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HORDES

DOMINATION

WE TAKE NOT ONLY
WHAT WE REQUIRE
BUT WHAT OUR
ENEMY DESIRES,
REGARDLESS
OF ITS VALUE.
THAT THEY COVET IT
IS ENOUGH.
IF WE FAIL TO
MAKE OURS
WHAT IS THEIRS,
RAZE IT UTTERLY.

–LORD ARBITER HEXERIS

HORDE

DOMINATION™

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UNLEASH THE FURY OF WAR!

In the shadowy wilds of Immoren, forces are on the move. The army of the Skorne Empire, united under one of their own once again, has marched forth to reclaim lost territory. In an effort to save her threatened race, a great leader of the trollkin kriels uses her cunning to trick another foe into stepping into harm's way. Meanwhile, a druidic hero many thought lost has returned with a desperate goal and the weight of prophecy upon his shoulders. This is the struggle for survival and supremacy. This is *Domination*.

The release of Mk II has injected new levels of energy and enthusiasm into the HORDES community and prompted its amazing growth around the world. For new fans and veteran players alike, *Domination* is the beginning of a new era in HORDES, as it returns to the advancing story line and further enriches the game with new characters and models for every one of the factions.

It's practically impossible to miss the biggest new addition to HORDES: battle engines. So big we developed a new base size for them, these impressive centerpiece figures are striking to behold, especially fully painted. They complement the fiercest warlocks and warbeasts by bringing survivable, concentrated firepower to the game and offer a wealth of new tactical options—and of course they do so with the same power of nature you've come to expect from HORDES.

Domination also introduces a slew of new warlocks to the game as well as the character warbeasts they keep by their sides. These models have a compelling depth of background and offer such stimulating strategic options that we couldn't wait to share them with you. Each main faction receives both a new warlock and the epic version of a warlock we've grown to know through battle after battle. In addition, each of the minion pacts also gains a new warlock, further diversifying the tactical variety of their armies and making it possible for them to participate in large-scale games of Unbound.

We're excited to dive into this next phase of HORDES and deliver an entirely new batch of awesome to your tabletops. Focus your rage, seize your destiny, and master your enemies. *Domination* is yours.

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ALL WAR IS DECEPTION
PART ONE

THE KOVOSK HILLS, 608 AR

Lylyth was unmoving as stone as she observed the Cryxian column making its way toward a gaping cave opening hidden amid the hills. Once she had spotted them north of the hills a few days before, following had been no great feat; they moved with uncharacteristic ponderousness and left a trail a neophyte could have tracked. The difficulty had been in remaining unseen, for despite their slow advance the Cryxians were in a state of agitation and alertness. Spectral pistol wraiths drifted on constant patrols around the column, their baleful eyes scanning for the living. Swift soul hunters ventured into the rocky valleys and shrub-covered hills, sniffing for living prey to reap with their scythes and sickles. Lylyth and her striders eluded them with expertise, aided as they were by the blessings of Everblight. More than one Khadoran patrol, lacking such gifts, had been intercepted and silenced.

It had been simple for Lylyth to deduce their likely destination based on their path, and she had moved ahead to lie in wait. She had picked a good vantage to watch the largest cave entrance in the region. It led to a maze of subterranean tunnels and caverns, including several sizable enough to support such a force. The region was riddled with them, some ancient enough that Everblight knew their course. As Cryx had increased its presence in the mainland they had seized more of these passages, together with their cephalyx allies, and the passages were now perilous for anyone else.

Lylyth waited patiently in the hiding spot she had chosen. She was perfectly situated to get a closer look at the large, slow-moving contraption at the center of the Cryxian force as it was hauled closer. Lylyth could feel Everblight's awareness focused within her with an almost discomfiting intensity.

An imposing iron lich strode adjacent to the great wagon. "LICH LORD VENETHRAX," Everblight conveyed to her, accompanied by a sense of loathing. In the echo of that identification came a series of impressions, enough to familiarize her with Venethrax's centuries-long work hunting dragon lore. Lylyth felt keenly aware of the peril of her position. Everblight, however, was less interested in the lich lord than in the machine in his possession.

The weighty mechanism atop the wheeled platform was difficult for Lylyth to look at directly, as to her augmented vision it appeared to be nothing more than a sphere of absolute darkness drifting above churning steam engines. Everblight forced her to stare into that blackness despite the nausea she felt. "REMOVE YOUR HELMET," Everblight commanded. "PERCEIVE WITH YOUR OWN EYES." Lylyth had grown so accustomed to seeing the world through the blighted radiance of her master that ordinary vision felt alien to her.

She pulled her helmet free carefully, knowing any movement might catch the attention of the Cryxians. With her mortal eyes she could observe how the steam engines powered several concentric metal rings being spun above the platform and generating some sort of energy field. Within the warded confines of those rings was a metal cube, suspended by no visible supports.

This inexplicable arrangement baffled Lylyth, and she felt no immediate answers from Everblight, but the dragon's fascination was unabated. Across the connection of their shared athanc shards, Vayl said, "The way it reacts to your blessed sight suggests it is impervious to blighted energies. What might be contained in so peculiar a device held by one such as Lich Lord Venethrax?"

A flood of images poured across the athanc as the dragon's thoughts blazed in her mind. Through her eyes, he was fixated on the cube within the swirling rings. Everblight remembered his own sealed prison after he had fallen to the Iosans at Issyrah. Simultaneous with the loathing and hatred of this memory came a desire overpowering in its intensity. She saw Thagrosh pulling forth the athanc of Pyromalfic and consuming it, the subsequent pains of absorption, and the rushing realization as his power magnified exponentially. Everblight could think of nothing else that might be secreted in such a mechanism. There had been no evidence of Cryx possessing technology like this, but that mattered not to Everblight.

With its engines roaring, the peculiar apparatus thrummed with power as it passed. She watched it become swallowed by the cave, viewing it with her naked eyes until it could be seen no more. As it vanished, the paralysis that gripped her amid the intense weight of the dragon's thoughts lifted. The afterglow of this union was so strong she could barely breathe, let alone think clearly. The rest of the Cryxian column entered the cave as well.

"Should I follow?" Lylyth asked Vayl, unwilling to interrupt the dragon's thoughts.

Vayl said, "No, not yet. It is too dangerous. Stay on the surface." After another lengthy pause she added, "Ravyn, Saeryn, and Bethayne will be moving into the region. We must find a better location to stage an ambush below. The tunnels there are beyond counting, our awareness of their branching paths incomplete. Teraphim will be dispatched to assist."

Lylyth donned her helmet, finding it a relief to shield her eyes from the sun's light. "At least we know their final destination: they will go southwest, to bring their prize home."

SOUTH OF MOUNT SHYLETH BREEN

More palpably than he had ever felt anywhere else, Grayle the Farstrider had the impression he had stepped on holy ground. A false impression, surely, for this was no ancient cairn. This stretch of land was remarkable only for being where a great man had been struck down. Nevertheless, his heightened senses insisted this was a place steeped in the power of Orboros. Could the spilling of the blood of one senior blackclad transform a place so thoroughly?

His steps were reluctant, slow. He did not know his purpose here, only that he had been sent by the enigmatic command of Cassius, Keeper of the Oath and speaker for Wurmwood. Grayle had never previously met that ancient entity or its proxy. For a warrior raised as a Wolf of Orboros, such a visitation was akin to a manifestation of the divine. The Tree of Fate served as a direct conduit for the Devourer Wurm, the predatory power to which Grayle had dedicated his blades.

The sun was setting on the forested vale. The slanting beams of light added to the mystical air of this place, made greater by the concentric rings of wolds that had gathered. Some of these had remained since the day of the battle with the Legion, when one of the Circle's potents had fallen here. Many others had traveled here of their own volition, ignoring the commands of their masters. They had left sacred circles, mountain fastnesses, and even battlefields where the fighting still raged.

Grayle had not thought the rumors of a gathering stone and wood congregation could be true, yet he saw several rings of wolds, all facing outward, unmoving yet menacing. Among them stood woldwardens, woldwatchers, and wold guardians, some difficult to perceive as anything other than columns of stone carved with runes until one looked closely. Woldwyrds had gathered in pairs and settled to the soil, their crystal orbs staring outward like eyes. Those wolds nearer the center were overgrown with thick ivy, as if they had been positioned thus for decades rather than months. At the center of them towered Megalith, standing with arms upheld to the sky as though to welcome the emergence of the moon and stars.

The wolds did not react to the intrusion, which was a relief. Grayle had not expected them to spring upon him, but the circumstances were unusual enough that he was unsettled and tense. With weapons drawn and facing an enemy, he felt at home. Not so, here. Should he pray? Make an offering? Did Wurmwood hope Grayle would break the wolds free from their vigil to send them where they belonged? The ancient one had given him no instructions.

Stepping closer, he could see the great stone sword Tritus leaning against Megalith's leg, perhaps placed there by some other druid come to pay respects. Such thoughts were forgotten in an instant as he beheld an unexpected wonder: lying still as death upon the soil in a shallow depression directly before Megalith was the body of Baldur the Stonecleaver. He looked unmarred and perfect, as if he had died in his sleep and was now awaiting a blanket of dirt for his final rest. It had been months now. His body should have been a ruin.

The vines entwining Baldur connected to the living branches within Megalith's frame, and Grayle wondered if that unique construct had somehow preserved its master so he would not be tarnished in death. It was a wonder, to be sure, but also an unfortunate waste of tremendous power. More than ever, Grayle wondered if he had been sent to break them free of this strange grief. Wolds were fighting constructs, and it was disconcerting and unseemly to see them gathered here, frozen and useless while the Circle Orboros waged war against countless enemies.

Grayle settled his emotions by focusing on the respect he felt for his slain mentor, the druid who had done so much to guide him through the difficult transition of his late *wilding*. Grayle decided he should indeed pay his respects now that he was here at this unusual monument. He knelt, bowed his head, and spoke not to Orboros or the Wurm but to Baldur, who lay as if sleeping. "My old master, and friend, I have come to offer my respects. I entreat, please release these wolds. They can serve better elsewhere."

IT HAD BEEN MONTHS NOW. HIS BODY SHOULD HAVE BEEN A RUIN.

A creaking, groaning noise rose all around him, and Grayle looked up in startled dismay to see the encircling wolds stepping back. Had his words antagonized them? Another movement caught his attention, and he looked to Baldur in time to see the potent sit up and open his eyes. His great hand closed on the hilt of Tritus as the blade began to fall, dislodged by Megalith when the wold stepped away. Baldur leaned upon it like a walking stick and rose to his feet. His eyes were bright and his expression bemused as he said, "Not just yet, lad. I have need of them."

Grayle opened his mouth to speak but managed only a strangled noise.

Baldur gave a rueful chuckle. "Come now, Grayle. You're of no use if you've lost your wits. I was never fully gone, although the line between living and dead seems thin to me

now." His hand reached out to steady himself on Megalith. "Reassure me you are listening. I have limited time."

The words and tone reminded Grayle of his initial mentorship, eight years ago. This snapped him out of his stunned bewilderment. He stood straighter and said clearly, "I am ready to serve."

Baldur nodded, his eyes filled with some inner fire Grayle had never seen before. "The truth be told, I should have died." He held up a hand and stared at it as he folded his fingers. "Megalith rebuilt my flesh, but my soul nearly slipped away. I fell into Orboros and only now was sent back. There is work to do, and I am on borrowed time. I saw much while communing with the body of Orboros. I have felt the skin of the world as if it were my flesh, the granite bedrock my bones and molten lava my arteries. In this state, I saw the dragons stir and felt their passage scar the land. I could feel blighted monstrosities wriggling below my skin like maggots. I knew them for Cryxians and other unnatural horrors. I saw the terrible prize they have seized. They march it toward their master like ants carrying a carcass to their queen. I must stop them." Baldur looked at Grayle as if he had forgotten he was there.

"Baldur, this vision you describe is beyond me," Grayle said. "Perhaps you should rest. We can discuss plans once you are recovered."

The bearded potent scowled and snapped, "I am not addled. I do not have the time to make you understand what I have seen." He waved a hand dismissively. "It does not matter. I have work to do: a great ceremony to invoke. You will not be part of it. But I am glad you are here. There is a task you must do."

"Of course," Grayle agreed, relieved to be on familiar ground. Ever since he had completed his training he had been a weapon for the druids, sent by the higher ranks to lead the Wolves in battle. It was what he had been born to do.

Baldur sighed as if weary and the fire faded slightly from his eyes. "This ceremony may be the end of me. I need to ensure someone is here to look after Kaya, to protect her, fight alongside her, and see that she does not succumb to her reckless impulses. Can you do this?"

Grayle swallowed and frowned in confusion. "I will do whatever you ask, but I do not understand. Kaya has considerably more experience than I."

"This is not about seniority, Grayle." Baldur stared around him for a moment and then added, "Go to her now, and assist her in whatever task occupies her. Stay near her, and lend her your strength of arms." He turned back to Grayle with a sudden renewed intensity, his expression fierce. "Above all else, keep her away. For now. While I was on the other side, I foresaw deadly peril to her should she intrude on my ritual. Is that clear?"

Grayle had to fight to keep his confusion from his face. "I understand your words, but little else." Seeing Baldur's expression darken, Grayle held up his hands. "I will do as you ask. I will do everything in my power to keep Kaya safe." At this Baldur nodded, satisfied.

THE SILVERTIP PEAKS

Vayl, Consul of Everblight maintained her regal poise as she mentally conversed with each of the warlocks in turn, dispensing their orders between speaking to several priors who coordinated dispatching reinforcements to them. Her three oraculi swept in smooth orbits around her head. Periodically she contacted Thagrosh to keep him apprised of the disposition of his armies. The Messiah was distracted as he conducted an ambush on a patrol of Rhulfolk in a pass some thirty miles from their main encampment. It was a trivial battle, but he had been itching for combat, and his assault was part of an orchestrated effort to lead Rhul's southern defenders astray by giving the impression the Legion was encamped elsewhere.

Everblight knew their location was tenuous at best but did not wish to relocate so long as their fortified operations did not attract significant notice. The Legion had acquired several forges from the villages they had seized; those, along with a significant stock of refined ore and additional metal from weapons that could be melted down, had enabled the production of much-needed armaments. Rhul knew several of their fringe communities had fallen prey to the dragonspawn that prowled the southern mountains but had yet to respond with any significant reprisals. From what intelligence Vayl could gather, the Rhulfolk would not be quick to attack, even once their contentious Moot finally reached a decision. Even though these dwarven villages were deemed beyond Ghord's official protection, she knew they were taking a risk in lingering; if it was ever fully mustered, Rhul's military might was far beyond their own.

Thagrosh had a strong loathing for the small details of running an army, and Everblight had even less patience for such matters, which left them to Vayl's capable hands. Overseeing these decisions was hardly Vayl's preference given the far more engaging arcane matters that fell under her purview, but she recognized the army needed a leader who understood these necessities. She had no qualms with allowing Thagrosh to be the revered leader, so long as the leading priors and war chiefs understood ultimately it was *her* they must satisfy and obey. She had sensed no resistance to this arrangement from Everblight and took the conferral of her new title as confirmation of the dragon's confidence.

All the warlocks were filled with Everblight's reaction to what Lylyth had seen to the southwest. Vayl intended

to march forth from the frozen mountains herself to lead their forces in seizing that prize from Cryx, but first there were a few other matters to which she must attend. Many of the warlocks were already abroad, having scattered months earlier when Scaefang and Halfaug had been seen above the Rhulic mountains soaring south. They were still under the mandate to avoid gathering in numbers, as Everblight considered the dispersal of his athanc shards vital to his survival. The current situation would require several of them to converge in order to exploit any opportunity to ambush the Cryxians, who had disappeared into the extensive subterranean tunnels.

Once she finished with her other tasks, Vayl braced herself to deal with one she had been avoiding. She nodded to the prior at the entrance of her throne chamber, who bowed and admitted the last warlock: Kallus, Wrath of Everblight. Vayl felt her lip curl at the sight of him, this creature so unlike the rest of their fellowship. She could have spoken to him mentally and foregone a physical audience, but she was not yet willing to enter into that intimacy with him. Each warlock of Everblight was bound by a kinship stronger than blood, joined by their athanc shards as each shared a piece of the mind and will of the dragon. This was true with Kallus, but he was different. He was something *other*, something new. More than anything else it grated on her she had not been consulted in his making. Kallus was a creature of Thagrosh and Everblight.

He had in fact been crafted, not born. His face and body lacked even the slightest resemblance to the Nyss, for he had not been taken from their stock. Even the grotesques and the mutable Absylonia were closer kin to Vayl than Kallus. His features looked almost human, although that impression was belied by his corpse-like pallor and the slightly unusual proportion to his long limbs. He wore thick-plated armor, but the heavy blade slung upon his back bore closer similarity to those wielded by the nephilim than the elegant weapons Nyss preferred. Vayl had expected the sight of him to prompt loathing among the soldiers of her armies, but they had embraced Kallus as a revered general. Much of this had to do with the paternal manner in which Thagrosh had presented him, describing him with proud words. It was proper that the Legion should revere all who bore Everblight's athanc, yet his easy acceptance aggravated her.

Kallus approached and went to one knee. He stared up at her expectantly, his expression suggesting lordly arrogance despite his posture. There was a strangely empty aspect

to his features and his eyes, perhaps due to the fact that he lacked the years of practice in conveying and reading expressions that every other mortal experienced as a natural part of maturity. Kallus was, in one sense, a child. Fresh delivered unto the world but possessed of a mind expanded and crafted by Everblight, he was mature in thought yet without worldly experience.

"I am ready to do my part," Kallus said, the words of their language flowing easily from his lips. This meant little—with their connection to the dragon, all languages were open to them. Vayl's eyes narrowed. He stared back unwavering, with neither intensity nor boredom. "I will lead the Legion to corner the Cryxians in their tunnels and seize their prize."

SHE FELT A DESIRE TO COMMIT VIOLENCE SOMEWHERE–ANYWHERE.

"You will do no such thing!" She spoke the words more abruptly than she had intended. He simply blinked, his head cocked slightly to the side. She added, "I have another purpose for you."

"Of course, Consul. State it and I shall make it so."

Vayl leaned forward to peer at him closely, wishing her eyes had the power to unravel him, to see beyond skin and muscle and learn what set him apart. This close she could feel his athanc shard—one that should have been akin to her own—oscillating with subtle harmonies in his chest. It struck an ill chord with her, its resonance wrong. After a pause she said, "I have devised a means to divine the proximity of our master's sibling dragons. Such an art will prove invaluable in the days ahead. It might also allow us to track the movements of Toruk's anointed generals."

Kallus' eyes dilated slightly. "A welcome boon indeed."

She continued, "For this artifice to be completed, I need the bones of a dragon. A skull would be ideal. A difficult proposition, but we know one location where such a thing might be found."

"The Castle of the Keys. Pyromalfic." Kallus nodded in understanding, although he had not existed when the Legion had won that momentous victory. What he knew he drew from Everblight or conversations between the other warlocks.

Vayl's jaw clenched, but she restrained her indignation. "Correct. Bethayne was near there recently and indicates the skorne tower atop that battleground was broken by Scaefang and lies in ruin. I believe the skorne had previously preserved those bones to profane them with their peculiar occult rites, and I doubt they have had occasion to excavate them. I have foreseen the skorne will soon be distracted—the perfect time for a small force to enter the region unseen and recover that which we should have claimed in the aftermath of our victory over Pyromalfic."

His eyes narrowed. "Exodus was the more important imperative. The bones meant nothing."

Vayl stared at him. Was Everblight speaking through him? She did not think so, yet he adopted the memories of the dragon as if they were his own. "Do not presume to instruct me in what transpired in those hours. I was there. You were not."

His head inclined, although he conveyed no sign of remorse. "Of course. My apologies. You wish me to reclaim the bones?"

"I do. It will not be an easy task. The region is crawling with soldiers, and I have no reason to suspect you are skilled in stealth. No reason, in fact, to suspect you are skilled in anything in particular." Vayl sighed as if in pity, but again he had no reaction. "Thagrosh claims you have special gifts. Perhaps you will prove it is so. We can spare no one else, and Everblight would be diminished least by your loss should misfortune befall you."

"That is true," Kallus unexpectedly agreed. "Your wisdom is impeccable, Consul. I gladly accept this task."

Even in acceptance he denied her satisfaction. Vayl grimaced and waved toward the chamber entrance. "Go, then, and take whatever you require. Be swift about this task. I need those bones."

He bowed deeply and then turned on his heel to march from the hall. Through her athanc she could feel Thagrosh's bloodlust being sated in his battle, and she realized she envied him. She felt a desire to commit violence somewhere—anywhere. She stood and stretched out her mind to summon her warbeasts. Her three oraculi whirled in the air around her head in sympathetic agitation.

THE GLIMMERWOOD

Jarl Skuld and those with him hastened through the trees and underbrush with an expertise born of years fighting within the tangled Thornwood. Unfortunately they had left their home soil, and the hills and gullies of the southeastern Glimmerwood were less familiar. He stopped for a moment to allow the warriors and scattergunners of his band to rush ahead, having already invoked his sorcerous powers to aid their movement. Upon the kriel warriors with their piper encouraging them forward he had bestowed magic to quicken their steps beyond what was natural, while he had

given his scattergunners mystical insight to the paths and lanes through terrain that would otherwise impede them. Nonetheless, those who pursued them followed closely. Jarl let his band race past while his full-blood trolls stopped with him, turning around ready for violence.

Tharn wolf riders came howling out of the trees, javelins ready to hurl. Jarl drew upon the innate essence of Hul, his troll impaler, to steady his hands and then raised his runic pistols and fired one after the other. The first two duskwolves were still at extreme range, but thanks to the arcane assistance of his Impaler, Jarl's shots flew with deadly accuracy to strike down each rider, killing them instantly.

The duskwolves behind them howled and closed the distance, even as Hul pulled back his arm and let a spear fly. This hit one of the wolf steeds in mid-stride and carried it backward into a tree, where its growl became a pained howl. Bloodtrackers followed not far behind the riders, and his axer, Golo, intercepted several and swept his axe through them. Golo suffered in turn as several javelins struck through the openings between his armored plates. The troll would quickly regenerate such injuries, if given the chance. The bloated swamp troll, Nog, lashed out with a tongue to yank a wolf rider off her steed and swallowed her with a loud gulp.

Lagun Bladegrim stepped beside Jarl as he was reloading his pistols. "There's no chance we're going to throw bloodtrackers off our trail." Lagun and his brother Hoson were expert skinners and trackers and two of Jarl's most reliable lieutenants. He had almost left them behind with the Sons of Bragg to watch over the rest of his people in the Thornwood, but now he was glad to have them. They knew this area better than he did and had helped improvise several traps to hinder the enemy chasing them.

Jarl glared back. "If we get far enough from where they want to be, they'll give up the chase. We just set them off intruding on their turf." They heard more howling wolves behind them. "Let's move!" They plunged into the trees again, the warlock urging his trolls onward with greater speed. Jarl occasionally turned and fired behind him to discourage the nearest pursuers.

Jarl had originally hoped to make a simple journey southeast to contact the kriels that had settled around Lake Scarleforth, looking to ask Calandra for a favor. He had made the decision reluctantly and already had some regrets. It was humiliating enough that he was forced to ask for assistance without happening across what seemed like a small Tharn army. A bit of scouting revealed it was led by none other than Kromac the Ravenous, a living terror who had not been seen near the Thornwood for many months. Why he was back in the vicinity was a mystery Jarl was not eager to solve. Most of the Tharn had been engaged in a full-moon bloodletting ceremony to their hungry god, and bypassing them while they were distracted had seemed simple enough—until it went wrong. But that was usually how it was with his luck.

He caught up with the rest of his band at the edge of a steep gorge. Along the bottom ran a tributary of the Black River that had cut through the hills adjoining the Glimmerwood. Hoson was peering down into the chasm. "Could have sworn there was a bridge here," he said wistfully.

Lagun had rushed along the gorge to the south and gave a yell. "It's down this way!" He pointed ahead of him, and they all moved hastily in that direction. Hoson shrugged apologetically at Jarl's glare. Just as the howl of duskwolves came from behind them, Jarl shoved the tracker abruptly forward to get him clear of a javelin. It flew past, and Jarl turned and took aim on the swiftly closing duskwolf, then fired. The bullet went through the creature's skull and killed it instantly, causing it to collapse in mid-leap and send its rider tumbling head over heels into the scrub, likely breaking her neck.

They reached the plank-and-rope bridge after a quick scramble and began crossing as fast as they could, even as Hoson yelled after them not to overburden the thing. The river passed swiftly far below, its shallow waters whipped into turbulence by the numerous rocks littering its course. Although the bridge was relatively well made and robust by the standards of such things, it was clearly not designed to bear heavy loads. Jarl and his trolls waited on the near end while the rest of his band hurried over.

The first few bloodtrackers and wolf riders began to emerge from the trees at a distance but seemed intent on staying out of his range. Perhaps they had seen too many of their sisters take bullets. He expected once enough of them had gathered they would advance to skewer him with a dozen javelins together. He kept his pistols extended and ready, switching from one target to another as any of them stepped closer. Hul stood next to him, glowering with similar menace and holding his spear ready.

Once Jarl's warriors had reached the far side he sent Nog across. "Go!" he shouted, clamping down on the troll's mind so he would heed the command despite being uneasy with the swaying bridge. It handled the creature's great weight with only a few creaks, which seemed promising. Several of the bloodtrackers howled something in his direction, and one of the wolf riders edged closer, her steed snarling and showing its fangs. Jarl fired a warning shot into the soil ahead of the wolf, and it backed away again. He reloaded with one hand—a trick requiring no small degree of skill—while keeping the other pistol pointed at them. He sent Golo over the bridge next. The entire assembly swayed wildly as the axer rushed across.

and alarming creaks and groans filled the air. "Aw, hell," Jarl said as he saw the ropes lashed to the nearest supports start to give way. Golo was moving as swiftly as his thick legs would take him, but the bridge was bouncing and several boards shattered beneath his feet.

"Grab hold of the bridge!" he shouted at Hul as he pelted forward. Just as the two of them started across the bridge he saw Golo make it to the other side, but then the nearby ropes twined and snapped with a popping noise. He and Hul both leapt forward with a cry to seize hold of the bucking ropes and boards just as they swung down and across the gorge. Jarl closed his eyes and hung on tightly as he was whipped through the air to crash into the rock wall on the other side. He could hear some of his ribs break with the impact and felt an explosion of pain as all the air was pushed violently out of him, but he managed to keep his grip. Gasping in pain, he drew on his power to mend the injury and ease his breathing. The full-blood troll had only grunted at the impact, knowing it would regenerate swiftly enough.

As they began to climb up the bridge hand-over-fist, javelins sank into the wood around them. Jarl called on Nog's inner power to surround himself with a swarm of buzzing insects, making him harder to target. He kept up a steady stream of cursing as he climbed; this was a fine mess, indeed. He felt confident the Tharn couldn't follow them across, so at least he was done with them—assuming he survived the climb.

