a **Challenging (+0) Intelligence Test**. If he succeeds, he may reduce this Damage by an amount up to his Intelligence Bonus and inflict 1 Fatigue upon his target for each Degree of Success he scored on the Intelligence Test. Further, this character gains a +30 bonus to any Medicae Skill Tests to treat wounds that he caused.

## TORMENTOR S FURY

**Prerequisites:** Dark Eldar, Power Through Pain

The Dark Eldar can direct the pain he has imbibed into a heightened savagery in battle, delivering more vicious wounds with the momentum of the charge. After gaining at least one Pain Token in an encounter, the character may spend a Fate Point to gain the Berserk Charge Talent and Brutal Charge Trait for the remainder of the encounter.

## TORMENTOR S MAJESTY

**Prerequisites:** Dark Eldar, Power Through Pain

The Dark Eldar radiates a terrifying and regal power when feeding upon the dread of lesser beings. After gaining at least three Pain Tokens in an encounter, the character may spend a Fate Point to gain the Fear (1) Trait or increase an existing Fear Trait by 1 (to a maximum of 3) for the rest of the encounter. While he benefits from this Fear Trait, he also adds a +10 bonus to all Intimidate and Command Tests.

## TORMENTOR S MIGHT

**Prerequisites:** Power Through Pain

The Dark Eldar's physical prowess is massively increased by the agony of others. After gaining at least three Pain Tokens in an encounter, the character may spend a Fate Point to gain the Unnatural Strength (x2) Trait for the remainder of the encounter.

## TORMENTOR S SUPREMACY

**Prerequisites:** Power Through Pain, Tormentor's Vigour

The Dark Eldar is an unstoppable force in battle when glutted upon the terror of his enemies. After gaining at least four Pain Tokens in an encounter, the character may spend a Fate Point to gain the Stuff of Nightmares Trait for the remainder of the encounter.

## TORMENTOR S VIGOUR

**Prerequisites:** Power Through Pain

The Dark Eldar is reinvigorated by the pain of others, turning mortal wounds into petty annoyances as he feeds. After spending a Fate Point to regain lost Wounds, the character regains 1d5 lost Wounds every time he gains a Pain Token for the rest of the encounter.

## TORMENTOR S WILL

**Prerequisites:** Power Through Pain

The Dark Eldar, when fuelled by pain, finds his thoughts unclouded by the petty frailties and fears of mortal existence. After gaining at least two Pain Tokens in an encounter, the character may spend a Fate Point to gain the From Beyond Trait for the remainder of the encounter.

## TRUEBORN

**Prerequisites:** Dark Eldar

The Dark Eldar was born to power and prestige, and raised to a life of refined cruelty and vicious politics. Unlike the teeming masses of the Dark City, the character was born naturally, and regards himself as superior to the half-born wretches grown in amniotic tanks and vitae wombs who he will strive to rule over. This Talent may only be purchased at character creation, and cannot be obtained at any later point. The character may purchase Fellowship characteristic advances at the lowest rate, with Simple advances costing 100 xp, Intermediate advances costing 250 xp, Trained advances costing 500 xp and Expert advances costing 1,000 xp.



# KABALITE WARRIOR CAREER PATH

*"These vermin cannot be trusted to succeed on their own. They scabble in the dirt, struggling to achieve even the simplest of victories. But they have wealth and power enough to secure the attentions of my masters, and that is enough that their goals shall be completed by my blade."*

—Anshir Kaelath, of the Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns

The Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns are one of a number of Kabals who are known to sell their services to the wealthy and powerful of other species. Willing to raid and murder for raw materials, slaves, or any number of more esoteric "prices," their services are at once remorselessly vicious and wreathed in guile and secrecy, performed swiftly and with little or no trace of their passage but the carnage they have wrought. The scale of these services varies immensely, from singular raids at a particular time and place, to massive campaigns of terror and bloodshed, to the protracted assistance of a small group of warriors.

At times, single agents of the Kabal will be loaned to aid in the endeavours of a client. These solitary warriors are deadly examples of their kind, and though they loathe mixing with lesser creatures, they are willing to put aside their revulsion for the sake of their mission. Even then, many refuse to lower themselves to the level of conversing with their erstwhile employers in their own language, favouring sophisticated translator devices that convert their complex, harsh argot into the crude tongue of their employers.

All Eldar live for centuries if allowed to carry out a natural lifespan. Though most Dark Eldar lives are abruptly ended by the blades, projectiles, or venoms of enemies or rivals, the strong and the cunning can endure for millennia, and even slip through the grasp of mortal wounds, thanks to the dark secrets of the Haemonculi.

Dark Eldar who survive and ascend to such heights are ageless terrors, swifter than human thought and capable of feats of appalling prowess when fuelled by the agonies of their many victims. They can dance through the fleeting gaps in deadly bursts of automatic fire and shear through foes at a tremendous rate in close combat or with vicious and exotic firearms, their power and dread majesty growing with each act of unspeakable violence that they inflict.

Such is the puissance of this dark legacy that even the rank and file, half-born shock troops of the Dark Eldar share in a measure of this might, and can use it to their own ends on their relentless quest to claw their way up into the ranks of the great lords and masters of fear.

## STARTING SKILLS, TALENTS, TRAITS, & GEAR

**Starting Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag), Awareness (Per), Chem-Use (Int), Common Lore (War) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Silent Move (Ag), Speak Language (Eldar) (Int), Speak Language (Dark Eldar) (Int).

**Starting Talents:** Decadence, Disturbing Voice, Hard Target, Kabalite Weapon Training, Melee Weapon Training (Universal), Resistance (Poisons).

**Starting Traits:** Keen Senses, Non-Imperial, Matchless Grace, Power Through Pain, Speak Not Unto the Alien, Soul's Nemesis.

**Starting Gear:** Best Craftsmanship splinter pistol or Good Craftsmanship splinter rifle or Common Craftsmanship shardcarbine, Best Craftsmanship mono-sword or Common Craftsmanship power sword, Kabalite armour, micro-bead, translator unit, gruesome trophy or kill-recorder, 2 doses of any one poison or 3 doses of any one combat drug.





## RANK 1 KABALITE WARRIOR CHARACTERISTIC ADVANCES

| Characteristic  | Simple | Intermediate | Trained | Expert |
|-----------------|--------|--------------|---------|--------|
| Weapon Skill    | 100    | 250          | 500     | 750    |
| Ballistic Skill | 100    | 250          | 500     | 750    |
| Strength        | 250    | 500          | 750     | 1,000  |
| Toughness       | 500    | 750          | 1,000   | 2,500  |
| Agility         | 100    | 250          | 500     | 750    |
| Intelligence    | 250    | 500          | 750     | 1,000  |
| Perception      | 250    | 500          | 750     | 1,000  |
| Willpower       | 500    | 750          | 1,000   | 2,500  |
| Fellowship      | 500    | 750          | 1,000   | 2,500  |

## RANK 1 KABALITE WARRIOR ADVANCES

| Advance                      | Cost | Type   | Prerequisites                       |
|------------------------------|------|--------|-------------------------------------|
| Carouse                      | 100  | Skill  |                                     |
| Concealment                  | 200  | Skill  |                                     |
| Deceive                      | 200  | Skill  |                                     |
| Forbidden Lore (Pirates)     | 200  | Skill  |                                     |
| Pilot (Personal)             | 200  | Skill  |                                     |
| Speak Language (High Gothic) | 200  | Skill  |                                     |
| Speak Language (Low Gothic)  | 200  | Skill  |                                     |
| Ambidextrous                 | 200  | Talent | Ag 30                               |
| Quick Draw                   | 200  | Talent |                                     |
| Resistance (Cold)            | 200  | Talent |                                     |
| Sound Constitution           | 200  | Talent |                                     |
| Takedown                     | 200  | Talent |                                     |
| Pilot (Personal) +10         | 300  | Skill  | Pilot (Personal)                    |
| Tech-Use                     | 300  | Skill  |                                     |
| Trueborn                     | 500  | Talent | Dark Eldar, Character Creation Only |

## RANK 2 KABALITE WARRIOR ADVANCES

| Advance                                 | Cost | Type   | Prerequisites            |
|-----------------------------------------|------|--------|--------------------------|
| Awareness +10                           | 100  | Skill  | Awareness                |
| Climb                                   | 100  | Skill  |                          |
| Trade (Chymist)                         | 100  | Skill  |                          |
| Trade (Voidfarer)                       | 100  | Skill  |                          |
| Common Lore (Dark Eldar) +10            | 200  | Skill  | Common Lore (Dark Eldar) |
| Deceive +10                             | 200  | Skill  | Deceive                  |
| Command                                 | 200  | Skill  |                          |
| Drive (Skimmer)                         | 200  | Skill  |                          |
| Interrogation                           | 200  | Skill  |                          |
| Intimidate +10                          | 200  | Skill  | Intimidate               |
| Literacy                                | 200  | Skill  |                          |
| Deadeye Shot                            | 200  | Talent | BS 30                    |
| Leap Up                                 | 200  | Talent | Ag 30                    |
| Nerves of Steel                         | 200  | Talent |                          |
| Rapid Reaction                          | 200  | Talent | Ag 40                    |
| Resistance (Cold)                       | 200  | Talent |                          |
| Sure Strike                             | 200  | Talent | WS 30                    |
| Exotic Weapon Training (Any Dark Eldar) | 300  | Talent |                          |
| Combat Master                           | 500  | Talent | WS 30                    |
| Hard Target                             | 500  | Talent | Ag 40                    |



### RANK 3 KABALITE WARRIOR ADVANCES

| Advance                                 | Cost | Type   | Prerequisites            |
|-----------------------------------------|------|--------|--------------------------|
| Acrobatics +10                          | 200  | Skill  | Acrobatics               |
| Awareness +20                           | 200  | Skill  | Awareness +10            |
| Chem-Use +10                            | 200  | Skill  | Chem-Use                 |
| Dodge +10                               | 200  | Skill  | Dodge                    |
| Forbidden Lore (Pirates) +10            | 200  | Skill  | Forbidden Lore (Pirates) |
| Forbidden Lore (Xenos)                  | 200  | Skill  |                          |
| Intimidate +20                          | 200  | Skill  | Intimidate +10           |
| Navigation (Surface)                    | 200  | Skill  |                          |
| Scholastic Lore (Beasts)                | 200  | Skill  |                          |
| Scholastic Lore (Chymistry)             | 200  | Skill  |                          |
| Silent Move +10                         | 200  | Skill  | Silent Move              |
| Rapid Reload                            | 200  | Talent |                          |
| Sound Constitution                      | 200  | Talent |                          |
| Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic)          | 200  | Talent |                          |
| Medicae                                 | 300  | Skill  |                          |
| Exotic Weapon Training (Any Dark Eldar) | 300  | Talent |                          |
| Hatred (Craftworld Eldar)               | 300  | Talent |                          |
| Hip Shooting                            | 500  | Talent | BS 40, Ag 40             |
| Mighty Shot                             | 500  | Talent | BS 40                    |
| Surgical Precision                      | 500  | Talent | Int 40, Medicae          |
| Tormentor's Fury                        | 500  | Talent | Power Through Pain       |



### RANK 4 KABALITE WARRIOR ADVANCES

| Advance                                 | Cost | Type   | Prerequisites                      |
|-----------------------------------------|------|--------|------------------------------------|
| Carouse +10                             | 100  | Skill  | Carouse                            |
| Common Lore (War) +10                   | 200  | Skill  | Common Lore (War)                  |
| Common Lore (Koronus Expanse)           | 200  | Skill  |                                    |
| Common Lore (Imperium)                  | 200  | Skill  |                                    |
| Inquiry                                 | 200  | Skill  |                                    |
| Deceive +20                             | 200  | Skill  | Deceive +10                        |
| Drive (Skimmer) +10                     | 200  | Skill  | Drive (Skimmer)                    |
| Navigation (Stellar)                    | 200  | Skill  |                                    |
| Pilot (Flyer)                           | 200  | Skill  |                                    |
| Pilot (Spacecraft)                      | 200  | Skill  |                                    |
| Disarm                                  | 200  | Talent | Ag 30                              |
| Pity the Weak                           | 200  | Talent | S 35, WP 35                        |
| Resistance (Psychic Techniques)         | 200  | Talent |                                    |
| Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee)              | 200  | Talent |                                    |
| Charm                                   | 300  | Skill  |                                    |
| Forbidden Lore (Webway)                 | 300  | Skill  |                                    |
| Exotic Weapon Training (Any Dark Eldar) | 300  | Talent |                                    |
| Sound Constitution                      | 300  | Talent |                                    |
| Bloodtracker                            | 500  | Talent |                                    |
| Crack Shot                              | 500  | Talent | BS 50                              |
| Lightning Reflexes                      | 500  | Talent |                                    |
| Tormentor's Will                        | 500  | Talent | Power Through Pain                 |
| Siphon Pain                             | 500  | Talent | Power Through Pain, Corruption 10+ |



## RANK 5 KABALITE WARRIOR ADVANCES

| Advance                                 | Cost | Type   | Prerequisites                         |
|-----------------------------------------|------|--------|---------------------------------------|
| Climb +10                               | 100  | Skill  | Climb                                 |
| Trade (Chymist) +10                     | 100  | Skill  | Trade (Chymist)                       |
| Trade (Voidfarer) +10                   | 100  | Skill  | Trade (Voidfarer)                     |
| Command +10                             | 200  | Skill  | Command                               |
| Common Lore (Dark Eldar) +20            | 200  | Skill  | Common Lore (Dark Eldar) +10          |
| Concealment +10                         | 200  | Skill  | Concealment                           |
| Literacy +10                            | 200  | Skill  | Literacy                              |
| Forbidden Lore (Webway) +10             | 300  | Skill  | Forbidden Lore (Webway)               |
| Interrogate +10                         | 300  | Skill  | Interrogate                           |
| Medicae +10                             | 300  | Skill  | Medicae                               |
| Navigation (Webway)                     | 300  | Skill  |                                       |
| Pilot (Personal) +20                    | 300  | Skill  | Pilot (Personal) +10                  |
| Cruelty                                 | 300  | Talent | Pity the Weak, Weapon Skill 40        |
| Sound Constitution                      | 300  | Talent |                                       |
| Assassin Strike                         | 500  | Talent | Ag 40, Acrobatics                     |
| Dual Shot                               | 500  | Talent | Ag 40, Two Weapon Wielder (Ballistic) |
| Exotic Weapon Training (Any Dark Eldar) | 500  | Talent |                                       |
| Marksman                                | 500  | Talent | BS 35                                 |
| Step Aside                              | 500  | Talent | Ag 40, Dodge                          |
| Swift Attack                            | 500  | Talent |                                       |
| Tormentor's Might                       | 500  | Talent | Power Through Pain                    |
| Unarmed Warrior                         | 500  | Talent | WS 35, Ag 35                          |



## RANK 6 KABALITE WARRIOR ADVANCES

| Advance                                 | Cost | Type   | Prerequisites                          |
|-----------------------------------------|------|--------|----------------------------------------|
| Common Lore (Koronus Expanse) +10       | 200  | Skill  | Common Lore (Koronus Expanse)          |
| Common Lore (Imperium) +10              | 200  | Skill  | Common Lore (Imperium)                 |
| Forbidden Lore (Pirates) +20            | 200  | Skill  | Forbidden Lore (Pirates) +10           |
| Forbidden Lore (Psykers)                | 200  | Skill  |                                        |
| Forbidden Lore (The Warp)               | 200  | Skill  |                                        |
| Forbidden Lore (Xenos) +10              | 200  | Skill  | Forbidden Lore (Xenos)                 |
| Inquiry +10                             | 200  | Skill  | Inquiry                                |
| Navigation (Surface) +10                | 200  | Skill  | Navigation (Surface)                   |
| Pilot (Flyer) +10                       | 200  | Skill  | Pilot (Flyer)                          |
| Scholastic Lore (Beasts) +10            | 200  | Skill  | Scholastic Lore (Beasts)               |
| Scholastic Lore (Chymistry) +10         | 200  | Skill  | Scholastic Lore (Chymistry)            |
| Tech-Use +10                            | 200  | Skill  | Tech-Use                               |
| Charm +10                               | 300  | Skill  | Charm                                  |
| Interrogate +20                         | 300  | Skill  | Interrogate +10                        |
| Medicae +20                             | 300  | Skill  | Medicae +10                            |
| Blademaster                             | 300  | Talent | Weapon Skill 30, Melee Weapon Training |
| Agony From Afar                         | 500  | Talent | Deadeye Shot, Per 45, Power From Pain  |
| Counter-Attack                          | 500  | Talent | WS 40                                  |
| Crushing Blow                           | 500  | Talent | S 40                                   |
| Exotic Weapon Training (Any Dark Eldar) | 500  | Talent |                                        |
| Furious Assault                         | 500  | Talent | WS 35                                  |
| Independent Targeting                   | 500  | Talent | BS 40                                  |
| Tormentor's Majesty                     | 500  | Talent | Power Through Pain                     |



## RANK 7 KABALITE WARRIOR ADVANCES

| Advance                                 | Cost | Type   | Prerequisites                          |
|-----------------------------------------|------|--------|----------------------------------------|
| Carouse +20                             | 100  | Skill  | Carouse +10                            |
| Climb +20                               | 100  | Skill  | Climb +10                              |
| Acrobatics +20                          | 200  | Skill  | Acrobatics +10                         |
| Command +20                             | 200  | Skill  | Command +10                            |
| Common Lore (War) +20                   | 200  | Skill  | Common Lore (War) +10                  |
| Dodge +20                               | 200  | Skill  | Dodge +10                              |
| Drive (Skimmer) +20                     | 200  | Skill  | Drive (Skimmer) +10                    |
| Literacy +20                            | 200  | Skill  | Literacy +10                           |
| Navigation (Surface) +20                | 200  | Skill  | Navigation (Surface) +10               |
| Pilot (Spacecraft) +10                  | 200  | Skill  | Pilot (Spacecraft)                     |
| Silent Move +20                         | 200  | Skill  | Silent Move +10                        |
| Concealment +20                         | 300  | Skill  | Concealment +10                        |
| Navigation (Webway) +10                 | 300  | Skill  | Navigation (Webway)                    |
| Psyniscience                            | 300  | Skill  |                                        |
| Crippling Strike                        | 500  | Talent | WS 50                                  |
| Dual Strike                             | 500  | Talent | Ag 40, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee)      |
| Exotic Weapon Training (Any Dark Eldar) | 500  | Talent |                                        |
| Gunslinger                              | 500  | Talent | BS 40, Two Weapon Wielder (Ballistic)  |
| Strong Minded                           | 500  | Talent | WP 30, Resistance (Psychic Techniques) |
| Tormentor's Vigour                      | 1000 | Talent | Power Through Pain                     |

## RANK 8 KABALITE WARRIOR ADVANCES

| Advance                                 | Cost | Type   | Prerequisites                                 |
|-----------------------------------------|------|--------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Trade (Chymist) +20                     | 100  | Skill  | Trade (Chymist) +10                           |
| Trade (Voidfarer) +20                   | 100  | Skill  | Trade (Voidfarer) +10                         |
| Common Lore (Imperium) +20              | 200  | Skill  | Common Lore (Imperium) +10                    |
| Common Lore (Koronus Expanse) +20       | 200  | Skill  | Common Lore (Koronus Expanse) +10             |
| Forbidden Lore (Psykers) +10            | 200  | Skill  | Forbidden Lore (Psykers)                      |
| Forbidden Lore (The Warp) +10           | 200  | Skill  | Forbidden Lore (The Warp)                     |
| Pilot (Flyer) +20                       | 200  | Skill  | Pilot (Flyer) +10                             |
| Pilot (Spacecraft) +20                  | 200  | Skill  | Pilot (Spacecraft) +10                        |
| Talented (Acrobatics)                   | 200  | Skill  |                                               |
| Sound Constitution                      | 200  | Talent |                                               |
| Charm +20                               | 300  | Skill  | Charm +10                                     |
| Inquiry +20                             | 300  | Skill  | Inquiry +10                                   |
| Scholastic Lore (Chymistry) +20         | 300  | Skill  | Scholastic Lore (Chymistry) +10               |
| Disciple of Shiamesh                    | 500  | Talent | Chem-Use +20, Scholastic Lore (Chymistry) +20 |
| Exotic Weapon Training (Any Dark Eldar) | 500  | Talent |                                               |
| Hotshot Pilot                           | 500  | Talent | Pilot Skill, Ag 40                            |
| Unarmed Master                          | 500  | Talent | WS 45, Ag 40, Unarmed Warrior                 |
| Wall of Steel                           | 500  | Talent | Ag 35                                         |
| Lightning Attack                        | 1000 | Talent | Swift Attack                                  |
| Tormentor's Supremacy                   | 1000 | Talent | Power Through Pain, Tormentor's Vigour        |
| Unnatural Agility (x3)                  | 1000 | Trait  | WS 45, Ag 40, Unarmed Warrior                 |





# IV: THE TREACHEROUS PATH



# DARK ELДАР ARMOURY

*"There is no finer thing in this galaxy than to find a new way to kill."*

—Vys Khuan, Archon of the Kabal of the Whispered Demise

The Dark Eldar are known for their vast array of bizarre and creative ways to bring death and pain to the rest of the galaxy, and they are constantly seeking new and imaginative ways to expand this arsenal. As a society driven by the whims of its capricious and merciless overlords, the chosen tools of the wealthy and powerful vary based purely on the ephemeral notion of which methods of murder are fashionable at the time, while those struggling to survive continue to employ their limited means in the most vicious ways possible.

This section serves two purposes. The first is to provide an arsenal of appropriate weaponry and armour for Kabalite Warrior player characters, and others looking for an elegant or exotic way to kill. The second is to serve as an accompaniment for the Dark Eldar NPCs presented later, detailing all manner of unusual weapons that may be used against the Explorers during this adventure.