NEAR THE CASTLE OF THE KEYS

"There you have it," said Alten Ashley in a somber voice. "Bad as you feared?"

"Worse. Much worse," answered Grissel Bloodsong with a growl the others could feel in their ribs. "Thanks for the warning."

Grim Angus was crouched down on one knee next to the other two as they peered from atop one of the higher craggy hills in a chain that looked out past the ruins of the Castle of the Keys. Both Alten and Grim looked through the scopes of their rifles. "Thought they'd gone east," Grim said with a grunt.

"They had, but whatever they were doing, they're back now," Grissel said.

Alten added, "Looks to be more of 'em than before." Grissel shot him a glare and he shrugged. "Just calling it as I see it. Look, those tents down by those cacti, never seen that banner. Nor those ones over there, in the black and gold. Think they found some new friends." Littered across the desert in the shelter behind the nearest hills was a massive army of skorne. The level of activity and the ordered layout of the tents suggested they were mustering to march. So many soldiers took time to arm, organize, and set forth, but they were being segregated into their respective fighting groups by the tyrants.

The former bounty hunter grunted. "You have good eyes for a human. I think he's right, Grissel. New banners. More soldiers. We should let Gunnbjorn know."

Grissel gave a sardonic snort. "Why? To what end?"

"Let him prepare his defenses?" Grim shrugged as if the matter was not his concern.

"I'm marshal of the kriels while Madrak's gone. If we were setting up defenses, it'd be on my say, not his." Grissel put her hands on her hips as she stared down at the desert sands. "No doubt he would fight to defend the lake. But I've had enough of losing lives with no hope of victory. We can't stand against an army like that." She waved a hand to indicate the sprawl of distant skorne moving as industriously as the ants they resembled in their enameled armor. Most showed crimson red, others black, and the rest a smattering of other colors depending on their house affiliations.

Alten rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Maybe they're not gunning for you lot at all. Might be they're going against Cygnar again. Can't see as how that lake is all that valuable."

"We took it from them," Grim mused. "That's probably enough. If they wanted Cygnar, they would muster closer to the Black River."

Grissel nodded her agreement. "On the bright side, looks like they're taking us seriously." She made a noise in her throat. "I may have to tie Gunnbjorn up and drag him away, but we are *not* fighting *that*."

"I'd like to see that," Grim said with a chuckle. More somberly, he added, "But where can we go? What land is left?"

Grissel squinted down at the army, and it was some time before she spoke. "Some kriels settled to the northeast, closer to the mountains south of Ios. That land is fertile. If the skorne want the lake, we can let them have it." Her eyes narrowed at a sudden thought. "But I have a better idea than just giving it to them. Come, we've seen enough." They turned to descend the hill, heading back toward trollkin-held territory. Grissel said to Alten, "You've been taking work from the blackclads in the region now and again, is that so?"

The monster hunter gave a sheepish shrug. "Sometimes. I work where I can get it. Prefer helping you, of course, when you've got the need."

She waved impatiently. "That's your business. Would you say there are a good number of them in the region? We've had skirmishes with Tharn probing our defenses in the west, and our scouts have seen Wolves north of the lake."

Alten shifted uncomfortably but affirmed, "There are some about. Heard a large group of Tharn are moving through just to the west."

A new voice interrupted them from behind the rocks ahead. "There's plenty of Tharn in the Glimmerwood right now, I can assure you of that."

Grissel's hand went immediately to her great hammer, and both Grim and Alten reacted similarly. The trio relaxed when two figures came into view, one of them Calandra Truthsayer, Oracle of the Glimmerwood. The one who had spoken was less familiar to Grissel. He was a rugged kin with a tartan of brown and green, a red bandana around his head to cover one eye, and a rope coiled over one shoulder. The two rune-inscribed pistols he carried told her he was Jarl Skuld, called the "Devil of the Thornwood." He was a kin of dubious reputation who had stubbornly remained behind in that accursed forest even after Madrak Ironhide had led most of the kriels away. It was rumored that the eye the bandana covered had been lost in some confrontation with Cryxian horrors and could no longer regenerate. His other eye glared at Grissel fiercely.

Calandra said, "Sorry to interrupt your scouting, Grissel, but I thought this was important. You've heard of Jarl Skuld? I've visited his people in the Thornwood on several occasions. Good fighters one and all. They need our help."

Grissel shook her head. "Your timing is poor, Jarl. We have little to offer."

Jarl frowned and clearly took some effort to speak politely. "I wouldn't come to you like this if I didn't have to. But the kriels left in the Thornwood are in trouble. We've got both Cryx and Khadorans moving in on us. We could use some support so we can carve ourselves some breathing room. Won't take much, and I'm willing to pay in kind. Thanks to the Khadorans we've got powder, weapons, food, liquor . . ."

Agitated, Grim said, "Walk up that hill behind us and take a look at the valley, at the army mustering there, then come to us and talk of troubles—"

Grissel touched his arm, her eyes narrowed in thought. "Hold, Grim. Perhaps this timing is not so bad after all." She studied Jarl and then Alten, who had been trying to look unobtrusive amid the trollkin warlocks. To Jarl she said, "We have less need of those supplies than your expertise. If you'd be willing to do a favor for me, I can guarantee a sizable group of warriors sent back to help your people."

From his expression it was clear Jarl had been expecting a different sort of negotiation. "What sort of favor?" His voice made his suspicion and doubt plain.

Grissel gave a devious smile. "I believe I may have a way to see that our would-be enslavers do not march into this region easily. Keeping them occupied would help with our withdrawal. And we owe the blackclads a bit of a reckoning." She eyed both Jarl and Alten in turn. "I'll need both your help to pull this off."

The monster hunter swallowed nervously. "I don't want to do anything that would turn the blackclads against me, Grissel. They're not the forgiving sort . . ."

"You worry too much. If we do this properly, they may even thank you for your help."

Alten chuckled and cocked his head. "Okay, you've got my attention. What do you have in mind?"

Grissel turned back to Jarl. "These Tharn you mentioned. Can you get their attention? Make them chase your tail?"

Jarl coughed into one of his hands. "That should be easy. Staying alive after, that's the trick. There's a whole army of them—led by Kromac the Ravenous." He paused to let that information sink in. Even Calandra next to him looked worried at the mention of the Tharn king. "Still want to get them riled?"

"I DON'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING THAT WOULD TURN THE BLACKCLADS AGAINST ME. THEY'RE NOT THE FORGIVING SORT."

In contrast, Grissel seemed encouraged. "That sounds perfect."

BONES OF ORBOROS

Baldur felt euphoria as he strode purposefully toward the stone bridge. Although the sensation of having been at one with Orboros had begun to fade, there were lingering effects. His awareness extended through the soil beneath his feet. He could sense the foundation of the stone bridge as well as the river rushing below. He could feel latent power converging under the broken monoliths called the Bones of Orboros. This site had once been among the most significant of the Circle's eastern holdings but had been lost after the battle of the Castle of the Keys. Other members of his order had forgotten it for now, knowing it would be difficult and costly to secure the site properly as well as repair its stones and resurrect its usefulness as a leyline node.

Behind Baldur was an army of wolds of every description, those that had stood vigil over the reconstruction of his flesh. He felt reborn—for he had been—and eager to test himself in battle. Marching ahead of his wolds did not feel reckless or foolish but necessary. He could feel the will of Orboros, the Devourer Wurm, urging him onward and empowering his steps. Baldur was in control, not enslaved

by that hungry god, but he was keenly aware his vitality was borrowed and would require payment. He had to appraise his new strength.

Baldur knew his enemies were forewarned; he had seen pygs rush off to report to others at his approach. A number of trollkin kriel warriors stood resolutely at the far side of the bridge, including a team with a ready cannon. Alongside them was a pair of troll impalers. The area was not as well guarded as he had expected, but this region meant little to the kriels. To them it was simply a bend in the river with bridges to guard. They had no idea of its true importance—of the surging arteries of untapped power flowing beneath their feet with a roar far greater than the Hawksmire River. The natural energy of the rivers and Lake Scarleforth concentrated and collected here, a torrent flowing from as far away as Mount Shyleth Breen.

He felt no anger at these trollkin. Once he had been a friend of the kriels. It brought him no pleasure to bring death to them now, but the need for battle thrummed in his veins more urgently than he had ever felt in his previous life. As he stepped onto the bridge he warned them, "Begone, or you will suffer! This ground is mine."

"Go back to your woods, blackclad!" The senior-most warrior jeered. "If you come any closer we'll feed your limbs to Bul and Kal!" He jerked his thumb over his shoulder to the impalers, who had their spears ready. Despite this bravado, most of the trollkin eyed the constructs behind Baldur with apprehension.

Baldur advanced, pausing only when the impalers hurled their weapons with all their considerable strength. He waved a hand and the stone of the bridge leapt up in front of him just before the spears reached him. The weapons shattered on impact, and the stone absorbed the blast of the cannon when it, too, roared to life. Baldur was sprayed with fine granite dust but was not harmed. The bridge stones settled back down, one section pocked with damage, and he walked on. Woldwatchers followed behind him, while his woldwardens came to the bridge and stood witness.

He pointed toward the cannon crew, and there was a roaring sound of the earth sundering as the ground split beneath their feet. They screamed as the earth swallowed them whole, cannon and all. At this, the warriors at the far end of the bridge smacked their weapons against their wooden shields and charged with resounding war cries. Baldur rushed to meet them and felt strength flowing into his arms from the stone below his feet. He brought Tritus around in a mighty two-handed swing to crash through buckler shield and trollkin bones with equal ease. The first trollkin he met was hurled off the bridge and into the river. The next smashed at him with a metal hammer, but Baldur simply shrugged off the blow and retaliated with a strike so powerful it instantly shattered the warrior's skull.

The others had stepped back several paces, awed by the sight of him, but anger at the deaths of their peers inspired them to renew their attack as he stepped onto the soil at their end of the bridge. Baldur stopped and let his feet join with the earth as plates of stone manifested along his skin. The kriel warriors surrounded him and hammered him with axes, hammers, and blades, but the druid accepted their blows with stoic indifference, feeling only lightly bruised through the stone's protection. He unleashed a tremendous surge of power exploding outward to send the warriors flying. The impalers were caught in this blast and knocked to the ground. They survived, but the woldwatchers behind Baldur ran past to beset them with stony fists as the other wolds began their crossing. Megalith stepped through the river itself, eschewing the bridge entirely.

He could feel an internal inferno threatening to consume him; the power that flooded his limbs with strength was too much for his body to bear for long. He concentrated his will to regenerate his seared flesh, summoning his shifting stones to teleport closer and assist. He knew the longer he fought, the greater the toll would become.

As he and the wolds advanced on the shattered monoliths of the Bones of Orboros, other trollkin foolishly stood their ground against him. By this point the power thrummed in his ears and through his limbs such that slaying these warriors had become effortless. His strength exceeded even that of the full-blood troll axer that came against him, enraged at the death of its kin. Wielding Tritus in one hand easily now, he shattered its arm and then its collarbone. It howled in pain but fought just as fiercely with its axe, forcing Baldur to send the injury for Megalith to endure. The wold stepped forward to finish the brave beast with a single mighty blow. Heat poured from the druid's cadent bones to ignite his veins and roast his organs as he groaned and fell to one knee, focusing his will to force the overwhelming inferno to abate.

More trollkin would likely come to contest the site, but for now it was his. He sent most of his wolds to guard the bridges and stand sentry as he regarded the cracked and battered stones of the great circle. Megalith was alongside him as he surveyed the damage. It had taken tremendous force to shatter these stones. Had it been done by dragonspawn, titans, or dire trolls? He decided it did not matter. Stones erected a thousand years ago and more lay around the clearing; only one of the great rune-inscribed monoliths was untouched. He approached it, then laid his

hand against its cool surface and closed his eyes. Its runes erupted with green light, and he felt the leyline power beneath the soil well upward to him like a geyser.

Megalith and two woldwardens took hold of one of the fallen halves of a shattered stone and together lifted the weighty fragment and placed it against the lower half, which still stood. Baldur pointed toward it, and green runes circled his hand as gathered energy flowed outward. Dust and small pieces of the stone rose from the soil to rejoin the original, mending the crack separating the halves as if it had never been there. In moments the great monolith was restored, and its runes lit with power. In this way, one by one, Baldur restored what had been broken. He traced his fingers along the runes, reinforcing shattered connections. The leyline node surged back to full strength and joined with the network of Orboros once more.

Baldur felt mental fatigue as he finished this endeavor; he had accomplished something that might have taken others weeks if not months of effort. As vital as this step was, though, it was only the least part of the work that must be done. With the site restored, he could reach through the leyline network to send his consciousness to other major nodes of power. He quickly found what he sought hundreds of miles away. By expending his will he could have teleported himself, but he did not wish to leave this site. Filled with the thrumming power of Orboros, he did not need a wayfarer to convey his message: he simply forced his voice to manifest on the other side. "Morvahna, it is Baldur. Come to me." Then he let the connection fade.

Almost immediately the runes on the stones pulsed, first slowly, then quickly, then in a wash of natural energies Morvahna the Autumnblade stood at their center. She looked just as he remembered her, which for some reason surprised him. To her left stood a pureblood warpwolf and on her right a shadowhorn satyr, both exemplary representatives of their breeds, while behind her stood a wayfarer. Morvahna looked at Baldur as if seeing a ghost. "Baldur?"

He gave an impatient shake of his head. "Yes, yes. I am alive and I am sane. I brought you here because there is vital and urgent work to do, and I have need of your skill and your power."

She stared at him still, as if his words were as startling as his presence. Then she blinked and drew herself up haughtily as she said with customary disdain, "I am pleased you are well. I did not expect it, but I am pleased. However, much time has passed and important matters are underway. I am at a vital stage in overseeing—"

"What you are doing," Baldur interrupted sharply, "is aiding me with this ceremony, here and now. All other tasks you will put aside." His eyes bored into hers.

Her cheeks flushed and her expression became hostile. Sensitive to the temper of their mistress, her warpwolf and satyr crouched slightly, as if readying for battle. "Who are you to speak to me like this? I am your senior by many years. Do not presume my relief at your recovery will excuse—"

"Your seniority matters not at all," Baldur said, his strong voice intense. "Listen to me closely, as we waste valuable time with every word. Cryx has made a singular discovery in the mountains far to the north of here, between Khador and Rhul. They have found a prize beyond all reckoning, one they hasten to return to their master. Everblight has caught its scent and even now sends hounds for its recovery. You will assist me now, as we must place obstacles before them. Cooperating with me is the only way we will have even the slightest chance to play a role in this chase. It may already be too late for our efforts to matter."

That she was thrown off guard by his tone was evident in her indignant expression as she demanded, "How could you possibly know these things?"

"Look around you," Baldur commanded, his voice as sonorous as if he spoke in a cave. "We stand at the Bones of Orboros. Do you recall how this place was left?" He saw from her widening eyes that she did. "Even now you are filled with questions as to how it could have been restored. It was by my hand. For this purpose." He passed only a second to allow her to absorb this, then continued sternly. "I have wasted all the time I can spare on explanations. The Legion is your enemy, so you will do this for me. To hinder those who would destroy us all."

Morvahna stared at him with more wonder than anger. "You are changed."

A small smile touched his lips. "The accommodating Baldur you knew died months ago, pierced by arrows. The man who stands before you now burns as a candle lit on both ends. With your help, the time that remains to me will not be wasted. Are you prepared to put aside your vanity and pride to do what must be done?"

She nodded mutely. Her expression suggested curiosity and respect.

Baldur inclined his head and the earth trembled underfoot as his body was surrounded with a shimmering nimbus. He said, "Let us begin."

NEAR THE CASTLE OF THE KEYS

Lord Arbiter Hexeris surveyed the gathering of his cohorts in the unrelenting heat of the Bloodstone Marches. They were impressive seen arrayed amid their tents and in their marching rows and columns, he had to admit, though his force represented only one part of the war host being mustered by the archdomina. He was surprised the army was being called to action so quickly after their arduous return across the desert from the Abyssal Fortress. The intended use of the force was also unexpected, and he suspected someone had been advising the archdomina in his absence—rather indecorous of them, given his new title and responsibilities. He was fairly certain he knew who. In this case, his thoughts did not fall to Lord Assassin Morghoul or even the sly and corrupt Dominar Rasheth. He saw the object of his suspicions approaching even now.

Supreme Aptimus Zaal possessed a frame slighter than was seemly for a skorne, even one of his years, and he carried himself with his shoulders slightly stooped. Yet this did not greatly undermine the sense of dignity and quiet power he conveyed. Ancestral guardians of exceptional quality and antiquity escorted him, and immortals followed behind them. His crystal eye gleamed from within the extoller mask that covered half his face.

Hexeris inclined his head in greeting. "Supreme Aptimus, it is a pleasure to receive you. I was just thinking of you. Perhaps you have some insight into the chosen direction of conquest. The scope of this expedition seems more than is necessary to quell some few savages squatting around a lake. I suspect there was some sort of ancestral guidance in the matter. I had thought I would be informed of any intelligence of mystical significance?"

Zaal's living eye narrowed. "If it is answers about this expedition you seek, you will need to discuss the matter with Supreme Archdomina Makeda. And as for ancestral guidance, you would need reprimand Hakaar the Destroyer. It was Aptimus Marketh who spoke for him, in the archdomina's presence. There was little I could do to intervene."

"Hakaar? Well, that is certainly unexpected. What interest has the Destroyer in pacifying some unruly trollkin? Seems a rather mundane endeavor to merit involving such a revered ancestor and summoning such a formidable army. Unless we have come to fear the *duzusk* so greatly?"

"As I say, for that you will need to ask Makeda. But I can understand your reluctance to remind her that the lake was an asset seized while the archdomina was away." It was an uncomfortable fact that this loss had transpired during Hexeris' oversight of the region. The fact that their western garrisons had been left all but unmanned while the archdomina confronted the Conqueror did not entirely diminish the shame of that loss. Hexeris was convinced he had Dominar Rasheth to blame for the incident, but it mattered little. He had been outmaneuvered, and he

could respect that. Zaal said, "Momentous events are about to unfold, and there is both opportunity and risk ahead of us. We must be bold."

"As vague and uninformative as always," Hexeris said with a sneer. "Very well; I will press you on that topic no more. You mentioned you had other news."

"Two items of intelligence—one large in scope but vague, the other more specific to matters of interest to the both of us and known with greater certainty."

Hexeris felt his strained patience growing even thinner. The supreme aptimus seemed to take pleasure in being obscure with his information, offering it in small drips, like a paingiver giving water to a victim under his ministrations. "Begin with the latter."

"I have questioned the ancestors regarding the dragonstones I have seen with my augmented sight—those foci of concentrated power that are in guise so similar to the sacral stones of our most ancient exalted. You and I agreed it should be a priority to seize one of these for study."

"Given what transpired to collapse Mordikaar's laboratory," he added drolly, "I think the capture or slaying of a dragon might be somewhat . . . ambitious."

Zaal shook his head. "You will recall I saw echoes of that power within the leaders of the blighted force that attacked our fortifications in the first battle atop those same ruins. I believe these beings carry within them small stones similar to—perhaps even taken from—the tremendous crystalline fonts of power the dragons themselves possess. Perhaps they are shavings, akin to those pieces of a greater sacral stone excised to imbue our weapons and armor. Our best opportunity to study these dragonstones will come from defeating or capturing one of these empowered mortals. A far simpler task than confronting a dragon."

"In theory, perhaps," Hexeris said. "If we knew where they might be found."

"The ancestors have been stirred to particular restlessness as their vision of the future has come into clarity. I have been told one or more of these dragonstone-empowered mortals approaches. I will share with you their most likely path, allowing you to seize the opportunity to confront them, if you agree to share the study of this stone once it is in your grasp."

"Are you curious what sort of *kovaas* might emerge from such a stone's shattering?" This veiled mention of his heretical research prompted an angry glare from the supreme aptimus. The lord arbiter laughed. "Never mind. I agree to your stipulations. A dragonstone-empowered mortal . . . Perhaps I can persuade Master Ascetic Naaresh to assist me in their capture. It seems just the sort of temptation that would appeal to him." Hexeris looked sharply back to the extoller and asked, "And what was the larger matter? Two pieces of intelligence, you said."

Zaal drew himself up and leaned upon his staff. "I have communed with the venerable ancestor Jyvox, who declared himself archdominar in the time of the First War of the Hezaat River. His sight has always been particularly prescient, accurate, and far-reaching. Jyvox warns that some occult ritual or ceremony of tremendous power is about to be invoked at a site northwest of the lake held by the trollkin. This must be interrupted. We may need to advise the archdomina to accelerate her plans to subdue the lake, paying particular attention to this threat. Jyvox declared the successful completion of this ritual will have a catastrophic impact on *all* our western holdings. I do not know how or why."

"ARE YOU PREPARED TO PUT ASIDE YOUR VANITY AND PRIDE TO DO WHAT MUST BE DONE?"

Hexeris leaned upon the shaft of Gulgata, his double-bladed weapon, with a thoughtful expression. "Enigmatic and yet dire. Far be it for me to doubt the venerable Jyvox. I will inform Makeda of this. Perhaps in her haste to interrupt this ritual she will not notice if I divert some few soldiers to intercept these dragonstone bearers you say are approaching."

The supreme aptimus seemed satisfied for the first time in their conversation and inclined his head slightly. "I have fulfilled my duty. I will await word of your success, Lord Arbiter."

NEW RULES

BATTLE ENGINES

From monstrous living weapons laden with soldiers and artillery to stone-wrought wonders teeming with the energy of nature, the battle engines of HORDES are powerful weapons of war. These giant entities require neither arcane control from an army's warlock nor battlefield guidance from its officers. Instead, a battle engine's own commander, crew, or consciousness guides it to rain down destruction upon enemies bold or foolish enough to stand in its path.

Battle engines have their own model type: **battle engine**. Battle engines are not warrior models. Battle engines are independent models.

Battle engines are on **huge bases** (120 mm).

HUGE BASE

A huge-based model occupies the space from the bottom of its base to a height of 5".

FACING & LINE OF SIGHT

A battle engine's front arc is marked on it base. Its front arc is further divided into two 90° **fields of fire**. These fields of fire determine which models a battle engine can target with its weapons depending on their location. Weapons located on a battle engine's left side (L) can target only models in its left field of fire. Weapons located on a battle engine's right side (R) can target only models in its right field of fire. Weapons with location "–" can target models in either field of fire. If any part of a model's base is in the middle of the battle engine's front arc, the battle engine can target it with any weapon.

FIELD OF FIRE

The Animantarax can attack the Blitzer with its left spear, either Scattergunner A or B with its right spear, and the Impaler with either or both spears.

TARGETING A BATTLE ENGINE

A battle engine never gains the DEF bonus from concealment, cover, or elevation.

CLOUD EFFECTS AND FOREST TERRAIN

Cloud effects and forest terrain do not block line of sight to a battle engine.

TARGETING A BATTLE ENGINE IN MELEE

A model targeting a battle engine with a ranged or magic attack does not suffer the target in melee attack roll penalty. If a ranged or magic attack misses a battle engine in melee, that miss is not rerolled against another model. It misses completely.

A battle engine can be targeted by combined ranged attacks while it is in melee.

PREDEPLOYMENT

Battle engines must be placed before normal deployment. If both players have models to predeploy, they predeploy their models in standard deployment order.

MASSIVE

A battle engine cannot be slammed, pushed, thrown, knocked down, or made stationary.

PATHFINDER

Although the icon does not appear on their stat lines, all battle engines have the Pathfinder advantage.

SERVICEABLE

Friendly Faction models with the Repair ability can attempt to repair damaged battle engines. To attempt repairs, the model with Repair must be in base-to-base contact with the damaged battle engine and make a skill check. If successful, remove d6 damage points from the battle engine.

SPECIAL ISSUE

A model with the Special Issue rule can be included in the Theme Forces of the warlock specified on on its card. This applies to all versions of a particular warlock and any versions of the warlock's Theme Forces.

The model can also be bonded to the warlock specified on its card. This only gives the warbeast the *potential* to bond to the warlock using standard bonding rules despite the fact that character warbeasts cannot normally be bonded. It does not automatically add a warbeast bond.

TROLLBLOODS

THE DEVIL'S DUE

The Southeastern Glimmerwood

Kalrok sat on a stump watching the fireflies dance across the murky surface of the swamp as he drummed his fingers idly on the scattergun across his lap. Behind him, the small trollkin camp was quiet. They were surrounded by enemies on virtually every side, so there were no fires.

"You bored?" a deep voice suddenly asked from directly ahead. The scattergunner leapt to his feet and brought his weapon to his shoulder. He could see nothing ahead but the still waters of the swamp and some mossy hummocks. He relaxed when the "hummocks" took on the distinct shapes of three large trollkin and a squat swamp troll.

"Boss!" Kalrok said, dropping his scattergun to his side. "I nearly unloaded Buster on the lot of you."

Jarl Skuld chuckled as he climbed up out of the water. "Just wanted to see how close we could get," he said. He clapped a hand on his kin's shoulder. "Seems I can see better with one eye than you can with two!"

"At least he was awake this time," joked Lagun, the second trollkin to appear. Kalrok glowered at him. The skinner's brother Hoson emerged from the water, followed by Nog, a rotund, green-skinned troll that looked like part of the bog even after he clambered out of the water.

Hoson handed a heavy, cloth-wrapped bundle to the trollkin leader. Kalrok's eyes went wide, and he grinned from ear to ear. "You bloody well did it, you sneaky bastards!"

Jarl unwound the binding cords to reveal a massive battle axe. Its crescent head bore strange, whirling patterns inscribed in hammered bronze near the haft on each side. Its razor-sharp blade was unblemished, its haft simple, well-worn ash with a slight bend in the middle. It was a huge, heavy thing, and the fact that its owner wielded it in one hand spoke of his great strength and skill.

Kalrok shook his head and whistled. "If that doesn't twist Kromac's tail in a knot, nothing will."

Jarl looked up, grinning. "Oh, we're not done yet. Nog still has to do his part."

The Tharn encampment was in chaos. Ravagers and bloodtrackers rushed about, while Kromac raged and shouted, hacking his tent to pieces with his remaining axe. Jarl had to stifle a chuckle at the sight of the infamous Tharn king throwing a colossal temper tantrum.

"He's going to murder us all," Hoson whispered. The skinner was hunkered down next to Jarl in a clump of tall reeds on the edge of the encampment. With Jarl's sorcery, they blended in completely.

"He won't get the chance," Jarl said, patting his companion's broad back. "Give me the axe."

Hoson passed Jarl the stolen axe, covering his nose and mouth with one hand as he did. "By the Wurm, that stinks!"

Jarl unwrapped the axe. A thick layer of half-dried green and brown slime coated the axe head, giving off a stench that was indescribably abominable. "Good boy, Nog," he said. Catching a strong whiff, he had to turn away and wait for his head to clear.

"You think Grissel will come through for us if we pull this off?" Hoson asked as he loosened his oversized skinning knife in its sheath.

Jarl nodded. "She may have her head halfway up Madrak's backside, but she keeps her word. She'll give us our troops."

"Then I suppose we'd better get this done. Lagun and the rest should be in position now." The skinner crept backward, out of the reeds, keeping low. He moved quietly away to the west, disappearing into the dense trees.

Jarl reached out and felt the ready strength of his three trolls nearby. He connected more deeply with his axer, Golo, to look through his eyes. The troll squatted where the swamp slowly gave way to the more rugged terrain southwest of the Scarleforth. Nog also crouched nearby, along with the impaler Hul and Jarl's entire force of scattergunners. All

were hidden behind a blind of woven vines, leaves, and other forest materials. Satisfied, Jarl moved slowly for the reeds, keeping the concealing magic cloaked about his body.

The Tharn encampment lay on the edge of the swampy woods to the southwest of Scarleforth Lake. Kromac and his sizable force of ravagers and bloodtrackers had pitched their simple tents in the middle of a large, mossy sward.

Kromac's tirade currently held the Tharn's attention, just as Jarl had hoped. His concealing spell was powerful, but he couldn't trust magic alone in order to stay hidden. He moved quietly around to a spot some fifty yards from Kromac's tent in the center of the encampment. From there he had a clear view of the Tharn king.

He dropped his concealment spell and drew one of his pistols, then sucked in a deep breath and pulled the trigger. Every Tharn turned at the loud report, seizing their weapons and growling angrily as they prepared to charge.

"I would parley with the great Kromac the Ravenous!" he called out, holding the axe aloft. He spoke fairly well in the Tharn tongue, which was essentially a dialect of Molgur and used many similar words as the trollkin's own language. He was relying on Kromac's pride now: if the Tharn leader wanted to save face, he could not just send his warriors or one of his massive warpwolves at Jarl. Of course, this would all be moot if Kromac had been driven into a state of irrational rage. Jarl was encouraged by the fact that Kromac had yet to adopt the bestial form he preferred in battle.

Several of the nearest Tharn ravagers began moving toward Jarl. He was about to drop the axe and draw his other pistol when Kromac's voice rose over their growls, halting them. The Tharn warlock walked slowly toward Jarl. Two of his warpwolves followed close behind him, one marked with runes and carrying a massive axe. When Kromac was within thirty feet, Jarl said, "That's far enough."

Kromac stopped and snarled, "I can kill you just as easily from here, *thief*. Speak, and consider yourself fortunate I allow you to do so."

"Thank you, great king," Jarl said and bowed. "I offer my sincere apologies for interrupting your . . . moon-howling ceremony yesterday." Kromac bristled at this description of the Tharn ritual and tightened his grip on the haft of his axe. His warpwolves growled low in their throats. "Also, I want to return your weapon. I had thought to add it to my collection, but I find it has not been well kept." He threw the axe to Kromac's feet.

The state of the axe was obvious even to those farther back, but Jarl suspected it was the smell that pushed the Tharn warrior over the edge. Just after the axe landed on the ground, Kromac let loose a blood-chilling howl. His face and body contorted, bulged, and suddenly increased alarmingly in mass as he gave himself over fully to his spiraling rage.

Jarl summoned his own sorcerous power to cloak himself in a concealing haze. He turned and broke into a dead run through the foliage toward where his trolls and scattergunners waited. Behind him he heard Kromac's roar answered by the deep howls of the warpwolves and the chorus of hundreds of Tharn ravagers and bloodtrackers.

He raced through the dense undergrowth, avoiding tangles and briars with the ease of one long accustomed to moving quickly over rugged ground. He knew his spell allowed him to blend into his surroundings, but the Tharn would scent his trail. He could hear them not far behind.

He broke through the underbrush onto a path. A hundred paces ahead lay the deep pit he and his men had dug the night before. He could barely detect the outline of the stake-lined deadfall under the forest debris concealing it. He raced around and continued north. As he neared the spot where his small force waited, he mentally ordered his trolls to join the rest of his men farther up the trail. A furious howl burst through the woods behind him as he reached the blind—the Tharn had found the deadfall.

He ducked behind the blind and grinned at Kalrok, who was hunkered down with ten other trollkin armed with immense scatterguns. "Ready?" he asked as he drew his pistols. "They're right behind me."

"HE'S GOING TO MURDER US ALL."

"Yes," Kalrok answered. "Did they hit the trap?"

"Lagun and Hoson know their work. I just hope one of those damned warpwolves landed in that pit." He looked the group over. "Remember, one blast and we hightail it out of here. We just need to slow them." He pointed directly at Kalrok. "No heroics. Understood?"

The muffled thunder of the approaching Tharn grew louder still. They were almost on top of the blind.

"Now!" Jarl yelled, and one of the scattergunners yanked a thick vine. The knots that held the blind upright released, letting it fall. The scattergunners unloaded their weapons into the large group of ravagers and bloodtrackers at the fore of the Tharn horde, blasting them with metal shot and small stones. After the deafening volley, a bloody haze hung in the air and the landscape was covered in gore and mangled Tharn corpses.

"Go! Now!" Jarl shouted, and the scattergunners slung their weapons and moved swiftly to the north with Jarl behind them. They ran along the trail as fast as they could manage with their heavy armor, skirting another deadfall. They had nearly reached the spot where they would rendezvous with the rest of their forces when a tide of snarling, furred bodies and a hail of javelins burst from the forest.

The first flurry of javelins felled three scattergunners. Kalrok was among them, his lifeblood spilling out around the heavy, barbed spear piercing his throat. Jarl fired his pistols almost by reflex. His first two shots blasted a Tharn wolf rider out of her saddle and put a slug through the eye of her duskwolf for good measure.

HIS FIRST TWO SHOTS BLASTED A THARN WOLF RIDER OUT OF HER SADDLE AND PUT A SLUG THROUGH THE EYE OF HER DUSKWOLF FOR GOOD MEASURE.

The group of scattergunners fell upon the remaining four wolf riders with the heavy blades of their scatterguns, largely shielding Jarl. He knew they didn't stand much of a chance against the bloodtrackers and their wolves, though. He reached out to his trolls, situated only a few hundred yards away, and commanded his axer and impaler to join them. He then drew upon his power to quicken the feet and reactions of the scattergunners, giving them a better chance to evade the javelins. Jarl continued to fire his pistols into the melee of skin and fur. His shots were unerring despite the chaos, and each bullet sent a rider tumbling from the saddle.

Two more scattergunners fell to Tharn javelins before Golo and Hul burst on the scene. Their rage was palpable, and Jarl drew on its strength to add accuracy and lethal force to his pistol shots. He ordered Golo forward into a charge at the nearest wolf rider, and the troll's axe swept out in a vicious arc to cut her in half as Hul impaled two others with thrown spears the size of ballista bolts.

The battle was over in seconds, leaving six scattergunners and all the duskwolves and riders dead and bleeding on the forest floor. "Move! Move!" Jarl shouted, knowing he could not pause even to retrieve the bodies of the slain. Dhunia would take them. He glanced to the south to see Kromac, his warpwolves, and the entire host of Tharn appear out of the underbrush.

He had to slow them, and there was only one way: urge Golo to charge Kromac. The big axer hurtled down the trail without hesitation, loosing a guttural roar. Jarl did not look through the troll's eyes as he died, but he made himself feel the claws and teeth of the warpwolves and Kromac's biting axes tearing into his flesh. Golo had been with him for years, but Jarl could do nothing to honor the faithful troll other than gather his dying rage as he fell.

Ahead, the trees began to thin, and the trail widened into a path. Lagun, Hoson, Nog, and his unit of kriel warriors moved out of the trees, and he and the scattergunners joined them.

"Where are the skorne?" Jarl asked Lagun.

"Quarter of a mile to the northwest. Hundreds of 'em."

"Excellent. Kromac will have a chance to work off some of his aggravation." As if on cue, Kromac and his forces appeared just two hundred yards down the path. The Tharn king halted and pointed his befouled axe at Jarl.

"Let's go!" the trollkin leader said, and he and his entire force sprinted off along the thinning tree line. He could hear Kromac and the Tharn behind them, gaining rapidly.

After another sprint, Jarl and his small force burst from the trees onto a wide, clear plain, ahead of a long column of marching warriors armored in crimson and gold. Their commander stood at the fore, a curved sword and a folded metal fan hanging at his waist. The lean, jagged faces of the soldiers registered surprise at the appearance of the trollkin.

Jarl did not give the skorne leader time to react but immediately summoned his will and unleashed his most potent sorcery. A thick fog rose up around the trollkin, completely obscuring them from both enemy forces. Beneath this shroud, Jarl and his men raced back into the cover of the trees, skirting the howling mob of Tharn.

As he and his band sprinted away, Jarl glanced back over his shoulder to see Kromac and the Tharn thunder into the open plain, directly into the path of the skorne. The two armies regarded one another for a moment in stunned silence before the plain erupted into furious violence with a cacophony of bestial howls and the metallic clash of weapons and armor.

"I almost feel sorry for Kromac," Lagun chuckled when the trollkin stopped a safe distance away. The din of the conflict carried even through the denser foliage of the inner forest.

"I'm sure he'll be fine," Jarl said. "I don't think even the skorne could hold up to the stink off that axe."

TROLLBLOOD THEME FORCES

JARL SKULD, DEVIL OF THE THORNWOOD
HIGHWAYMEN

WARBEASTS: Trollblood non-character warbeasts

UNITS: Kriel Warriors, Pyg Bushwhackers, Scattergunners, Sons of Bragg

SOLOS: Stone Scribe Chronicler, Trollkin Skinner, Troll Whelps

TIER 1
Requirements: The army can include only the models listed above.

Benefit: You gain +1 on your starting roll for the game. Additionally, Kriel Warrior units in the army gain Advance Move. (Before the start of the game but after both players have deployed, a model with Advance Move can make a full advance.)

TIER 2
Requirements: The army includes two Scattergunner units.

Benefit: Add one Scattergunner unit attachment to the army free of cost. This attachment does not count toward FA restrictions.

TIER 3
Requirements: The army includes three or more units.

Benefit: Models/units gain Pathfinder during your first turn of the game.

TIER 4
Requirements: Skuld's battlegroup includes three or more light warbeasts.

Benefit: Light warbeasts in Skuld's battlegroup gain Advance Deployment.

GRISSEL BLOODSONG, MARSHAL OF THE KRIELS
BLOCKADE RUNNERS

WARBEASTS: Troll Axer, Troll Bouncer, Troll Impaler, Dire Troll Blitzer, Dire Troll Bomber, Dire Troll Mauler

UNITS: Kriel Warriors, Pyg Bushwhackers, Trollkin Long Riders, Sons of Bragg

SOLOS: Troll Whelps; Horthol, Long Rider Hero

BATTLE ENGINES: Trollkin War Wagons

TIER 1
Requirements: The army can include only the models listed above.

Benefit: Reduce the point cost of cavalry models by 1.

TIER 2
Requirements: The army includes Horthol, Long Rider Hero.

Benefit: You gain +1 on your starting roll for the game.

TIER 3
Requirements: The army includes the Sons of Bragg.

Benefit: One medium-based unit gains Advance Move. (Before the start of the game but after both players have deployed, a model with Advance Move can make a full advance.)

TIER 4
Requirements: Grissel's battlegroup includes three or more warbeasts.

Benefit: Warbeasts in Grissel's battlegroup gain +2 SPD during your first turn of the game.

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JARL SKULD, DEVIL OF THE THORNWOOD

TROLLBLOOD TROLLKIN WARLOCK

They can have this wood—as their grave.

—Jarl Skuld, Devil of the Thornwood

SKULD

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	6	5	7	15	15	8

RUNE PISTOL

RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
12	1	–	12

SWORD

POW	P+S
4	10

FURY	6
DAMAGE	16
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARBEAST POINTS	+6
MEDIUM BASE	

FEAT: ROLLING FOG

The Devil of the Thornwood can summon a sudden dense fog to roll across the battlefield and plunge the enemy into chaos. While foes stumble blindly through choking mist, his allies effortlessly slip past trees and clamber over walls to execute a devastating ambush by which even superior forces are annihilated.

Place d3+3 4" AOE cloud effects anywhere completely in this model's control area. These AOEs do not block friendly Faction models' LOS. While in the AOE, friendly Faction models gain Pathfinder and can move through obstructions and friendly models if they have enough movement to move completely past them. While in the AOE, living enemy models suffer –2 to attack rolls. Rolling Fog lasts for one round.

SKULD

Gunfighter

Pathfinder

Tough

Evasive – This model cannot be targeted by free strikes. This model can advance up to 2" immediately after an enemy ranged attack that missed it is resolved unless it was missed while advancing.

Swift Hunter – When this model destroys an enemy model with a normal ranged attack, immediately after the attack is resolved it can advance up to 2".

RUNE PISTOL

Magical Weapon

Black Penny – This attack ignores the firing into melee penalty.

SPELLS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
MAGIC BULLET	2	6	–	–	NO	NO

If target friendly Faction model's next normal ranged attack directly hits, after resolving the attack choose a model within 4" of the model hit. The chosen model suffers an unboostable POW 12 magic damage roll. The point of origin for this damage is the model hit. After resolving this damage roll, Magic Bullet expires. Magic Bullet lasts for one turn.

QUICKEN	3	6	–	–	YES	NO

Target friendly model/unit gains +2 SPD and +2 DEF against ranged and magic attack rolls.

TACTICAL SUPREMACY	2	6	–	–	YES	NO

Target friendly model/unit can advance up to 3" after all models have ended their activations on your turn.

WEALD SECRETS	2	6	–	–	YES	NO

Target friendly model/unit gains Camouflage and Pathfinder (A model with Camouflage gains an additional +2 DEF when benefiting from concealment or cover.)

TACTICAL TIPS

Weald Secrets – If a model ignores concealment, it also ignores the Camouflage bonus for concealment.

The trollkin now known as the Devil of the Thornwood was never part of the kriels: his kith had been outcast as long as he could remember and had no use for kriel customs. Jarl has always been as willing to raid from trollkin villages as from human caravans. While he freely stole from those who had it easier, he considered violence a last resort and focused instead on lightning-fast raids. His band of trollkin and full-blood trolls would strike from concealment to seize their plunder and embattle those who refused to surrender before vanishing back into the dense fog that continually followed him.

Hostile confrontations were inevitable, and after a raid went wrong and resulted in unfortunate deaths on both sides, the Thornwood kriels declared Jarl a full outlaw. Hunted by both humanity and his own kind, Jarl became ever wilier, and both his skill with pistols and his mastery over the full-blood trolls increased. The elders cursed his name, but his repeated close calls and escapes soon made him a folk hero in the eyes of many younger trollkin. Some even left their kriels to join his outlawed band.

The Thornwood kriels were thrown into turmoil when Cryxian invaders and war between the human nations destroyed much of their homeland. After Ironhide led the kriels out of the forest, those that remained suffered. Something in Jarl would not let him abandon his home, and he realized he felt a connection to the holdouts as well. Time and again he has reluctantly risked his neck against his own instincts to help those who could not defend themselves. He still weighs every decision, all too aware of the price he paid fighting a Cryxian force attacking one of the last villages near Thornfall, when a blighted weapon took his eye and left an irreparable wound.

The reluctant leader of those kin banded together under his name, Jarl has begun to realize his fate is not so separate from the United Kriels as he had thought, and he has begun to trade with them for mutual favors and protection. Wherever forest invaders leave themselves vulnerable, Skuld is there to ensure they pay a price in coin and blood.

GRISSEL BLOODSONG, MARSHAL OF THE KRIELS

TROLLBLOOD EPIC TROLLKIN WARLOCK

Where there were once a handful of kriels there is now a people. Grissel has united them.

—Madrak Ironhide

BLOODSONG

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	7	7	6	15	17	9

FELL BLAST

RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
8	3	3	14

RESOUNDER

POW	P+S
7	14

FURY	6
DAMAGE	17
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARBEAST POINTS	+6
MEDIUM BASE	

FEAT: CALL OF VALOR

Grissel Bloodsong's shrewd military mind is equaled only by the power of her booming voice. As her call echoes across the battlefield, trolls and trollkin of the United Kriels are filled with an unyielding resolve that fires their blood and makes defeat or retreat unthinkable.

While within Bloodsong's control area, friendly Faction models gain Hyper Aggressive and Unyielding. Call of Valor lasts for one round. (When a model with Hyper Aggressive suffers damage from an enemy attack anytime except while it is advancing, after the attack is resolved it can immediately make a full advance directly toward the attacking model.) (While engaging an enemy model, a model with Unyielding gains +2 ARM.)

BLOODSONG

Tough

Inspiration [Faction] – Friendly Faction models/units in this model's command range never flee and immediately rally.

FELL BLAST

Ammo Type – Each time this weapon is used to make an attack, choose one of the following abilities:

- **Crescendo** – This weapon's base stats become AOE 4 and POW 12 for this attack. This attack's AOE remains in play for one round. Enemy models and non-Faction friendly models entering or ending their activations in the AOE suffer a POW 12 damage roll.
- **Quake** – On a direct hit against an enemy model, all models hit are knocked down.
- **Sonic Eruption** – This weapon's base stats become RNG SP 10, AOE –, and POW 12 for this attack.

Play List – This model can use each of this weapon's ammo types only once per activation.

RESOUNDER

Magical Weapon

Critical Smite – On a critical hit, this model can slam the model hit instead of rolling damage normally. The model hit is slammed d6" directly away from this model and suffers a damage roll with POW equal to this model's STR plus the POW of this weapon. The POW of collateral damage is equal to this model's STR.

SPELLS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
ARCANE BOLT	2	12	–	11	NO	YES
Magical bolts of energy streak toward the target model.						
DASH	2	SELF	CTRL	–	NO	NO
While in this model's control area, friendly Faction warrior models cannot be targeted by free strikes. This model and friendly Faction warrior models activating in its control area gain +1 SPD. Dash lasts for one turn.						
INHOSPITABLE GROUND	3	SELF	CTRL	–	NO	NO
While in this model's control area, enemy models treat open terrain as rough terrain. Inhospitable Ground lasts for one round.						

TACTICAL TIPS

CRITICAL SMITE – The slammed model is moved only half the distance rolled if its base is larger than the slamming model's.

Grissel Bloodsong stands as a bastion amid the storm devastating the lives of her people. Both warriors and elders of the kriels look to Grissel to be the voice of reason when all else fails. They trust her to save their people whether by shrewd words or the booming of her explosive voice and hammer on the battlefield.

Though she retains a strong respect for Madrak Ironhide, Grissel feels abandoned by the great chief. She saw how the curse of Rathrok was weighing upon his soul when he left the kriels alongside Doomshaper and Borka, but she feels the absence of those war leaders keenly amid the unremitting warfare that follows the kriels wherever they seek shelter. Assuming leadership was never her goal, but she has proven worthy of shouldering the terrible burden Ironhide set upon her.

Grissel knows survival is tenuous and that no soil is more important than the lives of her kin. The war they have entered was not of their choosing and requires difficult choices. She gladly fights alongside her warriors and asks nothing of them she would not risk herself. With her willingness to embrace all weapons they can seize, the trollkin see Grissel as a welcome bridge between older traditions and new ways that might be required to preserve their future.

Proving her pragmatism, Grissel has made short-term arrangements with outsiders, including mercenaries and other warlike tribes of the wilderness. She uses all her wits to keep the argumentative leaders of the kriels united. With every passing day she proves Madrak's faith in her was wise; she will not rest so long as her people are endangered, and she uses every ounce of cunning and courage for the fight to preserve them against the darkness that threatens their extinction.

STORM TROLL

TROLLBLOOD LIGHT WARBEAST

Looks like our enemies are about to learn that lightning does strike twice.

—Grissel Bloodsong

STORM TROLL

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	9	5	4	12	16	6

LIGHTNING

RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
8	1	–	12

CLAW

POW	P+S
3	12

CLAW

POW	P+S
3	12

FURY	3
THRESHOLD	9
FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	5
MEDIUM BASE	

STORM TROLL

Immunity: Electricity

Electrostatic – If this model is hit by a melee attack made by a warjack, immediately after the attack is resolved the warjack suffers Disruption unless this model was destroyed or removed from play by the attack. (A warjack suffering Disruption loses its focus points and cannot be allocated focus or channel spells for one round.)

Regeneration [d3] – This model can be forced to heal d3 damage points once per activation. This model cannot use Regeneration during an activation it runs.

LIGHTNING

Damage Type: Electricity

Lightning Generator – When a model is hit with this weapon, lightning arcs from that model to d3 consecutive additional models. The lightning arcs to the nearest model it has not already arced to within 4" of the last model it arced to, ignoring this model. Each model the lightning arcs to suffers a POW 10 electrical damage roll.

CLAW

Open Fist

Critical Disruption – On a critical hit on a warjack, it suffers Disruption. (A warjack suffering Disruption loses its focus points and cannot be allocated focus or channel spells for one round.)

ANIMUS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
LIGHTNING FISTS	1	6	-	-	NO	NO

Target friendly Faction model gains Immunity: Electricity and its melee weapons gain Electro Leap. Lightning Fists lasts for one round. (When a model is hit with a weapon with Electro Leap, you can have lightning arc to the nearest model within 4" of the model hit, ignoring the attacking model. The model the lightning arcs to suffers an unboostable POW 10 electrical damage roll.)

TACTICAL TIPS

Lightning Fists – During simultaneous attacks (such as Thresher), remember to determine all Electro Leaps before removing models from the table.

Lightning Generator – The lightning still arcs to models with Immunity: Electricity, it just cannot damage them. Damage from Lightning Generator strikes is not considered to have come from a hit or by a melee or ranged attack.

Unlike the many varieties of trolls that prefer to blend in to their environments, a storm troll primed with galvanic energy and ready to attack is a blazing beacon of power, intimidating well beyond its size. Deadly lightning erupts from the array of natural conductors that runs the length of its spine, playing along its sides before bolting from its mouth at anything that arouses the troll's ire. Beneath its fists, mighty warjacks shudder and stall with disrupted cortexes. With such fulgurant presence, the beasts have been welcomed by many kriels since being displaced from the Stormlands by the invading skorne.

SCATTERGUNNER OFFICER & STANDARD

TROLLBLOOD TROLLKIN UNIT ATTACHMENT

"Crude and imprecise"? Ha! I could shoot the beard off a bison with this thing.

—Sergeant Beltun

TACTICAL TIPS

GRANTED: QUICK WORK – A model with Quick Work cannot make the additional attack if it is still in melee.

OFFICER – Because this model is an Officer, when it is destroyed it does not replace a Grunt in its unit. Instead the Leader becomes the unit commander.

Though scattergunner sergeants lead their kith with the same bravery and stalwart resolve as any kithkar, they channel their formidable courage into military discipline unheard of within the kriels only a few years ago. Their veteran forces follow them and their standards into the bloodiest fights, storming trench lines and fortified positions with orchestrated brutality. Communicating through a mixture of bellowed orders and purposeful hand gestures, they unleash a punishing hail of gunfire before closing with gun blades.

These sergeants customarily recover medals and accolades pinned to the breasts of their enemies and keep them as trophies. Few sights unnerve a Khadoran officer more than seeing a seasoned trollkin scattergunner wearing several sabers of service and anvils of conquest from previous engagements against his countrymen.

Highly trained scattergunner officers and units are a rousing success in the efforts of the tradition-bound trollkin to modernize. Fighting and firing shoulder to shoulder, these veterans can shrug off trivial friendly fire that would incapacitate a human. Scattergunners led by their decorated sergeants have become some of the most effective assault forces available to the United Kriels.

Attachment [Scattergunners] – This attachment can be added to a Scattergunners unit.

OFFICER

Officer

Tough

Granted: Quick Work – While this model is in play, models in its unit gain Quick Work. (When a model with Quick Work destroys one or more enemy models with a melee attack during its combat action, immediately after the attack is resolved it can make one normal ranged attack. Attacks gained from Quick Work do not count against a weapon's ROF.)

Tactics: Clear! – Models in this unit gain Clear! (Ranged attacks against friendly models made by a model with Clear! automatically miss.)

Tactics: Combined Melee Attack – Models in this unit gain Combined Melee Attack

STANDARD BEARER

Standard Bearer

Tough

OFFICER

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	6	6	6	12	14	9

SCATTERGUN

RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
SP 8	1	–	12

GUN BLADE

POW	P+S
3	9

STANDARD BEARER

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	6	5	5	12	14	8

OFFICER'S DAMAGE 5
FIELD ALLOWANCE 1
OFFICER & STANDARD 2
MEDIUM BASE

RÖK

TROLLBLOOD DIRE TROLL CHARACTER HEAVY WARBEAST

The frozen wastes of the north are home to many terrifying legends, but it was no myth that inflicted this mayhem.

—Professor Viktor Pendrake surveying a ruined Kossite village

RÖK

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	12	7	5	12	18	5

FROST BREATH

RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
SP 6	1	—	14

BATTLE AXE

POW	P+S
6	18

BIG MEATY FIST

POW	P+S
4	16

FURY	5
THRESHOLD	7
FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	11
LARGE BASE	

RÖK

Immunity: Cold

Assault – As part of a charge, after moving but before making its charge attack, this model can make one ranged attack targeting the model charged unless they were in melee with each other at the start of this model's activation. When resolving an Assault ranged attack, the attacking model does not suffer the target in melee penalty. If the target is not in melee range after moving, this model can make the Assault ranged attack before its activation ends.

Berserk – When this model destroys one or more models with a melee attack during its combat action, immediately after the attack is resolved it must make one additional melee attack against another model in its melee range.

Regeneration [d3] – This model can be forced to heal d3 damage points once per activation. This model cannot use Regeneration during an activation it runs.

Snacking – When this model boxes a living model with a melee attack, this model can heal d3 damage points. If this model heals, the boxed model is removed from play.

Special Issue [Borka] – This model can be included in Borka's theme forces. It can also be bonded to Borka.

FROST BREATH

Damage Type: Cold

Critical Freeze – On a critical hit, the model hit becomes stationary for one round unless it has Immunity: Cold.

BIG MEATY FIST

Open Fist

ANIMUS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
PRIMAL	2	6	–	–	NO	NO

Target friendly living warbeast gains +2 STR and MAT for one round and automatically frenzies during your next Control Phase.

TACTICAL TIPS

Assault – The assaulting model ignores the target in melee penalty even if is not in melee range of its charge target after moving.

Berserk – Because Snacking removes a model from play before it is destroyed, if Rök benefits from Snacking he will not be able to make a Berserk attack.

Primal – The warbeast frenzies even if Primal was removed via a spell, ability, or casting of new animus on the same model prior to the Control Phase.