## AVAILABILITY

All weapons listed in this section have their availability listed as appropriate for a character seeking items from Dark Eldar settlements—useful for determining a Kabalite Warrior's starting equipment, or for obtaining goods found within the Nexus of Shadows or even the Dark City itself.

Outside of these limited situations, Dark Eldar war gear is significantly harder to find. Reduce the availability of all items within this section by four steps if an Explorer is seeking them outside of a Dark Eldar haven—a Common item becomes Very Rare, while a Rare item becomes Unique. Items of Very Rare, Extremely Rare, Near-Unique and Unique availability should all be treated as Unique, if they are to be made available at all.



## NEW QUALITIES

The following are new weapon qualities which apply to numerous Dark Eldar weapons and attacks found in these appendices:

### CRIPPLING (X)

Particularly cruel or deadly weapons sometimes include things like living barbs or shards that remain in their victims' wounds, causing them immense pain and even slowly killing them. When a target suffers at least one Damage (after reductions for Armour and Toughness Bonus) from a weapon with the Crippling Quality, it counts as being "Crippled" for the remainder of the encounter or until healed of all Damage. If a Crippled character takes more than a Half Action on a single turn, that character suffers Rending Damage equal to the number in parenthesis (X). This damage is not reduced by Armour or Toughness Bonus.

### FELLING (X)

Designed to puncture and to mangle, Felling weapons are capable of toppling even the mightiest foes. If the weapon hits, it ignores a number of levels of Unnatural Toughness possessed by the target equal to the number in parenthesis. For instance, a Felling (1) weapon ignores the benefits of Unnatural Toughness (x2) and would reduce the benefits of Unnatural Toughness (x3) by one multiplier.

### PROVEN (X)

Weapons with the Proven Quality always inflict significant injuries and treat any die roll for Damage lower than the value in parenthesis as if it were that number instead. For instance, a Proven (3) weapon treats any die roll of 1 or 2 as 3 for the purposes of calculating Damage.

### RAZOR-SHARP

The shearing edge of this weapon can glide through the most advanced armour as though it were primitive tin. When rolling to attack with this weapon, if the attack roll results in two or more Degrees of Success, double the weapon's Penetration for that attack.



# RANGED WEAPONRY



*"A flawless shot; surgical in its precision, artistic in its placement, and splendidly sadistic in its timing. The wretched creature could not have known how near death it truly was."*

—Sarik Heshaq, on a fellow Kabalite Warrior's kill-log

While most Dark Eldar are consummate melee combatants, many choose to deliver death from a distance, often out of a sense of self-preservation or a disdain for their foes. Even those who favour the swirling furore of melee combat are frequently inclined to bring some form of sidearm with them to battle, to cut down those who flee or deliver a final insult to an adversary unworthy of knife-work.

The many and varied guns of the Dark Eldar are as cruel and vicious in effect as their masters, ranging from the envenomed needles of a splinter rifle to the thorough annihilation wrought by a dark lance.

## KABALITE WEAPONS

### SPLINTER WEAPONS

Splinter weapons fire shards of splintered crystal using a powerful magnetic pulse. These shards are covered in incredibly virulent and fast-acting toxins that can ensure a painful death or incapacitate a would-be slave. The favoured armament of the Kabalite Warrior is the splinter rifle, often fired on the move from the balustrade of a Raider or Venom transport. The splinter pistol, its handheld cousin, is an elegant sidearm beloved of assassins and street fighters across the Dark City and the Nexus of Shadows alike; although designed for precision short-ranged shots, the toxins inside its reservoir pod are no less deadly. Some Dark Eldar become so enthralled by the distorted grimaces of agony that their weapons inflict that they employ larger and more potent splinter weapons. Amongst these is the shardcarbine, a favourite of Scourges and Trueborn, and the splinter cannon, capable of mowing down an entire mob of panicking prey in one volley.

Most Splinter weapons are fitted with razor-sharp blades that serve both as adornment and weapon. A splinter pistol with such blades may be treated as a mono-knife in close combat, while a splinter rifle or shardcarbine fitted with blades is treated as a mono-spear (see page 131 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook for **Primitive Melee Weapons**).

Splinter cannons are often fitted with suspensor pods and anti-gravity stabilisers that allow highly mobile warriors to use it more effectively on the move or keep it trained on a target for a longer period of time. A splinter cannon with these upgrades is Very Rare instead of Rare, but confers the Auto-Stabilised Trait for any shots he makes with it.

TABLE 4-2: KABALITE WEAPONS

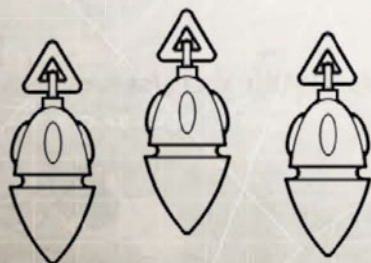
#### Splinter Weapons

| Name             | Class  | Range | RoF    | Damage   | Pen | Clip | Rld    | Special        | wt     | Availability |
|------------------|--------|-------|--------|----------|-----|------|--------|----------------|--------|--------------|
| Shardcarbine†    | Basic  | 60m   | S/3/5  | 1d10+2 R | 3   | 200  | 2 Full | Storm, Toxic   | 3 kg   | Scarce       |
| Splinter Cannon† | Heavy  | 110m  | —/—/10 | 1d10+5 R | 4   | 300  | 3 Full | Tearing, Toxic | 15 kg  | Rare         |
| Splinter Pistol† | Pistol | 50m   | S/3/—  | 1d10+2 R | 3   | 120  | 2 Full | Toxic          | 1 kg   | Common       |
| Splinter Rifle†  | Basic  | 80m   | S/3/5  | 1d10+2 R | 3   | 200  | 2 Full | Toxic          | 2.5 kg | Average      |

#### Grenades

| Name                 | Class  | Range | RoF   | Damage   | Pen | Clip | Rld | Special             | wt     | Availability |
|----------------------|--------|-------|-------|----------|-----|------|-----|---------------------|--------|--------------|
| Eldar Plasma Grenade | Thrown | SBx3  | S/—/— | 1d10+6 E | 4   | —    | —   | Blast (4), Shocking | 0.5 kg | Common       |

†These weapons have additional rules as described in their entries.



### ELDAR PLASMA GRENADES

The Eldar long ago refined the use of plasma in weaponry, creating devices that are stable and safe to use while still proving effective against the enemy. Their plasma grenades are a case in point—where human-made plasma warheads rely on the unstable and destructive nature of uncontained plasma, Eldar plasma grenades unleash a precise pulse of heat and electromagnetic force that not only burns, but also leaves foes disoriented.



TABLE 4-3: EXOTIC DARK ELДАР RANGED WEAPONS

**Darklight Weapons**

| Name         | Class  | Range | RoF   | Damage    | Pen | Clip | Rld    | Special                 | wt    | Availability |
|--------------|--------|-------|-------|-----------|-----|------|--------|-------------------------|-------|--------------|
| Blast Pistol | Pistol | 20m   | S/-/- | 2d10+5 X  | 16  | 6    | 3 Full | Felling (1), Proven (2) | 2 kg  | Rare         |
| Blaster      | Basic  | 60m   | S/-/- | 2d10+10 X | 16  | 18   | 3 Full | Felling (1), Proven (3) | 4 kg  | Rare         |
| Dark Lance   | Heavy  | 140m  | S/-/- | 2d10+16 X | 16  | 36   | 4 Full | Felling (1), Proven (4) | 16 kg | Very Rare    |

**Other Exotic Ranged Weapons**

| Name                       | Class  | Range | RoF   | Damage    | Pen     | Clip | Rld    | Special                      | wt    | Availability   |
|----------------------------|--------|-------|-------|-----------|---------|------|--------|------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Disintegrator Cannon       | Heavy  | 140m  | -/-/5 | 1d10+12 E | 12      | 30   | 4 Full | —                            | 30 kg | Very Rare      |
| Heat Lance†                | Basic  | 50m   | S/-/- | 1d10+15 E | 15      | 10   | 2 Full | Accurate                     | 6 kg  | Very Rare      |
| Hexrifle†                  | Basic  | 180m  | S/-/- | 1d10+1 I  | 2       | 1    | 3 Full | Accurate, Felling (2)        | 5 kg  | Unique         |
| Liquifier Gun†             | Basic  | 20m   | S/-/- | 2d10+2 I  | Special | 2    | 2 Full | Flame, Toxic                 | 4 kg  | Extremely Rare |
| Phantasm Grenade Launcher† | Basic  | 30m   | S/2/- | —         | —       | 6    | 6 Full | —                            | 4 kg  | Rare           |
| Shredder                   | Basic  | 60m   | S/-/- | 2d10+5 R  | 2       | 12   | 2 Full | Reliable, Blast (3), Tearing | 2 kg  | Rare           |
| Stinger Pistol             | Pistol | 30m   | S/-/- | 1d10+2 R  | 3       | 18   | 2 Full | Felling (1), Toxic           | 1 kg  | Extremely Rare |

†These weapons have additional rules as described in their entries.

## EXOTIC DARK ELДАР RANGED WEAPONS

### DARKLIGHT WEAPONS

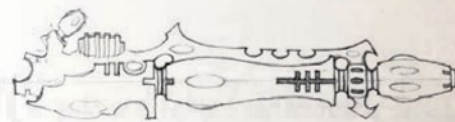
Never to be hindered by what lesser beings consider natural law, the Dark Eldar employ high-powered weapons that produce a stream of coherent, ravaging unlight, drawn from the hearts of black holes and other deadly celestial phenomena. Darklight reacts explosively with the true matter of the universe, leaving only smouldering desolation where the beam touches. So volatile is this substance that the tiniest fractions of a microgram are employed with every shot, for any greater quantities could enact untold devastation, and each containment cell holds only the tiniest mote of Darklight, locked within powerful wards and fields. To even look upon Darklight unprotected is to scar the eyes forever with its impossible radiance, a vile luminescence that is painful to behold caused by the corrupting influence of the Darklight upon the true light surrounding.

The Dark Eldar employ numerous forms of Darklight weaponry, including colossal torpedoes of horrific power, but the most common are portable devices capable of savage and precise devastation: the blast pistol, the blaster, and the dark lance. Any of these can shred through the toughest of armour and inflict horrific wounds upon the flesh of the living as tiny specks of Darklight create powerful detonations within the matter they touch.



### DISINTEGRATOR CANNON

Utilising tiny quantities of plasma stolen from enslaved suns, the disintegrator cannon is a sophisticated weapon, remaining cool to the touch even after a sustained barrage in spite of the boiling energies within. Disintegrator cannons are most commonly encountered mounted onto vehicles like Raiders and Ravagers.



### HEAT LANCE

These powerful devices combine the focus and precision of laser weaponry with the searing potency of melta weaponry, creating a weapon able to melt armour plate from further away than most comparable meltaguns, but with the fine precision of the most finely-honed Eldar laser weapon.

A heat lance doubles its Penetration value when fired at targets that are within Short Range and closer.



### HEXRIFLE

Thousands of years ago, the Dark City found itself host to a plague of a quite unusual nature. While the plague itself has long since been stopped, samples of the disease still exist in phials within the laboratories of Haemonculi, to employ as a weapon against their enemies. Each hexrifle is unique, created for an individual Haemonculus to deliver this potent and exotic plague



in battle, but all function in essentially the same way. Crystalline cylinders containing the tiniest quantity of the disease are fired from the rifles, shattering upon impact and exposing the target to the plague. For all but the hardest of victims, this momentary exposure is sufficient for the plague to begin its vile work, turning flesh and bone into glass and leaving a transparent, flawless statue where once was a living creature.

Any living creature (but not daemons or machines) that suffers one or more Wounds from a hexrifle after reductions for any Armour and Toughness Bonus must immediately pass a **Hard (-20) Toughness Test** or immediately lose the affected body part as it is transformed into glass, suffering all the usual effects of a lost limb (including death if the affected body part is his head or body). If the character fails this Test by three or more Degrees of Failure, he is simply slain outright as his entire body succumbs to the crystalline plague. A character who burns a Fate Point to survive such a demise crystallises only partially, and is rendered unconscious for 1d10+5 minutes as his body miraculously fights off the disease.

### LIQUIFIER GUN

This baroque collection of pipes and tubes projects a torrent of highly corrosive fluids that can melt through anything it touches. Typically carried by Grotesques, Wracks, and other servants of the Haemonculi, these weapons are most commonly fuelled by the corrosive ichor that passes for blood in such creatures. The devastation wreaked by a liquifier gun's noxious payload depends entirely on how much of the fluid splashes across a target.

While not strictly a Flame weapon, a liquifier gun functions in almost exactly the same way, including a chance of being set aflame—in truth, this represents a quantity of the corrosive liquid lingering on the target and continuing to eat away at flesh and armour, and thus deals 1d10 I Damage with the Toxic Quality, in place of the normal Damage from fire. The Penetration value of a liquifier gun increases by 2 for every Degree of Failure on a character's Agility Test to avoid it—the greater the failure, the greater the quantity of acid that strikes the target and thus the faster it eats away at any armour. A Liquifier Gun inbuilt into a Dark Eldar monstrosity such as a Wrack or Fleshwrought Drake never needs to be reloaded, but causes its user 1d5 I Damage that is not reduced by Armour or Toughness Bonus each time he fires it as he spews out the toxic substance that passes for blood in his twisted body.

### PHANTASM GRENADE LAUNCHER

These back-mounted weapons project volleys of tiny, explosive discs that unleash a fine mist of psychotropic vapours, the slightest whiff of which can cause terrible nightmares. Anyone within 10 metres of these grenades' point of impact must pass a **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test** or roll on **Table 10-4: The Shock Table** on page 294 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook, adding an additional +10 to the result for every Degree of Failure on the Toughness Test. Phantasm Grenade Launchers may never be loaded with other types of grenades.

### SHREDDER

The shredder unleashes an expanding mesh of monofilaments with miniscule barbs along their length. The mesh entangles the victim in an invisible net that slices apart the target as it struggles.



### STINGER PISTOL

A wicked weapon with a cruel purpose, a stinger pistol delivers horrifyingly deadly toxins via the thin needles that it fires.

## MELEE WEAPONRY



*"The caress of cold steel upon warm flesh is a divine gift, a sensation unmatched in all of existence in its purity and simplicity. I have drunk deep of its echoes in more opponents than I care to count, but have never felt the sensation itself. Will you be the first to gift me with the experience, or shall you be another through whom I must feel this gift vicariously?"*

—Attributed to Lelith Hesperax

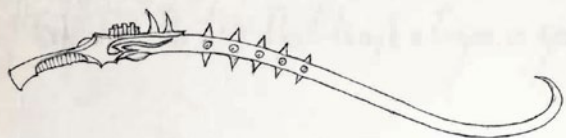
To look an enemy in the eyes as they die is highly regarded amongst the Dark Eldar, and though all manner of subterfuge and trickery may be employed to reach the moment itself, the act of murder is regarded as amongst the most intimate things two individuals can share. To face an enemy in close combat is viewed by most Dark Eldar as the simplest way to feed well, and the streets of Commorragh run crimson with the blood of those too weak to maintain the cruel stalemate between paranoid awareness and sadistic hunger.

For the wealthy and powerful Dark Eldar, however, simple blades are the toys of children. Envenomed blades dripping with necrolixirs and vitriolic ointments, talons and lashes that spark with a malicious energy, and devices more esoteric still are beloved implements of murder and dominance, symbols of prestige and personal might.



## AGONISER

These exceptionally sophisticated close combat weapons overwhelm a target's senses and can even cause long-term damage to the central nervous system through intense pain. Agonisers come in a variety of forms, with the most common being whips and barbed flails, though talon-fingered gauntlets are also favoured. Best Craftsmanship agonisers also cause 1d5 permanent Perception Damage in addition to their other effects whenever they inflict Critical Damage on a living creature.



## ELECTROCORROSIVE WHIP

An electrocorrosive whip is a lashing tongue of venom-soaked polymer with a high-yield neuroelectric generator in its handle. The merest touch is painful in the extreme, and leaves foes debilitated and enfeebled by both toxin and electrical shock.

Any creature that suffers one or more Damage from an electrocorrosive whip, after reduction from Armour and Toughness Bonus, also suffers 1d10 Strength Damage.

## FLESH GAUNTLET

A clawed glove fitted with far too many syringe-like spines and serum-filled vials, the flesh gauntlet can inject potent electrosteroids that force rapid, unnatural, and uncontrollable growth. Its victim will literally outgrow his own skin, bursting apart in a welter of streaming, heaving matter, and leaving little more than a pile of twitching overgrown muscle, ruptured skin, and shattered bone. The deadliness of the weapon is hardly offset by the fact that many models require a short period of time to prepare a new batch of electrosteroids after each use.

Any creature that fails the Toughness Test caused by a flesh gauntlet's Toxic Quality suffers 2d10+5 Rending Damage that ignores Armour and Toughness Bonus, instead of the normal 1d10 Impact Damage, as its body rapidly expands and tears itself apart. As it is specially engineered to deliver its particular lethal concoction, a flesh gauntlet may never be loaded with a new toxin, as discussed in **The Toxic Spectrum** on page 117. Finally, after causing a Toughness Test with its special Toxic Quality, a flesh gauntlet must be re-calibrated to churn out more of its vile brew; once it has been depleted, it loses the Toxic Quality until its wielder spends a Half Action to make a successful **Ordinary (+10) Chem-Use** or **Tech-Use Test**.

TABLE 4-4: DARK ELDAAR EXOTIC MELEE WEAPONS

| Name                   | Class            | Range | Damage    | Pen | Special                                    | wt     | Availability   |
|------------------------|------------------|-------|-----------|-----|--------------------------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Agoniser Lash†         | Melee            | 3m    | 1d10+3 E  | 6   | Flexible, Power Field, Tearing, Shocking   | 2 kg   | Rare           |
| Agoniser Talon†        | Melee            | —     | 1d10+4 E  | 7   | Power Field, Tearing, Shocking             | 2 kg   | Rare           |
| Electrocorrosive Whip† | Melee            | 3m    | 1d10+4 R  | 8   | Flexible, Shocking                         | 2 kg   | Rare           |
| Flesh Gauntlet†        | Melee            | —     | 1d10+3 R  | 2   | Toxic, Unbalanced                          | 5 kg   | Extremely Rare |
| Hellglaive†            | Melee            | —     | 1d10+5 R  | 3   | Razor-Sharp                                | 4 kg   | Scarce         |
| Husk Blade†            | Melee            | —     | 1d10+ 3 R | 7   | Balanced, Felling (1), Power Field         | 3 kg   | Unique         |
| Hydra Gauntlets†       | Melee            | —     | 1d10+2 R  | 2   | Tearing                                    | 1.5 kg | Very Rare      |
| Impaler†               | Melee            | —     | 1d10+3 R  | 3   | Razor-Sharp                                | 2 kg   | Rare           |
| Mindphase Gauntlet†    | Melee            | —     | 1d10 I    | 0   | —                                          | 4 kg   | Very Rare      |
| Razorflail             | Melee            | 3m    | 1d10+2 R  | 3   | Flexible, Razor-Sharp                      | 3 kg   | Rare           |
| Reaver's Fang†         | Melee            | —     | 2d5 R     | 2   | Felling (1), Tearing, Toxic                | 1 kg   | Extremely Rare |
| Shardnet†              | Melee/<br>Thrown | 5m    | 2d5 R     | 1   | Flexible, Snare, Crippling (1d5), Shocking | 3 kg   | Rare           |
| Venomblade             | Melee            | —     | 1d10+4 R  | 2   | Balanced, Felling (1), Toxic               | 2 kg   | Extremely Rare |
| Wych Knife†            | Melee            | —     | 1d10 R    | 3   | Razor-Sharp                                | 0.5 kg | Scarce         |

†These weapons have additional rules as described in their entries.



## HELLGLAIVE

These long, double-ended polearms are the favoured weapons of Hellions, who employ the sharpened hooks on each end to pull themselves around corners and past obstacles, while the broad heads and symmetrical balance of each hellglaive serves to aid a Hellion's stability in flight. As weapons, they are no less useful—a hellglaive's balance and razor-sharp blades allow a Hellion to strike down multiple enemies with every pass, if he is sufficiently skilled.

Hellglaives are designed to be used as two-handed weapons with a pair of striking ends. As such, a character wielding a hellglaive in two hands always counts as being armed with a pair of weapons with its profile (one in each hand) and follows all of the rules for Two-Weapon Fighting found on page 246 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook. A hellglaive's utility to a skyboard rider grants the wielder a +10 bonus to all Pilot (Personal) Tests.



## HUSK BLADE

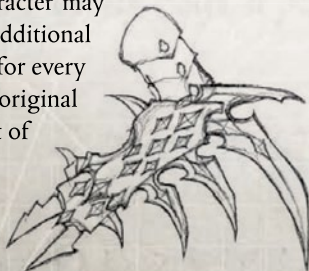
Appearing as if made of cracked and pitted bone, a husk blade leaves faint smoke trails as it passes through the air, and instantly evaporates any moisture that comes into contact with its blade. Victims slashed or stabbed by such a blade are reduced to shrivelled corpses that turn to dust in moments, and even those lucky enough to only suffer a glancing hit find much of their vitality dragged away by these deadly weapons.

Any living creature that suffers one or more Wounds from a Husk Blade, after reductions from any Armour and Toughness Bonus, also suffers 2d10+5 Toughness Damage. Any living creature that suffers Critical Damage from a husk blade is immediately slain, turning to dust almost instantly, its flesh outlived by the echoes of its dying scream.

## HYDRA GAUNTLETS

These outlandish weapons are the defining tools of Hydrae, and the bladed gauntlets they wield are said to have been forged beyond the petty confines of reality, in some strange and distant pocket of existence. The blades on each gauntlet are grown from a strange crystalline substance that continually renews itself, sprouting new blades to replace those shorn off or blunted.