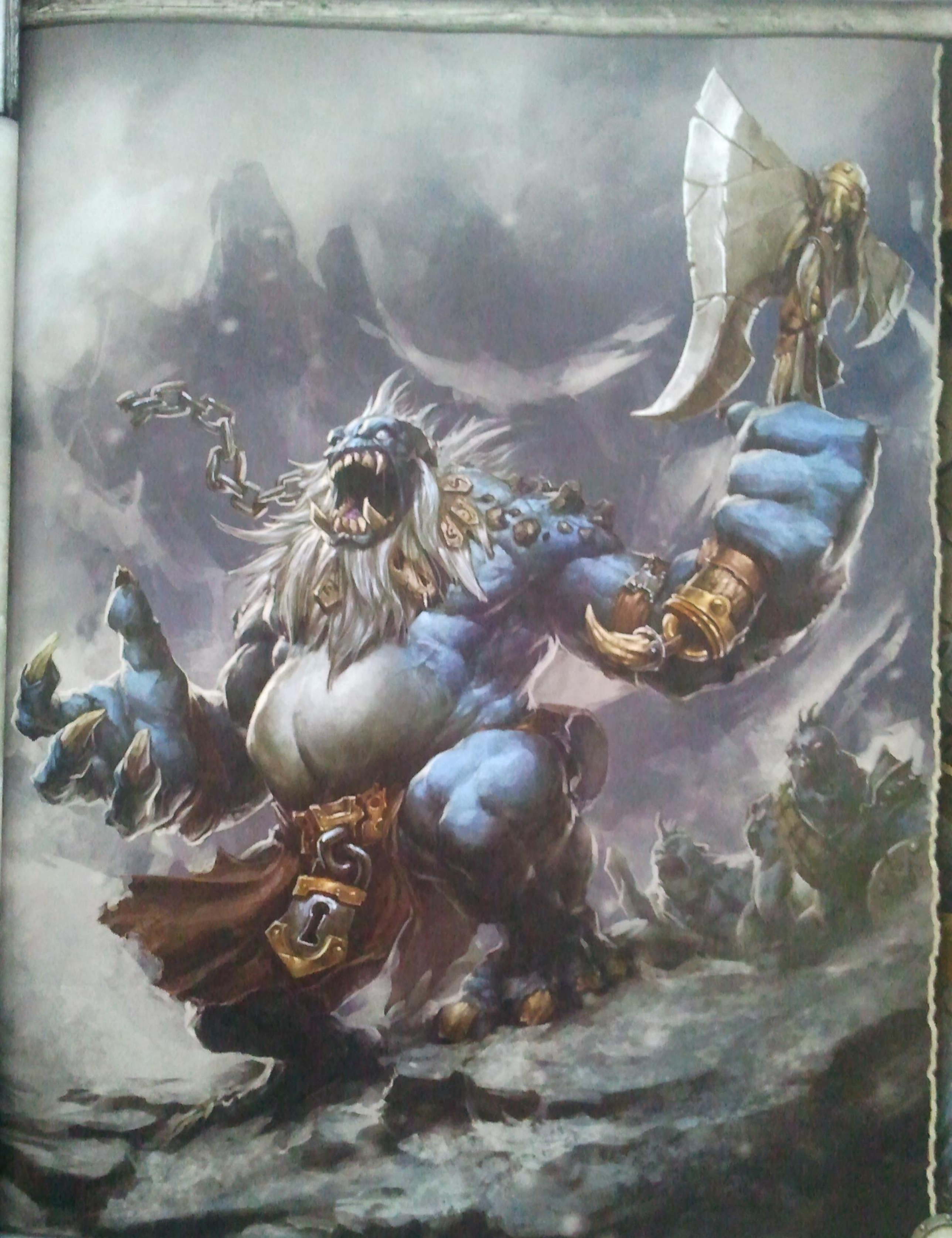
Snacking – Because the boxed model is removed from play before being destroyed, it does not generate a soul or corpse token.

Special Issue – This only gives the warbeast the potential to bond to the warlock. It does not automatically add a bond.

For more than a century the inhabitants of the frozen northern mountains have whispered of a beast of singular ferocity. When a remote village is found in ruins, its inhabitants missing and their taverns plundered, northerners speak fearfully of the dire troll called Rök.

Like all dire trolls Rök was motivated by his nearly insatiable hunger, and with each creature consumed his size and rancor alike increased. He hunted increasingly more dangerous prey, moving from giant ulk to satyrs and even to other dire trolls. He typically spurned humans as a paltry repast, although he would consume them to take the edge off his hunger if feeling particularly ravenous. He was in such a state the day he came upon a caravan transporting kegs of the dark beer preferred in northern Khador. In his great hunger he did not stop after consuming the guards, the merchants, and their carthorses but went on to empty the large kegs containing their wares. Rök felt sated in a way he never had from a simple meal, stronger and ready to fight. He rampaged over the mountain and sought villages where he might find the kegs containing the intoxicating liquid he now craved. He terrorized villages across the north for days before finally falling into slumber deep within a cave. Over the following years Rök's thirst grew as great as his hunger, and his raids of villages for their beer and spirits became legendary among both the Khadoran communities and the trollkin kriels of the north.

When Borka Kegslayer learned the secret of commanding the great dire trolls from the Shaman of the Gnarls, Rök was the beast he sought out. The two fought for hours, trading blow for blow. When both slumped to the ground at last, Borka drank deeply from his supply of potent brew and tossed Rök his own keg, and then another. The huge troll eventually followed Borka down the mountain, knowing that greater fights and rivers of beer waited wherever the Kegslayer led.



SONS OF BRAGG

TROLLBLOOD TROLLKIN FELL CALLER CHARACTER UNIT

One voice can be strong, but when joined in chorus they become unconquerable.

—Grissel Bloodsong

WRATHAR

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	7	7	6	13	15	9

GREAT SWORD

POW	P+S
5	12

TOR

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	7	7	6	13	15	9

SONIC BLAST

RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
SP 8	1	—	12

SWORD

POW	P+S
3	10

RHUDD

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	7	7	6	13	15	9

SWORD ×2

POW	P+S
3	10

DAMAGE	8 EA
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WRATHAR, TOR, & RHUDD	6
MEDIUM BASE	

WRATHAR

Fearless

Officer

Tough

Fell Concert – At the start of this unit's activation choose one of the following Fell Calls for this unit to make.

- **Call to Action** – Knocked down models in this unit in formation immediately stand up.
- **Call of Defiance** – When a model in this unit that is in formation makes a Tough roll of 4, 5, or 6, it heals 1 damage point and is knocked down. Call of Defiance lasts for one round.
- **Fervor** – Affected models gain +2 to attack and damage rolls this activation.

Theme Songs – Models in this unit are never affected by fell calls made by other friendly models.

TOR

Fearless

Tough

Assault – As part of a charge, after moving but before making its charge attack, this model can make one ranged attack targeting the model charged unless they were in melee with each other at the start of this model's activation. When resolving an Assault ranged attack, the attacking model does not suffer the target in melee penalty. If the target is not in melee range after moving, this model can make the Assault ranged attack before its activation ends.

Fell Concert – See above.

- **Call to Action** – See above.
- **Call of Defiance** – See above.
- **Fervor** – See above.

Theme Songs – See above.

RHUDD

Fearless

Tough

Fell Concert – See above.

- **Call to Action** – See above.
- **Call of Defiance** – See above.
- **Fervor** – See above.

Theme Songs – See above.

GREAT SWORD

Reach

Weapon Master

SWORD

Weapon Master

TACTICAL TIPS

Assault – The assaulting model ignores the target in melee penalty even if is not in melee range of its charge target after moving.

Officer - Because Wrathar is an Officer, when he is destroyed he does not replace Tor or Rhudd. Instead Tor or Rhudd becomes the unit commander.

The Sons of Bragg swagger across western Immoren like living legends, each as powerful with sword as he is in voice. The Sons are heard long before their arrival, booming mighty chants that resound off trees and mountains. They are welcome at every victory feast as the kin gather to hear tales of triumph and woe.

Though all fell callers claim kinship to one another from the legendary Bragg, these three are true kith. They were born in different kriels to different mothers, but their father was the same—a fell caller and champion whose deeds grow with every telling but whose greatest legacy was siring these three sons. Destiny brought them together in the Thornwood to fight side by side as Cryxian horrors overwhelmed the kriels. When Madrak Ironhide and his followers left the Thornwood, the Sons of Bragg did not quit the fight but joined Jarl Skuld to create a motley gang of highwaymen carving out safeholds for the kin who refused to abandon the forest.

Wrathor is the eldest, a brash and powerful warrior who wields a massive iron great sword as easily as a light piece of wood. Its notched edge has ended warpwolves, Tharn, bane knights, and Man-O-War soldiers beyond counting. As he fights, Wrathor's deep voice calls out to rally his brothers, and by his lead Tor and Rhudd join him in perfect harmony, belting out chants to sustain them despite impossibly grievous wounds. Tor boasts the sharpest pitched and most explosive voice, able to shatter stone and split wood with a shout as he closes to finish foes with a few expert blows of his sword. After battle it is Tor who has proven to be the best storyteller, with a memory as sharp as his blade. Rhudd may be youngest, but he is a swordsman without peer, and he claims to have bested kayazy duelists while drunk and blindfolded. Rhudd uses his baritone calls to taunt enemies into recklessness before contemptuously finishing them with a blade in each hand. Each brother is formidable, but together they stand as an army of three.

TROLLKIN WAR WAGON

TROLLBLOOD CAVALRY BATTLE ENGINE

I love it when I hear the enemy yell, "Hold the line!"

—War Wagon Driver Jormo Kelkun

WAR WAGON						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
7	14	6	5	10	19	10

POUNDER				
	RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
	10	1	5	16

SCATTERGUN				
	RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
	SP 8	1	—	12

MOUNT
POW
14

DAMAGE	22
FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
POINT COST	9
HUGE BASE	

WAR WAGON

Construct

Line Breaker – This model gains an additional die on impact attack rolls.

Power Attack Trample – This model can make trample power attacks.

Weapon Platform – This model can make melee and ranged attacks in the same activation. When this model makes its initial melee attacks or a power attack, it can also make its initial ranged attacks. This model can make ranged attacks even while in melee.

POUNDER

Arcing Fire – When attacking with this weapon, this model can ignore intervening models except those within 1" of the target.

Quake – On a direct hit against an enemy model, all models hit are knocked down.

MOUNT

Knockdown – When a model is hit by an attack with this weapon, it is knocked down.

Trampling Hooves – This model can charge and make charge attacks with this weapon. During a combat action it did not make a charge attack, this model can make one melee attack with this weapon.

The crashing sound of hooves, iron, and wood is so loud as to be nearly painful as a War Wagon roars across the battlefield. Its crew shout grimly back and forth as they clear their guns and exhort the enormous bison that haul them into position. The creatures thunder forward, lending the wagon formidable momentum. Any foe foolish enough to stand his ground is crushed beneath the wagon's bulk, his armor crumpled and his body ground into the earth. The cacophony of the wagon's passage is finally exceeded by the monstrous report of its main gun, which can blast apart man and beast alike in a shocking display of raw firepower.

The trollkin of the northern kriels have made war from great, heavy armored carts drawn by stout bison for centuries. Such wagons once crossed the southern Khadoran plains with greater frequency than in recent decades, when the kriels began to find themselves pushed to the fringes. Renewed relations between far-flung kriels separated by hostile territory have revived the use of these wagons. The trollkin augment the wagons with the finest weaponry they can scavenge or fabricate in their village smithies, the largest of which have been converted into impressive armories.

Driven and operated by a mixed crew, these powerful wagons have increasingly been used to escort armed bands of trollkin traveling great distances to reinforce the United Kriels. Because much of the armored wagon's interior is taken up by its powerful turret cannon—whose design was pilfered from the turrets that defend Khadoran military trains—there is little room for traditional crew beyond driver and gunner. This limitation has prompted reliance on the small but dexterous pygs to assist, as they are adept at scrambling for ammunition and expediting reloading while taking care not to get burned by a barrel that has become scorching hot from constant firing. These pygs are also tasked with keeping boarders off the vehicle so the driver and gunner can concentrate on aiming the bison and cannon in the appropriate directions.

The tremendous strength of their harnessed bison teams allows the trollkin to build their War Wagons without concern for weight. Between the yoked bison lie hundreds of pounds of reinforced armor that transforms the wagon into a battering ram of astounding power. A team of bison impelled forward at full speed is able to generate a veritable avalanche of force. Even the most heavily armored phalanxes are smashed beneath the pulverizing hooves and wheels. The most significant aspect of the wagon's armament and weight is its main weapon, the massive pounder. The wagon's driver calls the gunner's targets while a scattergun-wielding pyg clears the path of enemy troops. Once he locks his sights, the gunner fires, confident his shot will hit his mark even with the motion of the wagon. The shell's weight means the occasional miss still results in enormous destruction from the staggering explosive blast.

CIRCLE ORBOROS

A WARRIOR'S PREROGATIVE

Northern Glimmerwood

Grayle heard fighting through the trees as he rushed ahead, his runic hunting blades gripped tightly in each hand. He linked his vision to that of the beasts bonded to him to take in the environment through multiple pairs of eyes. Not far from him to either side his warpwolf stalkers moved swiftly and silently, their forms perfectly suited to hunting their prey. Behind them moved his men, one hunting pack each of reeves and Wolves of Orboros, together with a pair of war wolves. Grayle mystically extended his and his warpwolves' senses through the undergrowth and trees to determine exactly where to strike amid the mixed skirmish ahead. His master of the hunt coordinated his men with silent gestures.

Grayle saw his moment and darted past a tree straight behind a nephilim soldier being menaced by a hulking white-furred wolf wearing the bronze armor of the Circle. The nephilim sensed him at the last moment and twisted its monstrous, eyeless head toward him, its fanged jaw opening with a hiss. Grayle plunged his blades into the creature's back on either side of its spine to cut through lungs and arteries. It awkwardly attempted to swing its large sword at him, but he had already withdrawn his blades in a plume of blood and ducked beneath the strike. He lunged to slice a massive gash inside the creature's leg near the groin, nearly severing the limb and ending what passed for its life. Thick, foul-smelling blood poured from its injuries as it toppled.

The wolf growled deep in the throat, clearly agitated at having its kill stolen. The Farstrider inclined his head slightly, trying to convey by his posture that he was not a challenger. Instinctively, Grayle attempted to impose calm with his own will, but the white wolf's mind resisted. He realized this was Kaya's companion, Laris, and no ordinary beast. The wolf snarled and lashed his tail but then turned and sprinted away to leap upon a blighted Nyss swordsman, knocking this enemy on his back and tearing out his throat.

Grayle's stalkers burst through the trees to beset other nearby nephilim. It appeared the friendly forces had already taken the upper hand even before his arrival. The Circle forces included a shadowhorn satyr, a feral warpwolf, and no fewer than three argus, including one with the coloration and markings of those bred in the frozen north. The Legion of Everblight forces that had beset them were mostly put down. Reeve bolts and Wolf spears helped finish the remaining blighted Nyss, while warbeasts made short work of nephilim and raeks.

Laris turned back to Grayle and sat on his haunches, drawing back his lips to show fangs and staring at him fiercely. There was a flicker of shadow and Kaya appeared next to the wolf to rest a hand on his neck. Laris leaned into her but continued to stare fixedly at Grayle. A group of junior druids accompanied Kaya but occupied themselves with inspecting the fallen enemies. Grayle sheathed his blades and made a quick circling signal with a closed fist to his reeves and Wolves, directing them to see to the perimeter. They melted into the trees.

"What are you doing here?" Kaya asked belligerently. He wondered if Laris' mood had influenced her. They had been on friendly terms when last they had met.

Grayle hesitated only momentarily. "I came to assist you in your hunt, sister." He immediately regretted using the appellation. It was a habit from his time as a Wolf of Orboros, a reminder of his late *wilding*. He and Kaya shared the same teacher and mentor in Baldur, and among the Wolves such warriors commonly addressed one another as "brother" and "sister." There was no such tradition among blackclads. While he and Kaya were of a similar age, he felt keenly aware that she had been a druid more than ten years longer.

Her brow furrowed with suspicion. "You are a lone hunter, are you not? One who does what he is told?"

Grayle shifted, unsure what she was implying. What Baldur had asked of him had seemed straightforward, but looking into Kaya's eyes he began to have doubts. There was a wildness to her that had not changed over the years. Kaya had a deep and abiding connection to her beasts, but she

was no Wolf. She had not been raised as he had, had not been taught discipline and loyalty to the blackclads. "I am loyal to the Circle," he said.

She laughed. "Aren't we all? And yet the potents and omnipotents each have their own schemes and expect us to play our roles. Whose will do you serve now? It can be no coincidence you are here. Is it Morvahna? If you are her lap dog, hunt elsewhere. I was handling this fight just fine without your help." She leaned on her spear and gave Grayle a dismissive look.

"Morvahna did not send me," Grayle answered truthfully. This seemed to lessen her hostility. "But why shun help freely offered? Fighting the Legion is more important than one person's pride."

"You seek to instruct me in the ways of our order, Grayle?" Kaya asked. Despite the sharp words her tone was more amused than indignant. He flushed slightly, thinking again of how much longer she had been a druid than he.

Grayle stepped closer and extended his hand for Laris to smell. The beast still seemed wary but was no longer baring teeth. "I'm sure there are things each of us could learn from the other. Tell me about this enemy you chase."

Kaya looked to the nearby corpses. "A Legion ambush force lying in wait. We were on the trail of one of their warlocks we had learned was in the region. Not long ago they were in the northern mountains, just south of Rhul. Suddenly they have been spotted in many different areas. We do not know why. I hope to capture one of their leaders alive."

"An ambitious goal," Grayle said admiringly. "How numerous are they?"

"I do not know. We learned of them three days ago after they attacked a node site just southwest of here that had been largely abandoned after its wold guardians vanished." She looked wistful as she said this, and her eyes went to the direction of Ios' southern border.

"It will be a relief when those wolds return to their posts," Grayle said without thinking.

Kaya shot him a startled look. She demanded, "Why would the wolds return?"

Grayle was so accustomed to other druids having more information than he did that it had not even occurred to him she would not already know. "Kaya, my apologies—I should have given you the news at the outset. Baldur is alive! He has returned. I cannot explain how or why."

If she had been wary before, she now seemed like a serpent coiled to strike, her body tense. "You've seen him? Where was this? When? What happened?"

Grayle realized he had entered into potentially dangerous territory. As agitated as she was, revealing too much of his mission might jeopardize it, yet he did not feel he could lie effectively to her. "I saw him where he fell," he said slowly, "and came here directly."

Kaya stared at him, her eyes narrowing at his evasiveness. "What are you not telling me?" She stepped closer, her hands tightening on her spear. Grayle moved back, saying nothing but meeting her stare levelly. Realization dawned, and Kaya said, "It was Baldur who sent you, not Morvahna. What kind of game are you both playing? Why did he talk to you and not me?"

Grayle held up a hand defensively. "I'm not playing games. I said I was here to help you chase down your prey, and that is the truth."

KAYA'S SEVERAL ARGUS AND OTHER BEASTS MOVED CLOSER AS THEY SENSED HER AGITATION.

She knocked his hand aside. "You're of no use to me. I'll talk to Baldur myself." She shouted over her shoulder, "Farala, Maysor, to me!" The young wilder and the leader of the junior druids checking the fallen dragonspawn stood to attention and approached. Kaya's several argus and other beasts moved closer as they sensed her agitation. Seeing them preparing to move, Grayle's Wolves and reeves returned from the perimeter. Kaya and her group started to walk in the direction she had looked before.

"Wait!" Grayle called, trying to think of something to give her pause. "You do not even know where he is."

Kaya stopped and turned with a scowl. "So he's not where he fell. But you know where he has gone."

"You would abandon your mission half completed? Think of your responsibilities." While reprimanding her felt slightly impertinent, Grayle felt indignant at such mercurial priorities.

"The Legion can wait. I must speak to Baldur. Tell me where he is!"

Grayle felt the situation spiraling out of control, but he could understand how Kaya felt. To him, Baldur was a mentor and a valued friend—but then, *he* remembered his parents. Kaya had no one but Baldur; to her, he was both friend and family. Her beasts reflected the anger of their mistress and watched him with bared fangs. His warpwolf stalkers were also tense, ready to intercept should he be attacked.

Mentally he urged them to remain calm. Fortunately, stalkers had greater patience and control than their more feral counterparts.

"I will not," Grayle said firmly, standing his ground.

She closed the distance between them, her spear pointed at his chest. His blades were in his hands before he thought to draw them, thanks to his own keen fighting instincts. Beasts on both sides tensed, hunched, and growled as tension filled the air. Again Grayle forced himself to be calm, knowing the others would feel it. If he changed his approach, he might yet persuade her. He had never been skilled at verbal deception, so he hoped honesty might suffice. "Baldur begins a ritual of tremendous importance. He cannot be disturbed."

SHE CLOSED THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM AND POINTED HER SPEAR AT HIS CHEST. HIS BLADES WERE IN HIS HANDS BEFORE HE THOUGHT TO DRAW THEM.

"Then why are you here? That is where we are needed. To protect him while he works."

"No." Grayle struggled to find convincing words; he was a warrior, not a man with a silver tongue. "It is vital you stay away."

Kaya snarled, "Am I some child, to be shielded?" A deep growl emerged from several argus, Laris, and the feral warpwolf all at once.

Grayle saw no way around the bare truth. "He has foreseen your death," he said. "It was prophecy, when he was bonded to the Devourer. This has nothing to do with your skill or your courage. Leave him to his work. If you go to him you may die. I will stop you, Kaya, if I must. Your mission here is—"

He was interrupted as Laris leapt for him. His instinct was to strike with his blades—one into the wolf's mouth, angling upward to penetrate the animal's brain, the other into his chest to seek the heart. It required an effort of will to stay his hand, but he did not wish to kill Kaya's guardian beast. He brought his left blade crosswise to block the bite, but the wolf's bulk toppled Grayle back as Laris landed on his chest, knocking the wind from him. Laris clamped teeth down on Grayle's left blade and yanked it from his grasp to send it flying into the nearby underbrush. His other sword was pressed firmly against the wolf's side, almost penetrating his hide. Kaya was upon him in an instant, her spear at his throat. Her other beasts closed, but Grayle restrained his.

His master of the hunt shouted in alarm. His men had moved up, weapons at the ready, and multiple double crossbows were pointed at Kaya's beasts.

"Stand back, all of you!" the Farstrider ordered, straining to be heard. Tensely, they did as bid, only partially lowering bows and spears.

He met Kaya's hard stare. She said vehemently, "I will not be dictated to by you, or Baldur, or anyone."

"We speak of prophecy. Be reasonable." Laris was a heavy weight on his chest, and the wolf continued to snarl.

"There are no perfect prophecies," Kaya argued. "Baldur saw only one possible future." She shook her head. "You and I, we are warriors of Orboros. We put our lives on the line every day. If I risk mine now, that is my prerogative. Baldur's task must be vital for him to hasten to it so soon. Its success—and his life!—will both be in peril. I will not flee to protect myself while he is at risk."

He found himself admiring her, both her resolve and her words. Baldur had bid him keep her safe, yet what Kaya said was true. She was his senior; what right had he to prevent her from risking her life where she chose? Looking at those with her, he doubted he could stop her, and trying would result in bloodshed on both sides. If she fled, how could he ensure her safety? He saw no way to obey every part of Baldur's directive.

Finally Grayle reached a decision. "I will not stand in your way." Both sides relaxed visibly. After a moment Kaya waved Laris off him and extended a hand to pull him to his feet. "But I will go with you. He's at the Bones of Orboros, along Hawksmire River near Lake Scarleforth."

An unexpected voice came from ahead. "Problem is, you're not the only one with that little bit of information." They whirled to face the new arrival. Looking quite unconcerned at the dozen crossbow quarrels pointed his way, the monster hunter Alten Ashley stepped from the trees with his massive rifle slung across his back. "Thought you might like to know there's a massive skorne army closing on Baldur right now. If you want to do something about it, you'd better get moving. Oh, and by the way . . . Bucking Jenny and I are available for hire."

CIRCLE THEME FORCES

GRAYLE THE FARSTRIDER
CLAW & FANG

WARBEASTS: Circle non-character Argus and Warpwolf warbeasts

UNITS: Wolves of Orboros, Reeves of Orboros, Skinwalker units

SOLOS: War Wolves, Wolves of Orboros solos, Reeves of Orboros solos, Skinwalker solos, Wolf Lord Morraig

TIER 1
Requirements: The army can include only the models listed above.

Benefit: Reeves of Orboros and Wolves of Orboros units and unit attachments are FA U.

TIER 2
Requirements: The army includes two or more units.

Benefit: For every unit in the army, add a War Wolf solo free of cost. These solos do not count toward FA restrictions.

TIER 3
Requirements: The army includes Wolf Lord Morraig.

Benefit: One Reeves of Orboros or Wolves of Orboros unit gains Advance Deployment.

TIER 4
Requirements: Grayle's battlegroup includes three or more Arguses.

Benefit: Your deployment zone is extended 2" forward.

BALDUR THE STONESOUL
HOUR OF RECKONING

WARBEASTS: Circle non-character construct warbeasts, Megalith

UNITS: Druids of Orboros, Shifting Stones

SOLOS: Blackclad Wayfarer, Gallows Grove, Lord of the Feast

BATTLE ENGINES: Celestial Fulcrum

TIER 1
Requirements: The army can include only the models listed above.

Benefit: Shifting Stone units and Gallows Grove solos in this army can be placed up to 20" from the back of Baldur's deployment zone.

TIER 2
Requirements: The army includes one or more Druids of Orboros units.

Benefit: For each Druids of Orboros unit in the army, one Celestial Fulcrum battle engine gains Advance Move. (Before the start of the game but after both players have deployed, a model with Advance Move can make a full advance.)

TIER 3
Requirements: The army includes Megalith.

Benefit: Heavy warbeasts in Baldur's battlegroup gain +2 SPD during your first turn of the game.

TIER 4
Requirements: The army includes two or more light warbeasts with Construct.

Benefit: Reduce the cost of light warbeasts with Construct by 1.

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GRAYLE THE FARSTRIDER

CIRCLE WARLOCK

Men follow courage, not treachery.

—Grayle the Farstrider

GRAYLE

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
7	6	7	4	15	16	9

HUNTING BLADES

POW	P+S
4	10

FURY	6
DAMAGE	17
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARBEAST POINTS	+6
SMALL BASE	

FEAT: DARKEST NIGHT

With the power granted him by Orboros, Grayle the Farstrider can invoke the darkness of night to shroud his hunting pack and grant them tremendous swiftness as they advance to strike deep into the heart of the enemy.

While in Grayle's control area, friendly Faction models gain Stealth. When a friendly Faction model in Grayle's control area destroys an enemy model with a melee attack during its activation, another friendly Faction model in Grayle's control area can advance up to 3". A model can advance only once this turn as a result of Darkest Night. Darkest Night lasts for one round.

GRAYLE

Pathfinder

Stealth

Elite Cadre [Wolves of Orboros] – Friendly Wolf of Orboros models gain Hunter. (A model with Hunter ignores forests, concealment, and cover when determining LOS or making a ranged attack.)

Side Step – When this model hits an enemy model with an initial attack or a non-power attack special attack, it can advance 2" after the attack is resolved. This model cannot be targeted by free strikes during this movement.

Sprint – At the end of this model's activation, if it destroyed one or more enemy models with melee attacks this activation it can make a full advance.

HUNTING BLADES

Magical Weapon

Weapon Master

SPELLS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
AWARENESS	3	SELF	CTRL	-	NO	NO

While in this model's control area, the front arcs of models in its battlegroup are extended to 360° and when determining LOS those models ignore cloud effects, forests, and intervening models. Awareness lasts for one round.

GALLOWS	3	10	-	13	NO	YES

When an enemy model is hit by this attack, it can be pushed d6" directly toward Gallows' point of origin.

STORM RAGER	2	6	-	-	YES	NO

Target friendly Faction warrior model gains +2 STR, MAT, and ARM and cannot be targeted by combined ranged attacks or combined melee attacks.

WIND BLAST	2	CTRL	5	-	NO	NO

Place a 5" AOE anywhere completely in this model's control area. Cloud effects overlapping the AOE expire. Models suffer –3 RAT while within the AOE. The AOE remains in play for one round.

TACTICAL TIPS

GALLOWS – This means the model is moved before it suffers damage.

Grayle leads bands of Wolves of Orboros with the same ruthless precision with which he wields his twin hunting blades. Utterly devoted to the Devourer Wurm, he commands men and beasts with the self-assurance of a warrior who embodies the very soul of the wolf.

Born of one of the most ancient bloodlines of the Wolves of Orboros, Grayle was trained to follow the orders of the druids, seen by his family as wise priests and protectors. At the age of fifteen he was already the leader of a pack, and it was clear he would one day become a master of the hunt. It was a shock to him when, while hunting a stag, he realized could feel its beating heart within his own chest and sense the thoughts of a hawk above him. He feared he might be going mad, but this was his *wilding*.

Most fated to wield the power of Orboros receive the gift as young children. Almost grown and with his own aspirations, Grayle struggled to accept his new role when the druids took him from all he had known to initiate him in the first mysteries of their order. He soon became aware the blackclads he had so revered were not what he had thought. They were not all wise and prescient, and they eschewed the rituals he had been raised to believe were sacred. Worse, they were endlessly embroiled in internecine scheming.

None of this matters when Grayle stalks the wilderness, blades in hand. His prowess as a warrior combined with his newly awakened powers have transformed him into one of the most deadly combatants the Circle has ever seen. Time and again his superiors have sent him forth to stalk and slay threats to their order, and he has proven his worth. His ingrained obedience and loyalty may be obstacles to greater advancement within their hierarchy but make him a perfectly reliable weapon, one in great demand. Since becoming an overseer, he knows he must learn to adapt to intrigues while staying true to his beliefs and instincts. He remains most comfortable when sent to battle the Circle's foes, and the howls of his hunting pack rise above the trees as enemies die to his blades as sacrifices to the Devourer.

BALDUR THE STONESOUL

CIRCLE EPIC WARLOCK

The Devourer's blessings come at a price terrible; one day the power that sustains him will consume him.

—Mohsar the Deserthalker

BALDUR						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	7	7	4	13	17	8

TRITUS	
POW	P+S
7	14

FURY	6
DAMAGE	18
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARBEAST POINTS	+5
SMALL BASE	

FEAT: HALLOWED GROUND

While his body lay shattered, Baldur's soul merged with Orboros and he communed with the ravenous will of the Devourer Wurm. Baldur can draw on this connection to root his warriors to the very bones of the world, transforming any battlefield to holy ground for Orboros. Protected by the essence of stone, his allies endure the most withering assaults unharmed, unshaken, and unmoved.

Friendly models currently in Baldur's control area gain Roots of the Earth for one round. (A model affected by Roots of the Earth gains +3 ARM, cannot be knocked down, and cannot move or be placed.)

BALDUR

Pathfinder

Devourer's Debt – During your Control Phase place one Wurm token on this model. For each Wurm token on this model it gains +1 STR. At the end of each of this model's activations it suffers 1 damage point for each Wurm token on it. This damage cannot be transferred.

Elemental Mastery – Warbeasts in this model's battlegroup with Construct beginning their activations in this model's control area can charge and make power attacks without being forced. This model can heal friendly warbeasts in its battlegroup that have Construct.

Ritual of Renewal (★Action) – Remove all Wurm tokens from this model.

TRITUS

Magical Weapon

Reach

Weight of Stone – When a model is damaged by this weapon it suffers –3 SPD and DEF for one round.

SPELLS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
CREVASSE	3	8	-	12	NO	YES

If Crevasse boxes its original target, you can make an SP 6 attack using the boxed model as the attack's point of origin. Models hit suffer a POW 12 magic damage roll. Models boxed by Crevasse are removed from play.

GROUND ZERO	3	SELF	5	13	NO	NO

Center a 5" AOE on this model. Each other model in the AOE is hit and suffers a POW 13 damage roll. Each enemy model damaged by Ground Zero is pushed d6" directly away from this model in the order you choose.

ROCK WALL	2	CTRL	WALL	-	YES	NO

Place a wall template anywhere completely in this model's control area where it does not touch a model's base, an obstruction, or an obstacle. The wall is a linear obstacle that provides cover.

ROOTS OF THE EARTH	2	6	-	-	NO	NO

Target friendly Faction model gains +3 ARM, cannot be knocked down, and cannot move or be placed. Roots of the Earth lasts for one round.

TACTICAL TIPS

Crevasse – Because a boxed model is removed from play before being destroyed, it does not generate a soul or corpse token.

Ground Zero – Roll separately for each model pushed.

The deepest mysteries of Orboros were revealed to Baldur when death tried to claim him. While the last tenuous thread of his life was held fast by Megalith, Baldur's soul escaped into the endless wilderness inhabited by the Devourer Wurm. His spirit was subsumed within the entirety of Orboros, and the fundamental principles of the world were made clear to him. He experienced near-total awareness, able to feel the crust of the world like his own skin before rejoining his more limited corporeal form. To say that Baldur came back a changed man is an understatement.

After Megalith restored Baldur's body to life, the Beast of All Shapes flung his soul back into the world with the obligation to serve as a conduit for its power. The druid returned with new urgency, burning with the certain knowledge of looming catastrophe and the slim chance his order has to set the world on the right path. He is all too aware he has only limited time to accomplish his ingrained mission before his life is once again forfeit.

As a conduit for Orboros, Baldur's body channels a torrent of power, energies simultaneously embodying the forces of both creation and destruction. No mortal flesh can endure such an onslaught indefinitely. While his connection to the granite bones of the world has been strengthened, his very existence is a blazing pyre that will eventually consume itself. In the midst of battle Baldur can tap into this endless flow to empower himself beyond his mortal limits, glowing with energy as his every blow strikes with multiplied strength. The longer he fights, the more his body tears itself apart, and it is only by the application of concentrated effort that he can damp these energies to a sustainable level and regenerate tissues rent by forces beyond comprehension.

With the limited time available to him, Baldur has no patience for the intrigues of the Circle. The calm for which he was known is gone, replaced by an unyielding urgency and an unmatched ferocity in battle. The energies of the Devourer rise within him as he fights, and the heady powers of chaos and nature wrack his body even as they destroy his foes.

SCARSFELL GRIFFON

CIRCLE LIGHT WARBEAST

One cannot hide from the death that comes from above.

—Nyss proverb

SCARSFELL GRIFFON						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	8	6	1	14	15	6

BEAK		
	POW	P+S
H	4	12

CLAW		
	POW	P+S
L	3	11

CLAW		
	POW	P+S
R	3	11

FURY	3
THRESHOLD	8
FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	5
MEDIUM BASE	

SCARSFELL GRIFFON

Stealth

Flight – This model can advance through terrain and obstacles without penalty and can advance through obstructions and other models if it has enough movement to move completely past them. This model ignores intervening models when declaring its charge target.

Hunter – This model ignores forests, concealment, and cover when determining LOS or making a ranged attack.

Long Leash – When checking to see if this model is in its controller's control area, double the area.

CLAW

Open Fist

ANIMUS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
SHADOW SHIFT	2	SELF	-	-	NO	NO

This model gains Parry. Shadow Shift lasts for one turn. (A model with Parry cannot be targeted by free strikes.)

Griffons are predators that combine the sinewy grace of great hunting cats with the ferocity of birds of prey. In ancient times griffons were hunted almost to extinction, becoming so scarce that mankind came to believe them purely creatures of myth. In truth, the survivors had drifted to the edges of the known map, away from civilization but still within reach of the beast masters of the Circle Orboros. Druids of the Circle have long tended griffon fledglings and picked out those best suited to their needs. The creatures' snapping beaks and powerful talons, to say nothing of their vicious temperament, make them dangerous combatants.

One particular breed of these peerless hunters occupies the Scarsfell Forest in Khador, a region of untamed wilderness that shelters elusive species of all kinds. These Scarsfell griffons take solitary roosts among the cliffs and foothills bordering that dark forest. Known for their stealthy tactics, they dive from great heights to surprise even well-camouflaged creatures hiding on the forest floor. Often a target becomes aware of its doom only when talons close upon it and the griffon releases a shriek of victory. Scarsfell griffons lift ulk and other prey aloft to be eaten among the crags or in great nests atop ancient trees, leaving little sign on the ground of their passing.

WINTER ARGUS

CIRCLE LIGHT WARBEAST

It is the cruel northern storm given flesh and a hunting spirit.

—Pyotr Velt, Kossite huntsman

ANIMUS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
WINTER COAT	2	SELF	-	-	NO	NO

This model gains +2 ARM and Immunity: Cold for one round.

Small caravans and lone hunting parties regularly vanish in the wilds of the Khadoran north. Often the only signs left to mark their end are a few splashes of blood-reddened snow and the paw prints of the savage winter argus. Few linger over such remains lest their scent attract the attention of these relentless predators. Prowling under cover of great northern storms, winter argus leap from the veil of snow and wind with a chilling howl. Great gouts of gelid breath freeze their victims in place until the argus pack closes for the feast.

The winter argus that stalk the dark, frozen hinterlands of the Scarsfell Forest and Blackroot Wood display behaviors and hunting techniques similar to those of wild wolves. Some druids of the Circle Orboros dislike this breed because it has difficulty creating new pack bonds and rarely demonstrates the loyalty of more southern breeds. Northern druids, however, prize its savagery and the supernatural cold it can manifest to cripple the enemies of their order.

ARGUS

Immunity: Cold

Circular Vision – This model's front arc extends to 360°.

FROST BREATH

Damage Type: Cold

Critical Freeze – On a critical hit, the model hit becomes stationary for one round unless it has Immunity: Cold.

ARGUS

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
7	8	5	4	15	14	6

FROST BREATH	RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
H	SP 6	1	–	12

FROST BREATH	RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
H	SP 6	1	–	12

BITE	POW	P+S
H	4	12

BITE	POW	P+S
H	4	12

FURY	3
THRESHOLD	9
FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	5
MEDIUM BASE	

GHETORIX

CIRCLE WARPWOLF CHARACTER HEAVY WARBEAST

He has felt the hot breath of madness on his skin and watched blood drip from the corpses of his people. His loyalty to me is absolute, for he knows he stands at the edge of an endless chasm.

—Kromac the Ravenous

GHETORIX

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	11	7	3	14	17	8

BITE (H)

POW	P+S
3	14

GREAT AXE (—)

POW	P+S
6	17

FURY	4
THRESHOLD	8
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
POINT COST	11
LARGE BASE	

GHETORIX

Terror

Controlled Warping – At the beginning of this model's activation, choose one of the following warp effects. Warp effects last for one round. If this model frenzies it must choose Warp Strength at the start of its activation.

- **Hyper Aggressive –** When this model suffers damage from an enemy attack anytime except while it is advancing, after the attack is resolved it can immediately make a full advance directly toward the attacking model.
- **Snacking –** When this model boxes a living model with a melee attack, this model can heal d3 damage points. If this model heals, the boxed model is removed from play.
- **Warp Strength –** This model gains +2 STR.

Regeneration [d3] – This model can be forced to heal d3 damage points once per activation. This model cannot use Regeneration during an activation it runs.

Special Issue [Kromac] – This model can be included in Kromac's theme forces. It can also be bonded to Kromac.

Unyielding – While engaging an enemy model, this model gains +2 ARM.

GREAT AXE

Reach

Powerful Charge – This model gains +2 to charge attack rolls with this weapon.

ANIMUS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
ORNERY	2	SELF	-	-	NO	NO

This model gains Retaliatory Strike. Ornery expires after the affected model makes a Retaliatory Strike attack. Ornery lasts for one round. (When a model with Retaliatory Strike is hit by a melee attack made by an enemy model during your opponent's turn, after the attack is resolved it can immediately make one normal melee attack against that enemy model.)

Ghetorix's thirst for blood and hunger for violence is legendary among the brutal tuaths of the Tharn. The very sight of the hulking beast fighting alongside Kromac the Ravenous inspires the same abject terror in the hearts of the enemy as their ancestors felt trembling in the presence of the Molgur hordes. His howled battle cry sets his foes' hair on end, breaking spirits even before his axe and teeth bite into flesh. Ghetorix's bloodlust is slaked only when he stands knee-deep in the entrails of the fallen, his jaws dripping gore.

Ghetorix was once a *tuath* king of the Tharn. He and his tribe stood defiant when Morvahna the Autumnblade put out a call for warriors in the years when Kromac served her bidding. To bring them to task, Morvahna released Kromac to subjugate his tribe, and the two clashed axe-to-axe in personal combat, each channeling the Devourer Wurm. In the end Kromac was victorious, and he dragged Ghetorix before Morvahna to face her terrible judgment.

Morvahna saw in Ghetorix a primal connection she could exploit to create a weapon of greater power, and her punishment was to inflict the warpwolf elixir upon the proud king. Druids had long avoided using Tharn in these rites, as their inborn connection to the Wurm combined with the draught's effects invited disaster. Perhaps to test Kromac's convictions, Morvahna bade him witness as she shattered Ghetorix's mind and reason to transform him into one of the fiercest warpwolves the Circle had ever seen.

Ghetorix broke loose to massacre his own tribesmen, including his wife and children, beginning a maddened rampage of slaughter that escalated even further with the full moon. Kromac hunted him for weeks and finally subdued him once more, imposing his tremendous will to hold the creature back from the brink of a mental abyss. A bond of honor and respect was born between the two, and Ghetorix obeys Kromac as he will no one else. The mind of the transformed chieftain remained broken and deranged, however, and his mournful howls seem to suggest that in every battle he relives the tragedy he once visited upon his people.

TACTICAL TIPS

Snacking – Because the boxed model is removed from play before being destroyed, it does not generate a soul or corpse token.

Special Issue – This only gives the warbeast the potential to bond to the warlock. It does not automatically add a bond.

GALLOWS GROVE

CIRCLE SOLO

Worms can feed on the body; the gallows grove feeds on the soul.

— Morvahna, the Autumnblade

GROVE						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
—	0	0	0	5	16	3

DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	4
POINT COST	1
MEDIUM BASE	

GROVE

Advance Deployment

Channeler [friendly Faction warlock] – While this model is not engaged and is in a friendly Faction warlock's control area, the warlock can channel spells through it.

Entropic Force – While in this model's command range, enemy models lose Tough and cannot heal or be healed.

Immobile – This model has no movement or action and cannot be knocked down or moved. Its front arc extends to 360°. It has no melee range, cannot engage, and is automatically hit by melee attacks.

Prowl – This model gains Stealth while within terrain that provides concealment, the AOE of a spell that provides concealment, or the AOE of a cloud effect.

Strange Growth – Once per turn during its activation, place this model anywhere within 5" of its current location. This model cannot be placed except as a result of Strange Growth.

Among the oldest manifestations of the Devourer Wurm's conscious will on Caen are trees that grow on blood, whether from sacrifice or from massacre. These hungry sentinels have been warped and shaped by generations of bloody obeisance to the Devourer Wurm and have stood mute witnesses to the bloody rites of both druids and cultists for so long that even the wind through their branches seems to whisper its approval.

Having endured millennia of fire, war, and the axe of man, those ancient trees that still stand have gained an unsettling approximation of sentience over time and now prowl the deepest forests like scavenging beasts. When sacrifices become scarce in a given area, a tree might vanish only to reappear in another part of the forest, its roots drinking deeply from the carcass of a dead animal. Though they are unable to actively strike out at prey, they are irresistibly drawn to blood-drenched soil—a fact that unnerves young wilders of the Circle.

Ever hungry, these dark wardens of the forest follow the blackclads in search of fresh blood. Cultists of the Devourer have seen their arrival as an auspicious sign of approval and have responded by indulging in occasional frenzies of sacrifice. The trees silently appear amid the camps of the Circle's warbands as if they had ever been rooted in place, though they seem to move about as battle is joined, reappearing wherever the blood runs most freely. The leading druids of the Circle feed their will into these ready conduits of Orboros' power and then unleash it upon those marked for death. The very presence of the trees saps vitality from the living as wounds gape wide to pour blood upon the thirsty roots of their destroyers.

These ancient allies of the Circle are rare, and the druids take pains to tend to them, even encouraging Devourer worshipers to spill blood in regular offering. The more fanatical among the Wolves of Orboros hoist captured prey into the trees' branches and bleed them out from careful incisions. The carcasses are left to rot, and the remaining skeletons may dangle from the ropes for months or years. Some druids enter into communion with the gallows after the trees have fed, listening for whispers of prophecy.

Druids who make use of them will cultivate the same groves for years, forging relationships akin to those forged with their beasts. The runes manifesting on the trunks of these trees are not carved but simply appear as the gallows feed on the bodies and souls of the slain. Senior druids insist auguries and portents can be discerned by examining these runes as they shift and change over decades of feasting. These sigils pulse with an eerie glow that can lure travelers into the paths of hungering predators in the deepest woods so that their blood might feed the groves of Orboros.

CELESTIAL FULCRUM

CIRCLE BATTLE ENGINE

Each season in its turn, each life in its place, each death in its time.

—Baldur the Stonesoul

CELESTIAL FULCRUM						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	10	–	6	10	18	10

FLAME BLAST			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
8	1	4	15

LIGHTNING BOLT			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
12	1	–	14

WINTER'S RAGE			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
SP 10	1	–	12

DAMAGE	20
FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
POINT COST	9
HUGE BASE	

CELESTIAL FULCRUM

Construct

Gunfighter

Immunity: Cold

Immunity: Electricity

Immunity: Fire

Circular Vision – This model's front arc extends to 360°.

Fury Generator – This model gains 1 fury point at the start of each of your Control Phases. It can have up to 3 fury points at a time. If this model is in a friendly warlock's control area, the warlock can leach fury points from it during your Control Phase. During its activation, this model can spend fury points to boost attack or damage rolls, at 1 fury point per boost.

Interference – This model cannot be placed.

FLAME BLAST

Continuous Effect: Fire

Damage Type: Fire

Magical Weapon

Smoke – This weapon's AOE is a cloud effect that remains in play for one round.

LIGHTNING BOLT

Damage Type: Electricity

Magical Weapon

Electro Leap – When a model is hit with this weapon, you can have lightning arc to the nearest model within 4" of the model hit, ignoring the attacking model. The model the lightning arcs to suffers an unboostable POW 10 electrical damage roll.

WINTER'S RAGE

Damage Type: Cold

Magical Weapon

Critical Freeze – On a critical hit, the model hit becomes stationary for one round unless it has Immunity: Cold.

TACTICAL TIPS

Electro Leap – The lightning will still arc to a model with Immunity: Electricity; it just cannot damage that model. Damage from Electro Leap is not considered to have been caused by a hit or by a melee or ranged attack.

Those uninitiated into the mysteries of Orboros are slaves to the seasons of Caen; they are mercilessly scourged by the elements and must bend knee to the prevailing climate. Not so the druids of the Circle. None of their works better demonstrates their mastery of natural cycles than the Celestial Fulcrum. Each one of these creations is an awe-inspiring device that not only illustrates the workings of Caen's firmament but also mimics those celestial movements with a sympathetic harmony evoking the power of the seasons—a power to be wielded against those who would defy the druids' will.

The blackclads have charted the orbits of Caen's three moons for millennia. Calder, largest among them, is easily distinguished by its blue-white glow, but its siblings are more elusive. The middle-sized moon, Laris, with its black and brown speckles, vanishes from normal sight for long periods of time. The smallest moon, Artis, glows a white-streaked pale green, turning to a glowing lily white as she waxes. The druids know that each moon has great sway over Caen and that their influence can be felt in the tides and storms and even in surges of power through the ley lines beneath the earth.

A Celestial Fulcrum contains empowered orbs that precisely model the orbits of Caen's moons. Spring orbits allow the orbs to summon jagged lightning storms that lash out as the embodiment of the Devourer's claws and fangs. As the orbits shift into summer, withering blasts emanate like drafts from a forest fire. As summer gives way to winter, the fulcrum's parts rotate to generate a killing wind able to transform even the hottest day into a frozen wasteland.

Blackclads first learned these secrets through simple orreries and armillary spheres crafted from stone and rock. As the mysteries were revealed, the druids made ever-more-powerful devices, harnessing the energies inherent in each season until the first Celestial Fulcrum was perfected. This creation tracks the movements of the seasons so precisely that it can generate purposeful manifestations of the elements. Senior druids study the orbits represented via these fulcrums to glean deepening insight into the long-term motion of Orboros and its moons. As the Circle's agenda becomes increasingly militant, the Celestial Fulcrums are more often leveraged as weapons of tremendous power—tangible proof of the Circle's will dominating and channeling the raw strength of Orboros.

SKORNE

NONE SO WORTHY

North of Scarleforth Lake

Master Ascetic Naaresh watched the nihilators charge recklessly forward into a melee against warriors with white flesh and silver blades. So eager were they to prove their worth to him, they had immediately flung themselves at the first blighted *toksaa*—what other races called elves—they encountered, without even waiting for orders.

The nihilators fought reasonably well. Their understanding of the visceral path was rudimentary, though, and despite the pain spurs festooning their bodies the fighting trance they achieved was little more than blind rage. Their great blades hacked into the bodies of the dragon-blighted, splattering the ground and each other with gore.

He was far more interested in the capabilities of the blighted swordsmen. Lithe, lightly armored, and incredibly quick, the white-skinned warriors wielded their long, curved blades with a fluid grace that was the direct antithesis of the nihilators' butchering strokes.

Naaresh and Hexeris had taken smaller forces away from the main army as it traveled with Tyrant Xerxis to confront the scattered trollkin defenders nearer the lake. On their march north Hexeris had sent high-flying archidons scouting for the dragon-blighted forces the ancestors had told them of, which they spotted making swift progress through the craggy hills and valleys northeast of the Castle of the Keys. Were it not for the vantage of the flying reptiles, the toksaa might have slipped past entirely unseen. Many of the dragonspawn could also fly, but their masters kept them low to the hills, where they failed to spot the archidons soaring far above.

The forward portion of the blighted forces included the majority of the soldiers, led by one in heavier armor. Following several hundred yards after them was a group of primarily dragonspawn, with a variety of unfamiliar skorne-sized flying monsters. It was not difficult to spot their leader, a hideously blighted female easily mistaken for another dragonspawn. When Hexeris described her, Naaresh knew at once she was the one he must engage in battle to test her power and resolve against his own.

Hexeris had agreed Naaresh should intercept the northern group while he engaged the southern force with his soldiers. He had sent his disciplined Praetorian karax and Cataphract cetrati to hold a narrow gap between the two sides as the skorne leaders split to engage the enemies in either direction. Hexeris had exhorted Naaresh to be swift in the destruction of his enemy, but the master ascetic paid little mind. He had his own reasons for engaging in this conflict.

The blighted swordsmen he observed battling his nihilators had been caught on the near side of the narrow gorge when Hexeris had implemented his karax blockade. They now fought between the wall of karax and the charging nihilators. Naaresh watched their fight with interest but kept an eye to the north, where the second toksaa warlock and her beasts should emerge.

"Master," Dakar Garul said beside him. The short, thin adjutant Hexeris had forced on him seemed lacking in many ways. "Shall I order the rest of our forces to aid them?"

"No." Naaresh answered, glancing behind him at his remaining soldiers: several dozen nihilators, twenty Praetorians, a dozen paingiver beast handlers, and the warbeasts he had borrowed from Hexeris.

"They're being slaughtered," Garul said, his thin lips pulled down in disapproval. "Lord Hexeris does not appreciate squandering warriors."

Naaresh shrugged, enjoying the dakar's discomfort. In moments the opportunity to intervene had passed, and ten nihilators lay dead or dying on the ground. The four swordsmen who remained standing were unwounded. They should have become desperate and fearful upon seeing they were so greatly outnumbered by the surrounding skorne, yet they stared back with strangely empty eyes, poised for battle. Naaresh wondered whether this was a tradition of fatalism akin to the *hoksune* code or simply part of their dragon-blighted condition.

"Interesting," Naaresh murmured. He stepped forward a few paces, within easy reach of the swordsmen.

The toksaa fanned out as they advanced, blades at the ready. Naaresh smiled but did not yet pull his katara from their sheaths.

He inhaled deeply and opened his mind to the transcendent agony of the thirty-six pain spurs piercing his body. Each had been sunk into muscle and bone to exploit nerve clusters that evoked waves of pain with even the smallest movement, allowing him to draw mortitheurgical energy continuously from his savaged flesh. It was the endless well of strength and resilience that lay beyond the threshold of torture.

He felt strength pour into him as his perception of time accelerated, making the motions of those around him seem slow. The first incoming sword descended in a lazy arc, beautifully unhurried. Naaresh's left hand shot up to grasp the warrior's wrist, halting the descending sword, while his right lashed forward under the blighted soldier's pointed chin to strike the throat. The master ascetic let the enemy fall to the ground, gurgling and choking.

The other three charged as one. Naaresh let them come, reaching down at last to pull both katara from their sheaths. The ornate thrusting blades were like an extension of Naaresh's arms, giving each fist a long, deadly steel fang.

Naaresh became a blur of crimson and steel. The swordsmen converged on him, and their blades fell from three directions: left, right, and behind. He stepped left first to duck beneath that warrior's guard and drive his right katara up under his chin, slamming two feet of steel through his skull. He then dangled his left katara over his shoulder, laying it against his back to intercept the blade of the second swordsman. Spinning in place on his right foot, he lashed out with his left katara to rip the right free from the first attacker's skull. His whirling strike opened up the belly of the second swordsman, spilling entrails onto the ground as he raised the blade for another strike. He faced the last swordsman, who was already lunging forward with his blade. Naaresh dropped to one knee and thrust both katara out as the strike passed over his head. The attacker's momentum carried him directly onto the waiting blades.