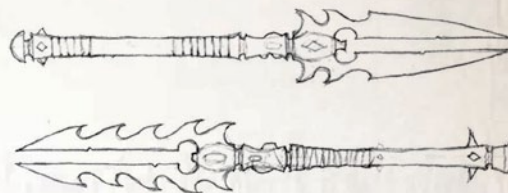
Hydra gauntlets are only ever equipped in pairs by Hydra Wyches, and though one could theoretically be used alone, it would be both uncouth and far less effective. When a character equipped with a pair of Hydra Gauntlets makes an All-Out Attack Action, that character may spend his Reaction to make an additional attack with each Hydra gauntlet for every three Degrees of Success on the original Weapon Skill Test made as a part of the All-Out Attack Action.



## IMPALER

An impaler is unremarkable in itself, a simple twin-bladed short-spear that can be rammed deep into the body of a victim. Impalers are seldom used alone, and most of those who wield them are Yraqnae, who use them in conjunction with shardnets.

In the hands of those not used to its subtleties, an impaler merely counts as a mono-spear (see page 131 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook for **Primitive Melee Weapons**), but inflicts no penalties for using it this way so long as the wielder has the Melee Weapons Training (Primitive) Talent.



## MINDPHASE GAUNTLET

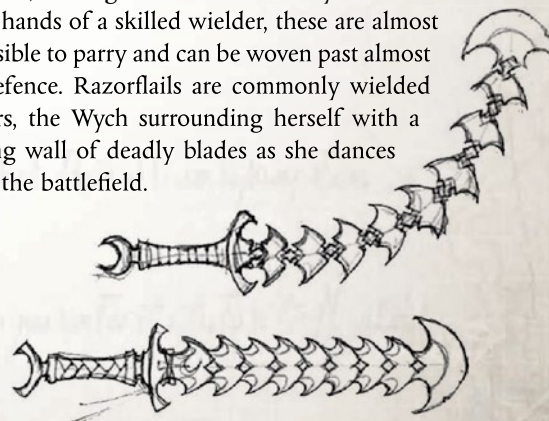
Less a weapon and more a control device, mindphase gauntlets can stop a creature in its tracks with a single touch. A fleeting moment's contact is sufficient for the gauntlet's discharge to paralyse muscle and dull the mind.

A creature struck by a mindphase gauntlet must immediately make a **Challenging (+0) Strength Test** and a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**. If it fails either Test, the creature is Stunned for 1 Round and gains a level of Fatigue for every Degree of Failure. If it fails both Tests, add together the Degrees of Failure from both Tests to determine how many levels of Fatigue the creature gains.

## RAZORFLAIL

The defining tool of the Lacerai, razorflails are lightweight swords composed of a number of interlocking blades joined by a cable. At a moment's notice, these blades can be separated, turning a sword into a many-bladed lash.

In the hands of a skilled wielder, these are almost impossible to parry and can be woven past almost any defence. Razorflails are commonly wielded in pairs, the Wych surrounding herself with a swirling wall of deadly blades as she dances across the battlefield.



## REAVER'S FANG

The nobles of the Bonespires believe that there is a perfect insult to accompany each death, and a perfect poison to cause it. Reaver's fangs' triple-pronged blades are designed to suit the latter need.



A reaver's fang may be loaded with up to three toxins that replace its Toxic Quality instead of just one, as described in **The Toxic Spectrum** on page 117. However, only one venom can do its dark work at a time, and so the weapon's user must choose only one venom to be in effect before each attack he makes.

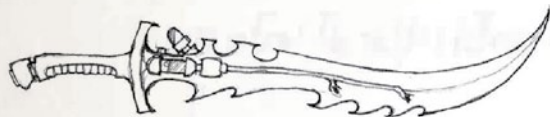
## SHARDNET

Shardnets are a wire mesh covered in tiny barbs that dig into flesh and tear with every moment of struggle, while simultaneously administering electrical shocks that render a victim incapable of self-defence and cause him to jerk and twitch against the barbed net.

A shardnet's Crippling Damage continues only while the target is immobilised by the Snare Quality, but will trigger every time the target attempts to get free, which in turn may cause the Shocking Quality to take effect again.

## VENOMBLADE

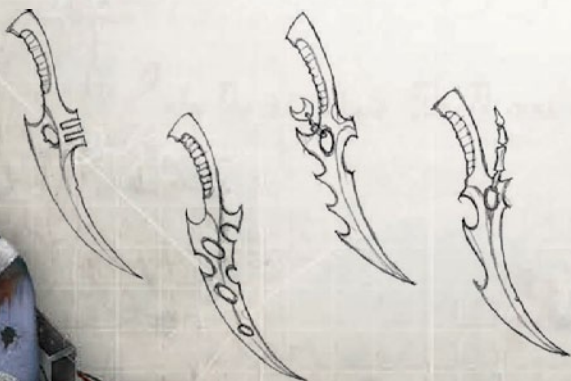
This weapon is a common sign of wealth and power amongst the Dark Eldar aristocracy. Each venomblade has thousands of microscopic pores that continually exude a distilled cocktail of hypertoxins. The slightest scratch from a venomblade is sufficient to fell even the mightiest of foes.



## WYCH KNIFE

At first glance, there is little to distinguish these blades from a commoner's knife or a Kabalite Warrior's slaying blade. However, subtle details of their construction, such as the pattern of serrations, the precise curvature of the blade, or the placement of perforations, influence their balance and the cuts they inflict so that in the hands of an expert they can inflict grievous wounds and find the weaknesses in all but the toughest armour.

A character not proficient in the use of a wych knife counts the weapon as a mono-knife in all respects (see page 131 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook for **Primitive Melee Weapons**), rather than using the listed profile, but suffers no penalties for using it this way so long as he has the Melee Weapons Training (Primitive) Talent.



# ARMOUR AND FORCE FIELDS

*"There is no finer armour than fear; fear will stay a blade before the will to strike is fully-formed, and makes physical armour into a needless burden."*

—Final words of Lord Heirax

Swift and arrogant they may be, but the Dark Eldar are not oblivious to the benefits of armour, and while they favour light-weight harnesses that do not impede their natural swiftness, it is rare even for the prideful and graceful Wyches to take to battle unclad. Those who do enter battle without armour are more arrogant than most, and history tells whether they were mistaken in their assumptions of invulnerability.

## XENOHIDE CLOTHING

Crafted from the flayed hides of arena beasts or slaves (living or dead), these garments are common clothing amongst the Dark Eldar of the Nexus of Shadows. The toughened nature of the material helps ward off would-be murderers and other common hazards of the Bonespires and the Shadow Arteries alike.

## KABALITE ARMOUR

These suits of segmented plates are commonly worn by Kabalite Warriors of all kinds, from the half-born murderers who have dragged themselves up from the depths of Commorragh to the sneering Trueborn in their palatial spires. Each suit of armour is held in place by a variety of barbs and hooks that dig deep into the wearer's flesh and play against his nerve bundles. His senses heightened by his own pain, the simple act of donning this armour prepares him for battle. Any individual not accustomed to wearing such armour must make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness** or **Willpower Test** when donning it to avoid gaining a level of Fatigue and frequently expressing displeasure at the tearing barbs through curses, complaints, or whimpers.

## WYCHSUIT

Wychsuits and similar garments are little more than flexible bodysuits, adorned in an eclectic manner with armoured plates and reinforced panels. Those worn by Wyches often provide protection only to the side of their bodies that they habitually turn towards the enemy, while Hellions commonly wear armoured collars and vambraces, and many Reavers favour masked cowls and heavily padded shoulders. Regardless, it is difficult to strike a Dark Eldar warrior past even the tiny amounts of armour that these suits provide.



TABLE 4-5: DARK ELДАР ARMOUR AND FIELDS

| Name              | Locations Covered | AP | Wt     | Availability |
|-------------------|-------------------|----|--------|--------------|
| Xenohide Tunic    | Body              | 3  | 1 kg   | Plentiful    |
| Xenohide Cloak    | All               | 2  | 3 kg   | Common       |
| Kabalite Armour   | All               | 4  | 5 kg   | Average      |
| Ghostplate Armour | All               | 6  | 2 kg   | Rare         |
| Wychsuit          | All               | 2  | 0.5 kg | Common       |
| Shadow Field      | —                 | —  | 0.5 kg | Near Unique  |
| Clone Field       | —                 | —  | 0.5 kg | Near Unique  |

## FORCE FIELD RULES

“Fields” cover a broad range of technologies across the galaxy, but all personal defence fields are devices that protect their user from the attacks of enemies. A character can only benefit from one field at a time, regardless of how many different fields he may have equipped. When a character wearing an active field is hit, roll 1d100. If the result is lower than or equal to the field’s Protection Rating, the hit is nullified and has no effect on the protected character (though some attacks may have an impact on the character’s surroundings or other nearby characters, especially those from weapons with the Blast Quality).

Eldar force fields tend to be very reliable, and rarely overload. If a force field does overload, it ceases to function until its user repairs it. Most force fields require a **Very Hard (–30) Tech-Use Test** to repair.

## GHOSTPLATE ARMOUR

Constructed of strange resinous materials and shot through with pockets of lighter-than-air gases, each suit of ghostplate armour provides considerable protection while weighing far less than any comparable panoply. The expense of a single suit of ghostplate is such that only the wealthiest and most influential Dark Eldar can obtain it. Each suit is further reinforced by a force field.

Ghostplate has a field with a Protection Rating of 20, but overloads after shielding against the attack if its user rolls doubles on any roll to deflect an incoming attack.

## SHADOW FIELD

A shadow field is an arcane Dark Eldar device that creates a defence that is virtually impossible to pierce. Projecting a dark miasma of energy around the wearer, the field is proof against almost any attack, and the warrior within cannot be easily targeted. However, should one manage to penetrate this miasmatic aura, the field’s instability causes it to collapse almost immediately.

A shadow field is a force field with a Protection Rating of 80. However, should any roll against that Protection Rating be higher than the Protection Rating, the field immediately fails and does not provide any further protection until repaired. Repairing the field requires delicate calibrations, and it cannot be used again until the user or another character spends at least an hour working on it and succeeds at a **Very Hard (–30) Tech-Use Test** outside of combat.

## CLONE FIELD

In place of coherent fields of energy, a clone field projects holographic duplicates of the wearer, all identical in aspect and moving in perfect and lifelike synchrony. Only through trial and error can the true wearer be identified, and few combatants have the time to find the real threat amidst a swarm of falsehoods.

Due to the shifting duplicates surrounding the wearer, he may re-roll one failed Dodge Test per Round while the clone field is active, and he may make a single additional Dodge Test each round that does not expend one of his available Reactions. Further, the wearer doubles all Degrees of Success on successful Dodge Tests. A clone field cannot be used to evade the attacks of creatures that do not rely on sight as a primary sense. Clone fields do provide direct protection, and thus do not overload.





# DRUGS AND POISONS

*"The scorpion's sting is deadly, but it is the venom that makes it so. A blade alone is naked without a choice poison, a pale shadow of the implement it should be."*

—S'liassen Tael, Envenomer and Chymist

Within the blood-soaked arenas and throughout the deadly streets of the Dark City, chemical advantages are highly prized as a way of ensuring survival for another day or another battle. Whether employing poisons against a rival, or dosing themselves with combat stimulants, Dark Eldar will do whatever is necessary to seize victory.

TABLE 4-6: DRUGS AND POISONS

| Name                       | Wt     | Availability   |
|----------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Accelerai                  | 0.1 kg | Scarce         |
| Corpse Obmulen             | 0.1 kg | Rare           |
| Eviscerine                 | 0.1 kg | Scarce         |
| Murder's Boon              | 0.1 kg | Scarce         |
| Shudderstep                | 0.1 kg | Rare           |
| Soul Echo                  | 0.1 kg | Extremely Rare |
| Essence of Perfect Vitriol | 0.1 kg | Scarce         |
| Final Breath               | 0.1 kg | Rare           |
| Heartfire                  | 0.1 kg | Very Rare      |
| Liquid Agony               | 0.1 kg | Scarce         |
| Nightmare Philtre          | 0.1 kg | Very Rare      |
| Sanguine Exodus            | 0.1 kg | Rare           |
| Vitae Rebellion            | 0.1 kg | Extremely Rare |

## COMBAT DRUGS

Though they drastically shorten the life expectancy of those who take them, drugs and stimulants are in widespread use throughout Dark Eldar society. The fashions and the vagaries of supply and demand commonly influence which ones are used during a given battle or realspace raid, but certain drugs remain popular amongst the inhabitants of the Nexus of Shadows.

Dark Eldar combat drugs are designed to enhance Eldar physiology, and do not function in the bodies of any other creature. Any non-Eldar who takes a dose of any of the combat drugs listed below must pass a **Hard (–20) Toughness Test** or be immediately Stunned for 1d5 Rounds as the chemicals course painfully through a physiology they are not designed to augment. Should this Test result in four or more Degrees of Failure, the character also suffers 1d10 Damage, ignoring Armour and Toughness Bonus, as he suffers a particularly adverse reaction.

These drugs are not designed to be used in combination, and an Eldar character attempting to take a second dose of any combat drug while the first is still in effect must also take the Test listed above, regardless of whether it is a second dose of the same drug, or a dose of

a new drug. Whether he passes or fails, the character only gains the benefits of the most recent dose of drugs he has taken.

All the drugs listed below remain in effect for 50+2d10 minutes unless otherwise noted. Every dose taken inflicts physical and spiritual stress on a character, ageing him and more rapidly thinning his already-hollow soul. Each dose causes 1d5 Corruption Points upon consumption.

## ACCELERAI

This stimulant alters the warrior's adrenal glands, producing a substance that is far more potent. Harvested from the brain of a small, multi-legged, and extremely aggressive predator found on the ruined shell of the *Light of Terra* and certain space hulks that drift through the Koronus Expanse, Accelerai accelerates the user's attacks to a blistering tempo. For the drug's duration, the character may make an extra attack when performing the Multiple Attacks Action. After the effect ends, the character gains a level of Fatigue and must make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or suffer a –5 penalty to his Initiative for 1d5 days as the stimulant's harmful by-products flush out of his system.

## CORPSE OBMULEN

First found growing amidst the corpses of fallen warriors during the taking of the Nexus of Shadows, Corpse Obmulen appears to be a cousin of the better-known Dusk Lotus and seems, against all odds, to have been on the Gaelan Sphere longer than the Dark Eldar. Since their arrival, however, the blood-drinking plant has flourished, and covers many pits of discarded corpses with an ashen veil. Though inherently toxic, Corpse Obmulen is a popular additive to steroidal compounds that saturates muscle fibres and makes them superhumanly resistant to the stress and tension of use, allowing the warrior to exert himself to an extreme level for a protracted period of time. The character gains a +20 to Strength for the duration of the drug's effect. After the effect ends, the character gains a level of Fatigue and must make a **Difficult (–10) Strength Test** or suffer 1d10 Strength Damage that lasts for a day or until he receives another dose of Corpse Obmulen.

## SHUDDERSTEP

Tailored from a number of incredibly dangerous ingredients, including grass harvested from specific Yu'Vath grave worlds and miniscule quantities of the stasis venom of the Ariadne Helspider, Shudderstep is designed to hyper-stimulate fast-twitch muscle fibres. A dose of Shudderstep enables a warrior to run at incredible speeds. The character gains the Unnatural Speed Trait for the duration of the drug's effect. After the effect ends, the character gains a level of Fatigue and must make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or pass out for 1d10+5 minutes as the deferred exhaustion catches up to him.

## MURDER'S BOON

Distilled from the cranial fluid of slaves who have been poisoned with a combination of other drugs and toxins including Corpse Obmulen and Liquid Agony, Murder's Boon amplifies a warrior's killer instincts. The warrior gains the Proven (4) Quality on all melee attacks for the duration



of the drug's effect. After the effect ends, the character gains a level of Fatigue and must make a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** or lose himself in the suffering he has imbibed, suffering a –20 penalty to Fellowship, Intelligence, and Willpower for the next 1d5 hours.

## EVISCERINE

Eviscerine is a derivative of the rare but seemingly uninteresting viperleaf found on certain worlds within the Koronus Expanse. Though The Sutured Helix does not share exactly how it transforms this barbed vine into a drug as effective as Eviscerine, the raw material nonetheless commands a high price on the Nexus of Shadows. Cold Trader groups such as the Consorvana Ring exchange vast quantities of viperleaf for xenos artefacts, and know better than to ask why the devious aliens want this particular plant. Once refined into a useable drug, Eviscerine is a favourite of warriors who prefer to kill at close range. Heightening the adrenaline sensitivity of perception centres of the brain and the conductivity of synapses and nerve fibres, a dose of Eviscerine makes a warrior more able to perceive and avoid the attacks and defences of his enemies. The character gains +20 Weapon Skill for the duration of the drug's effect. After the effect ends, the character gains a level of Fatigue and must make a **Difficult (–10) Toughness Test** or lose his Reaction in combat for 1d10 hours or until he receives another dose of Eviscerine.

## SOUL ECHO

The coalesced essence of a being who has been tortured not only unto death but far beyond it, Soul Echo is almost pure pain, containing the last tormented gasp of a spirit bound in eternal agony. On the Nexus of Shadows, the only producer of Soul Echo is Drecarus himself, and his exact arcane processes are a jealously guarded secret. The character using this drug immediately gains 1d10 Pain Tokens and an additional 1d10 Corruption Points on top of the usual Corruption for using combat drugs. A character may not benefit from another dose of Soul Echo for at least an hour after taking a dose, even if he uses De-Tox or another similar ability to clear his system of drugs, and suffers the negative effects listed above if he attempts to use more Soul Echo anyway.

## THE TOXIC SPECTRUM

The Dark Eldar are experts in the many applications of poisons and toxins. Entire districts of Commorragh are given over to the manufacture of substances that can kill in countless thousands of different ways, and many an aristocrat's court contains a master poisoner whose gifts can transform the merely agonising into the unrelentingly lethal. Many weapons employed by the Dark Eldar exude, are impregnated with, or otherwise employ potent hypertoxins, and most warriors have their own favourite cocktail of poisons. The toxic spectrum is something that all Dark Eldar appreciate with an artist's insight, and personal aesthetics are as important as effect when it comes to poisoning a rival, enemy or prey-beast.

The following section provides a number of common poisons employed by the Dark Eldar. Any of these poisons

may be employed as alternative ammunition on any weapon with the Toxic Quality, replacing the effects of the Toxic Quality temporarily. Alternatively, they may be employed using whatever other poison delivery methods a character can think of—the Dark Eldar are nothing if not creative in their application of toxins.

### YOU ARE ALREADY DEAD...

The Dark Eldar love to draw out the kill, and their master poisoners often brew their finest toxins to this end. After all, why should a prey-beast have the right to die before the Dark Eldar allow its suffering to end? Many Dark Eldar also like to taunt their prey for longer than the poisons might normally allow. Timing is everything in a perfect kill, and it is considered a master's mark to be able to deliver a final, cutting insult that exactly fills a victim's last seconds before a poison wreaks its terrible work.

Any Dark Eldar poison of Good Craftsmanship may be concocted to have a delayed effect if the buyer so chooses. Toxins with a delayed effect behave as normal, but they do not cause their Damage and other deleterious effects until one Round after the target fails its Toughness Test.

Best Craftsmanship toxins are the same, except the maker can delay the effect for any amount of time up to 24 hours (chosen upon creation or acquisition of the poison) after the target fails its Toughness Test.

## ESSENCE OF PERFECT VITRIOL

Perfect Vitriol is the universal solvent, a corrosive agent capable of dissolving absolutely everything. Created by the Stryxis for reasons they refuse to explain and traded to the denizens of the Nexus of Shadows for use in their arenas and shadowy plots, no substance is proof against this liquid's fury, and it must be stored in magnetic suspension because no material container exists that can hold it. Not to be stymied in their quest to weaponise everything in their grasp, the Dark Eldar of the Nexus of Shadows cleverly use fields and other exotic distribution systems to imbue their blades and projectiles with the vapours produced by this substance without degrading their own equipment too quickly for it to be of use.

A failed Toughness Test to resist Essence of Perfect Vitriol inflicts 1d10 Strength Damage, with a bonus of +1 Damage for each Degree of Failure on the Toughness Test.

## FINAL BREATH

A targeted paralytic agent that is derived from a plant native to Burnscour and brought to the Nexus of Shadows accidentally along with several beasts for the pits, Final Breath causes rapid respiratory shutdown, swiftly making it impossible for the target to breathe. The Dark Eldar first discovered the effect of the plant when a number of slaves tasked with cleaning the pen of a Clawed Fiend were discovered dying after inhaling its deadly pollen. The Dark Eldar of the Nexus of Shadows were most impressed by the agonising death that this humble plant had



inflicted upon their slaves, and so they immediately set about finding a way to turn the plant's toxic pollen into a weapon.

A failed Toughness Test to resist Final Breath causes the target to immediately begin suffocating, as per the rules on page 261 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook. Unless the target is aware of the poison in advance and knows to take a deep breath before its effects kick in, he counts his Toughness Bonus as half (rounding up) its normal value for determining how long he may hold his breath. The toxin remains in effect for 1d10+15 minutes or until the victim is treated, such as with De-Tox (see page 141 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook).

## HEARTFIRE

Heartfire is a substance produced by the razor-spined fungi that inhabit certain parts of the Gaelan Sphere, and is found in the greatest concentrations in those specimens that have made their home in the shafts that house the coolant for many of the sphere's mysterious processes. Apparently a defence mechanism against predators, this poison coats the spines and self-replicates within a victim's body, polluting his blood with a kinetically unstable chemical that may ignite at any moment. Vigorous motion is often sufficient to set the poisoned blood off, consuming the victim with a fire within his own veins and arteries, burning up the oxygen in his blood.

A failed Toughness Test to resist Heartfire has a lingering effect. Without extensive medical treatment, such as dialysis or some other means of cleansing or replacing the blood, the character is subject to this effect until death. Every time the character takes Impact or Explosive Damage, and every time the character runs, falls or is knocked prone, he must pass a **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test** or immediately suffers 1d10 Energy Damage that is not reduced by Armour or Toughness Bonus to the body (the fire is concentrated in the chest, near the heart and lungs).

## LIQUID AGONY

Popular amongst nobles of the Kabal of the Splintered Talon involved in realspace raids against particularly valuable targets and those fighting rivals at home alike, Liquid Agony is a potent neurotoxin that amplifies nerve conductivity to extreme levels, turning even the weight of clothing and the caress of the air into torturous sensations. Liquid Agony is based upon the viscous bodily fluids of the Sandsnapper of Vaporious, a rare, segmented serpent that inhabits the deep deserts. Some within the depths of the Nexus of Shadows imbibe tiny quantities of Liquid Agony to heighten the impact of sensations, but overdoses are all too common and leave the wretched beings in a state of perpetual agony just long enough for a hungry soul to find the source of the screams and drink deep of the self-inflicted pain.

A failed Toughness Test to resist Liquid Agony causes the target to be Stunned for a number of Rounds equal to his own Perception Bonus. Liquid Agony has no effect on targets that are already Stunned.

## NIGHTMARE PHILTRE

This toxin creates terror in its victims, nothing more or less. Though the exact composition of this poison is a jealously guarded secret of The Sutured Helix, dark whispers tell of how Salaine Morn commissioned Drecarus to create it shortly after her forces slew a Rak'Gol raiding party that had simultaneously attacked the human settlement she was in the midst of pillaging. It is said that she brought one of the creatures' corpses back to the Haemonculus as a gift to entice his services, and he repaid her with this serum of hell-dreams some days later. By chemically influencing the "fight or flight" reaction, and then triggering it, an overwhelming sense of panic and dread afflicts the victim, without obvious cause or reason—something that is arguably more terrifying than being afraid of anything specific. In many cases, the horrified psyche actually tries to invent some fearful apparition to justify the terror, a feat of self-delusion that only serves to act as a beautiful accompaniment to the Dark Eldar feeding upon this unreasoning panic. Hard-won experience has taught the Dark Eldar that this particular poison does not have an effect on all of their foes—even the most concentrated dose does not influence a Space Marine in any way, and it seems to merely enrage Orks.

A failed Toughness Test to resist Nightmare Philtre is treated as a failed Fear Test with the same number of Degrees of Failure. As a result, the target must immediately roll on **Table 10-4: The Shock Table** on page 294 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook. Creatures immune to Fear or that follow different rules for Fear are unaffected by this poison. Additionally, when an Ork is affected by a Nightmare Philtre, the drug always triggers the "fight" side of the reaction, causing the victim to automatically enter a Frenzy upon a failed Toughness Test instead of having its usual effect (see page 98 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook).

## SANGUINE EXODUS

This toxin causes the victim to begin exsanguinating rapidly, his blood pouring from every wound as if seeking to escape from his body. Sanguine Exodus in part on the saliva of the Culamia Bloodsucker that is all too common on the world of Burnscour and certain other Death Worlds in the Koronus Expanse, and has become popular amongst the Wyches of the Withered Blade Cult, as it allows them to kill with even greater elegance and conservation of motion.

A failed Toughness Test to resist Sanguine Exodus causes the target to immediately suffer from Blood Loss.

## VITAE REBELLION

A cruel and savage toxin, Vitae Rebellion is a genetic serum of incredible potency created in the laboratories of The Sutured Helix and sold to Dark Eldar nobles on the Nexus of Shadows who desire a certain explosive flair to their kills. Vitae Rebellion aggressively transforms the biochemistry of its victims, transmogrifying critical fluids into chemicals and compounds that react violently with one another. The end result is gruesome and spectacular, as the victim detonates in a shower of mutated gore.

A failed Toughness Test to resist Vitae Rebellion causes the target to suffer 2d10 Explosive Damage that ignores Armour but is reduced by the target's Toughness Bonus as normal.



# DRAMATIS PERSONAE

*"There is no good story without a villain. I shall provide you with an antagonist beyond your imaginings or even your comprehension, and as you die you will curse my name exquisitely."*

—Drecarus, Master of The Sutured Helix

This section contains a number of the important characters who appear within the adventure. Some are great champions who can aid the Explorers, others are vile foes who they must slay, and many can play either role, depending on the tenor of the adventure and the actions of the Explorers.

## MAJOR CHARACTERS

The great lords who inhabit the Nexus of Shadows wield vast amounts of power, and at their command countless sentient beings suffer. The Explorers may be able to parley and even form alliances with some of these ruthess masters of the shadows, but would do well not to forget their terrifying might.

### SALAIN MORN, ARCHON OF THE KABAL OF THE SHADOWED THORNS

Salaine Morn intentionally projects a presence that is both evasive and unmistakable; her dread majesty is as hard to put into

words as it is to ignore. Appearing at once menacing and tempting, the Archon catches many of her foes off-guard, uncertain of the obfuscated nature of this ancient being. Morn is several thousand years old, though only she knows for certain how long she has been alive, and has seen and done much that would long haunt the nightmares lesser beings. Like all Archons, she is possessed of a deadly martial prowess, but her true weapon is a mind finely-honed by the lethal intrigues of Commorragh's high society.

She finds it utterly distasteful, then, that she and all those she commands are exiles from the Dark City and now even the Nexus of Shadows. At her grudging command, the warriors of her Kabal have turned to mercenary work, selling their efforts to lesser beings as part of a plan to regain the power she once possessed. On the rarest of occasions, she deigns to speak to these prey-creatures herself.



#### Archon Salaine Morn

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag      | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|---------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 68 | 61 | 52 | 38 | (18) 66 | 58  | 58  | 59 | 54  |

**Movement:** 6/12/18/36

**Wounds:** 22

**Armour:** Ghostplate armour (All 6).

**Total TB:** 3

**Fate Points:** 3

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +20, Chem-Use (Int) +10, Command (Fel) +20, Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int) +20, Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S) +20, Silent Move (Ag), Sleight of Hand (Ag).

**Talents:** Air of Authority, Catfall, Combat Master, Crippling Strike, Crushing Blow, Dark Soul, Die Hard, Disturbing Voice, Exotic Weapon Training (Agoniser, Husk Blade, Blast Pistol), Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Into the Jaws of Hell, Iron Discipline, Jaded, Kabalite Weapon Training, Lightning Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Master Orator, Mighty Shot, Paranoia, Quick Draw, Rapid Reaction, Resistance (Poison, Psychic Techniques), Sprint, Step Aside, Strong Minded, Swift Attack, Total Recall.

**Traits:** Dark Sight, Power Through Pain, Touched by the Fates, Unnatural Agility (x3).

**Weapons:** Blast pistol (Pistol; 20m; S/-/-; 2d10+7 X; Pen 20; Clip 8; Rld 2 Full; Felling [1], Proven [2]), Best Craftsmanship agoniser lash (Melee; 3m; 1d10+10 E; Pen 6; Flexible, Shocking, Tearing), husk blade (Melee; 1d10+8 R; Pen 7; Balanced, Felling [1]), 3 Eldar plasma grenades (Thrown; 12m; 1d10+8 E; Pen 4; Blast [3], Shocking).

**Gear:** Shadow field (Protection 80, Overloads upon failure), 3 doses of Corpse Obmulen, soul trap†.

†**Soul Trap:** A soul trap is a terrifying device that captures the souls of worthy enemies in vampiric runes cut into its jewelled surface, and turns these into raw power for its master. Each time a Dark Eldar character with a soul trap slays an enemy with Fate Points, the bearer may make a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** to gain the Unnatural Strength (2) Trait or increase an existing Unnatural Strength Trait by 1.





## DRECARUS, THE ARCH-AGONIST OF T SAEVOYM, HAEMONCULUS

Drecarus is the master of the Sutured Helix Coven, the Arch-Agonist of T'saevoym, a title whose meaning is long-forgotten but instils dread in even the most jaded of Dark Eldar nobles of the Nexus of Shadows to this day nonetheless. What is known about Drecarus is that he is an incalculably ancient being, and that as long as anyone can remember he has been sole master of his coven, the Sutured Helix. Though his coven once held a position of some prominence in the twisted dens of Commorragh, Drecarus grew weary of the bickering of Archons and even fellow Haemonculi, and so he lead his coven into the webway that they might focus on their twisted work.

During its aeons of sojourning, The Sutured Helix ran afoul of a group of Rak'Gol marauders while travelling the Koronus Expanse. Their damaged vessel was saved by the raiding fleet of Zaergarn Kul. Eager to have a Haemonculi Coven on the Nexus of Shadows, Zaergarn offered the crippled vessel an offer it could not refuse, and Drecarus grudgingly assented to become Zaergarn's ally and advisor. Over time, Zaergarn trusted Drecarus with more and more of his rule, and the Haemonculus' power over the

Nexus of Shadows grew. Drecarus worked to accelerate the war between the two Archons, and it was he who provided Salaine Morn with the means to acquire the Mandrake who slew Zaergarn. When the dust settled, the Haemonculus was victorious. With Salaine banished and Zaergarn's spirit trapped inside *The Soul Reaver*, Drecarus is now master of the Nexus of Shadows, and rules through subtle manipulation of Zaergarn's Kabal of the Splintered Talon, which does not even yet suspect its true lord's death.



### Haemonculus Drecarus

| WS | BS | S  | T         | Ag         | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|-----------|------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 53 | 59 | 36 | (8)<br>49 | (12)<br>49 | 64  | 58  | 49 | 38  |

**Movement:** 4/8/12/24

**Armour:** Gnarlskin (2 All).

**Fate Points:** 2

**Wounds:** 24

**Total TB:** 8

**Skills:** Awareness (Per) +20, Chem-Use (Int) +20, Command (Fel) +20, Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int) +20, Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Mutants) (Int) +10, Forbidden Lore (Xenos) (Int) +10, Interrogation (WP) +20, Intimidate (S) +20, Literacy (Int) +10, Medicae (Int) +20, Scholastic Lore (Beasts) (Int) +10, Silent Move (Ag), Sleight of Hand (Ag), Tech-Use (Int) +20, Trade (Chymist) (Int) +20.

**Talents:** Ambidextrous, Autosanguine, Catfall, Chem Geld, Dark Soul, Decadence, Disciple of Shiamesh, Die Hard, Disturbing Voice, Dual Shot, Exotic Weapon Training (Reaver's Fang, Stinger Pistol), Gunslinger, Infused Knowledge, Iron Jaw, Jaded, Marksman, Master Surgeon, Paranoia, Prosanguine, Resistance (Cold, Fear, Heat, Psychic Techniques), Swift Attack, Takedown, Talented (Chem-Use, Interrogation, Medicae), Touched by the Fates, Total Recall, Two Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee).

**Traits:** Altered Physique, Dark Sight, Multiple Limbs, Power Through Pain, Touched by the Fates, Unnatural Agility (x3), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

**Weapons:** Two custom stinger pistols† (Pistol; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+8 R; Pen 3; Clip 18; Rld 2 Full; Felling [2], Toxic), reaver's fang (Melee; 2d5+9 R; Pen 2; Felling [2], Tearing, Toxic).

†**Binary Toxin:** Drecarus' pistols are loaded with poisons that are virulent enough in their own right, but which in combination cause far more spectacular and gruesome results. If a creature is wounded by both of Drecarus' stinger pistols in the same turn and fails both Toughness Tests from their Toxic Quality, then ignore the weapons' normal Toxic Damage—instead, the victim suffers 2d10+5 Explosive Damage that ignores Armour and Toughness, and must roll on **Table 5-5: Hallucinogen Effects** on page 126 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook.

**Gear:** Array of drugs, elixirs, unguents, and toxins including at least one of each described in **Drugs and Poisons** on page 116, sundry organs and samples, the last breath of Archduke Tremeyre in an haemoceramic phial, the crystallised agony of Farseer Andryath in a debased spirit stone, the distilled souls of a thousand martyrs in a flask made from their bones.

*The Dread Haemonculus Drecarus*





## ANYALRA, SUCCUBUS OF THE CULT OF THE WITHERED BLADE

Absolute perfection in battle is Anyalra's goal; to achieve anything less is wasteful. The spectacle of the arena is merely so that others can testify to her beauty and skill. Anyalra's ambitions will not permit her to sate her desires for long—she yearns to return to Commorragh, to test herself against her supposed peers within other cults. For now, however, the Withered Blade arena complex is sufficient, particularly with the many and varied prey that Drecarus and his pet Magos can provide.

Anyalra is the foremost Succubus of the Cult of the Withered Blade. The other two, Haeccia and Vithorix, are little more than squabbling sisters by comparison, merely the latest in a long line of Succubi who have sought to contest her dominion over the Cult—their predecessors having been slain by a thousand perfect cuts that disfigured and crippled them even as they bled to death, delivered by Anyalra's machinations or by her own hand. In battle, Anyalra moves calmly and with an unwavering dignity, her pace increasing with every moment as she begins to strike, a split-second flash of silver followed by a scream of agony or a welter of blood the only signs of her attacks. As her walk becomes a dance, she whirls and vaults around and over her prey. It is claimed that her greatest display was when she systematically slew two hundred and eleven human slaves without stopping for even a moment, using only her razor-edged fingernails.

as having the Crippling (5) Quality. In addition, her unarmed attacks deal Rending Damage instead of Impact Damage.

**Weapons:** Two Best Craftsmanship wych knives (Melee; 1d10+7 R; Pen 3; Razor-Sharp, Crippling [5]), one Best Craftsmanship razorflail (Melee; 3m; 1d10+6 R; Flexible, Razor-Sharp, Crippling [5]), unarmed attacks (Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 0, Crippling [5]).

**Gear:** 3 doses of Accelerai.



### Succubus Anyalra



| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag                 | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|--------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 73 | 56 | 46 | 37 | <sup>(21)</sup> 72 | 44  | 51  | 47 | 49  |

**Movement:** 7/14/21/42

**Armour:** Wychsuit (All 2).

**Fate Points:** 2

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag) +20, Awareness (Per) +10, Charm (Fel) +20, Chem-Use (Int) +10, Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int) +10, Deceive (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag) +20, Intimidate (S) +10, Silent Move (Ag), Sleight of Hand (Ag).

**Talents:** Assassin Strike, Ambidextrous, Catfall, Combat Master, Crushing Blow, Crippling Strike, Dark Soul, Dual Strike, Exotic Weapon Training (Splinter Pistol, Hydra Gauntlet, Razorflail, Wych Knife), Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Lightning Reflexes, Pity the Weak, Precise Blow, Preternatural Speed, Razor Perfection†, Sprint, Step Aside, Sure Strike, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee), Unarmed Master, Unarmed Warrior.

**Traits:** Dark Sight, Power Through Pain, Unnatural Agility (x3).

†**Razor Perfection:** Anyalra is the foremost practitioner of the arts of the Withered Blade, and none can match her grace, speed, and precision, which leaves countless foes sprawled upon the ground in her wake, bleeding from the tiniest possible mortal wounds. When Anyalra makes a Called Shot attack with a melee weapon or unarmed attack, her weapon counts

**Wounds:** 18

**Total TB:** 3

## LORDS OF THE TWILIGHT

Even the least of Archons, Succubi, and Haemonculi are powerful individuals indeed, with wealth, power, and influence unimaginable to nearly any in the Koronus Expanse but a Rogue Trader. Each is a ruler of countless thousands, if not millions, of other beings, and possessed of vast resources the likes of which even most Rogue Traders would envy. Even those exiled from the Dark City, such as Salaine Morn, are still potent and wealthy individuals.

No such being is limited merely to the items listed within his or her entry. Such individuals are likely to have access any item deemed “mundane” by the decadent Dark Eldar nobility.



## TOUCHED BY THE FATES (TALENT)

**Prerequisites:** Non-player Characters only, must have free will, may not be applied to daemons or other non-living creatures.

The NPC has a number of Fate Points equal to half his Willpower Bonus (rounding up). He may use these Fate Points in the exact same way as an Explorer, and may even “burn” a Fate Point to survive death and destruction. In addition, the rules for Righteous Fury apply to this character.

## ZAERGARN KUL, VENGEANCE IN FLESH

Zaergarn Kul is the master of the Nexus of Shadows in name, but in name only. For years, since his demise at the hands of a Mandrake sent by Salaine Morn during their power struggle, his soul has been trapped within the twisted heart of *The Soul Reaver*. While *The Soul Reaver* draws power from all of those who die within the Nexus of Shadows, Zaergarn’s assassin attacked him while he was observing the vessel’s tormented heart, bathing in the pain that exuded from it. As such, the warp echo that *The Soul Reaver* drew out of the dying Zaergarn was particularly potent.

Since that day, Zaergarn’s essence has simmered and seethed, trapped within the heart of the voidship but unable to lash out at those who have wronged him because the Nexus of Shadows pulls out all of the energy that the vessel collects. When the Explorers sever *The Soul Reaver* from the Nexus of Shadows, however, Zaergarn’s echo is able to guide *The Soul Reaver* down the path of vengeance against Salaine, his killer, and Drecarus, his treacherous ally who stole his Kabal instead of retrieving his soul and resurrecting him. When the Explorers make their way to the heart of *The Soul Reaver*, the ambient Warp energy flowing from the souls of the dead even allows Zaergarn to control his own corpse, lashing out with the jerking, frenzied motions of a hellish marionette.

### Archon Zaergarn Kul

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag                 | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|--------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 68 | 61 | 49 | 38 | 66 <sup>(18)</sup> | 52  | 50  | 59 | 14  |

**Movement:** 6/12/18/36

**Armour:** Kabalite armour (All 4).

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +20, Intimidate (S) +20.

**Talents:** Combat Master, Crippling Strike, Crushing Blow, Dark Soul, Die Hard, Disturbing Voice, Exotic Weapon Training (Blast Pistol, Agoniser Talon), Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Iron Discipline, Jaded, Kabalite Weapon Training, Lightning Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Mighty Shot, Paranoia, Rapid Reaction, Resistance (Poison, Psychic Techniques), Sprint, Strong Minded, Swift Attack.

**Traits:** Dark Sight, From Beyond Power Through Pain, Unnatural Agility (x3).

**Wounds:** 22

**Total TB:** 3

**Weapons:** Blast pistol (Pistol; 20m; S/—/—; 2d10+7 X; Pen 20; Clip 8; Rld 2 Full; Felling [1], Proven [2]), Best Craftsmanship agoniser talon (Melee; 1d10+9 R; Pen 7; Shocking, Tearing).

## DENIZENS OF THE NEXUS

The Explorers are likely to encounter a great many different Dark Eldar during their time in the Nexus of Shadows. This section contains information on the more rank and file individuals of the Cults, Kabals, and Covens.

### KABALITE WARRIOR

Each and every Kabalite Warrior is a deadly, sadistic killer, skilled with blade and rifle alike, and driven by both cruelty and savage ambition. Having won out over countless others of their kind to partake in realspace raids for their Kabal, these warriors have sampled greater agonies than the meagre and vicarious torments that lesser Dark Eldar are forced to subsist upon.

This profile represents a common, half-born Dark Eldar Warrior from the Kabal of the Shadowed Thorns, Splintered Talon or any number of other Kabals. Within a given group of Kabalite Warriors, one or two may have earned the wealth and power to use and maintain a more potent or unusual weapon.

#### Kabalite Warrior

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag                 | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|--------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 41 | 41 | 39 | 34 | 52 <sup>(10)</sup> | 33  | 45  | 31 | 28  |

**Movement:** 5/10/15/30

**Armour:** Kabalite armour (All 4).

**Wounds:** 10

**Total TB:** 3

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag), Awareness (Per), Chem-Use (Int), Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S) +10, Silent Move (Ag), Sleight of Hand (Ag).

**Talents:** Catfall, Dark Soul, Deadeye Shot, Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Kabalite Weapon Training, Lightning Reflexes, Pity the Weak, Sprint.

**Traits:** Dark Sight, Power Through Pain, Unnatural Agility (x2).

**Weapons:** Splinter rifle (Basic; 80m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 200; Rld 2 Full; Toxic) or (Melee; 1d10+3 R; Pen 2), mono-blade (Melee; 1d5+3 R; Pen 2).

**Gear:** Assorted grisly trophies, 2 clips of splinter rifle rounds.

## ARMING THE DARK ELДАР

The vast myriad of ways the Dark Eldar have of inflicting pain and death upon the galaxy’s other inhabitants is bewildering, and the weapons listed in each entry within this section represent only a small selection of that deadly array. Should the GM wish to add an additional edge to a group of Kabalite Warriors, or spice up a battle against a team of Wyches, there are additional rules for a variety of Dark Eldar weapons and equipment in **Dark Eldar Armoury** on page 108.



## KABALITE TRUEBORN

Unlike the exiled Shadowed Thorns Kabal, the Kabal of the Splintered Talon has long maintained a large cadre of Kabalite Trueborn. Trueborn are raised to regard those around them with contempt and derision, viewing themselves as superior. To their credit, this is often the case, with the long and ruthless upbringing of a Trueborn child creating a killer with prowess equal to its arrogance and ambition.

Amongst the Splintered Talon Kabal, rapid-firing shardcarbines and long, serrated blades of exquisite quality are some of the most fashionable weapons. Beyond the easy reach of many half-born warriors, these deadly implements form the common armament of many Trueborn within the Kabal. However, the wealth and power of even the least influential of Trueborn is sufficient for them to enter battle with deadlier and more exotic weaponry more often, and many choose to carry splinter cannons, shredders, blasters, and dark lances with which to obliterate their prey.