Naaresh stood and stepped back as the last blighted warrior fell to the ground. He sighed in disappointment. He was not interested in mere skill. He had hoped to find foes with the power and means to surprise him; so many enemies were insipidly predictable. He wiped his blades clean and looked north, to where his true quarry had emerged at last, alongside her serpentine beasts.

The blighted warlock was an awe-inspiring abomination. Even from this distance he could see the great bony spurs and wing-like claws by which she glided swiftly forward. Naaresh felt his pulse quicken with a long-forgotten sensation: the intoxicating thrill of uncertainty. For the first time in the better part of century he had no preconceptions about the capabilities of his opponent or the scope of her powers.

Battling her while she was protected by her beasts and the flying warriors would tell him little of her prowess; he needed to isolate her and push her to her limits, to see how the desperation of imminent death awakened her deepest instincts. Naaresh reached out with his mind to incite the trio of titans and pair of rhinodons waiting behind his troops. He pointed his katara toward the dragonspawn. "Now, Garul," he said, "send your forces to engage." He advanced swiftly but allowed his army to race ahead of him while he directed his beasts with careful precision. Naaresh let his nihilators and Praetorians take the fore, hoping their blades and battle rage would blunt the grotesque flying warriors and the dragonspawn. The two armies came together with a tremendous crash of steel, fang, and claws.

HE INHALED DEEPLY AND OPENED HIS MIND TO THE TRANSCENDENT AGONY OF THE THIRTY-SIX PAIN SPURS PIERCING HIS BODY.

Many of the grotesques fell, but skorne bodies soon joined them. He pushed the two rhinodons forward to aid the nihilators, and their heavy mace-like tails scattered blighted warriors and battered the hides of dragonspawn with each swing.

Naaresh entered a trancelike state as he focused on the blighted warlock, allowing the agony of his pain spurs to center him once more. He could see power flowing through and around her even as her flesh mutated and shifted. To this sight she was as beautiful as she was horrific. He was able to perceive her true essence and apprehend the patterns that formed her identity: Absylonia was her name, he realized.

Time resumed its normal pace as he returned his attention to the battle. With the bulk of the spawn engaged, the forces around Absylonia were thin. One pair of humanoid dragonspawn with massive two-handed swords remained, along with a nearly indescribable horror the size of a titan whose draconic head ended in a writhing nest of tentacles. Naaresh saw his opportunity.

He urged his titan forward to barrel into the sword-wielding spawn. It sent one flying back and then assailed the other with tusks as well as savage blows from its war gauntlets. The rhinodon he sent against the larger, tentacled spawn. This opened a narrow path directly to Absylonia.

"Scourge me!" Naaresh howled to his paingivers as they joined him. He heard the snap of five paingiver whips unfurling just before their barbed tips bit his back. Suffused by the power of this fresh agony, he launched himself at his chosen enemy.

Absylonia crouched, the long, barbed claws of her distended hands splayed and ready. His blades clove the air before him in a razored web of steel, but she avoided most of the strikes with preternatural agility, lashing out with her claws when he failed to make contact. The strength and speed of her blows easily beat aside his lighter blades.

Naaresh suddenly disengaged to drop low under a slashing claw and roll backward. He gracefully regained his feet a few paces away, bleeding from half a dozen deep gashes across his chest and legs. Another combatant might have been diminished by the wounds, but Naaresh drew strength from them, as each lash only deepened his fighting trance. Absylonia, too, had not escaped unscathed, and between thick scales her toughened skin bore numerous marks of his katara. He knew she had called upon the vitality of her spawn to divert his most damaging strikes, something Naaresh had yet to do. He preferred to close his wounds by using his katara to siphon the life energy of his fallen foes.

SUFFUSED BY THE POWER OF THIS FRESH AGONY, HE LAUNCHED HIMSELF AT HIS ENEMY.

He took stock of the embattled warbeasts closest to him. All three titans and a rhinodon were injured grievously, and the other rhinodon was dead. Fully immersing his mind in the visceral path, he sent a torrent of psychic agony through the connection he shared with his remaining beasts, driving their rage to new heights. The pain would push them to their physical limits long enough for him to finish Absylonia.

He lifted his blades in a salute to his enemy. Absylonia spread her impossibly long arms wide, crouched, and sprang forward. He had learned much in their first exchange: she was strong and swift, but she relied too much on her greater reach. It was a flaw he could exploit.

Naaresh let Absylonia close, stepping into the first lash of her barbed claws instead of ducking away from them as she would expect. Pain blossomed along his chest and face as her talons tore through his flesh, but once more he drew strength from each violation of his flesh and his skin thickened to the hardness of metal. Now Absylonia was within his reach. She tried to pull back, but he drove his right katara deep into her abdomen, holding her in place. His other katara he drove through her chest until the honed steel burst from her back.

Naaresh could feel the life leaving her and knew she trembled on the precipice of death. One more blow and she would be extinguished, her vitality flowing through the killing instrument to seal his wounds. He felt a slight disappointment; she had been an enemy deserving of his attention, but he had hoped for more. To his heightened awareness it seemed that time froze as he pulled his first blade free for the killing strike. He could sense the battle around him, stilled to his perception. The nihilators were largely dead, although a number of the Praetorians had endured. His warbeasts, strengthened by his pain-fueled sorcery, had killed or heavily wounded most of the dragonspawn. This was the turning point.

Time resumed but even as he began his strike Absylonia's body erupted in a wash of blighted power he felt as heat upon his skin. Her wounds sealed instantly, and her red eyes focused on his as a cruel smile touched her lips. One of Absylonia's great, clawed hands caught him by the throat while the other smashed his katara harmlessly away. She was as whole as she had been when their battle began. From the corner of his eye he saw several previously grievously wounded spawn rise, similarly restored.

"Fool," she said in perfect Havaati, the language of the skorne, her voice a hissing bass rumble. "I am a child of the dragon." The claw descended. Pain bloomed across Naaresh's entire body, and in order to save his life he had to abdicate the injury to his remaining rhinodon. He could not remember when last he had been forced to use his warbeasts in this way. The awareness of facing a worthy foe filled him with euphoria.

He broke free of her grasp and punched toward her, but she had slipped to the side; he was not the only one who had learned from their clash. As he watched, her arms shortened and became more muscular. She drew closer and raked him twice. Once again Naaresh had to divert his injuries to his warbeasts, killing a titan. Startled, he realized he was about to die. He fell to the sands dripping blood, and the blighted warlock raised her claws to finish him.

She looked past him suddenly, her eyes narrowing as if in irritation. She slashed her claws across him one last time and then fled. Naaresh used the last of his energy to steal the life of another titan, killing the beast even as he heard the sound of armored footsteps approaching. He stared after Absylonia. *A pity,* he thought, *to bring me so close and yet fail.* Steeped in the energies of his body's exquisite pain, he closed his eyes and allowed the beautiful dance of their duel to play out in his mind.

SKORNE THEME FORCES

MASTER ASCETIC NAARESH
NO PAIN, NO GAIN

WARBEASTS: Skorne non-character warbeasts with SPD 5 or higher

SOLOS: Agonizers, Nihilator solos, Paingiver solos

UNITS: Paingiver units, Nihilator units

TIER 1

Requirements: The army can include only the models listed above.

Benefit: Nihilator and Paingiver Beast Handler units become FA U.

TIER 2

Requirements: The army includes two or more Nihilator units.

Benefit: Nihilator units gain Advance Move. (Before the start of the game but after both players have deployed, a model with Advance Move can make a full advance.)

TIER 3

Requirements: The army includes two or more Paingiver Beast Handler units.

Benefit: Friendly models/units can begin the game affected by Naaresh's upkeep spells. These spells and their targets must be declared before either player sets up models. Naaresh does not pay fury to upkeep these spells during your first turn.

TIER 4

Requirements: Naaresh's battlegroup includes three or more warbeasts.

Benefit: Models in Naaresh's battlegroup gain +2 SPD during your first turn of the game.

LORD ARBITER HEXERIS
PRACTICAL MAGIC

WARBEASTS: Skorne non-character warbeasts

SOLOS: Agonizers, Void Spirits, Ancestral Guardian solos, Extoller solos

UNITS: Paingiver Beast Handlers, Praetorian units, Venator units

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TIER 1

Requirements: The army can include only the models listed above.

Benefit: For each Extoller solo in the army, one warbeast in Hexeris' battlegroup can use its animus during its activation without being forced during your first turn of the game. The warbeast cannot be forced to use its animus again that activation.

TIER 2

Requirements: The army includes three or more Ancestral Guardian solos.

Benefit: Add one non-character Ancestral Guardian solo to the army free of cost. This solo ignores FA restrictions.

TIER 3

Requirements: The army includes two or more units.

Benefit: Your deployment zone is extended 2" forward.

TIER 4

Requirements: Hexeris' battlegroup includes three or more warbeasts.

Benefit: The warbeast bonded to Hexeris gains Advance Deployment ➧.

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MASTER ASCETIC NAARESH

SKORNE WARLOCK

Truth can be measured by the length of lines scored in flesh, the weight of flesh carved from bone.

—Master Ascetic Naaresh

NAARESH						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	6	7	4	15	15	7

KATARA	
POW	P+S
4	10

FURY	6
DAMAGE	17
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARBEAST POINTS	+6
SMALL BASE	

FEAT: IMPERISHABLE FLESH

In a single, great outpouring of mortitheurgical power Master Ascetic Naaresh flays open the flesh of his beasts, unlocking a pain-induced wellspring of strength and fortitude while siphoning a portion of their vitality to heal his own wounds. Amid this focused state they shrug off what would ordinarily be mortal injuries. As his beasts shriek in pain, they become avatars of carnage.

Immediately apply up to 1 damage point to each aspect of warbeasts in Naaresh's battlegroup that are currently in his control area. Naaresh heals 1 damage point for each damage point applied. For one round, while in Naaresh's control area, warbeasts in his battlegroup gain +1 STR and ARM for each of their damaged aspects.

NAARESH

Tough

Blood Trade – This model can upkeep spells by suffering 1 damage point per spell instead of spending fury.

Flagellant – This model is automatically hit by melee attacks made by friendly models.

Pain Monger – When this model suffers damage from an attack, it gains one blood token. For each blood token on this model, it gains +1 STR and ARM. This model can have up to five blood tokens at a time. Remove all blood tokens from this model at the start of your Control Phase.

KATARA

Magical Weapon

Combo Strike (★Attack) – Make a melee attack. Instead of making a normal damage roll, the POW of the damage roll is equal to this model's STR plus twice the POW of this weapon.

Life Drinker – When it destroys a living enemy model with this weapon, immediately after the attack is resolved this model heals d3 damage points.

SPELLS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
BLEED	2	8	–	10	NO	YES
When Bleed destroys a living enemy model, this model heals d3 damage points.						
CYCLONE	2	SELF	–	–	NO	NO
This model immediately makes a full advance. It cannot be targeted by free strikes during this movement. At the end of this movement, this model can make one melee attack against each model in its LOS that is in its melee range. Cyclone can be cast only once per turn.						
IRON FLESH	2	6	–	–	YES	NO
Target friendly warrior model/unit gains +3 DEF but suffers –1 SPD.						
LAMENTATION	3	SELF	CTRL	–	YES	NO
Enemy models pay double the focus or fury point cost to cast or upkeep spells while in this model's control area.						

TACTICAL TIPS

IMPERISHABLE FLESH – You choose where Imperishable Flesh damage is applied.

The Skorne Empire is home to hundreds of self-proclaimed warrior-philosophers, but Master Ascetic Naaresh scoffs at their delusion. He has transcended simple anatomical understanding and finds even the *hoksune* code too shallow for his purposes. His suffering is no disguise for masochism but is the vehicle of enlightenment. Naaresh's unique grasp of mortitheurgy is informed by pain itself—suffering fuels his power. With every drop of spilled blood he grows stronger until he strikes with enlightened perfection, shorn of mortal weakness as his blades precede the stillness of oblivion.

Having lived nearly two hundred years, the master ascetic is old for a skorne, particularly one who has continually tested the limits of his body against both the blades of enemies and the wasting of self-inflicted privation, but age has had no perceptible toll on him. Once a follower of the School of Morkaash, the first paingiver, Naaresh has gone beyond those ancient beliefs to forge his own path. Many skorne have sought to study with him, but none have passed even the first hour of his torturous trials. They die beneath his punishing blades and are cast aside.

Naaresh spent decades meditating in the Blasted Desert east of the Abyss before determining he had learned all he could in isolation. Hearing of the wars to the west, he marched into the Bloodstone Desert, taking neither food nor water. His flesh roughened and torn by winds and razor sands, he appeared among the officers of the Army of the Western Reaches with no explanation and joined their battles. His destiny required him to find new enemies of faiths and disciplines unknown to him in order to cleanse his art of its last few flaws.

Naaresh exists outside of skorne society. His standing as a peerless martial practitioner and founder of his own school of philosophy ensures he is shown respect even though none are comfortable in his presence. He moves freely among the skorne sabaoths, taking troops and supplies as he wishes without regard for protocol. He is on the verge of enlightenment and dreams of achieving perfect tranquility amid the pain, a state within which he will be invincible—death itself will refuse to claim him. To this end he will go to any lengths to seek and embrace all potential agonies in the crucible of war.

LORD ARBITER HEXERIS

SKORNE EPIC WARLOCK

The lord arbiter's thirst for power can no more be satiated than Gulgata's thirst for blood.

—Lord Assassin Morghod

HEXERIS

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	8	7	4	15	16	8

GULGATA

POW	P+S
6	14

FURY	7
DAMAGE	17
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARBEAST POINTS	+6
SMALL BASE	

FEAT: ARCANE REAVER

Lord Arbiter Hexeris has studied arcane power in all its forms, and his hunger for supremacy over the will of his enemies cannot be denied. By opening his hand he invokes a hungry vortex of vampiric energy that siphons all souls, all arcane energy, and all rage from the field to empower his own formidable might.

Immediately remove any number of soul tokens, fury points, and focus points from non-warlock, non-warcaster models in Hexeris' control area. For each soul token or focus or fury point removed, place one fury point on Hexeris. Hexeris cannot exceed his current FURY in fury points as a result of Arcane Reaver.

HEXERIS

Vampiric Harvest – When a living enemy model is destroyed in this model's control area, a model in this model's battlegroup in its control area can heal 1 damage point.

Warbeast Bond – One non-character warbeast in Hexeris' battlegroup can begin the game bonded to him. Hexeris can channel spells through the bonded warbeast while it is in his command range.

GULGATA

Magical Weapon

Reach

Thresher (★Attack) – This model makes one melee attack with this weapon against each model in its LOS and this weapon's melee range.

SPELLS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
ARCANE RECKONING	3	6	–	–	YES	NO

Target friendly Faction model/unit gains Whiplash. (When an enemy model misses a model with Whiplash with a magic attack, the attacking model becomes the target and is automatically hit by the attack. AOE magic attacks that miss are centered on the attacking model. The model with Whiplash is the point of origin for all these attacks.)

ASHEN VEIL	2	6	–	–	YES	NO

Target friendly model/unit gains concealment. Living enemy models suffer –2 to attack rolls while within 2" of an affected model.

ASHES TO ASHES	4	8	*	10	NO	YES

If target model is hit, it and the d6 nearest enemy models within 5" of it suffer a POW 10 fire damage roll.

BLACK SPOT	2	8	–	–	YES	YES

Target enemy warrior model/unit suffers –2 DEF. When a friendly Faction model destroys one or more affected models with a melee or ranged attack during its activation, immediately after the attack is resolved it can make one additional melee or ranged attack regardless of ROF. Attacks gained from Black Spot cannot generate additional attacks from Black Spot.

HELLFIRE	3	10	–	14	NO	YES

A model/unit hit by Hellfire must pass a command check or flee.

TACTICAL TIPS

ARCANE REAVER – Hexeris can steal soul tokens, fury points, and focus points from non-warlock, non-warcaster models until he reaches his FURY stat. If Hexeris had 1 fury point when using Arcane Reaver, he could steal any combination of 6 souls, fury, and focus in order to gain 6 fury points.

THRESHER – The melee attacks are all simultaneous.

Lord Arbiter Hexeris represents the pinnacle of the skorne's occult powers among both past and present masters. Under Hexeris' dissecting gaze, the minds of his rivals are laid as bare to him as the anatomy of their flesh. Through cunning, raw power, political acumen, and tactical genius, he has furthered his own schemes while simultaneously strengthening the Skorne Empire. He has made himself indispensible to the supreme archdomina, who values him not only for his personal capabilities but also because he knows every secret, weakness, and goal of the other occultists serving the Army of the Western Reaches. He adroitly manipulates them into uneasy but effective alliances through carefully tailored threats and promises.

The lord arbiter's knowledge goes well beyond the lore of the skorne, and no enemy arcanist is safe from his vampiric thirst for mystical secrets. To oppose Hexeris in battle is to be sapped of arcane power as he steals and transforms the energies of his foes. He selects the most intriguing of those who fall to him in battle and takes them aside to be vivisected at his leisure before death frees their spiritual essence for his study.

Hexeris has left no avenue unexplored in his quest to fully apprehend and wield the dark arts. His exposure to foreign necromancy, sorcery, the blood-empowered arts of the blackclad mystics, and the blighted power of the dragons has given him insights into the metaphysics of the world no other mortal in western Immoren can claim. Hexeris has carved a place for himself with ruthless and bold action, perpetrating countless deceptions to further his occult power.

The unprecedented title of Lord Arbiter was bestowed by Archdomina Makeda after her return from securing the Abyssal Fortress. Hexeris suspects Makeda promoted him to feign honoring his accomplishments while in truth seeking to keep him occupied overseeing the intractable and self-serving ranking occultists of the army. He accepted without complaint, however, recognizing the opportunity to exploit the disparate mortitheurges and extollers now beneath his command.

CYCLOPS RAIDER

SKORNE LIGHT WARBEAST

It knows to aim not where the target is, but where the target will be.

—Beast Handler Sekhet

RAIDER						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	8	5	5	13	16	6

HEAVY REIVER			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
10	1	–	12

PUNCHING SPIKE	
POW	P+S
3	11

FURY	3
THRESHOLD	8
FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	5
MEDIUM BASE	

RAIDER

Arcane Precision – If this model forfeits its movement during its activation to gain the aiming bonus, it ignores Stealth that activation.

HEAVY REIVER

Burst Fire – Gain +1 to damage rolls with this weapon against models with medium bases and +2 to damage rolls against models with large bases.

PUNCHING SPIKE

Open Fist

ANIMUS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
FAR STRIKE	2	6	-	-	NO	NO

Target friendly model's ranged weapons gain Snipe. Far Strike lasts for one turn. (An attack with a Snipe weapon gains +4 RNG.)

Most raiders are raised among captive cyclops populations, where conditioning from infancy lessens their natural proclivity for casual violence. Their training in the use of their projectile weapons is augmented by surgeries that enhance their natural prescient abilities. These modifications lend the creatures an uncanny capability for judging distance and movement, compensating for their lack of binocular vision. So great is a raider's awareness of the imminent future that it can train its weapon on even the best-hidden targets and annihilate them in a burst of fire before they have time to react.

The terrifying sight of eight-foot-tall armored brutes unleashing torrents of razor-sharp steel does much to confirm the horror related in the tales of skorne assaults. The few who survive the excruciating hail of reiver fire are crushed by the raiders' spiked gauntlets. Though trained in the complexities of ranged combat, which requires a certain degree of discipline and patience, raiders are still cyclopes and exhibit the same delight as others of their species in inflicting cruelty with their bare hands.

VENATOR SLINGERS

SKORNE UNIT

The skorne are endlessly persistent in finding new ways to sow death through the application of ancient tradition.

—Asheth Magnus

The whirring susurration of Venator slingers in battle is a sound that even the bravest Praetorians dread to hear. Centuries of house wars have begun with that noise preceding a rain of shattering globes that drench defenders in lethal and viscous acid. Even the most heavily armored and revered champion might forfeit his life with an agonized, humiliating shriek as armor corrodes and flesh melts from bone. Using these weapons, the lowest among the warrior caste can reduce the greatest with just a few well-aimed shots.

The seemingly simple sling is a weapon of one of the oldest skorne martial traditions, having served as a primary hunting tool since the race's time as nomads. Though the origin of these slings is ancient, they remain useful and deadly today, as they provide vital supporting firepower to the frontline infantry of many houses. The weapons have been made considerably more deadly by skorne chymists, who labor to create an ample supply of caustic ammunition.

SLING

Damage Type: Corrosion

Acid Bath – If this attack directly hits a target, center a 3" AOE on the target. Models in the AOE suffer Continuous Effect: Corrosion.

Arcing Fire – When attacking with this weapon, this model can ignore intervening models except those within 1" of the target.

Erosion – This model rolls an additional die on this weapon's damage rolls against non-living models.

LEADER & GRUNTS

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	5	5	5	12	12	8

SLING

RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
10	1	–	10

SWORD

POW	P+S
3	8

FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
LEADER & 5 GRUNTS	4
LEADER & 9 GRUNTS	6
SMALL BASE	

ARCHIDON
SKORNE HEAVY WARBEAST

Not even the sky is beyond the reach of the Skorne Empire.

—Archdomina Makeda

ARCHIDON						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
7	10	6	1	14	17	6

BITE	
POW	P+S
5	15

FURY	4
THRESHOLD	9
FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	7
LARGE BASE	

ARCHIDON

Flight – This model can advance through terrain and obstacles without penalty and can advance through obstructions and other models if it has enough movement to move completely past them. This model ignores intervening models when declaring its charge target.

Serpentine – This model cannot make slam or trample power attacks and cannot be knocked down.

BITE

Critical Pitch – On a critical hit, instead of rolling damage normally you can choose to have this model throw the model hit. Treat the throw as if this model had hit with and passed the STR check of a throw power attack. The thrown model suffers a damage roll with POW equal to this model's STR plus the POW of this weapon. The POW of collateral damage is equal to this model's STR.

ANIMUS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
LIGHTNING STRIKE	2	6	–	–	NO	NO

Target friendly model gains Sprint. Lightning Strike lasts for one turn. (At the end of its activation, if a model with Sprint destroyed one or more enemy models with melee attacks this activation it can make a full advance.)

TACTICAL TIPS

Critical Pitch – A model cannot throw a model whose base is larger than its own.

The relentless howling winds and continual sustained thunderclaps of the Bloodstone Desert's well-named Stormlands create the perfect backdrop for another, no less unnerving, sound: the piercing shrieks of archidons. These enormous reptiles, perfectly at home among the area's lightning and rolling thunder, attack from cover of the raging storms. At the commands of their skorne masters, archidons swoop down upon their victims with a speed matched only by their savagery. They descend screaming to tear into flesh with razor-sharp teeth and leave their victims staggering and bleeding. Before the doomed prey can begin to recover from the shock of the first assault, the beasts return to deliver the fatal strike.

Archidons roost in the mountain ranges scattered across the Bloodstone Desert, posing a constant threat to those few but hardy creatures inhabiting the barren expanse. The power of flight makes these peerless ambush predators superbly adapted to hunt the Stormlands. Though they prefer to prey upon smaller creatures, archidons are capable of working together to hunt surprisingly large animals. Sieges of archidons coordinate their hunts via deafening screams and move in unison to attack prey as large as titans. The siege descends upon its quarry with shocking alacrity, ripping into them with their bony maws before quickly moving out of reach of retaliation. Archidons can reduce even the largest titan to a maimed and helpless heap within minutes and then wait for the beast to bleed out before landing to feast.

Archidons are not discriminating predators, however, and will prey upon small groups of skorne or other nomads that venture across the wastes. Once they have their quarry, they hurl the victim high into the air with a single toss of their powerful necks. The unfortunate creature flies heavily through the air to smash down upon the jagged stones. The need for skorne resupply to cross the desert with regular caravans has greatly increased the availability of prey for the archidons, but at the same time it has also given paingiver beast handlers increased opportunities to capture them.

Since first encountering the archidons as one of the many perils of the desert, skorne tyrants have come to appreciate the tremendous speed and fighting prowess of these beasts. Ever eager to add to the living arsenals of the Army of the Western Reaches, the skorne leaders have put out the call for more of these flying predators to be acquired. The creatures' availability relatively close to the new skorne fortifications in western Immoren adds to their appeal. Even with the methods to break and train them still being refined, capturing and preparing archidons for battle still requires far less of an investment than acquiring fresh titan stock from the Skorne Empire.

TIBERION
SKORNE CHARACTER TITAN HEAVY WARBEAST

I need no shield with Tiberion beside me.

—Tyrant Xerxis

TIBERION						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
4	12	7	3	11	19	8

SHIELD	
POW	P+S
1	13

TETSUBO	
POW	P+S
6	18

TUSKS	
POW	P+S
3	15

FURY	4
THRESHOLD	10
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
POINT COST	11
LARGE BASE	

TIBERION

Immovable Object – This model cannot be knocked down or placed. It can move or be moved only during its normal movement.

Shield Guard – Once per round, when a friendly model is directly hit by a ranged attack during your opponent's turn while within 2" of this model, this model can become the target of the attack and be automatically hit instead. This model cannot use Shield Guard if it is incorporeal, knocked down, or stationary.

Special Issue [Xerxis] – This model can be included in Xerxis's theme forces. It can also be bonded to Xerxis.

SHIELD

Shield

TETSUBO

Reach

Critical Smite – On a critical hit, this model can slam the model hit instead of rolling damage normally. The model hit is slammed d6" directly away from this model and suffers a damage roll with POW equal to this model's STR plus the POW of this weapon. The POW of collateral damage is equal to this model's STR.

TUSKS

Hard Head – This model can add this weapon's POW to its head-butt and slam power attack damage rolls.

ANIMUS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
BUMP	2	6	-	-	NO	NO

When target friendly model is damaged by an enemy melee attack, after the attack is resolved the enemy model is pushed 3" directly away from the affected model, then Bump expires. Bump lasts for one round.

TACTICAL TIPS

Critical Smite – The slammed model is moved only half the distance rolled if its base is larger than the slamming model's.

Shield Guard – If this model cannot become the target of the attack for some reason, it cannot use this ability.

Special Issue – This only gives the warbeast the potential to bond to the warlock. It does not automatically add a bond.

Among an army whose warbeasts are hurled at the enemy as disposable weapons, only a rare few survive long enough to distinguish themselves. Tiberion is one of these, a titan who has seen battle in a dozen wars and proven his mettle over a decade of service to his honorable master, Tyrant Xerxis. This legendary titan has earned a regard nearly unheard of among Xerxis' Cataphracts and Praetorians, and some have adopted his fearsome visage as carvings upon their shields.