### Kabalite Trueborn

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag                 | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|--------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 46 | 46 | 44 | 34 | 57 <sup>(10)</sup> | 33  | 45  | 36 | 44  |

**Movement:** 5/10/15/30

**Armour:** Kabalite armour (All 4).

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Chem-Use (Int), Command (Fel), Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int), Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S) +20, Silent Move (Ag), Sleight of Hand (Ag).

**Talents:** Catfall, Combat Master, Dark Soul, Deadeye Shot, Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Kabalite Weapon Training, Lightning Reflexes, Mighty Shot, Pity the Weak, Sprint.

**Traits:** Dark Sight, Power Through Pain, Unnatural Agility (x2).

**Weapons:** Shardcarbine (Basic; 60m; S/3/5; 1d10+4 R; Pen 3; Clip 200; Rld 2 Full; Storm, Toxic), Best Craftsmanship monosword (Melee; 1d10+5 R; Pen 2; Balanced), 3 Eldar plasma grenades (Thrown; 12m; 1d10+8 E; Pen 4; Blast [3], Shocking).

**Gear:** Assorted grisly trophies, 2 clips of shardcarbine rounds.

## REAYER

Riding sleek, swift jetbikes, Reaver are obsessed with killing at speed, and they crave nothing so much as the thrill of taking a life while travelling at breakneck velocities. Whether slaughtering whimpering lesser races during a realspace raid or eviscerating their rivals in a death-race high above the streets, Reavers find joy only by turning their skill as pilots to murderous ends.

Several small Reaver sects gather to the arena of the Withered Blade. Their deadly sport takes place high above the stands amidst razor-sharp obstacles, often simultaneously with the gladiatorial bouts far below. More than a few clashes on the gore-caked sands of the arena floor have been enlivened by a splatter of blood and a shower of body parts and jetbike pieces plummeting from above.

Sometimes the Reavers who fly above the Shadowspine Pits descend to slaughter combatants or even members of the audience in murderous flybys, much to the amusement of those spectators who they have not just eviscerated.

### Reaver

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag                 | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|--------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 51 | 43 | 35 | 33 | 62 <sup>(12)</sup> | 33  | 48  | 36 | 30  |

**Movement:** 6/12/18/36

**Armour:** Wychsuit (All 2).

**Skills:** Awareness (Per) +20, Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Drive (Skimmer) (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S) +10, Pilot (Flyers) (Ag) +10.

**Talents:** Catfall, Crippling Strike, Dark Soul, Exotic Weapon Training (Splinter Pistol, Splinter Rifle), Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Lightning Reflexes, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Paranoia, Step Aside.

**Traits:** Dark Sight, Power Through Pain, Unnatural Agility (x2).

**Weapons:** Splinter pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/3/—; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 120; Rld 2 Full; Toxic) *or* (Melee; 1d5+3 R; Pen 2), mono-knife (Melee; 1d5+3 R; Pen 2).

**Gear:** Grisly prizes wrested from their prey, combat drugs (see page 116), Reaver jetbike (see page 139).





## WYCH OF THE WITHERED BLADE CULT

The Hekatarri gladiators of the Cult of the Withered Blade are best known for the precision of their strikes and the lingering wounds those cuts inflict, and every member of the cult, from the youngest initiate to the Succubus herself, is renowned for the swiftness and precision of her bladework. The greatest of them can slay a foe and leave only the slightest visible mark, hidden to all but the most exhaustive investigation.



### Wych

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag         | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 48 | 41 | 44 | 36 | (12)<br>61 | 33  | 45  | 31 | 28  |

**Movement:** 6/12/18/36

**Armour:** Wychsuit (All 2).

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per), Chem-Use (Int), Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag) +20, Intimidate (S) +10, Silent Move (Ag), Sleight of Hand (Ag).

**Talents:** Ambidextrous, Catfall, Combat Master, Dark Soul, Exotic Weapon Training (Splinter Pistol, Wych Knife), Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Lightning Reflexes, Pity the Weak, Precise Blow, Sprint, Sure Strike, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee), Unarmed Warrior.

**Traits:** Dark Sight, Power Through Pain, Unnatural Agility (x2).

**Weapons:** Splinter pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/3/-; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 120; Rld 2 Full; Toxic) *or* (Melee; 1d5+4 R; Pen 2), wych knife (Melee; 1d10+4 R; Pen 3; Razor-Sharp), unarmed attacks (Melee; 1d10+1 R; Primitive).

**Gear:** 1 dose of combat drugs (see page 116).

**Wounds:** 10

**Total TB:** 3

## HEKATRIX BLOODBRIDE OF THE CULT OF THE WITHERED BLADE

Anyalra's favoured handmaidens, the Bloodbrides are gladiators at the height of their art, masters of the traditional bloodletting techniques of the Cult of the Withered Blade. Each is a magnificent sight in her own right, graceful and deadly, and each has been anointed with the blood of great champions on countless occasions. A scant few have stood in the presence of one of Anyalra's Bloodbrides and lived to tell of it, and all bear the tiny scars of the Bloodbrides' lethal craft.



### Hekatrix Bloodbride

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag         | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 53 | 41 | 51 | 36 | (12)<br>61 | 33  | 45  | 36 | 36  |

**Movement:** 6/12/18/36

**Armour:** Wychsuit (All 2).

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag) +20, Awareness (Per), Charm (Fel), Chem-Use (Int), Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag) +20, Intimidate (S) +10, Silent Move (Ag), Sleight of Hand (Ag).

**Wounds:** 13

**Total TB:** 3

**Talents:** Assassin Strike, Ambidextrous, Catfall, Combat Master, Dark Soul, Exotic Weapon Training (Splinter Pistol, Hydra Gauntlet, Razorflail, Wych Knife), Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Lightning Reflexes, Pity the Weak, Precise Blow, Sprint, Step Aside, Sure Strike, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee), Unarmed Master, Unarmed Warrior.

**Traits:** Dark Sight, Power Through Pain, Unnatural Agility (x2).

**Weapons:** Splinter pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/3/-; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 120; Rld 2 Full; Toxic) *or* (Melee; 1d5+5 R; Pen 2), wych knife (Melee; 1d10+5 R; Pen 3, Razor-Sharp), unarmed attacks (Melee; 1d10+5 R; Pen 0).

**Gear:** 1 dose of combat drugs (see page 116).

## DELICATE LETHALITY (TALENT)

The warriors of the Withered Blade are well-versed in the art of slaying with the tiniest wounds, leaving their prey bleeding and crippled upon the ground with only the smallest and most precise cuts. When a character with this Talent makes a Called Shot attack with a melee weapon or unarmed attack, the weapon counts as having the Crippling (5) Quality. In addition, this character's unarmed attacks deal Rending Damage instead of Impact Damage.





## WYCH BEASTMASTER

Though officially part of the Cult of the Withered Blade, the Beastmasters are a world apart from the Hekatarri. Almost universally male and isolated from the rest of the cult, the Beastmasters are regarded more as a necessity than valued members, for none but the Beastmasters can drive forth the beasts and slaves into the arena with such cruel efficiency.

Each Beastmaster is blessed with a powerful and commanding presence, and even the mightiest and deadliest of beasts will hesitate at a Beastmaster's scornful glare and the way his hand tightens around the handle of his lash. Weapons that inflict debilitating shocks to a target are favoured tools of Beastmasters, allowing them to cow their charges into submission and savour the pain and helplessness that such devices inflict.

### Wych Beastmaster

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag                 | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|--------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 48 | 41 | 46 | 41 | <sup>(10)</sup> 57 | 48  | 45  | 42 | 46  |

**Movement:** 6/12/18/36

**Wounds:** 12

**Armour:** Wychsuit and skyboard (All 4).

**Total TB:** 3

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Chem-Use (Int), Command (Fel) +10, Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S) +20, Pilot (Personal) (Ag), Silent Move (Ag), Sleight of Hand (Ag), Wrangling (Int) +20.

**Talents:** Air of Authority, Ambidextrous, Catfall, Combat Master, Dark Soul, Disturbing Voice, Exotic Weapon Training (Splinter Pod), Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Iron Jaw, Jaded, Lightning Reflexes, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Pity the Weak, Sprint, Sure Strike, Takedown, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee), Unarmed Warrior.

**Traits:** Dark Sight, Power Through Pain, Unnatural Agility (x2).

**Weapons:** Skyboard-mounted splinter pods (Heavy; 50m; S/3/-; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 500; Rld -; Storm, Toxic), agoniser lash (Melee; 3m; 1d10+7 R; Pen 6; Flexible, Shocking, Tearing).

**Gear:** Skyboard, dominion mask†

†**Dominion Mask:** The wearer of a dominion mask may re-roll failed Intimidate and Wrangling Tests.

## HELLION

Where Dark Eldar gather, Hellion gangs are sure to form. Exiled miscreants, feral adolescents, and those scornful of the rule of the Kabals, Hellion gangs roam the skies at will, surviving in whatever ways they can and resentful of any with power, prestige, or privilege. Mounted upon shrieking skyboards, their reflexes and senses heightened by powerful combat drugs, and armed with razor-sharp hellglaves, Hellions are an unpredictable danger to anyone who strays into their domains.

Two dozen or so major Hellion gangs haunt the territories of the Splintered Talon and the Withered Blade, while many more form and collapse within short spans of time, their members absorbed into larger, more powerful gangs or cast to the distant streets below. These gangs sometimes join in the realspace raids launched by the Kabal of the Splintered Talon or the Cult of the Withered Blade, but each group considers itself independent from these powerful organisations.

### Hellion

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag                 | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|--------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 43 | 41 | 44 | 36 | <sup>(10)</sup> 59 | 33  | 45  | 29 | 28  |

**Movement:** 6/12/18/36

**Wounds:** 11

**Armour:** Wychsuit and skyboard (All 4).

**Total TB:** 3

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Chem-Use (Int), Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S) +10, Pilot (Personal) (Ag) +10, Silent Move (Ag), Sleight of Hand (Ag).

**Talents:** Assassin Strike, Ambidextrous, Catfall, Dark Soul, Exotic Weapon Training (Hellglave, Splinter Pod), Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Lightning Reflexes, Pity the Weak, Sprint, Sure Strike, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee).

**Traits:** Dark Sight, Power Through Pain, Unnatural Agility (x2).

**Weapons:** Skyboard-mounted splinter pods (Heavy; 50m; S/3/-; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 500; Rld -; Storm, Toxic), hellglave (Melee; 1d10+7 R; Pen 3; Razor-Sharp).

**Gear:** Skyboard, 1 dose of combat drugs (see page 116).

### SKYBOARD

These single-pilot anti-gravity craft are prized by Hellions as symbols of independence. Each one is heavily personalised, and many have been won in fights or claimed as the spoils of war. Skyboards are sensitive to the slightest pressure, and react to the tiniest of movements on the part of the rider, requiring exceptional skill and reflexes to control effectively.

A character riding a skyboard counts as having the Flyer (15) Trait, and gains +2 AP to all locations from the board's armoured surfaces and its unpredictable movements. Due to the necessity of absolute control over the board, a character riding a skyboard must make Pilot (Personal) Tests in place of Acrobatics or Dodge Tests whenever he would make one of these. Finally, each skyboard is fitted with underslung splinter pods, with the following profile: Skyboard-mounted splinter pods (Heavy; 50m; S/3/-; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 500; Rld -; Storm, Toxic). Skyboards are of Scarce Availability.



## SCOURGE

Flitting between the towering spires of Kabals, the arena complexes of Wyches, and the dank dungeons of Haemonculi, Scourges have seen the full extent of Dark Eldar society and soar contemptuously above it all. Each has been subjected to agonising augmentative and transformative surgeries, grafting great wings to their shoulders, augmenting their flesh with synth-muscle and adrenaline dispensers, and hollowing their bones so that each Scourge can truly fly. Even after these gruelling procedures, a Scourge's ascension is incomplete, for the newly transformed Dark Eldar must soar to the eyries of their new kin upon blood-soaked wings still raw from their implantation, surviving the perils of Hellion gangs and the high-speed hunts of Reavers and Razorwings. Only once this vertical pilgrimage is complete can they truly be called Scourges.

Scourges serve as messengers for the powerful, carrying venom-sealed missives. The recipient has the only means to cure the courier and open the message. This role gives the Scourges great freedom and power, for to slay a Scourge while he performs his duties is punishable by the most creative and painful of deaths. In battle, Scourges favour long-ranged weaponry, unwilling to risk their fragile augmented bodies to the fury of melee, and a flight of Scourges can deliver that firepower to the enemy swiftly and from unexpected angles. The patronage of powerful Archons and Succubi allows a Scourge to afford some of the deadliest and most exotic weaponry, from toxic shardcarbines, to vicious shredders, deadly blasters, and even haywire blasters and heat lances.

### Scourge

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag                 | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|--------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 42 | 48 | 46 | 30 | <sup>(10)</sup> 55 | 33  | 48  | 36 | 32  |

**Movement (Walking):** 5/10/15/30

**Wounds:** 10

**Movement (Flying):** 12/24/36/72

**Armour:** Ghostplate (All 6, PR 20).

**Total TB:** 3

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +20, Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S) +10, Silent Move (Ag) +10, Sleight of Hand (Ag).

**Talents:** Bulging Biceps, Catfall, Dark Soul, Deadeye Shot, Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Hip Shooting, Kabalite Weapon Training, Lightning Reflexes, Mighty Shot, Pity the Weak, Sprint.

**Traits:** Dark Sight, Flyer (12), Power Through Pain, Unnatural Agility (x2).

**Weapons:** Shardcarbine (Basic; 60m; S/3/5; 1d10+4 R; Pen 3; Clip 200; Rld 2 Full; Storm, Toxic), mono-blade (Melee; 1d5+4 R; Pen 2), 3 Eldar plasma grenades (Thrown; 12m; 1d10+8 E; Pen 4; Blast [3], Shocking).

**Gear:** Assorted grisly trophies, 2 clips of shardcarbine rounds.

## WRACK

Drecarus and his coven have countless thousands of assistants, collectively known as Wracks. These degraded, twisted beings no longer resemble the Dark Eldar they once were, but rather the abominations they have chosen to become, resorting to gruesome transformative surgeries in order to stave off the ennui that comes from centuries of debauched experience.

Wracks one day hope to ascend to the ranks of the Haemonculi themselves, though whether or not any amongst them has ever done so is unknown. The Haemonculi, careful with their secrets and essentially immortal, have little room for rivals, only servants, slaves, and subjects. Each Wrack is, however, a capable torturer, alchemist, and physician in its own right, for few Haemonculi are inclined to the indignities of manual labour and instead command their minions to perform the procedures they direct. Some Wracks take the bizarre, specialised results of their masters' dark science onto the battlefield, and equip themselves with liquifier guns, hexrifles, and even stranger contraptions that bring death and pain to their enemies.

### Wrack

| WS | BS | S  | T                 | Ag                | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|-------------------|-------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 47 | 43 | 46 | <sup>(8)</sup> 41 | <sup>(8)</sup> 41 | 42  | 48  | 36 | 12  |

**Movement:** 4/8/12/24

**Wounds:** 19

**Armour:** Gnarlskin (All 2).

**Total TB:** 8

**Skills:** Awareness (Per) +10, Chem-Use (Int) +20, Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int) +10, Dodge (Ag), Interrogate (Int) +10, Intimidate (S) +20, Medicae (Int) +10, Sleight of Hand (Ag).

**Talents:** Ambidextrous, Autosanguine, Catfall, Crushing Blow, Dark Soul, Disturbing Voice, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Jaded, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Pity the Weak, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee).

**Traits:** Altered Physique, Dark Sight, Multiple Arms, Power Through Pain, Unnatural Agility (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

**Weapons:** Envenomed blades, talons and injector-claws (Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 2; Tearing, Toxic).

**Gear:** Surgical tools, phials of blood, bile, tissue samples.

## ALTERED PHYSIQUE (TRAIT)

The creature's anatomy and biochemical composition have been so radically altered that they may only superficially resemble their original species. The creature's toughened, scarred flesh—known as gnarlskin—grants it Natural Armour 2 (or a +2 to any existing Natural Armour), and the creature cannot be harmed by diseases, poisons, or toxic effects. Furthermore, if the creature also has the Power Through Pain Trait, then it automatically regains 1d5 lost Wounds every time it gains a Pain Token. Finally, no creature with Altered Physique can benefit from Dark Eldar combat drugs.



## GROTESQUE

While Wracks are the result of their own depraved ambitions and vile imaginations, Grotesques are beings whose alterations are the result of the cruelty and sickening creativity of the Haemonculi themselves, inflicted upon those who have slighted them or simply been in the wrong place at the wrong time. Each Grotesque is a towering mass of hyper-stimulated muscle and distorted bone, grown wildly out of proportion and shaped into something monstrous. Each is lobotomised, rendering it a mindless slave-beast good only for labours of burden or outbursts of extreme physical violence.

Grotesques are little more than tools to the Haemonculi, slab-muscled bodyguards and shock troops to be used and expended on a whim, and augmented to serve those whims effectively. Many are further enhanced with weapon-tipped limbs that drip with venom or spew corrosive ichor. Their mindless state leaves them docile for the most part, performing simple tasks upon command, but when their master is angered, his wrath drives them into a killing frenzy, and they become virtually unstoppable in spite of even mortal wounds.

| Grotesque |    |            |            |    |     |     |    |     |
|-----------|----|------------|------------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| WS        | BS | S          | T          | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
| 49        | 16 | (12)<br>47 | (10)<br>56 | 38 | 15  | 35  | 22 | 08  |



**Movement:** 4/8/12/24

**Armour:** Gnarlskin (All 2).

**Wounds:** 40

**Total TB:** 10

**Skills:** Awareness (Per), Intimidate (S) +20.

**Talents:** Autosanguine, Berserk Charge, Crushing Blow, Dark Soul, Die Hard, Disturbing Voice, Fearless, Frenzy, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Iron Jaw, Jaded, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Pity the Weak, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee).

**Traits:** Altered Physique, Dark Sight, Fear (1), Hurling, Power Through Pain, Unnatural Agility (x2), Unnatural Strength (x3), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

**Weapons:** Cleaver (Melee; 2d10+14 R; Pen 2; Unbalanced).

**Gear:** Stimulant injectors†.

†**Stimulant Injectors:** Grotesques automatically enter a Frenzy as a Free Action when combat begins.

## Cronos Parasite Engine

Cronos Parasite Engines are terrible creatures built by the insane, arcane science of the Dark Eldar. Ponderous, insectoid creatures, they rip away the very vitality of living creatures with the dread energies of their spirit siphons and pass this stolen life on to their masters, who revel at the sight of husks of foes whose time has been stolen from them.

| Cronos Parasite Engine |    |            |            |    |     |     |    |     |
|------------------------|----|------------|------------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| WS                     | BS | S          | T          | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
| 35                     | 32 | (12)<br>49 | (15)<br>59 | 30 | 18  | 29  | 36 | 02  |



**Movement (Walking):** 3/6/9/18

**Movement (Hovering):** 4/8/12/24

**Wounds:** 60

**Armour:** Armoured carapace (All 10)

**Total TB:** 15

**Skills:** Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S).

**Talents:** Crushing Blow, Die Hard, Fearless, Frenzy, Iron Jaw, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Pity the Weak, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee).

**Traits:** Brutal Charge, Dark Sight, Fear (2), Hoverer (4), Multiple Arms, Power Through Pain, Size (Massive), Strange Physiology, Unnatural Strength (x3), Unnatural Toughness (x3).

**Weapons:** Spirit Probes (Melee; 1d10+12, Pen 4; Shocking, Temporal Leech†), Spirit Siphon (Basic; 20m; 1d10+8; Pen 4; Spray††, Temporal Leech†), Spirit Vortex (Basic; 30m; 1d10+6, Pen 4; Blast [5], Temporal Leech†).

†**Temporal Leech:** Whenever the Cronos Parasite Engine deals Damage (after reductions for Toughness Bonus and Armour have been applied) to a living being in excess of that creature's Willpower Bonus, that character must make a Very Hard (–30) Test with a Characteristic of its choice. For every Degree of Failure on the Test, that creature suffers 1d10 Characteristic Damage to that Characteristic. At the end of any Round in which a creature suffered Damage in this way, every creature with the Power Through Pain Trait that the Cronos Parasite Engine did not attack within 20 metres of it gains a Pain Token.

††**Spray:** The Spirit Siphon fires as if it was a weapon with the Flame Quality in all respects except that it does not count as being heat-based and it does not ignite targets that it hits.



## SLAVES OF THE CULT

The Cult of the Withered Blade has countless slaves, some fighters of terrifying prowess and others mere drudges to feed the beasts that the Dark Eldar unleash in the pits.

### ANGUISHED ELДАР

Rare enough commodities within most Dark Eldar settlements, few Craftworlders or Exodites ever reach the gladiatorial arenas of the Nexus of Shadows. Most are claimed by powerful Dark Eldar as prizes or tributes, their potent souls and intense emotions savoured amidst the petty agony of lesser beings, while others are given to the Haemonculi, who employ their flesh as raw materials while distilling their spirits are into potent elixirs.

Only those few Eldar captured by the Cult of the Withered Blade, and those few given to the Cult's Succubi, ever find their way to the Shadowspine Pits. The mightiest of them have endured countless battles and have lost themselves in the hate and fury of the arena, and have little care for their own lives. Each is permitted to keep his spirit stone, to be defiled, rent open, devoured by his killer, a sensation unlike any other and a reward worthy of the finest performance.

#### Anguished Eldar

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 46 | 43 | 36 | 32 | 51 | 37  | 45  | 47 | 31  |

**Movement:** 5/10/15/30

**Wounds:** 10

**Armour:** Rough leathers (Arms 2, Body 2). **Total TB:** 3

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int), Common Lore (Eldar) (Int) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Silent Move (Ag).

**Talents:** Catfall, Exotic Weapon Training (Shuriken Catapult, Shuriken Pistol, Splinter Pistol), Hard Target, Hatred (Dark Eldar), Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Jaded, Lightning Reflexes, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Sprint, Touched by the Bloody Hand†.

**Traits:** Unnatural Agility (x2).

†**Touched by the Bloody Hand:** This Eldar has been exposed to unending battle, and no creature can endure such a thing unscathed. To survive, he has embraced the rage and ferocity of Kaela Mensha Khaine. As a Full Action, the Eldar may draw upon the ageless fury of the Bloody Handed War God of the Eldar, gaining +10 to Weapon Skill and Agility until the end of the combat, and all of his melee attacks count as having the Tearing Quality, but he also suffers a -10 penalty to Ballistic Skill, Intelligence, and Fellowship during that time and for 1d5 hours afterwards.

**Weapons:** Mono-sword (Melee; 1d10+3 R; Pen 2; Balanced).

**Gear:** Spirit stone.

### BRUTALISED TAU FIRE WARRIOR

Although an impossibly rare sight within the Koronus Expanse, little is beyond the reach of the realspace raids of the Dark Eldar, and the

distant Tau Empire is no exception. Regarded as little more than animals for sport and sustenance in the same ways as humans, Tau are sometimes captured in raids by the Dark Eldar of the Nexus of Shadows, more as a curiosity than for their actual worth, for the souls of Tau are pale, flickering things, meagre even compared to the sputtering light of the human spirit.

The Withered Blade has several dozen grey-skinned Tau warriors remaining within its dungeons, more as fodder for the beasts than for any real sport. Nonetheless, their efforts in the ring amuse Anyalra, who has watched with idle interest as these disciplined warriors have been whittled down to a bare few, surviving by wits and ferocity uncharacteristic of their kind in the circle's bloody conflicts.

#### Brutalised Tau Fire Warrior

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 26 | 34 | 31 | 32 | 32 | 37  | 33  | 34 | 31  |

**Movement:** 2/4/6/12

**Wounds:** 10

**Armour:** Rough leathers (Arms 2, Body 2). **Total TB:** 3

**Skills:** Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Tau) (Int), Speak Language (Tau) (Int).

**Talents:** Exotic Weapon Training (Pulse Carbine, Pulse Rifle), Heightened Senses (Smell).

**Weapons:** Mono-sword (Melee; 1d10+3 R; Pen 2; Balanced), bonding knife (Melee; 1d5+3; Primitive).

**Gear:** None.





## TORMENTED HUMAN

Given their sheer numbers within the galaxy, humans make up the largest proportion of the inhabitants of the Withered Blade's dungeons, and can be found participating in all manner of events. Whether they battle against the cult's Wyches, struggle to fend off the onslaught of beasts, or swarm about as moving targets for the exhibition flights of Reavers, there are humans everywhere within the arena and beyond.

As is commonplace, the Withered Blade tends to trade away or otherwise discard those humans who will provide little sport—the spectacle of the arena is diminished if the victims cannot pose some challenge, no matter how slight, to the Wyches or the beasts, and a swift and easy kill is worth little prestige. Those who are weak of mind or body are swiftly traded away to Kabals or Haemonculi covens, for the Withered Blade seeks those with strength and a spark of fury to better serve their needs. As a result, most of those who find themselves in the Withered Blade's dungeons are fighters, and already bear the scars of las-burn, bullet, and blade. They fight with the righteous hatred and the desperate ferocity of men whose lives were long ago given to battle.

### Tormented Human

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 38 | 38 | 36 | 37 | 34 | 28  | 31  | 34 | 29  |

**Movement:** 3/6/9/18

**Wounds:** 10

**Armour:** Rough leathers (Arms 2, Body 2). **Total TB:** 3

**Skills:** Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Intimidate (S), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int).

**Talents:** Basic Weapon Training (Las, SP), Hatred (Dark Eldar), Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Nerves of Steel, Paranoia, Pistol Training (Las, SP).

**Weapons:** Mono-sword (Melee; 1d10+3 R; Pen 2; Balanced).

**Gear:** None.

## DOMOS AGNELAIN, ENSLAVED MAGOS OF THE ADEPTUS MECHANICUS

Captured some decades ago, Magos-Errant Doms Agnelain was accompanying an Explorator mission into the Koronus Expanse in search of the Gaelan Sphere, when the vessel was attacked by a large group of Dark Eldar whilst performing maintenance rites after a somewhat tumultuous journey through the Warp and taken after a short battle. Over the following years, Agnelain saw his brethren mutilated and flensed down to little more than augmetic-enhanced skeletons driven by shattered minds, yet Agnelain alone was spared the worst of the torturers' cruel attentions. He did not find out why until decades later—the Dark Eldar had discovered that he was the leader amongst the surviving Tech-Priests, if only by dint of his rank, and had spent years siphoning and pillaging lore from the minds of his subordinates before they reached the leader.

After nearly forty years with a dwindling number of fellow captives for company, Agnelain's mind had turned in on itself, focussing on the knowledge he had attained rather than face the horrors of his surroundings, until eventually his captors came for him as well. It took the Dark Eldar a matter of years to unlock the secrets of his mind and begin sifting through them to find anything of use. Doms patches up the slave warriors of the Withered Blade when he is not being called upon by the Cult to create monstrosities to tear the gladiators asunder yet again.

### Magos Doms Agnelain

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 26 | 38 | 29 | 32 | 29 | 58  | 37  | 44 | 18  |

**Movement:** 2/4/6/12

**Wounds:** 12

**Armour:** Rusty cyber-mantle (All 4).

**Total TB:** 3

**Skills:** Common Lore (Machine Cult) (Int) +10, Common Lore (Tech) (Int) +10, Evaluate (Int) +10, Forbidden Lore (Archeotech) (Int) +20, Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus) (Int) +10, Literacy (Int) +10, Logic (Int) +10, Medicae (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Speak Language (Techna-Lingua) (Int) +20, Tech-Use (Int) +20, Trade (Technomat) (Int) +10.

**Talents:** Autosanguine, Basic Weapon Training (Universal), Binary Chatter, Chem Geld, Crippled in Mind and Body†, Electrical Succour, Electrocraft Use, Feedback Screech, Ferric Lure, Jaded, Logis Implant, Luminen Blast, Luminen Charge, Mechadendrite Use (Utility), Melee Weapon Training (Universal), Orthoproxy, The Flesh is Weak (3), Total Recall.

**Traits:** Mechanicus Implants.

†**Crippled in Mind and Body:** Doms Agnelain has been a prisoner of the Dark Eldar for a long time, and has not fared well under their dominion. He has 80 Insanity Points and suffers from a single Acute Disorder: Dead Comrade (Agnelain's old mentor, Magos Pridius Thurizan). Further, none of his Mechanicus Implants or related Talents function properly.

**Weapons:** Rusty mechadendrites (Melee; 1d5–1 R; Pen 0).

**Gear:** None.

## CAPTAIN ANJA SHEN, COMMANDER OF THE HOSTILE TRANSACTION

One of numerous voidborn pirates who ply the routes around Footfall, Captain Shen gained name for herself and her vessel until it vanished without a trace, like so many other ships in the Koronus Expanse. *The Hostile Transaction* was captured and dragged away by vessels belonging to the Kabal of the Splintered Talon, one more prize for the Archon's trophy vaults and another haul of slaves to fill the Withered Blade's arena for a short span of time.

Being condemned to the arena is perhaps a kinder fate for Shen and her crew than any other that could have awaited them. At least within the arena they are offered the chance—albeit a slim chance—to survive long enough to determine a method



of escape. Having eluded Imperial Navy patrols and avoided the reprisals of rivals and victims alike, Anja Shen prides herself on being able to slip out of unpleasant situations, though this current predicament is taking longer than usual to crack. Nonetheless, she is not without a trick or two—a digital laser is concealed within a compartment within her bionic arm. That she has not been forced to give it up is more due to the amusement of the Dark Eldar at this human's attempts to cheat death than because of her own talent for subterfuge, but her captors may have allowed her to keep just the advantage she needs to escape.

### Captain Anja Shen



| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 44 | 38 | 34 | 42 | 34 | 34  | 37  | 42 | 36  |

**Movement:** 4/8/12/24

**Wounds:** 15

**Armour:** Rough leathers (Arms 2, Body 2). **Total TB:** 3

**Skills:** Awareness (Per), Barter (Fel), Charm (Fel), Command (Fel) +10, Commerce (Fel), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Common Lore (Merchant) (Int), Common Lore (Underworld) (Int) +10, Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Evaluate (Int), Forbidden Lore (Pirates) (Int) +10, Interrogate (WP), Intimidate (S), Inquiry (Fel), Navigation (Stellar) (Int) +10, Pilot (Space Craft) (Ag), Scholastic Lore (Astromancy) (Int), Security, Sleight of Hand (Ag) +10, Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Speak Language (Void Cant) (Int), Trade (Voidfarer) (Ag).

**Talents:** Air of Authority, Basic Weapon Training (Universal), Concealed Cavity, Decadence, Exotic Weapon Training (Digi-Laser), Hatred (Dark Eldar, Imperial Navy), Iron Discipline, Jaded, Light Sleeper, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive, Universal), Nerves of Steel, Paranoia, Peer (Criminals), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Resistance (Fear), Swift Attack.

**Weapons:** Mono-sword (Melee; 1d10+3 R; Pen 2; Balanced), concealed digi-laser (Pistol; 3m; S/-/-; 1d10+3 E; Pen 7; Clip 1; Rld Full; Reliable).

**Gear:** Good Craftsmanship bionic arm with small compartment, 3 digi-laser charge packs, one small effigy of Anyalra filled with sharp objects.

### LUDVOS TARN, BROTHER-SERGEANT OF THE IMPERIAL FISTS

Captured over a decade ago by a Splintered Talon raid, Ludvos Tarn was the senior squad sergeant of Strike Force Falchion, a small Imperial Fists battle group operating from a squadron of rapid strike vessels, intended to quell a campaign of Eldar raids within the Calixis Sector. While the raids eventually ceased due to the Imperial Fists' counter-assaults, several Battle-Brothers were taken captive. Ludvos Tarn is the only survivor of those brought back to the Nexus of Shadows.

Long ago stripped of his war gear, Tarn still holds true to the Emperor and is a figure of awe and devotion for the human captives imprisoned alongside him, both because he is a member of the Adeptus Astartes and because he is one of the few enduring figures of leadership they have. Tarn's history amongst the Dark Eldar is well-known amongst the humans, though perhaps somewhat exaggerated—it is claimed that he was given as a gift of patronage to Drecarus, so that the Haemonculus could break the warrior's iron will and unmake his superhuman flesh. Drecarus, to his ire, was unable to achieve either, for the fortitude of the Imperial Fist was too great for even the Arch-Agonist to overcome, and out of spite he was given to the Withered Blade to die within their arenas.

Clearly, Tarn did not die, though when questioned about his past, his response is typically a grim smile and three simple words: "The Emperor Protects." Testing the limits of his Chapter's vaunted resistance to pain and despair has occupied the Cult of the Withered Blade for years, and their best efforts have not yet revealed any results besides the broken corpses of his foes. In battle, he is as mighty as the reputation of his brethren would suggest.

### Brother-Sergeant Ludvos Tarn



| WS | BS | S         | T          | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|-----------|------------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 58 | 56 | (8)<br>49 | (10)<br>53 | 48 | 46  | 44  | 61 | 48  |

**Movement:** 4/8/12/24

**Wounds:** 25

**Armour:** Leathers (Arms 2, Body 2). **Total TB:** 10

**Skills:** Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Common Lore (War) (Int) +10, Intimidate (S) +20, Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis) (Int), Speak Language (High Gothic) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int) +10.

**Talents:** Ambidextrous, Basic Weapon Training (Universal), Bulging Biceps, Crippling Strike, Crushing Blow, Die Hard, Disarm, Duty Unto Death, Fearless, Hardy, Hatred (Dark Eldar), Heightened Senses (Sight, Hearing), Iron Discipline, Iron Jaw, Lightning Reflexes, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive, Universal), Peer (Adeptus Astartes), Pistol Training (Universal), Resistance (Poisons, Psychic Techniques), Swift Attack, True Grit, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee), Unarmed Master, Unarmed Warrior.

**Traits:** Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

**Weapons:** 2 mono-swords (Melee; 1d10+10 R; Pen 2; Balanced), unarmed attacks (Melee; 1d10+10 I; Pen 0).

**Gear:** None.





## NASHRIK HAKH, SAVAGE KROOT

Captured alongside the remnants of a cadre of Tau, Nashrik Hakh has survived where many of her kin have not. The strength, agility, sensory acuity, and most of all the genetic pliancy of the Kroot saw her kindred divided between the laboratories of Drekarus and the fighting pits of the Withered Blade. Of the former, none but Drekarus know their fates. Of the latter, only Nashrik survives, her kin having been driven like beasts into the arena time and again without respite.

Nashrik herself is far from intact. Having triumphed in an early battle, she took the opportunity to sate her hunger upon the cadaver of her foe, only to find that the Wyche's drug-polluted flesh reacted poorly with her physiology. She struggles to maintain her sense of self against the toxins that seared her brain as they flooded her body, but the senseless ferocity of a feral oblivion grows nearer with every passing day.

| Nashrik Hakh |    |            |    |    |     |            |    |     |
|--------------|----|------------|----|----|-----|------------|----|-----|
| WS           | BS | S          | T  | Ag | Int | Per        | WP | Fel |
| 49           | 32 | (10)<br>51 | 46 | 51 | 28  | (10)<br>53 | 26 | 28  |

**Movement:** 5/10/15/30

**Wounds:** 16

**Armour:** Rough leathers (Arms 2, Body 2). **Total TB:** 4

**Skills:** Awareness (Per) +20, Concealment (Ag) +20, Intimidate (S), Silent Move (Ag) +20, Speak Language (Kroot) (Int), Speak Language (Tau) (Int), Survival (Int) +20, Tracking (Int) +20.

**Talents:** Basic Weapon Training (Primitive, SP), Berserk Charge, Frenzy, Heightened Senses (All), Lightning Reflexes, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Polyglot, Sprint, Swift Attack.

**Traits:** Natural Weapon (Beak), Unnatural Perception (x2), Unnatural Strength (x2).

**Weapons:** Mono-sword (Melee; 1d10+10 R; Pen 2; Balanced), beak (Melee; 1d5+10 R; Primitive).

**Gear:** A single ragged quill from her former Shaper's head.

## NEIJA TROMEAN, WARP-WYRD

"Neija Tromean is cursed." Those are likely to be the first words from the lips of any person who has encountered her. Escaping from the grasp of the Imperium and the toil of Sepheris Secundus, she found passage to the fringes of the Calixis Sector aboard ore freighters and other transports, always escaping the calamities that befell those who carried her, until the most recent instance. When she attempted to gain passage to the Koronus Expanse, her vessel was attacked by Dark Eldar Raiders.

The Kabal that claimed her fell to the machinations of another within a week of her arrival in the Dark City, and she has since been within the ownership of several other Kabals and cults within Dark Eldar society, each one crumbling due to completely unrelated events, as if misfortune is attracted to this young woman. Now, she is condemned to the arena of the Withered Blade thanks to the machinations of a rival Wych cult seeking to gain a foothold in the Nexus of Shadows. For her part, Neija is biding her time before some new calamity befalls her captors.

## Neija Tromean

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 28 | 28 | 30 | 38 | 36 | 28  | 37  | 48 | 23  |

**Movement:** 3/6/9/18

**Wounds:** 13

**Armour:** Rough leathers (Arms 2, Body 2). **Total TB:** 3

**Fate Points:** 2

**Skills:** Awareness (Per), Ciphers (Occult) (Int), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Common Lore (Calixis Sector) +10, Deceive (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (Cults) (Int), Forbidden Lore (Warp) (Int), Intimidate (S), Invocation (WP) +10, Psyniscience (Per) +10, Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int).

**Talents:** Accursed Presence†, Dark Soul, Fearless, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Psy Rating 5, Resistance (Psychic Techniques), Touched by the Fates.

**Psychic Powers:** Telepathy Discipline (Beastmaster, Compel, Delude, Mind Probe, Short-Ranged Telepathy, Terrify), Telekinesis Discipline (Precision Telekinesis).

†**Accursed Presence:** Misfortune, both minor and major, seems to accompany Neija on her travels. When attempting to spend a Fate Point to re-roll a failed Test within 100m of Neija, roll 1d10. On a 1, the Fate Point is spent, but no re-roll may be made. Further, should she end up as a passenger on the Explorer's vessel, there is a cumulative 5% chance that a Misfortune will occur every week she is aboard—roll on **Table 9–14: Misfortunes** on page 284 of the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook to determine what Misfortune, if any, she causes.

**Weapons:** Mono-sword (Melee; 1d10+3 R; Pen 2; Balanced).

**Gear:** Psychic Suppressor†.

†**Psychic Suppressor:** While this device is fitted, Neija is considered to have a Psy Rating of 0 and may not attempt Focus Power Tests.

## RELHADHAR ANTARIEL, THE HAWK AT SHADOW S EDGE

A noteworthy corsair and pirate within the Koronus Expanse, Relhadhar once served aboard the *Memory of Lament* under the renowned Pirate Prince Caeluthin Baharrudor, before parting ways with the Twilight Swords to seek his own destiny. For over a century, the Corsair band known as Antariel's Hawks grew increasingly bloodthirsty and vicious in their raids, and even sold their services to the Shadowed Thorns, being shunned by the Twilight Swords and the Kaelor Craftworld in the process. Disaster struck, however, when their activities drew the wrath of the Splintered Talon, who ambushed Antariel's forces within the webway and dragged the bounty of Eldar captives away.

For decades, Antariel was the favoured plaything of the Lord of the Splintered Talon, but even so valuable a prize can become tiresome in time, and with every passing year, the Corsair grew increasingly bitter, his passion soured by the torture of his existence. When he tore out the throat of the Splintered Talon's foremost Lhamaeon with his own teeth, and cut down the remainder of the Talonlord's court



with the poisoner's knives, Antariel was cast aside, gifted to Anyalra to die in the arena. Against the odds, Antariel has survived even there, where his viciousness is met with applause from crowds, who regard him as something of a favoured adversary for the Withered Blade's Wyches.



### Relhadhar Antariel

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag      | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|---------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 54 | 33 | 4I | 38 | (12) 62 | 35  | 45  | 47 | 3I  |

**Movement:** 6/12/18/36

**Wounds:** 13

**Armour:** Rough leathers (Arms 2, Body 2).

**Total TB:** 3

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Common Lore (Dark Eldar) (Int), Common Lore (Eldar) (Int) +10, Dodge (Ag) +20, Intimidate (S) +10, Silent Move (Ag).

**Talents:** Ambidextrous, Catfall, Exotic Weapon Training (Shuriken Catapult, Shuriken Pistol, Splinter Pistol, Wych Knife), Hard Target, Hatred (Dark Eldar), Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Jaded, Lightning Reflexes, Melee Weapon Training (Universal), Resistance (Poison), Sprint, Step Aside, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee).

**Traits:** Unnatural Agility (x2), Touched by the Bloody Hand†.

**Touched by the Bloody Hand:** This Eldar has been exposed to unending battle, and no creature can endure such a thing unscathed. To survive, he has embraced the rage and ferocity of Kaela Mensha Khaine, and succumbed to its lure. As a Full Action, the Eldar may draw upon the ageless fury of the Bloody Handed War God of the Eldar, gaining +10 to Weapon Skill and Agility until the end of the combat, and all of his melee attacks count as having the Tearing Quality, but he also suffers a -10 penalty to Ballistic Skill, Intelligence, and Fellowship during that time and for 1d5 hours afterwards.

**Weapons:** 2 stolen wych knives (Melee; 1d10+4 R; Pen 3; Razor-Sharp).

**Gear:** Spirit stone.

## BEASTS OF THE ARENA

The Shadowspine Pits play host to countless horrors from across the Koronus Expanse and beyond. This section includes a list of some—but hardly all—of the terrible creatures the Explorers might face on the sands of the arena.



## CHRONO-GLADIATOR

It was a glorious day for the Cult of the Withered Blade when they first learned of the concept of chrono-gladiators from the chatter of slaves. The human whose idle words had brought it to their attention was subsequently rewarded by being transformed into the first of many such creatures produced for the cult. A chrono-gladiator is a warrior living on borrowed time—each one is fitted with devices that will slay him when his own personal clock reaches zero. The only way to increase the time remaining is to kill.

The Cult of the Withered Blade has ordered the creation of countless of chrono-gladiators by captured Tech-Priests. Each is subjected to horrific torments and forcibly addicted to a unique cocktail of combat stimulants and pain suppressants. Injectors within their bodies provide the chemicals with every life they take, but the doses provide only brief respite. The quantities within each gland are small, and the withdrawal symptoms are lethal, resulting in agonising pain as their bodily fluids react violently, and then explosively, with one another. To ensure that the deaths of chrono-gladiators are not wasted, they are held in stasis between battles.



### Chrono-gladiator

| WS | BS | S      | T      | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|--------|--------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 48 | 23 | (6) 38 | (6) 32 | 54 | 26  | 3I  | 36 | 22  |

**Movement:** 5/10/15/30

**Wounds:** 16

**Armour:** Implanted plates (All 3).

**Total TB:** 6

**Skills:** Awareness (Per), Intimidate (S) +10.

**Talents:** Ambidextrous, Autosanguine, Crushing Blow, Fearless, Melee Weapon Training (Universal), Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee).

**Traits:** Unnatural Speed, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2), The Ticking Clock†.

†**The Ticking Clock:** Chrono-gladiators deployed by the Cult of the Withered Blade are driven by a physiological need for particular drugs secreted by their augmented bodies that are only released when they kill. Upon killing a creature, the chrono-gladiator gains an additional level of Unnatural Strength and becomes immune to Fatigue and all Critical Effects that do not cause death or the loss of body parts for 1d5 Rounds. Any further kills made within this time add 1d5 Rounds to the end of the current duration. Should a chrono-gladiator not gain a dose of the drugs within 5 Rounds of the benefits ceasing—either through inability to kill, or through a lack of drugs remaining—it immediately suffers a level of Fatigue and 1d5 Explosive Damage to the Body, ignoring Armour and Toughness Bonus. This Damage and Fatigue repeats every 5 Rounds until the chronogladiator receives another dose of the drugs.