From the first days of his training, Tiberion earned a reputation among the beast handlers as a particularly ornery creature. He was as resistant to their commands as a full-grown bronzeback; such a beast was judged too intractable to serve, and he was on the verge of being killed. Xerxis saw something beyond temper within the mind of the beast, however, and decided to break him personally. Locking his will with the creature's, he sensed a fighting spirit rare among the often-docile titans. In time and with much training, the beast demonstrated a degree of discipline and intelligence remarkable for his species. He required neither goading nor will-sapping drugs to be made ready for battle and soon engaged in warfare alongside Xerxis with all the devotion of a sworn soldier.

In battle after battle, Xerxis came to rely upon this titan to hold flanks or spearhead charges into the most dangerous melees. After the beast endured dozens of encounters fighting stoically alongside him, Xerxis named him Tiberion, after a great stone that has for centuries endured the surf near the coastal city of Verskone. When a battlefield position must be held at any cost, Tiberion stands as invulnerable against charging enemies as that stone stands against the endless pounding of the waves. Entire formations of enemies have marched in formation to confront him, only to be casually shattered regardless of their individual skill or collective courage.

Tiberion obeys Xerxis without hesitation and in battle almost seems to emulate the fighting stance and techniques of his master. His roars echo in the hearts of the skorne who march beside him, inspiring them to fight with similar unflinching endurance.

SIEGE ANIMANTARAX

SKORNE BATTLE ENGINE

A less warlike people might consider the Animantarax suitable for battle without needing to arm it like an iron-hulled battleship.

—Professor Viktor Pendrake

SIEGE ANIMANTARAX						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	13	7	5	10	19	10

DOUBLE REIVER			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
10	1	—	13

CLUB TAIL	
POW	P+S
3	16

SPEAR	
POW	P+S
*	10

SPEAR	
POW	P+S
*	10

DAMAGE	22
FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
POINT COST	9
HUGE BASE	

SIEGE ANIMANTARAX

Fearless

Cantankerous – When this model is damaged by an enemy attack it gains one rage token. This model can have up to three rage tokens at a time. For each rage token on this model when it declares a melee attack, it gains +1 to the damage roll. During its activation, this model can spend rage tokens to boost Club Tail melee attack or Club Tail damage rolls at one token per boost.

Hyper Aggressive – When this model suffers damage from an enemy attack anytime except while it is advancing, after the attack is resolved it can immediately make a full advance directly toward the attacking model.

Weapon Platform – This model can make melee and ranged attacks in the same activation. When this model makes its initial melee attacks or a power attack, it can also make its initial ranged attacks. This model can make ranged attacks even while in melee.

DOUBLE REIVER

Burst Fire – Gain +1 to damage rolls with this weapon against models with medium bases and +2 to damage rolls against models with large bases.

Rapid Fire [d3+1] – When you decide to make initial attacks with this weapon at the beginning of this model's combat action, roll a d3+1. The total rolled is the number of initial attacks this model can make with this weapon during the combat action, ignoring ROF.

SPEAR

Reach

Independent Attack – This attack has base STR 6 and base POW 4, for P+S 10.

CLUB TAIL

Reach

Rear Attack – When declaring and resolving attacks with this weapon, this model's front arc extends to 360°.

TACTICAL TIPS

Rear Attack – This does not enable this model to target models in its back arc with charges.

With slow and measured steps, the animantaraxes walk among the armies of the skorne as living siege engines. The ornate *houdaas* atop their backs bristle with weapons manned by veteran crews of Praetorians and Venators. From the vantage of the rear platform that towers above the lacquered armor, commanding dakars shout their orders and blow sonorous horns to signal the attack. Animantaraxes move inexorably forward to deliver a hail of reiver fire into the enemy. Incoming fire serves only to enrage them, and their handlers gladly indulge the beasts' anger, watching with grim pleasure as the behemoths smash through their foes. Spears and double-combed reiver guns keep time with the swing of the creatures' deadly tails, delivering death to everything within reach.

Animantaraxes have been known to the skorne for centuries, and they have long been highly prized by those few houses that could afford the great cost of capturing them. Their incredible durability and strength made them ideal as weapon platforms in the house wars that raged for many centuries among the skorne. House Baalash was feared and envied for the dozen Siege Animantaraxes it kept ready during the Wars of Unification.

In recent decades, the Skorne Empire's expansion north of the Shroudwall Mountains has led to increased availability of the notoriously intractable animantaraxes. Impossible to breed in captivity, they are captured by teams of paingiver beast handlers dispatched into the dangerous plains north of the empire's borders, where a number of massive beasts have carved their territories. The Conqueror was reluctant to fund such expeditions, but Archdomina Makeda has ordered the wealthy houses of Malaak to renew these efforts, sparing no expense to send the walking fortresses to the burgeoning fortifications of the Army of the Western Reaches.

Veteran dakars who have trained in the fundamentals of the beast handler's art lead mixed units of Praetorians and Venators in weeks of drills before mounting the armored houdaa atop a Siege Animantarax. Commanding tyrants strive to requisition animantaraxes for any conflict in which they expect to face heavy resistance. The presence of just one of these living engines of war can ensure victory.

LEGION OF EVERBLIGHT

THE WARRIOR WITHIN

Northeast of Scarleforth Lake

Kallus raised his great sword Hellbrand high and roared as he charged into the tightly packed ranks of Praetorian karax. He felt a familiar transformative surge of blighted energy twisting his flesh. His succubus had invoked the draconic power of his carnivean upon him, causing spines to burst from his pallid skin. The hardened spikes were capable of turning even the karax's pike blows aside.

Hellbrand struck like a living thing with its own will as he used its weight and sharpened edge to cleave through armor and bone. Arcane might coursed through his body and guided each blow to find exposed flesh between shield and armor. Where Hellbrand's keen edge killed, the slain were consumed in unholy fire that spilled over to the nearest compatriots. In mere moments nothing remained of an entire karax line but charred, dismembered corpses. The rest of the skorne had stepped back and locked shields, seemingly reluctant to engage.

He forced himself to stop in his advance, eyeing the enemy warily. He could not allow the draconic rage threatening to overwhelm him seize hold. It was a powerful thrill to at last engage in battle, what he had been born for. Though this was the first time wielding Hellbrand in actual combat, it felt comfortable in his hands. He felt a strong desire to push himself and see if he could drive through the karax line leaving nothing but ash and destruction, but he recognized he must hold that impulse—an inheritance from his generative father—in check.

His force had been ambushed by the skorne after entering a particularly high-sloped valley amid the rough hills northeast of his destination. At first Kallus had not understood the intent of the soldiers moving in neat formations into the gap behind him, then he realized they must be trying to drive a wedge between his soldiers and Absylonia, who was following at a distance with her warbeasts. Even now he could hear the sounds of battle and the defiant shrieks of dragonspawn in that direction. Additional skorne were converging from the western slope and rushing into the valley's southern end. His efforts to reach the Castle of the Keys undetected had clearly failed.

It had not been long into his journey that he had seen Absylonia following at a slight distance. He had sought to greet her and invite her to join him, but she had refused to answer even when he spoke through their linked athanc shards. He did not understand why she had followed him and wondered if Vayl had sent her to spy on his mission. Similar attempts to contact other warlocks or Everblight had failed. Deciding this might be a test of his abilities, he had pressed on, alone with his own thoughts. He could still draw upon Everblight's vast repository of lore, which was a comfort.

Now he felt a pang of concern that he had led Absylonia into a dangerous ambush. He was more worried about her survival than his own. From the skorne blocking the narrowest section of the gorge, it looked as though he would not be able to force his way through to reach her not without opening himself up to attack from the rear. The trap had been well sprung.

A winged reptilian creature he identified through Everblight's extensive knowledge as an archidon soared toward him, and he reached out with his mind to direct his angelius to intercept it. He let the martial instincts Thagrosh and Everblight had instilled in him take hold. Kallus watched through the angelius' senses as the archidon wheeled aside to avoid a direct clash. Sensing the moment, he impelled the dragonspawn to unleash blighted fire. The incendiary ball flashed past the great reptile, almost forcing it to stall as it hastily banked to evade. Kallus savored the rush of wind as the warbeast struck, its deadly tail barb guided by his will.

By the time the archidon realized its peril it was too late. With an impact of finality the angelius' barb pierced deeply into the reptilian beast's left shoulder, then struck again to impale its right. The archidon shrieked in panic

and plummeted toward the ground, no longer able to control its wings. Kallus then sent the angelius to the aid of a group of blighted swordsmen fighting for their lives against a massive titan gladiator that had charged them from the south.

Kallus was confused about the objective of his skorne adversary. The ambush had been quick and well executed, but only a portion of the enemy forces engaged. Were they merely stalling for time? Dividing him from Absylonia was a sound strategy, but only if they intended to press the attack and annihilate first one and then the other. Unless, he considered, Absylonia was the main target of their attack. As unsettling as this notion was, he was too preoccupied defending himself against attackers from all sides to worry about her situation.

As he looked once more over the ranks of those enemies willing to close with his forces, uncertainty was replaced with disdain. He would demonstrate the folly of opposing Everblight's chosen. Past the immediate skorne soldiers he spotted their leader, a tall and imposing figure in heavy armor bearing a polearm bladed on both ends. Sweeping curved tusks extended from his back, but even had his ornamented armor not marked him out, Kallus could perceive shimmering power around him as he gathered his arcane might and directed his beasts. With a wave of his hand, a pall of choking ash obscured the forward ranks of the Legion soldiers.

Remove the head, and the body dies.

With a single mental command Kallus summoned his carnivean to his side while at the same time shouting commands to his legionnaires, archers, and swordsmen. He turned to Veln, the leader of his legionnaires, and motioned toward the enemy line that had pulled back. "While you distract the main line I will break through and eliminate the leader of their forces."

Veln simply nodded his compliance and raised his sword to enter his battle stance. In perfectly coordinated discipline the rest of the legionnaires readied their weapons.

Massive Cataphracts stood with shields locked and wicked war spears lowered. Kallus urged his carnivean forward, and a gout of incendiary ash and flame washed over the wall of red and gold armor. Proving their courage, the skorne survivors held without flinching as the mighty warbeast slammed through their line, unleashing its rage even as their blades pierced its flesh. Its great clawed hands sent Cataphracts flying while it consumed the torsos and limbs of others with its great fanged maw.

Kallus invoked his most powerful blighted magic, igniting the draconic energies within every Nyss warrior in his retinue. As several fell to enemy spears, their flesh transfigured and twisted into new forms by the blessing of the power Kallus had unleashed. These newly formed incubi surged forth to rend their opponents asunder with their claws.

Kallus lifted his hand and runes danced around it before he let his power loose in a massive eruption of fire. He drove his will into the carnivean and took full control of its draconic mind as it battled, savoring the unbridled strength it possessed. Meanwhile, he clove through the ruined skorne line, focusing so intently on his attacks he barely reacted in time to raise Hellbrand to block a powerful blow from an armored cyclops that forced its way through the smaller skorne to strike at him. The beast pressed him back, seeming to predict his motions, but then disappeared in a sheet of white-hot flame as the carnivean crashed into the still-burning foe.

UNCERTAINTY WAS REPLACED WITH DISDAIN. HE WOULD DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLY OF OPPOSING EVERBLIGHT'S CHOSEN.

Aided by that beast, Kallus cut through the press of skorne warriors, carving a bloody path toward the skorne warlock. Several lithe bloodrunners manifested from thin air to assault him. He growled as they sliced his flesh with their curved blades, trying to kill him from a thousand shallow cuts. These warriors employed an unusual mystical technique, vanishing in one spot only to appear in another, but he quickly adjusted. Anticipating the movements of his enemy, he struck at empty air and felt a moment of satisfaction when his blade bit flesh as the bloodrunner teleported to just that spot. The skorne's flesh exploded as Hellbrand's magic consumed him in a geyser of flame that also ignited several of his peers. Their tricks unraveled, the remaining bloodrunners were quickly dispatched.

Free once again of impediments, Kallus continued on toward the skorne warlock, who had been giving up ground while sending soldiers in his stead. "Face me!" Kallus bellowed, speaking the skorne language fluently, another gift of Everblight. He raised his blade and charged, directing his carnivean to join him in the assault. It clawed apart its nearest foes and then raced to obey.

Suddenly the ground shook and several great horned worms tore from beneath the earth, their fanged maws snapping

at Kallus and his warbeast. Kallus used the momentum of his charge to roll beneath the sudden attack, but his carnivean's way was blocked. Wicked spines erupted from the dragonspawn, impaling the razor worms even as they took savage chunks from its flesh. Regaining his feet Kallus saw the skorne warlock retreat up the hillside. Without a second thought Kallus followed, leaving his carnivean to deal with the tunneling worms.

"You cannot run forever!" Kallus shouted.

A wave of shock hit him as he felt a sudden dissonance and indignation across his athanc from Absylonia. He could sense she had suffered a serious wound. He turned and saw his legionnaires had been unable to break through the skorne line, and most of them were now dead.

HIS BOAST SEEMED PREMATURE AS THE GROUND SHUDDERED VIOLENTLY, AND ANOTHER RAZOR WORM ERUPTED FROM THE EARTH BEHIND HIM.

The skorne warlock turned his gaze from the battle below as if seeing Kallus for the first time. "I won't have to; I will soon have what I came for."

Kallus felt a powerful wave of blighted energy from the north as he felt Absylonia draw upon one of her unique gifts—the ability to unleash a tremendous burst of restorative power by which she could mend even the most grievous wounds. Across their athanc shards he could feel her glee as she took her enemy by surprise. Kallus faced the skorne leader and said, "Your ally has fallen. Now it is your turn."

Unfortunately his boast seemed premature as the ground shuddered violently, and another razor worm erupted from the earth behind him. He whirled to face it, but before he could do anything the skorne invoked his power and sent a blast of arcane fire through the beast, using its body as a conduit. The flames burst against Kallus' heavy breastplate and knocked him back, reeling. He saw a blur of approaching movement and brought his blade up just in time to catch his enemy's first blow. The heavily armored skorne had moved with surprising speed and attacked skillfully. His lips curled back and his pointed teeth were bared in a vicious snarl. His entire attitude and posture had changed, and it caught Kallus entirely off guard.

Kallus reached out his mind, searching for his carnivean. Some distance from him, the beast was still battling the first group of razor worms that had appeared. He focused all his will to gather power from it.

Glowing runes surrounded the skorne warlock and an unearthly light burst from his armored form before sweeping back into a halo of utter darkness. It seemed as if light itself were being pulled into its black depths. Kallus felt rising panic as the carnivean's energies vanished before he could claim them, drawn into the black vortex surrounding his enemy. He felt slow and ineffective without his spawn to fuel his body—power his enemy had stolen and used to strike with his polearm again and again. Kallus was forced to divert what would have been fatal wounds back to his carnivean and realized the foolishness of having chased the enemy so far that his other spawn were out of reach. The carnivean collapsed with one last shriek and then lay lifeless.

He could only watch as the skorne extended his free hand, red runes blazing about it. Another blast of arcane force knocked Kallus back even as it seared his flesh and armor. He stumbled, completely powerless before such arcane might. He brought his blade up, too slowly. He grimaced as the skorne spun his weapon blindingly fast. The first sweep knocked Hellbrand from Kallus' weak fingers, and the backswing cut his right leg off just below the knee, sending him tumbling to the ground.

Kallus looked up at the blue sky, cataloging all the mistakes he had made to bring him to this point. *I cannot believe this is how it ends.*

"A brave attempt, but you were a child against a titan," the skorne said, his voice satisfied. He raised his weapon high above his head. Kallus took one last look into his enemy's face, memorizing every detail before a white-hot lance of pain blurred his vision as a blade plunged through his heart and death claimed his body.

LEGION THEME FORCES

KALLUS, WRATH OF EVERBLIGHT
UNCONQUERABLE DOMINION

WARBEASTS: Legion non-character warbeasts

UNITS: Blighted Nyss Grotesques, Blighted Nyss Legionnaires, Blighted Nyss Swordsmen

SOLOS: Legion solos with Soulless

TIER 1
Requirements: The army can include only the models listed above.

Benefit: Reduce the point cost of Blighted Nyss Swordsman units by 1.

TIER 2
Requirements: The army includes one or more units with a unit attachment.

Benefit: Units in this army with unit attachments gain Advance Move. (Before the start of the game but after both players have deployed, a model with Advance Move can make a full advance.)

TIER 3
Requirements: Kallus' battlegroup includes two or more heavy warbeasts.

Benefit: For each heavy warbeast in Kallus' battlegroup, place one 3" AOE cloud effect template anywhere completely within 20" of the back of Kallus' deployment zone after terrain has been placed but before either player deploys his army. Enemy models and non-Faction friendly models entering or ending their activation in the AOE suffer an unboostable POW 14 fire damage roll. The cloud effects leave play after the first round of the game.

TIER 4
Requirements: The army includes four or more units.

Benefit: Models in this army gain Pathfinder during your first turn of the game.

VAYL, CONSUL OF EVERBLIGHT
MACHINATIONS OF SHADOW

WARBEASTS: Non-character Legion Warbeasts, Proteus, Typhon

UNITS: Blighted Nyss Legionnaires, Spawning Vessel, Legion units with Magic Ability

SOLOS: Blighted Nyss Shepherd, Spell Martyrs, Succubus, Legion solos with Magic Ability

BATTLE ENGINES: Throne of Everblight

TIER 1
Requirements: The army can include only the models listed above.

Benefit: Non-character solos in this army gain Advance Deployment.

TIER 2
Requirements: The army includes a Spawning Vessel unit.

Benefit: You gain +1 on your starting roll for the game.

TIER 3
Requirements: Vayl's battlegroup includes three or more warbeasts with Flight.

Benefit: Warbeasts with Flight gain +2 SPD during your first turn of the game.

TIER 4
Requirements: Vayl's battlegroup includes three or more heavy warbeasts.

Benefit: Reduce the cost of heavy warbeasts in this army by 1.

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KALLUS, WRATH OF EVERBLIGHT

LEGION WARLOCK

We will birth the age of fire, and through fire the world shall be claimed.

—Thagrosh the Messiah

KALLUS

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	7	7	4	14	16	8

HELLBRAND

POW	P+S
7	14

FURY	6
DAMAGE	18
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARBEAST POINTS	+5
SMALL BASE	

FEAT: HOST OF ANGELS

Kallus was crafted to be the perfect weapon of Everblight's ferocious will, able to tap directly into the blighted energies of his athanc. In a wave of horrific exultation, Kallus sends forth a revelation of blight to awaken the seed of Everblight within each soldier of his army. As they perish, their flesh transforms to fight on and reap greater slaughter.

When a friendly living non-Incubus warrior model in Kallus' control area is disabled by an enemy attack, you can replace it with an Incubus model. The replaced model is removed from play. While in Kallus' control area friendly soulless warrior models gain +2 DEF. Host of Angels lasts for one round.

KALLUS

Hyper Regeneration – This model automatically heals d3 damage points at the start of each of its activations.

Soulless – This model does not generate a soul token when it is destroyed.

Unconquerable – While in this model's command range, friendly Faction warrior models gain Unyielding. (While engaging an enemy model, a model with Unyielding gains +2 ARM.)

HELLBRAND

Magical Weapon

Reach

Flame Burst – When this model boxes an enemy model with this weapon, enemy models within 1" of the boxed model suffer the Fire continuous effect.

SPELLS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
DARK GUIDANCE	4	SELF	CTRL	-	NO	NO

While in this model's control area, friendly Faction models gain an additional die on their melee attack rolls this turn.

ERUPTION	3	8	3	14	NO	YES

Models hit suffer a POW 14 fire damage roll. The AOE is a cloud effect that remains in play for one round. Models entering or ending their activation in the AOE suffer an unboostable POW 14 fire damage roll.

FLASHING BLADE	1	SELF	-	-	NO	NO

This model immediately makes one normal attack with one of its melee weapons against each enemy model in its LOS that is in the weapon's melee range. These attacks are simultaneous.

IGNITE	2	6	-	-	YES	NO

Target friendly model/unit gains +2 to melee attack damage rolls. Affected models gain Critical Fire on their normal melee attacks.

TACTICAL TIPS

HOST OF ANGELS – You do not pay points for these Incubi.

IGNITE – When this spell is cast on cavalry models, it affects mount attacks.

UNCONQUERABLE – This includes this model.

Every Legion warlock is a miracle of blighted transformation, but none have been so deliberately crafted as Kallus, Wrath of Everblight. All the dragon's previous warlocks were born of imperfect natural chaos, their bodies carrying inconvenient vestiges from the original progenitors. Not so, Kallus. His every bone and muscle was shaped by Everblight's will, his mind structured to fulfill the dragon's need for an imperishable and irrepressibly bold general. At his command the dragon's fury within all his blighted followers can be ignited into an unyielding flame.

Kallus is perhaps the creation in which Thagrosh takes the most pride, for through him Everblight achieved something never before accomplished. His genesis was Thagrosh's idea, the execution of which required testing all Everblight had learned of flesh and form as well as his mastery of his own athanc. The shard chosen for this warlock was subtly altered such that it can transform any flesh into Kallus' body and mind. The imperishable crystal is imprinted with a pattern for his body and soul, based on a version of Thagrosh the dragon honed to emphasize strengths and erase unwanted elements. Kallus is proof Everblight can create an evolving mind embedded in an athanc still connected to his own essence.

The modified shard was placed on the body of a captive, who howled as his flesh flowed and melted, his bones shifting and realigning to reveal a new creature not Nyss, ogrun, human, or any simple creature of nature. This was Kallus, a blank slate informed by the vast repository of lore contained within Everblight but lacking residual memories that might distract him from his service. Most importantly, Kallus' mind can be preserved so long as the athanc endures, giving him something like the immortality of the dragons. He can hurl himself into battle fearless of his own destruction, taking whatever risks are necessary to obliterate his enemies. To this warrior, death is but a temporary state, an inconvenience to be borne only until a new victim can be subjugated and transfigured.

Kallus' personality is yet in flux as he takes in the world and learns his place among his peers. The Nyss warlocks are all mysteries to him, with their individual motivations outside of the dragon's wishes. His own mind is filled with the imperatives of both Thagrosh and Everblight, and he learns with a preternatural quickness. Kallus has begun to suspect that his creation represents the destiny of the Legion and that he is specially empowered to lead Everblight's army for the glory of conquest. Thagrosh may be the Messiah, but Kallus is the inevitable heir to the blighted throne.

VAYL, CONSUL OF EVERBLIGHT

LEGION EPIC BLIGHTED NYSS WARLOCK

Piece by piece I measure the weight of our power, and by blood and bone shall we secure our dominion over Caen.

—Vayl, Consul of Everblight

VAYL

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	5	3	7	15	14	9

ORACULI

RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
10	3	—	8

FURY	8
DAMAGE	14
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARBEAST POINTS	+6
SMALL BASE	

FEAT: DARK MIRACLES

As the supreme sorceress of the Legion of Everblight, Vayl has plumbed the depths of blighted power with a sophisticated touch none can rival. Amid battle she can draw on her inner reserves to manifest the full scope of her magic prowess. She contemptuously tears asunder the feeble magic of her enemies while unleashing her own in a devastating eruption of sorcerous might.

This activation Vayl can cast each of the spells on her card once without spending fury points.

VAYL

Gunfighter

Immunity: Cold

Quick Draw – Once during your opponent's turn, when an enemy model within 10" of this model that is in its LOS targets this model with a ranged attack, this model can make a ranged attack against the enemy model before it makes its attack roll. If this model's ranged attack hits, the enemy model suffers no damage but its attack automatically misses.

Serenity – At the beginning of your Control Phase, before leaching, you can remove 1 fury point from a friendly Faction warbeast within 1" of this model.

ORACULI

Magical Weapon

Spellbound – This model can channel spells through a model hit by an attack made with this weapon. Spellbound lasts for one turn.

SPELLS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
ADMONITION	2	6	-	-	YES	NO

When an enemy model advances and ends its movement within 6" of target model in this model's battlegroup, the affected model can immediately advance up to 3", then Admonition expires. The affected model cannot be targeted by free strikes during this movement.

ICY GRIP	2	8	-	-	YES	YES

Target enemy warrior model/unit without Immunity: Cold suffers –2 DEF and cannot run or make special attacks.

OBLITERATION	4	10	4	15	NO	YES

The force of this attack blasts apart the earth itself.

OCCULTATION	2	6	-	-	YES	NO

Target friendly model/unit gains Stealth.

PURIFICATION	3	SELF	CTRL	-	NO	NO

Continuous effects, animi, and upkeep spells in this model's control area immediately expire.

REFUGE	2	6	-	-	YES	NO

When target friendly Faction model hits an enemy model with an attack during its activation, immediately after its combat action ends the affected model can make a full advance. It cannot be targeted by free strikes during this movement.

While Thagrosh stands as Everblight's Messiah, the might of the Legion has grown in accordance with the plans and tireless efforts of the Legion's dark queen, Vayl Hallyr. Her master's servants are hers to command, and she does so with the same flawless skill with which she wields her blighted sorcery. Vayl strides regally among the elite of her armies, picking and choosing which conflicts require her personal intervention by peering into the mists of the future with her divinatory powers. She appears to take singular satisfaction in the successes of the dragon, for only by advancing her master's power can she ensure her own star ascends.

The trust placed in Vayl by Everblight is well deserved; no other among the dragon's generals has been so instrumental in forging the once-broken people of the Nyss into the adaptable army he requires. There are those who might believe Vayl incapable of true loyalty, given she sacrificed her people to the dragon of her own free will, but such people do not understand her. The goals of Everblight and Vayl are in perfect harmony, for she has given herself over wholly to the dragon's purposes, and in doing so she has received everything required to realize her own dreams of power and domination.

As consul Vayl has achieved a position of regal authority, answering only to Thagrosh and Everblight himself and empowered to explore her mystical arts. In exchange for the freedom she has been given, Vayl has pitted all her considerable intelligence and cunning to achieving the dragon's long-term plans. She has seized the opportunity to reform the Nyss into a weapon both for the dragon and for herself and thereby become the ultimate mistress of their fate.

Vayl's mastery of the Legion came in equal measure through her political acumen and her thorough understanding and insight into the nature of the blight. Her ability to adapt Nyss sorcery to utilize the dragon's power has served as the template for all the blighted sorceresses who have followed. Each of these new disciples looks to Vayl for leadership, and this arcane branch is responsible for the Legion's unprecedented advances in arcane weaponry.

Drawing on this lore, Vayl has begun to unravel the mysteries of the athanc, following Everblight's example. It was by this study that she modified her oraculus to resemble that crystalline perfection and then split it in three. She strives to make similar use of the physical remains of the consumed dragon Pyromalfic to craft tools by which Everblight's draconic siblings can be located and confronted. Given her prodigious skill, she may succeed in accomplishing in a few years tasks that have eluded the lich lords of Cryx for centuries.

NAGA NIGHTLURKER

LEGION LIGHT WARBEAST

From blood and shadow it emerged, and into blood and shadow it carries its victims.