**Weapons:** Multiple sets of implanted talons (Melee; 1d10+8 R; Pen 3; Razor-Sharp, Toxic).

**Gear:** Implanted stimm-inductor with 2d10 doses remaining.



## FLESHWROUGHT DRAKE

Holding a place of pride within the Withered Blade's beast cages, these monstrosities were once entirely mundane Carnosaurs on a distant, nameless primordial world. Favoured upon their acquisition for their simplicity and the spectacle of their size and power, these creatures have been slain on countless occasions and resurrected each time by the labours of Haemonculi, who have not hesitated to improve upon the creatures.

Now, a Fleshwrought Drake is a hybrid of flesh and venom, its decayed muscles renewed by hypersteroids and vivisect-grafts, its blood replaced by a deadly mixture of unnatural chemicals, and its bestial mind supplanted by Drecarus' own invention, the spider-like Effigy Matrix.

### Fleshwrought Drake

| WS | BS | S       | T       | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|---------|---------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 42 | 15 | (12) 65 | (15) 58 | 31 | 18  | 42  | 31 | 01  |

**Movement:** 5/10/15/30

**Armour:** Gnarlskin over scale (All 4).

**Skills:** Awareness (Per).

**Talents:** Berserk Charge, Die Hard, Fearless, Furious Assault, Heightened Senses (Smell), Iron Jaw.

**Traits:** Altered Physique, Deadly Natural Weapons, Enormous, From Beyond, Natural Armour (Scaled Hide and Gnarlled Skin), Quadruped, Size (Enormous), Toxic, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x3).

**Weapons:** Augmented bite (Melee; 1d10+14 R; Pen 4; Tearing, Toxic), maw-mounted liquifier gun† (Basic; 20m; S/-/-; 2d10+2 E; Pen 2; Flame, Toxic).

†**Maw-mounted Liquifier Gun:** As described in the liquifier gun entry on page 111, this inbuilt weapon causes 1d5 I Damage that is not reduced by Armour or Toughness Bonus to the Fleshwrought Drake each time that the creature fires it, vomiting forth its own lifeblood onto its prey.

## ARIADNE HELSPIDER

For better or worse, the arachnid form is commonplace across the galaxy, and has been for longer than any alive can recall. Countless trillions of species of spiders and similar organisms exist on innumerable worlds and parts beyond, and the webway is no exception. Native to the ragged and twisted webway tunnels that stretch across and beyond the Calixis Sector, the Koronus Expanse, and the Screaming Vortex between, the Ariadne Hespider is a vicious, many-legged creature that seems unfettered by the normal passage of time. Its wounds heal as if its flesh was reverting to a past state, its attacks seem to strike home even though the creature remains some metres distant, and blows struck against it seem impossibly to miss, as if they had never happened.

Hunted for sport by the Dark Eldar of the Nexus of Shadows, Hespiders are a local favourite of the Beastmasters of the Shadowspine Pits. The audience also enjoys the unique confusion and suffering these creatures can inflict. Further, these beasts also make their pit matches more exciting by

their habit of manipulating the web of fate to slip past the normally impenetrable fields that keep the combatants in the ring. It is not unheard of for these creatures to run rampant through the stands until being brought under control, to the delight of any Dark Eldar not in their path.

### Ariadne Hespider

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag      | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|---------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 39 | 33 | 49 | 38 | (15) 51 | 12  | 45  | 31 | 01  |

**Movement:** 16/32/48/96

**Armour:** Chitinous carapace (All 3).

**Skills:** Acrobatic (Ag), Awareness (Per) +10, Concealment (Ag), Climb (S) +20, Dodge (Ag), Psyniscience (Per), Silent Move (Ag). **Talents:** Assassin Strike, Heightened Senses (Sight), Improved Warp Sense, Rapid Reaction, Sure Strike, Talented (Climb), Step Aside, Warp Sense.

**Traits:** Bestial, Dark Sight, Deadly Natural Weapons, From Beyond, Multiple Arms, Natural Armour (Chitinous Carapace), Quadruped (8 legs), Regeneration, Scrawny, Strange Physiology, Unnatural Agility (x3), Unnatural Senses (20m), Temporal Predator†, Warp Weapon.

†**Temporal Predator:** An Ariadne Hespider seems capable of re-weaving time as it hunts, finding futures in which it struck true and was not harmed in return. Each turn, an Ariadne Hespider may re-roll a single missed attack roll or Dodge Test. Those who encounter a Hespider in battle find themselves becoming confused by conflicting memories as time alters around them, and at the end of any combat involving Ariadne Hespiders, a character must pass an **Ordinary (+10) Willpower Test** or a **Difficult (-10) Intelligence Test**. Any sentient creature that fails this Test gains 1 Insanity Point, plus one additional Insanity Point per Degree of Failure.

**Weapons:** Time-rending mandibles† (Melee; 10m; 1d10+4 R; Stasis Venom††), webbing (Basic; 20m; S/-/-; Snare).

†**Time-Rending Mandibles:** Thanks to the anachronistic quirks of its physiology, the Ariadne Hespider's grasp sometimes exceeds its reach. It can make melee attacks against foes up to 10 metres away as if it was adjacent to them. Due to the paradoxical nature of these strikes, attempts to Dodge or Parry them suffer a -10 penalty.

††**Stasis Venom:** This potent and unusual venom works by holding a victim within a singular moment of existence until their metabolism overcomes it. The Haemonculi of the Sutured Helix prize the creature's venom, as it preserves its victims perfectly. A creature wounded by an Ariadne Hespider's mandibles must pass a Toughness Test with a -5 penalty for each wound inflicted by the attack. Failure causes the creature to be Stunned for a number of Rounds equal to 1d5+2 minus the victim's Toughness Bonus, to a minimum of 1. While Stunned by stasis venom, a creature cannot be harmed in any way by any source—the creature is frozen in time.



## CLAWED FIEND

Of all the unpleasant creatures in the pens of the Dark Eldar, none can surpass the raw animal ferocity of the Clawed Fiend. A Clawed Fiend is a mound of corded muscle, covered by durable grey fur. Every one of its extremities is lethal, from its shredding talons, to its bone-bladed tail, to its great, red head set, with slaver jaws and far too many beady eyes. Perhaps even more startling than the creature's physique is the savagery with which it pursues prey. Terrors in their own right, Clawed Fiends hardly need to feel the indelicate touch of a Beastmaster's lash to be hunters of the highest calibre. When harmed, however, this beast enters a slashing madness, converting its assailants into a gruesome red slurry as it tears and bellows at everything and anything around it.

The Dark Eldar delight in such violence, of course, and so Clawed Fiends are prized by many Beastmasters, including those of the Cult of the Withered Blade, both as creatures to fight in the Shadowspine Pits and as extra muscle for the realspace raids that drag new fodder back to the arenas. More information on Clawed Fiends in the Koronus Expanse is available in **THE KORONUS BESTIARY**.

### Clawed Fiend

| WS | BS | S      | T      | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|--------|--------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 48 | 05 | (6) 35 | (8) 43 | 47 | 20  | 32  | 23 | 05  |

**Movement:** 5/10/15/30

**Wounds:** 38

**Armour:** Toughened Skin (All 4)

**Total TB:** 8

**Skills:** Awareness (Per), Climb (Str) +10.

**Talents:** Berserk Charge, Bestial Fury†, Blind Fighting, Combat Master, Crushing Blow, Iron Jaw, Nerves of Steel, Takedown.

**Traits:** Animalistic Fury†, Bestial, Brutal Charge, Dark-Sight, Fear (2), Natural Armour, Natural Weapons, Size (Hulking), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2), Unnatural Sight (25 metres).

**Weapons:** Claws (Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 1; Tearing), tail claw (Melee; 3m; 1D10 R; Tearing, Flexible).

†**Animalistic Fury:** If the Fiend suffers one or more wounds, it automatically gains the Frenzy and Lightning Attack Talents for the remainder of the combat.

## KHYMERA

Spawned in fractured corners of the Warp where mortal dreams twist, grow, and burst forth into living creatures of nightmare, Khymerae are savage, feline hunters kept in realspace through the copious efforts of Dark Eldar Beastmasters. Despite the difficulty of keeping these creatures in the materium, to say nothing of keeping them under control once there, Khymerae resonate with the sadistic psyche of the Dark Eldar in a way that natural beasts cannot, and Beastmasters are often found trailing packs of these hulking, ethereal beasts, driving them ever onward to greater and greater heights of slaughter.

In the pits of the Nexus of Shadows, there are few sights more outwardly unnatural and horrifying than a pack of Khymerae phase-shifting through a solid wall to rend the flesh of a group of slaves with their claws and lashing tendrils of knotted flesh. These wretches serve as fodder for the warp-spawned Khymerae, and the Dark Eldar drink deep of their terror. More information on Khymerae in the Koronus Expanse is available in **THE KORONUS BESTIARY**.

### Khymera

| WS | BS | S  | T      | Ag      | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|--------|---------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 45 | —  | 40 | (6) 36 | (10) 54 | 15  | 40  | 35 | 01  |

**Movement:** 12/24/36/72

**Wounds:** 21

**Armour:** None

**Total TB:** 6

**Skills:** Awareness (Per), Tracking (Int), Silent Movie (Ag).

**Talents:** Furious Assault, Hard Target, Heightened Senses (all), Swift Attack.

**Traits:** Bestial, Daemonic (TB 6), Daemonic Presence†, Dark Sight, Fear (3), From Beyond, Multiple Arms, Natural Weapons, Phase, Quadruped, Size (Hulking), Unnatural Agility (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2), Warp Instability.

†**Daemonic Presence:** All creatures within 20 metres suffer a -10 penalty to Willpower Tests.

**Weapons:** Teeth and Claws (Melee; 1d10+4 R; Pen 0; Tearing), Raptorial Arms (Melee; 2m; 1d10+4 I; Pen 1; Flexible).

## RAZORWING

Compared with Khymerae and Clawed Fiends, Razorwing flocks seem positively mundane. The large avians do not at first appear to be a threat to a seasoned traveller—and it is this fact that makes them so very deadly. Razorwings are blisteringly fast and agile, capable of outmanoeuvring a flying Hellion ganger on his skyboard, and their hardened talons, beaks, and razor-tipped feathers can strip a body of armour and flesh in an instant. It is not unknown for flocks of Razorwings to reduce their prey to a mess of bones and blood in a single pass before carrying off the skeleton of their victim to devour elsewhere.

Anyalra always takes a particular interest when her Beastmasters unleash these graceful, feathered killers in the arena. More information on Razorwings in the Koronus Expanse is available in **THE KORONUS BESTIARY**.

### Razorwing

| WS | BS | S  | T  | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 47 | 01 | 31 | 33 | 52 | 22  | 38  | 23 | 10  |

**Movement (Walking):** 2/4/6/12

**Wounds:** 10

**Movement (Flying):** 8/16/24/48

**Armour:** Toughened Feathers (All 2).

**Total TB:** 3

**Skills:** Dodge (Ag), Silent Move (Ag).

**Talents:** Frenzy, Furious Assault, Lightning Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Step Aside, Swift Attack.



**Traits:** Bestial, Flyer (8), Natural Armour, Improved Natural Weapons, Size (Scrawny).

**Weapons:** Beak (Melee; 1d10+3 R; Pen 1; Tearing), wings (Melee; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Razor Sharp).

## MURDERFIEND SERVITOR

The particular talents of Domos Agnelain have not gone to waste, and the depths of his knowledge have been sifted and sorted on many occasions to find some morsel of worth. Seldom are any of the secrets of the Adeptus Mechanicus of value to the Dark Eldar, for their eldritch technology is as sorcery to the sciences of the Martian priesthood. However, it is not lore that the thought-pillagers and meme-scalpels seek, but concepts that bring new sights and sensations to the Nexus of Shadows.

Servitorisation is not a concept entirely unfamiliar to the Dark Eldar—Grotesques are, after all, lobotomised slaves of a similar sort—but the notions of Murder-servitors and Arco-flagellants found approval in the dark cliques of the Nexus when they were mined from Magos Domos' brain. Autonomous killing machines designed to terrorise and slaughter appealed to the murderous decadence of the Talonlord's court, and when these concepts were found in the Magos' mental archives, Drecarus' Haemonculi almost immediately began work to create something similar. Wrought from the flesh of Dark Eldar who were deserving of some cruel and unusual punishment, Murderfiend Servitors are vicious, swift, and entirely remorseless creatures, seeking only the deaths of those around them and to slake the unholy thirst that still burns their hollow souls.

### Murderfiend Servitor

| WS | BS | S                 | T                 | Ag                 | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 55 | 06 | <sup>(6)</sup> 38 | <sup>(6)</sup> 39 | <sup>(12)</sup> 64 | 16  | 41  | 12 | 04  |

**Movement:** 6/12/18/36

**Wounds:** 12

**Armour:** Mechanical form (All 4).

**Total TB:** 6

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Ag), Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S) +20.

**Talents:** Ambidextrous, Autosanguine, Catfall, Crippling Strike, Frenzy, Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Sight, Hearing), Sprint, Swift Attack.

**Traits:** Dark Sight, Fear (1), From Beyond, Machine (4), Deadly Natural Weapons, Power From Pain, Unnatural Agility (x2), Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

**Weapons:** Implanted eviscerator blades (Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 3; Razor-Sharp, Tearing).

**Gear:** Stimulant injectors†.

†**Stimulant Injectors:** Murderfiend Servitors automatically enter a Frenzy as a Free Action when combat begins.

# VEHICLES AND VESSELS

This section provides full rules to allow GMs to employ the graceful and deadly voidships and vehicles of the Dark Eldar in this adventure and in beyond.

## DARK ELДАР VOIDSHIPS

In addition to the real pace raids that venture directly from the webway to the surface of worlds, the Dark Eldar employ fleets of swift and vicious raiding craft, similar to the vessels of their Craftworlder and Corsair cousins in some ways, but distinct in many others. Dismissive of the graceful aesthetics of Craftworlder starship design, Dark Eldar starships are exercises in excess, with every vessel a canvas upon which shipwright, Archon, and Haemonculus alike have unleashed the vilest fruits of their imagination. For a ship to bear deck after deck of torture chambers is common, to better sustain the unnatural hunger of the crew on their voyages, but many vessels also include far more imaginative spectacles of brutality.

As such, the vessels of the Dark Eldar, while bearing many superficial similarities to one another, are all unique creations, outfitted to the particular desires of their creators and commanders. Classifying such ships is difficult, and though many long and dusty treatises exist to exhaustively classify these differing configurations in Imperial Navy archives, each new contact with the Dark Eldar invariably renders some of these theories invalid.

Whilst such pedantry may be entirely fitting within the comfortable confines of Naval bases and Administratum facilities, the needs of front-line commanders are different, and Imperial Navy captains and Rogue Traders alike have come to refer to these wildly differing vessels by two broad designations: the Torture-class cruiser, and the Corsair-class raider.

## DARK ELДАР SPECIAL RULES

All Dark Eldar ships are subject to the special rules detailed below. Note that, while similarities in design do exist between the vessels of the Dark Eldar and those of their Craftworld cousins, the Dark Eldar do not use or benefit from the special rules for Eldar vessels in other **ROGUE TRADER** books such as **LURE OF THE EXPANSE** and **BATTLEFLEET KORONUS** unless noted. Any rules that these disparate factions have in common are listed here in full.

**Master Starfarers:** Like their Craftworld kin, the Dark Eldar are some of the most accomplished starfarers in the galaxy, and their ships are designed to make the best use of their talents. Any Dark Eldar aboard a Dark Eldar vessel may re-roll any Piloting Tests for Manoeuvre Actions.

**Slave-takers:** The warriors who serve aboard Dark Eldar vessels are vicious, cruel, and bloodthirsty beings, and are made deadlier by the agony of their prey. They will often drag away scores of crew during their raids and boarding actions. During Boarding Actions, Dark Eldar vessels add +10 to any Command Tests, and inflict 1d5+2 Crew Population and



1d5+2 Morale Damage. During Hit and Run Attacks, Dark Eldar vessels add +20 to Command Tests and may choose to inflict 1d10 Crew Population and 1d10 Morale Damage instead of dealing a Critical Hit as they round up enemy crew and drag them away. A Dark Eldar vessel regains lost Crew Population and Morale equal to the amount of Damage that it inflicts to Crew Population and Morale during any Boarding Action or Hit and Run Attack, as the agony of the victims and slaves restores and invigorates the Dark Eldar crew.

**Sharks of the Void:** Dark Eldar vessels are impelled by all manner of exotic technologies, ranging from rows of aethersails that capture the spectral winds of the webway, to plasma drives that burn with the chained fury of enslaved stars, to gravitic impulse engines that bend the potent energies of a captured black hole to the crew's will. In all cases, Dark Eldar vessels are swift and agile, able to easily outpace and outmanoeuvre their prey. Dark Eldar ships gain a +20 bonus on the Flank Speed Extended Action (or, if using the NPC Starship Actions rules in **BATTLEFLEET KORONUS**, roll an additional 1d5 and discard the lowest when determining additional Speed), and do not have to move at least half their speed before turning. All Dark Eldar vessels, regardless of type or class, may turn up to 90 degrees.

**Shadowfields:** Rather than the brutish void shields employed by humans, the Dark Eldar wreath their vessels in an inky blackness that makes them almost invisible against the cold, dark void. These fields confound even the electromantic scrying of starship augurs, concealing the vessel's heat and emissions from prying eyes. All attacks against a vessel with a functioning shadowfield suffer a -40 penalty on any Test to hit the vessel in addition to other penalties. Macrobatteries, which operate by filling the void with ordinance, suffer only a -20 penalty to hit. Ships also suffer a -30 to any attempts to use any Extended Actions against a ship protected by shadowfields that involve Detection (such as Lock On or Focussed Augury). Finally, a vessel with shadowfields may travel at full speed and adds +10 on all Manoeuvre Tests made while on Silent Running.

**Mimic Engines:** Many Dark Eldar ships are equipped with strange devices that can be used to project false emissions during their approach, tricking their enemies into thinking that an ally approaches, not an enemy. Each Dark Eldar vessel employing mimic engines must be operating on Silent Running (to better hide behind the falsehood they are projecting), and may nominate a single class of vessel to appear as. This class of vessel must be of similar size to the Dark Eldar vessel—Raiders may appear as transports, raiders or frigates, while cruisers can appear as light cruisers, cruisers, battlecruisers, or grand cruisers. Vessels may attempt a **Challenging (+0) Scrutiny+Detection Test** to spot the inconsistencies in the illusion and detect the Dark Eldar vessel behind it, though crews which have encountered Dark Eldar before gain a +20 on this Test as they know the subtle telltale signs of a mimic engine.

**Arrogance and Spite:** Dark Eldar vessels have no void shields and always have their shadowfields active unless these systems have been disabled or destroyed.

## DARK ELДАР WEAPONRY

The following rules apply to certain Dark Eldar weapons, reflecting their exotic and alien nature:

**Disintegrator Macrocannons:** Unlike the solid shells and unrefined lasers of human vessels, Dark Eldar employ weapons similar to their vehicle-mounted disintegrator cannons, sophisticated devices that unleash salvoes of unstable matter torn from the hearts of stolen suns. Equipped with advanced targeting systems, all attacks made with disintegrator macrocannons add a +10 to Ballistic Skill Tests.

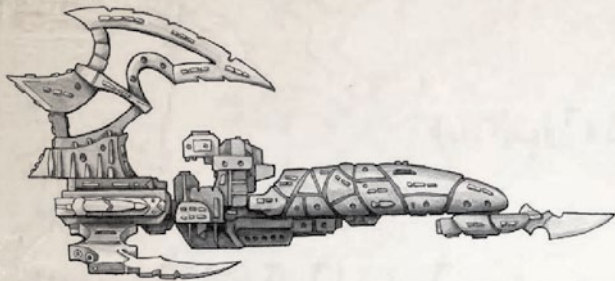
**Phantom Lance:** These weapons harness the unstable energy known as Darklight, said to be drawn from massive celestial phenomena, to annihilate their foes. Even the tiniest quantity of Darklight reacts explosively with matter, and phantom lances channel colossal streams of the stuff, tightly controlled within constrictor fields to inflict catastrophic damage. A phantom lance deals an additional +1d10 Damage per Degree of Success, up to a maximum of +2d10 damage.

**Attack Craft:** Dark Eldar vessels with launch bays are loaded with their own unique and deadly craft. If you are using the launch bay rules from **BATTLEFLEET KORONUS**, the following rules apply to Dark Eldar attack craft. Raptor interceptors have a Craft Rating of +15, a Speed of 12 VUs and a Squadron Size of 12. Tormentor Bombers have a Craft Rating of +6, a Speed of 9 VUs, and a Squadron Size of 6. Slavebringer Assault Boats have a Crew Rating of +11, a Speed of 12 VUs, and a Squadron Size of 5. None of these craft suffer a penalty for being below half-strength, and negate any Turret Rating bonuses that the target ship would normally receive when attempting to shoot them down in an incoming attack craft wave.

**Torpedoes:** If you are using the torpedo rules from **BATTLEFLEET KORONUS**, the following rules apply to Dark Eldar torpedoes: All Dark Eldar torpedoes use the rules for Seeking Torpedoes, and negate any Turret Rating bonuses that the target ship would normally get when attempting to shoot down an incoming salvo. Dark Eldar torpedoes come in two varieties: void torpedoes and leech torpedoes. Void torpedoes employ a pulse of Darklight contained within a bubble of force to blast smoking hemispheres of matter from enemy vessels. They deal 2d10+14 Damage and may re-roll any Damage dice that roll a 3 or less. Leech torpedoes deal no Damage, and instead latch on to armour and sap a vessel's power, imposing a -2 penalty to the ship's Speed characteristic and a -30 penalty on all actions that increase speed. This penalty is not cumulative, but so long as even one leech torpedo remains attached, the penalty applies. The Emergency Repairs Extended Action immediately removes 1 leech torpedo, +1 additional attached leech torpedo per two Degrees of Success, instead of repairing any damaged components.



## TORTURE-CLASS CRUISER



*Hull:* Cruiser

*Class:* Torture-class cruiser

*Dimensions:* Varies; 4.2 km long approx., 1.3 km approx. abeam

*Mass:* 18 megatonnes approx.

*Crew:* unknown

*Accel:* 8 gravities max sustainable acceleration

The Torture-class is the larger of the two commonly encountered types of Dark Eldar vessel. As with all Eldar vessels, the sensor-confounding technologies these ships employ to defend themselves also makes accurate identification virtually impossible, and Dark Eldar cruisers of all kinds are frequently confused for one another, with even trusted accounts requiring retroactive alteration in the light of new evidence from subsequent encounters. Torture-class cruisers always possess heavy firepower, though the specific reports of their armament vary from encounter to encounter and are likely rendered even less consistent by the terror that Dark Eldar raids deliberately inspire.

**Speed:** 9

**Manoeuvrability:** +28

**Detection:** +25

**Hull Integrity:** 60

**Armour:** 19

**Turret Rating:** 1

**Void Shields:** –

**Crew Rating:** Veteran (50)

**Weapon Capacity:** Prow 4

**Morale:** 100

**Crew Population:** 100

### Essential Components

Unidentified Xenos Propulsion System, Warp-Plotter, Command Bridge, Eldar Life Sustainer, Eldar Crew Quarters, Sensor Array

### Supplemental Components

#### Shadow Field Generator

**Torture Holds:** These labyrinthine complexes contain all manner of depravity, and the air within them seethes with anguish and echoes with the screams of countless thousands of slaves. If this component is destroyed, the vessel loses an additional 1d5 Morale each Strategic Round as the crew's source of unholy sustenance is taken from them.

**3 Disintegrator Macro cannon Clusters:** Macrobattery; Strength 4; 1d10+3; Crit Rating 4; Range 5; +10 bonus to Ballistic Skill Tests.

### One of the following weapon systems:

- 2 Phantom Lances: Lance; Strength 1; 1d10+4; Crit Rating 3; Range 4; +1d10 damage per degree of success, max +2d10.
- Torpedo Tubes: Strength 4. These torpedo tubes are loaded with Dark Eldar void torpedoes and leech torpedoes. The ship carries 24 void torpedoes and 8 leech torpedoes.
- Launch Bay: Strength 4. This bay holds four squadrons of Raptor Interceptors, four squadrons of Tormentor Bombers, and four squadrons of Slavebringer Assault Boats.

## CORSAIR-CLASS ESCORT



*Hull:* Raider

*Class:* Corsair-class Escort

*Dimensions:* Varies; 1.2 km long approx., 0.1 km approx. abeam

*Mass:* 4 megatonnes approx.

*Crew:* unknown

*Accel:* 9.5 gravities max sustainable acceleration

As with their larger counterparts, the Corsair-class Escorts are more a collection of broadly similar vessels. Accurate identification of these ships has so far been impossible, and indeed the collective term "Corsair" may be as much a reference to the crew or to these vessels' activities as to the ships themselves.

Corsairs are known to make particularly frequent use of the mimic engine system favoured by many Dark Eldar Void-Archons, their smaller size allowing them to pose as more commonly encountered frigates, destroyers, transports, and system ships as they close upon their prey unperturbed. In the largest raids, a single squadron of Corsairs with mimic engines are often used to slip in amongst the prey while the rest of the fleet coasts silently through the darkness of space. Such Corsairs take the greatest risks, but also present the earliest opportunities for their crews to sow terror and panic and reap the rewards of their subterfuge.

**Speed:** 13

**Manoeuvrability:** +45

**Detection:** +25

**Hull Integrity:** 20

**Armour:** 15

**Turret Rating:** 1

**Void Shields:** –

**Crew Rating:** Veteran (50)

**Weapon Capacity:** Prow 2

**Morale:** 100

**Crew Population:** 100

### ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

Unidentified Xenos Propulsion System, Warp-Plotter, Command Bridge, Eldar Life Sustainer, Eldar Crew Quarters, Sensor Array



## SUPPLEMENTAL COMPONENTS

### Shadow Field Generator

**Torture Holds:** These labyrinthine complexes contain all manner of depravity and the air within them seethes with anguish and echoes with the screams of countless thousands of slaves. If this component is destroyed, the vessel loses an additional 1d5 Morale each turn as the crew's source of unholy sustenance is taken from them.

**Disintegrator Macro cannon Cluster:** Macrobattery; Strength 4; 1d10+3; Crit Rating 4; Range 5; +10 bonus to Ballistic Skill Tests

**One of the following weapon systems:**

- **Disintegrator Macro cannon Cluster:** Macrobattery; Strength 4; 1d10+3; Crit Rating 4; Range 5; +10 to Ballistic Skill Tests.
- **Phantom Lance:** Lance; Strength 1; 1d10+4; Crit Rating 3; Range 4; +1d10 damage per degree of success, max +2d10.
- **Torpedo Tubes:** Strength 2. These torpedo tubes are loaded with Dark Eldar void torpedoes and leech torpedoes. The ship carries 12 void torpedoes and 4 leech torpedoes.

## THE SOUL REAVER

*Hull: Cruiser*

*Class: Unknown*

*Dimensions: 6.6 km long approx., 1.6 km approx. abeam*

*Mass: 30 megatonnes approx.*

*Crew: unknown*

*Accel: 7 gravities max sustainable acceleration*

*The Soul Reaver* is a massive ship made of a psychically resonant material and inhabited by countless thousands of raging spirits, corrupted by its time adrift in the Warp and its tenure as the dark centrepiece of the Nexus of Shadows. Guided, if not truly controlled, by the furious essence of the fallen Archon Zaergarn Kul, *The Soul Reaver* lashes out at all vessels around it indiscriminately. It is not truly a Dark Eldar vessel, but it has been modified to incorporate some of their technologies and the blasts of materialised hate that it fires count as Phantom Lances.

**Speed:** 7

**Detection:** +35

**Armour:** 23

**Void Shields:** –

**Weapon Capacity:** Prow 6

**Morale:** 100†

**Manoeuvrability:** +20

**Hull Integrity:** 100

**Turret Rating:** 3

**Crew Rating:** Veteran (50)

**Crew Population:** 100†

†**Crew of the Dead:** Because *The Soul Reaver* is animated by a mass of screaming spectres, it does not truly have a crew. However, as it suffers damage in battle, more and more of the spirits trapped within begin to tear their way loose, and parts of the *Reaver* grow dark. As such, its Crew Population and Morale are always equal to its Hull Integrity. It may still make (and repel) boarding actions as normal, and uses Zaergarn Kul's statistics when called upon to make Tests that require an individual (see page 122 for the profile for Zaergarn Kul).

## ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

Unidentified Xenos Propulsion System, Warp-Plotter, Command Bridge, Eldar Life Sustainer, Eldar Crew Quarters, Sensor Array

## SUPPLEMENTAL COMPONENTS

### Shadow Field Generator

**6 Phantom Lances:** Lance; Strength 1; 1d10+4; Crit Rating 3; Range 4; +1d10 damage per Degree of Success, max +2d10.

## NPC PILOTS

The Reaver Pilot profile listed on page 123 serves as any vehicle crewman. The only changes needed relate to equipment—aside from those mounted on Reaver jetbikes, no pilot should be equipped with combat drugs, and as most vehicles employed by Kabalite forces are piloted by Kabalites, the crew of a Reaver, Ravager or Venom carrying Kabalites or the servants of a Haemonculus should wear Kabalite armour (All 4), instead of a wychsuit.

## VEHICLES

This section is intended to be used with the vehicle rules found in the supplement **INTO THE STORM**. It details some of the advanced and lethally graceful craft employed by the Dark Eldar, which are all likely to be encountered within **THE SOUL REAVER**. Even without **INTO THE STORM**, this information can be useful both as background and to provide statistics on the vehicles. Most of these vehicles are open-topped skimmers, and so rules applicable to multiple vehicles are explained here.

**Open-Topped:** Enemies may target the crew and passengers of the vehicle by using a Called Shot Attack Action.

**Skimmer:** This vehicle hovers over the battlefield, allowing it to ignore terrain that would otherwise hamper movement. If it ever becomes completely immobilised due to damage, count the vehicle as destroyed instead as it crashes into the ground.

## RAIDER

Appearing as a mixture of elegant barge and vicious racing craft, Raiders are amongst the most common of Dark Eldar vehicles, employed as a transport to carry groups of Kabalite Warriors or Wyches into battle at high speed. Unlike the fighting vehicles of other species, and even unlike the swift grav-tanks of their Craftworld cousins, Dark Eldar do not enter battle within the armoured shells of tanks and gunships, but rather hanging from the flanks of swift and many-bladed skiffs, ready to descend at a moment's notice into the fury of battle.

**Type:** Skimmer

**Tactical Speed:** 35m

**Cruising Speed:** 350 kph

**Manoeuvrability:** +25

**Structural Integrity:** 20

**Size:** Enormous

**Armour:** Front 18, Side 15, Rear 15

**Crew:** Pilot, Gunner

**Carrying Capacity:** 10 warriors with gear.



## Weapons

Gunner-operated dark lance (Facing Front; Range 160m; S/-/-; 3d10+10 X; Pen 20; Clip 50; Rld 3 Full; Felling, Proven [4]) *or* disintegrator cannon (Facing Front: 150m; -/-/5; 1d10+12 E; Pen 12; Clip 150; Rld 3 Full).

## Special Rules

**Open-Topped:** See above.

**Skimmer:** See above.

**Precarious Mount:** The passengers of a Raider are often found hanging from the vehicle's flanks, and even its small deck provides little protection, so that the warriors on board can descend from the craft onto the enemy unhindered. When an enemy makes a Fully Automatic Attack Action against a Raider, every third hit strikes one of the passengers instead of the vehicle itself. However, a passenger may disembark from a Raider as a Free Action by making a **Challenging (+0) Acrobatics Test**; if the passenger fails this Test, then a moment's hesitation increases the time taken to disembark to a Half Action.

**Availability:** Extremely Rare

## RAVAGERS

The archetypal gunship of the Dark Eldar appears at first glance to be little more than an up-gunned Raider. The distinction between the two is subtle but significant. A Ravager the same as a Raider in all respects except those noted below:

- Increase Armour to Front 24, Side 21, Rear 15.
- Increase its Crew to 1 Pilot and 3 Gunners. Each Gunner has a dark lance or disintegrator.
- Reduce Carrying Capacity to 0 and remove the Precarious Mount special rule.

## VENOM

Favoured by those who seek to reach battle with greatest haste, and by those who disdain the company of lesser warriors, the Venom is a small, swift, and lightweight transport, faster and more nimble even than the Raider. Carrying only a handful of warriors, those borne to battle upon Venoms rely on their own skill and the shock of their sudden arrival to overwhelm enemies, relishing the first moments of terror that their victims experience before the rest of the raiding force arrives.

**Type:** Skimmer

**Tactical Speed:** 40m

**Cruising Speed:** 380 kph

**Manoeuvrability:** +35

**Structural Integrity:** 18

**Size:** Hulking

**Armour:** Front 18, Side 15, Rear 12

**Crew:** Pilot

**Carrying Capacity:** 5 warriors with gear.

## Weapons

Pilot-operated twin-linked splinter rifles (Facing Front; 80m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 500; Rld 2 Full; Toxic, Twin-Linked) and passenger-operated splinter cannon (Facing Front; 110m; -/-/10; 1d10+5 R; Pen 4; Clip 300; Rld 3 Full; Tearing, Toxic).

## Special Rules

**Open-Topped:** See above. Note that the pilot's compartment provides him 8 AP of Cover.

**Skimmer:** See above.

**Flickerfield:** This highly advanced optical distortion field makes a Venom difficult to target effectively, with the craft appearing almost to flicker in and out of existence at random. The vehicle's size does not grant attackers any bonus to hit, nor does it impose any penalties upon the pilot's attempts to Dodge. Further, no attacker may gain a bonus to hit from aiming at a vehicle with a flickerfield, as its inconsistent vanishing makes it impossible to effectively train a weapon on it.

**Passenger-Operated Weaponry:** Weapons noted as passenger-operated may only be fired by characters travelling in the passenger section of the vehicle, using that passenger's Ballistic Skill.

**Precarious Mount:** When an enemy makes a Fully Automatic Attack Action against a Venom, every third hit strikes one of the passengers instead of the vehicle itself. However, a passenger may disembark from a Venom as a Free Action by making a **Challenging (+0) Acrobatics Test**; if the passenger fails this Test, then a moment's hesitation and an awkward landing increase the time taken to disembark to a Half Action.

**Availability:** Very Rare

## REAYER JETBIKE

Beloved and customised by their owners, Reaver jetbikes are the ultimate blend of velocity and lethality. For a Reaver, it is not sufficient to slay one's foes, or to travel at breakneck speeds with effortless grace. Doing both, simultaneously, is a true test of a Reaver's prowess, and everything about a Reaver jetbike is turned towards this end, from the stripped-down and reshaped chassis to improve speed and aerodynamics, to the vicious blades that adorn them, streaked with the blood of countless victims.

**Type:** Skimmer

**Tactical Speed:** 50m

**Cruising Speed:** 400 kph

**Manoeuvrability:** +30

**Structural Integrity:** 8

**Size:** Hulking

**Armour:** Front 15, Side 12, Rear 10

**Crew:** Pilot

**Carrying Capacity:** None.

## Weapons

Pilot-operated splinter rifle (Facing Front; 80m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 200; Rld 2 Full; Toxic).

## Special Rules

**Skimmer:** See above.

**Bladevanes:** A Reaver jetbike is a weapon in its own right, and in the hands of a skilled rider can be deadly indeed. When attempting a Ram Action against a creature, a Reaver jetbike deals 1d10+5 R Damage, Pen 4, increasing to 2d10+5 R Damage if travelling at least twice its tactical speed. It may continue to move, using any remaining movement, after hitting such a



creature. If the pilot chooses to take an additional -20 penalty on the Drive (Skimmers) Test to perform this Ram Action, he may choose the location struck, as if the attack were a Called Shot. Note that this means that a Reaver can potentially strike down the passengers and crew of open-topped vehicles.

**Exposed:** Enemies may target the pilot of a Reaver jetbike with a Called Shot Attack Action. In addition, when an enemy makes a Fully Automatic Attack Action against a Reaver jetbike, every third hit strikes the pilot instead of the vehicle itself.

**Availability:** Rare

## RAZORWING JETFIGHTER

Flown by those few Reavers who have earned sufficient wealth and prestige to escape the death-races, a Razorwing jetfighter is a deadly aircraft, designed to be a lethal predator against anything that moves upon the ground. Armed with a variety of weapons, the deadliest tools these fighters possess are the bizarre missiles that produce exotic and lethal effects to their pilots' twisted tastes.

**Type:** Flyer

**Tactical Speed:** 40m/20 AUs

**Cruising Speed:** 1,750 kph

**Manoeuvrability:** +40

**Structural Integrity:** 25

**Size:** Enormous

**Armour:** Front 20, Side 20, Rear 20

**Crew:** Pilot

**Carrying Capacity:** None.

## Weapons

Pilot-operated twin-linked splinter rifles (Facing Front; 80m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 500; Rld 2 Full; Toxic, Twin-Linked) and two pilot-operated dark lances (Facing Front; Range 160m; S/-/-; 3d10+10 X; Pen 20; Clip 50; Rld 3 Full; Felling, Proven [4]) and four pilot-operated missiles chosen from the following list: monoscythe missiles, necrotoxin missiles, shatterfield missiles.

## Special Rules

**Flyer:** In Flyer mode, this vehicle uses aerodynamic principles to stay aloft. When airborne, it must move at least half of its cruising speed at all times, lest it crash into the ground. If it ever becomes completely immobilised due to damage, it will plummet to the ground and be destroyed upon impact.

**Mastery of Gravity:** To Eldar of all kinds, gravity is something to be manipulated and turned to their ends by advanced technology. At any time, the Razorwing jetfighter may operate as a Skimmer (following all the rules for a Skimmer, noted above) rather than as a Flyer.

**Linked Pilot-Operated Weaponry:** Weapons classified as "pilot-operated" may all be fired by the pilot, as one Standard Attack Action, at any number of targets within range and no more than one AU (roughly 100m) apart from one another. Roll Attack Rolls and Damage Rolls separately for each weapon.

**Monoscythe Missiles:** These exotic devices detonate above the ground with a pulse of force that extends in a flat plane parallel with the ground. This pulse, infinitely thin, can shear through flesh and armour like the finest blade, leaving



dismembered corpses behind. A monoscythe missile has the following profile: Heavy; 250m; S/-/-; 3d10+5 R; Pen 4; Clip 1; Rld -; Blast (8). A monoscythe missile cannot affect anything above or below the targets, and always hits the Body of all targets within the blast unless the attack roll succeeds by two or more Degrees of Success, in which case it hits the Head location of all targets within the blast.

**Necrotoxin Missiles:** These missiles contain a large quantity of virulent poison. When the missile detonates, the casing shatters into thousands of toxin-coated razor shards. A necrotoxin missile has the following profile: Heavy; 250m; S/-/-; 2d10 R; Pen 4; Clip 1; Rld -; Blast (8), Felling (1), Tearing, Toxic.

**Shatterfield Missiles:** These missiles contain two systems that work in sequence, detonating in a carefully timed manner for greatest effect. The first blast rips all the heat from the surrounding area, leaving frozen statues in the place of any unfortunate enough to be in its radius. A split-second later, a shockwave of kinetic force erupts from the missile, shattering those statues. A shatterfield missile has the following profile: Heavy; 250m; S/-/-; 3d10 I; Clip 1; Rld -; Blast (8). Any creature hit by a shatterfield missile must make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** before Damage is rolled; if it fails, then it is frozen solid, and is rendered immobile 1d5 Rounds. Targets that have been frozen are also more vulnerable to heavy impacts, and count their Toughness Bonus as 0 when hit by attacks that deal Impact Damage.

**Availability:** Near Unique







## MOVEMENT

|                      |                      |                   |                |                       |                          |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Half Move<br>(AB x1) | Full Move<br>(AB x2) | Charge<br>(AB x3) | Run<br>(AB x6) | Base Leap<br>(SB x1m) | Base Jump<br>(SB x20 cm) |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|

## CHARACTERISTICS

|                   |                      |                 |                 |                 |                    |                  |                 |                  |
|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Weapon Skill (WS) | Ballistic Skill (BS) | Strength (S)    | Toughness (T)   | Agility (Ag)    | Intelligence (Int) | Perception (Per) | Will Power (WP) | Fellowship (Fel) |
| <div></div>       | <div></div>          | <div></div>     | <div></div>     | <div></div>     | <div></div>        | <div></div>      | <div></div>     | <div></div>      |
| OOOO Adv. Taken   | OOOO Adv. Taken      | OOOO Adv. Taken | OOOO Adv. Taken | OOOO Adv. Taken | OOOO Adv. Taken    | OOOO Adv. Taken  | OOOO Adv. Taken | OOOO Adv. Taken  |

### WEAPON

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Class \_\_\_\_\_ Damage \_\_\_\_\_ Type \_\_\_\_\_ Pen \_\_\_\_\_  
 Range \_\_\_\_\_ RoF \_\_\_\_\_ Clip \_\_\_\_\_ Reload \_\_\_\_\_  
 Special Rules \_\_\_\_\_

### WEAPON

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Class \_\_\_\_\_ Damage \_\_\_\_\_ Type \_\_\_\_\_ Pen \_\_\_\_\_  
 Range \_\_\_\_\_ RoF \_\_\_\_\_ Clip \_\_\_\_\_ Reload \_\_\_\_\_  
 Special Rules \_\_\_\_\_

### WEAPON

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Class \_\_\_\_\_ Damage \_\_\_\_\_ Type \_\_\_\_\_ Pen \_\_\_\_\_  
 Range \_\_\_\_\_ RoF \_\_\_\_\_ Clip \_\_\_\_\_ Reload \_\_\_\_\_  
 Special Rules \_\_\_\_\_

### WEAPON

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Class \_\_\_\_\_ Damage \_\_\_\_\_ Type \_\_\_\_\_ Pen \_\_\_\_\_  
 Range \_\_\_\_\_ RoF \_\_\_\_\_ Clip \_\_\_\_\_ Reload \_\_\_\_\_  
 Special Rules \_\_\_\_\_

### GEAR

### ACQUISITIONS

### CORRUPTION

Current Points \_\_\_\_\_  
 Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
 Malignancies \_\_\_\_\_

### ARMOUR

### WOUNDS

Total \_\_\_\_\_  
 Current \_\_\_\_\_  
 Critical Damage \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fatigue \_\_\_\_\_

### LIFTING

|             |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Lift        | Carry       | Push        |
| <div></div> | <div></div> | <div></div> |

### FATE POINTS

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| Total       | Current     |
| <div></div> | <div></div> |

### PAIN TOKENS

|                         |             |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Required for Fate Point | Current     |
| <div></div>             | <div></div> |

### RIGHT ARM

11-20

TYPE:

### LEFT ARM

21-30

TYPE:

### BODY

31-70

TYPE:

Armour Weight

### RIGHT LEG

71-85

TYPE:

### LEFT LEG

86-100

TYPE:



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1360JUN12

The Soul Reaver  
ISBN: 978-1-61661-455-3

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