—Vayl, Consul of Everblight

NAGA

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	8	5	6	13	15	6

NIGHT'S VENOM (H)

RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
10	1	–	12

BITE (H)

POW	P+S
4	12

FURY	3
THRESHOLD	8
FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	5
MEDIUM BASE	

NAGA

Eyeless Sight

Pathfinder

Blood Creation – This model never attacks friendly Faction warlocks and cannot choose them as its frenzy target.

Prowl – This model gains Stealth while within terrain that provides concealment, the AOE of a spell that provides concealment, or the AOE of a cloud effect.

Serpentine – This model cannot make slam or trample power attacks and cannot be knocked down.

Soulless – This model does not generate a soul token when it is destroyed.

NIGHT'S VENOM

Magical Weapon

Critical Poison – On a critical hit, gain an additional die on this weapon's damage rolls against living models.

BITE

Critical Shadow Bind – On a critical hit, the model hit suffers Shadow Bind for one round. (A model suffering Shadow Bind suffers –3 DEF, and for one round when it advances it cannot move except to change facing.)

ANIMUS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
WRAITHBANE	2	6	–	–	NO	NO

Target friendly Faction model's weapons gain Magical Weapon and Blessed. Wraithbane lasts for one turn. (When making an attack with a weapon with Blessed, ignore spell effects that add to a model's ARM or DEF.)

As winged spawn soar overhead, the hosts of Everblight's legion are preceded on the ground by the fearsome naga. These vicious minions slither through the shadows toward their prey almost like serpents, their countless small claws allowing them to clamber swiftly over any obstacle. The naga use their fanged maws to tear apart enemies of their master after spewing their caustic venom from a distance. The sight of comrades' melting flesh is often enough to send unaffected foes fleeing in horror as the naga arrive to claim their feast, unnatural darkness dripping from their jaws.

The naga were among the first forms Everblight crafted in the time of Morrdh. Ancient texts from that period refer to the "worms of the earth" that devoured the enemies of Morrdh and likened them to "crawling shadows." Some of these terrifying creatures came to be known as nightlurkers in the language of the Morrdh. Though seemingly simple in form, the naga are in truth complex spawn representing Everblight's genius in the manipulation of blighted flesh.

SUCCUBUS

LEGION BLIGHTED NYSS SOLO

The chosen of Everblight hold infinitely more power in their blood than they alone can seize.

—Saeryn, Omen of Everblight

TACTICAL TIPS

Attached – This model cannot be reassigned if its warlock is destroyed or removed from play.

Magic Attack – Performing a Magic Ability special action or special attack counts as casting a spell.

Everblight's manipulations of Nyss physiology have had profound effects on their species. At first these changes manifested in spines and scales as the dragon's blight altered those who succumbed, metamorphosing them into the weapons he needed. As new Nyss have been born into the Legion, the long-term effects of Everblight's subtle alterations have become apparent. Each succubus is a product of far-reaching changes wrought in the flesh of the Nyss.

The blight gifts each rapidly maturing generation of female Nyss with greater sorcerous potential. Having isolated the strongest of these bloodlines, the Legion has fostered as many of these as possible to serve as fonts of blighted arcane power. While the majority will go on to further their master's glory as sorceresses of the Nyss, a certain few are culled out for a wholly different purpose. These are brought to the spawning pools and ritually bathed in the blood of a warlock. When they emerge from the agonizing transformative rite, they are no longer wholly Nyss, each attuned to the warlock whose blood actualized its second birth.

These creatures are as loyal to their creators as any spawn would be. Their prolonged exposure to the protean blood of the dragon's servants empowers them as amplifiers of their warlock's own gifts. With their every thought and action they carry out the will of their masters and the dragon itself.

SUCCUBUS

Arcane Assist – If its warlock is in this model's command range during your Control Phase, the warlock can upkeep one spell without spending fury.

Attached – Before the start of the game, attach this model to a friendly warlock for the rest of the game. Each warlock can have only one model attached to it.

Magic Ability [6]

- **Spirit Tap (★Action)** – This model immediately casts the animus of a friendly Faction warbeast in its command range as a spell. This model cannot cast an animus with a RNG of SELF. This model must make a special attack to cast an offensive spell. Other spells are cast by making a special action.

SUCCUBUS

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	4	4	3	14	11	6

DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	1
POINT COST	2
SMALL BASE	

PROTEUS

LEGION CHARACTER HEAVY WARBEAST

If there is a constant in the turmoil of Absylonia's mind it is her affection for her favored spawn.

—Vayl, Consul of Everblight

PROTEUS						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	12	6	6	11	18	7

TENTACLE LASH (H)			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
6	1	–	14

TENTACLES (H)		
POW	P+S	
2	14	

TALON (L)		
POW	P+S	
4	16	

TALON (R)		
POW	P+S	
4	16	

FURY	5
THRESHOLD	9
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
POINT COST	11
LARGE BASE	

PROTEUS

Eyeless Sight

Pathfinder

Blood Creation – This model never attacks friendly Faction warlocks and cannot choose them as its frenzy target.

Herding – While this model is in its warlock's control area, the warlock can force, leach, reave, heal, and transfer damage to the warbeasts in its battlegroup that are in this model's command range.

Soulless – This model does not generate a soul token when it is destroyed.

Special Issue [Absylonia] – This model can be included in Absylonia's theme forces. It can also be bonded to Absylonia.

TENTACLE LASH

Chain Weapon – This attack ignores the Buckler and Shield weapon qualities and Shield Wall.

Drag – If this weapon damages an enemy model with an equal or smaller base, immediately after the attack is resolved the damaged model can be pushed any distance directly toward this model. After the damaged model is moved, this model can make one normal melee attack against the model pushed. After resolving this melee attack, this model can make additional melee attacks during its combat action.

TENTACLES

Reach

Chain Weapon – See above.

Pull – If this weapon hits an enemy model with an equal or smaller base, immediately after the attack is resolved the hit model can be pushed any distance directly toward this model.

TALON

Open Fist

ANIMUS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
HEIGHTENED METABOLISM	2	6	–	–	NO	NO

Target friendly warbeast gains Snacking. Heightened Metabolism lasts for one turn. (When a model with Snacking boxes a living model with a melee attack, the model with Snacking can heal d3 damage points. If the model heals, the boxed model is removed from play.)

TACTICAL TIPS

Drag / Pull – "Any distance" means "as much as necessary," not "any distance the player chooses."

Heightened Metabolism – Because the boxed model is removed from play before being destroyed, it does not generate a soul or corpse token.

Special Issue – This only gives the warbeast the potential to bond to the warlock. It does not automatically add a bond.

Of all the warlocks who serve Everblight, Absylonia is the most skilled and prodigious in the creation of dragonspawn—and Proteus is her greatest accomplishment. Everblight spoke to her throughout the process, guiding her hand and informing the application of her will that eventually gave form to the beast. Proteus' birth nearly took her life, as she was almost totally exsanguinated in the creation process. It was only through a supreme effort of will that she was able to crawl to her knees to watch Proteus emerge from a pool filled with her own blood mingled with that of dozens of sacrificial victims.

With head thrown back in a silent shriek and thrashing tentacles glistening with blood, Proteus is the dragon's hunger given obscene form. Its naturally armored body ripples with thick muscles taut with violence, while it fairly bristles with heavy spikes, needle-sharp spines, and lethal claws. The very sight of the enormous creature is as confusing as it is terrifying; below the sharp, bony crown atop its head, where one might expect to find jaws filled with rows of savage teeth, there is instead a mass of whipping, razor-tipped tendrils. The beast wraps these powerful tentacles around a victim to drag them inexorably into the grasp of its waiting claws even as it flays the prey and strips meat from bone, filling the air with a bloody mist. Then the savage creature begins to feast, replenishing its own flesh as it devours that of its unfortunate victim.

CAPTAIN FARILOR & STANDARD

LEGION BLIGHTED NYSS LEGIONNAIRE CHARACTER UNIT ATTACHMENT

The Prophet demands victory, but I require perfection.

—Captain Farilor

FARILOR						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	6	7	4	12	14	9

GREAT SWORD	
POW	P+S
4	10

STANDARD BEARER						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	6	6	4	12	14	9

DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
FARILOR & STANDARD	3
SMALL BASE	

Attachment [Blighted Nyss Legionnaires] – This attachment can be added to a Blighted Nyss Legionnaires unit.

FARILOR

Combined Melee Attack

Fearless

Officer

Cleave – When this model destroys one or more enemy models with a melee attack during its activation, immediately after the attack is resolved the model can make one additional melee attack. This model can gain only one additional attack from Cleave each activation.

Defensive Line – While this model is B2B with one or more models in its unit, it gains +2 ARM.

Iron Zeal – Once per game during its unit's activation, this model can use Iron Zeal. For one round, while in formation models in this unit gain +4 ARM and cannot become stationary or be knocked down.

Tactics: Set Defense – Models in this unit gain Set Defense. (A model in the front arc of a model with Set Defense suffers –2 on charge, slam power attack, and impact attack rolls against the model with Set Defense.)

Vengeance – During your Maintenance Phase, if one or more models in this unit were destroyed or removed from play by enemy attacks during your opponent's last turn, each model in the unit can advance 3" and make one normal melee attack.

STANDARD BEARER

Fearless

Standard Bearer

Defensive Line – See above.

Mage Static – While this model is in formation, enemy magic attacks targeting a model in this model's unit suffer –5 RNG.

Vengeance – See above.

GREAT SWORD

Reach

Weapon Master

TACTICAL TIPS

VENGEANCE – Models move after continuous effects have been resolved during the step of the Maintenance Phase that says "Resolve all other effects that occur during the Maintenance Phase."

The ranks of the legionnaires are a weapon wielded by one hand—that of Farilor, Bladeguard of the Prophet. He directs their every strike for the glory of Thagrosh, and the obedient legionnaires follow with unflinching discipline. To encounter Farilor and his guard in battle is to come upon a wall of blades prepared to cut down any foe, at any cost. So great is their devotion that they can will themselves to ignore the most grievous wounds and punishing blows in order to hold their line beneath the standard of the Legion.

Farilor was born into the Maelwyrr Aeryn shard, one that is few in number but nevertheless stands among the most respected Nyss for their guardianship of the Fane of Nyssor. Farilor always knew he would one day bear heavy responsibilities, and he worked diligently to prepare himself for the rituals and trials of initiation that would confer upon him the honor of devoting his life to Nyssor's protection. All of Maelwyrr Aeryn were shocked, then, when he failed his testing and was denied by the priest caste.

Leaving the shard in shame, young Farilor for a time considered taking his own life. His driving need to serve his people was too strong for such a final step, however, so instead he sought out the *ryssovass* order, hoping that he might find new purpose defending the high mountain passes. He served with grim devotion and absolute discipline, rising quickly through the ranks. Though his family would never again accept him, his new peers deemed him a warrior without equal.

When Vayl betrayed the Nyss, the ryssovass were among the first to be blighted. Vayl knew not only that they would otherwise be a dangerous obstacle, but also that the blight would transform their dedication and loyalty into single-minded devotion to Everblight's prophet. Her prediction was borne out as they became the legionnaires, none more zealous than Farilor, who assumed the mantle of leadership. He sees Thagrosh as the savior of the Nyss and Everblight as their new and rightful god and demands nothing less than perfection from the Messiah's honor guard.

THRONE OF EVERBLIGHT

LEGION BATTLE ENGINE

My rule given flesh, that it might be known and feared.

—Everblight

THRONE						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	10	7	1	10	19	10

TENTACLE	
POW	P+S
5	15

TENTACLE	
POW	P+S
5	15

TENTACLE	
POW	P+S
5	15

DAMAGE	24
FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
POINT COST	9
HUGE BASE	

THRONE

Immunity: Cold

Terror

Battle Wizard – Once per turn, when this model destroys one or more enemy models with a melee attack during its activation, immediately after the attack is resolved it can make one Magic Ability special attack or special action.

Circular Vision – This model's front arc extends to 360°.

The Feeding – When it destroys a living enemy model with a melee attack, remove the enemy model from play, and this model gains a corpse token. This model can have up to three corpse tokens at a time. During its activation, this model can spend corpse tokens to boost attack or damage rolls at one token per boost.

Flight – This model can advance through terrain and obstacles without penalty and can advance through obstructions and other models if it has enough movement to move completely past them. This model ignores intervening models when declaring its charge target.

Gross Anatomy – During its activation, this model can spend corpse tokens to heal damage. For each corpse token spent remove d3 damage from this model.

Magic Ability [7]

- **Frostbite (★Attack)** – Frostbite is a RNG SP 8 magic attack. Models hit suffer a POW 12 cold damage roll.
- **Spine Burst (★Attack)** – Spine Burst is a RNG 10, POW 10 magic attack. If target model is hit, the d3 nearest models within 5" of it suffer a POW 10 magical damage roll.

TENTACLE

Reach

Chain Strike – This weapon has a 4" melee range during this model's activation.

Chain Weapon – This attack ignores the Buckler and Shield weapon qualities and Shield Wall.

TACTICAL TIPS

MAGIC ABILITY – Performing a Magic Ability special action or special attack counts as casting a spell.

Nothing marks the dragon's growing dominion and rising power more than the appearance of the dreadful Thrones of Everblight. Towering above his legions, the Thrones are the pillars from atop which the will of the dragon is made manifest. The creatures lurch forward at the behest of sorceresses chosen by Vayl Hallyr to make Everblight's glory known to all those who would oppose his desires. Harriers, seraphim, and angelii all flock to the Thrones, circling them as a host equally awe-inspiring and terrible to behold.

The Thrones move effortlessly forward over the roughest ground and most formidable earthwork defenses without pause. From their positions on platforms high upon the Thrones, sorceresses cast down blighted invocations upon those foolish enough to battle the dragon, freezing enemy flesh with frost and ripping apart their bodies with terrible spines. As the Thrones reach the lines of the unworthy, their great tongues lash out and pull foes into their draconic maws to be utterly devoured.

Everblight dreamed of the Thrones millennia ago in the time of Morrdh as a testament to his glory, but in that age he never had the occasion to see them made flesh. It was not until he devoured the essence of Pyromalfic that the discarnate dragon gained sufficient power to unleash this malefic creation upon the world. The first Throne of Everblight was birthed in the deepest spawning pool at a tremendous cost in blood to Vayl, Saeryn, and Absylonia, who joined together to give form to the vision of the dragon. The terrible and mindless creature that erupted from the pool was not dragonspawn but something entirely unprecedented. It roared as it surged from the depths of its fetid womb, exulting in its birth and showering the gathered host in gore. Its primordial tendrils tore at the victims laid before it before stuffing them into its maw as a sacrificial first meal. It was only the first of many that would be birthed.

The monstrous creations responded only to the mental commands of those Nyss trained as sorceresses. Vayl chose her most promising lieutenants to receive the unique privilege of guiding the Thrones in battle. As each Throne emerged from its spawning pool, one of these chosen stepped forward, anointed and garbed for the task, to mount the ornate dais and from this lofty platform spread the glory of Everblight on the battlefield.

MINIONS

THE LOOSE THREAD

Near Blindwater Lake

Maelok stared at the rotting arm on the soft swampy earth. He bent down to recover it with the same disinterest as someone might lift a broken tree branch lying in their path.

"Repair yourself," Calaban hissed. "I don't have time for you to fall apart every time I turn my back."

Maelok turned his dead gaze to his master. "Can you blame the doll for the maker's poor stitching?" he asked, his voice bereft of emotion. Maelok pushed the piece of meat against his rotted stub and used his power to rejoin the dead flesh.

Calaban's eyes flared behind his mask, and he showed rows of razor-sharp teeth. "Speak only when I ask it of you!" Maelok could feel the command like a physical restraint. He felt some echo of what might have been anger or frustration, like the memory of an emotion he could no longer feel. He looked to the gatorman village in the distance, its small fires glowing eerily in the heavy mist rising from the swamp floor. They reminded Maelok of souls freed to be consumed by their god, Kossk. A luxury his own soul had been denied.

"What are you doing here?" Calaban demanded, looking past him. Maelok turned to see one of his own blackhide wrastlers crouching nearby. He felt the beast's cold mind as it awaited instruction. When he gave no command, the massive reptile slunk back into the murky waters. Calaban turned back to Maelok, his bloody eyes filled with suspicion.

The dreadbound had not moved since repairing his arm, his expression fixed in the blank gaze of the undead, but his mind spun. *That warbeast is one connected to me. Yet I did not summon it. Did it respond to my anger?*

Maelok's contemplation was broken by Calaban. "Come, I have work for you to do. Prove I didn't waste my talents keeping you from the grave."

You were the one who sent me there, you treacherous worm! The words bubbled up into his mind and again he recognized his own anger, from somewhere far away. Held in Calaban's clutches, was his soul still capable of reacting? *How many will you stab in the back while you continue to lick the feet of Barnabas, helping him loose a bloody apocalypse upon our world?*

His divided mind observed his distant anger with curiosity. Some inner part of him wanted to unleash the rage, but he simply lowered his head in submission as he moved forward, and his cracked voice said laconically, "Yes, master."

The small gatorman village bustled with life. Hunting parties came and went, hissing greetings to the elder warriors watching the perimeter. Hatchlings raced underfoot while youths and other adults went about such chores as preparing meat for storage, inspecting nets, and patching the two dozen reed huts sprawled amid dank ponds. The two bokors watched from the darkness beyond the perimeter.

Maelok wondered what work Calaban could have in such a place. Like his body, his memories of his former life had rotted away, but something here resonated with him.

"Come," said Calaban, and stepped forward. Maelok was forced to follow, compelled by the ties that bound him to his master. He sensed Calaban shroud him in an occult veil that would hide his dead flesh from prying eyes.

The inhabitants peered suspiciously at Calaban as the bokor neared the perimeter, and several of the warriors watching for enemies gathered closer, staring at him with their blade-set poles in hand. Calaban's mask marked him as a bokor of power, and from their gesturing it seemed likely they recognized him and were wary. They did not see the hulking undead warlock standing next to him or the beasts that were hiding nearby beneath the water.

"Do you know this place, Maelok?" Calaban asked, waving Carcass in a flourish. He ignored the nearest warriors, even as they stepped back in startled alarm at his gesture.

Maelok's mind strained, but nothing came. "No, master."

"You should. Think harder; this is important. It was larger once but has fallen on difficult times. You must remember before your task can begin," he said. "There—consider that idol. In the center of the village."

Maelok looked to where his master pointed, at a rough-hewn stone carving half-sunk in the muck. The statue was a representation of Kossk in the form of a great gator. Maelok could see that the tail had been shattered. A memory slowly and inexorably rose to the surface.

"Now do you know this place?"

Maelok nodded. It had changed, but there was no doubt this was his home, where he had been senior bokor. How long had it been since his defeat by Calaban—years or only months?

"They refuse to join Barnabas in his great cause. Your teachings left them blind to the destiny our people must embrace. Their willful refusal cannot be allowed, lest others be emboldened." Calaban stared Maelok straight in the eyes, his jaw spilt into a macabre smile. "You shall be my instrument to warn others who would defy us."

The undead gatorman did not so much as tremble as memories washed over him like water bursting from a dam. Maelok recognized faces and names, and the wave threatened to drown him. A warrior shouted a demand at Calaban, asking his business, but the bokor ignored him. Maelok wished he could warn them, tell them to run, but he could not.

Calaban said, "You will kill every one of them. Our warbeasts will intercept any who flee. You may draw on the power of those under your control, but do not call them into the village. This task is yours alone."

The enslaved bokor began chanting dark words of power and a dark wind rose about him. The candles atop his head ignited with his power. He reached out and called on the innate essence of a lurking swamp horror. The bones and skin of his arms stretched and elongated, twisting his appearance into something even more horrifying, but he felt nothing. The shroud that had hidden him from those gathered fell away, and they gasped in horror. He charged forth to tear the nearest warriors limb from limb before they could react. By Calaban's mental orders he feasted, biting through scales to tear at the meat beneath.

A voice buried in his mind screamed in anguish. Fresh blood covered his dry, dead flesh and pooled on the swampy ground, staining the yellow reeds of the huts. He had known these people, guided them. Now he was their ruin.

He moved relentlessly through the village, his black vestments whipping about him as he tore through old friends, ignoring what wounds they inflicted on his dead flesh. Before he realized what he was doing he was approaching a clutch of hatchlings he had cornered against a log too thick for them to climb. He saw his hand rise. Green runes swirled about it, then coalesced into a spray of acidic venom that soaked the little ones, and they shrieked in terror and pain as the liquid melted flesh from bone. To escape the nightmare Maelok pushed his consciousness into the cold, reptilian minds of the warbeasts under his control, taking refuge in the simple calm of the predators' thoughts even as he drew on their power.

As the slaughter reached its end, Maelok came back to himself and saw Calaban approach. "You see? You are mine, utterly."

"YOU SHALL BE MY INSTRUMENT TO WARN OTHERS WHO WOULD DEFY US."

Maelok bowed low in submission. With his head held high in a show of dominance over his undead slave, Calaban did not see Maelok's fists clench tight in a spasm of repressed emotion as the blood of his kin dripped from them.

The candles in Calaban's hut cast flickering shadows across the walls. Maelok stood silent as his master chanted over the painstakingly constructed symbols carved in dirt and filled with salt that dominated the floor. As Calaban's voice reached a fevered pitch, a blast of air swept into the hut from the entrance, extinguishing several candles. Maelok thought he heard unearthly shrieks as the dancing shadows disappeared back into the darkness. Calaban looked up murderously at the intruder but cut his hiss of rage short when he saw who stood in the doorway.

"Calaban, I have need of you," Bloody Barnabas rasped.

"Of course, *hok-shishan*. I will come to you when my rituals are complete. Presently, they are—"

"Your rituals matter only as they serve to forward my ascension. It is not rituals I need now."

Calaban paused, then dropped his head in a show of submission. "What do you require of me?"

Barnabas strode into the hut, his feet and tail tramping across the carefully etched symbols. He swung his great head toward Maelok, squinting at the dead gatorman with evident curiosity. "This tool of yours has been useful, Calaban? He retains his bokor powers?"

Maelok's hollow eyes looked straight ahead. "My powers are stronger than ever," he said mechanically.

Calaban glowered at his slave and clamped his will down, forcing Maelok to be silent. "I apologize that it speaks out of turn."

Barnabas considered Maelok more closely and laughed, a low, rasping sound like wind through the reeds. "You have a clever dreadbound, Calaban. I believe he will do for my task."

"Hok-shishan?" Calaban asked, straightening from his bow.

Another figure stepped from behind Barnabas, clad in a worn leather coat and wearing a ratty top hat. The newcomer said, "True 'nough, Barnabas. Send this one to satisfy them trolls. They're in a pinch, said they'd owe you for swift service . . ."

"Yes, my plans will be long in reaching fruition. Having the trollkin in my debt will be useful." He turned back to Calaban. "You will send Maelok with Wrong Eye. The trollkin ask us to ambush the skorne, a task that does not displease me, but you and I have our own work to complete. Your slave can attend to this."

Calaban struggled to maintain a neutral expression. Since the massacre at Maelok's village, he had taken care to keep the undead slave close by and tightly leashed by ropes of will. But Barnabas would not be denied. "As you wish, hok-shishan."

The journey had been swiftly made, using the rivers to follow Comb's Beacon Run to Lake Scarleforth. From there it was simply a matter of picking his prey, as the skorne were plentiful, an army arrayed across the region as they marched to occupy forts and settlements recently erected by the trollkin. Maelok kept his force hidden within the water and waited.

He reached deep within himself and let the doorway to the spirit world open completely. He had long had mastery of such power, but after his death the black energies came to him even more easily. Dark strands wrapped themselves about his companions and warbeasts, strengthening them against the blows of their enemies. Maelok felt his body dissolve to spirit and stood a moment, relishing his freedom from the prison of flesh Calaban had condemned him to. Then he mentally urged his temporarily spectral boneswarms to strike. They surged past tree and soldier alike before becoming corporeal once more to devour the flesh of the skorne warriors and amalgamating the corpses into their own mass.

As the enemy lines tried to maintain order, several tentacles shot from the dark tree line and wrenched screaming skorne to their death. Maelok urged the swamp horror to charge forward, its writhing mass lashing out in all directions. He felt it savor the taste of flesh as it consumed its victims. Nearby Snapjaw feasted similarly, impelled onward by Wrong Eye.

The skirmish was over nearly as soon as it had begun. Maelok felt the weight of dead flesh return as the effects of his most powerful ritual faded and he returned to the solid world.

Wrong Eye approached. The witch doctor had left him barely a moment's peace since they had arrived. "Them skorne be in a hurry to get somewhere," he said. "No sign of Grissel, though."

Maelok grunted, more concerned with the pressing weight of his imprisonment. Since leaving Calaban he had found himself tormented by his actions in his old village. Despite the distance between them, Maelok could do nothing other than what his master commanded. He was to ambush the skorne wherever it might aid the trollkin without imperiling his existence.

Wrong Eye watched the undead gator for a moment, then pulled a bottle from underneath his coat. "What got you so troubled?" He pulled the cork out with his teeth and spat it into the reeds. "You figure to be Calaban's forever? Might be true. The price for turning your back to such a one as him," Wrong Eye took a long swig. "Exactly why I never turn my back—not without someone watching it." As if on cue, Wrong Eye's mighty warbeast Snapjaw emerged from the dense foliage, an armored skorne torso in his mouth.

Maelok said dully, "I am his slave now, bound forever." He watched the massive gator chomp its grisly meal into pieces.

Wrong Eye chuckled a strange huffing noise. "Not many more powerful than you. You should know there's no magic can't be undone." He tipped the bottle again. "Your soul calls to you. Just find the loose thread and pull."

Finding his bottle empty, Wrong Eye smashed it over Maelok's back with a laugh. "Come on, Snapjaw. Let's see what other morsels we can find."

Maelok watched the pair disappear into the darkness. Long after, the witch doctor's words continued to ring in his mind: *find the loose thread and pull.*

MINIONS THEME FORCES

MAELOK THE DREADBOUND
THE WALKING DEATH

WARBEASTS: Minion Gatorman non-character warbeasts

UNITS: Minion units with Amphibious, Minion units with Undead

SOLOS: Gatorman Witch Doctors, Minion solos with Undead, Wrong Eye & Snapjaw

TIER 1
Requirements: The army can include only the models listed above.

Benefit: Reduce the cost of Gatorman Witch Doctor solos by 1. Additionally, the FA of Gatorman Witch Doctor solos increases by +1 for every unit included.

TIER 2
Requirements: The army includes two or more units.

Benefit: Models/units in this army gain Incorporeal during your first turn of the game.

TIER 3
Requirements: The army includes two or more Gatorman Witch Doctor solos.

Benefit: Up to one model with Undead gains Advance Move for each Gatorman Witch Doctor solo in the army. (Before the start of the game but after both players have deployed, a model with Advance Move can make a full advance.)

TIER 4
Requirements: Maelok's battlegroup includes three or more Boneswarms.

Benefit: Boneswarm warbeasts in this army each begin the game with one corpse token.

STURM & DRANG
SPLIT DECISION

WARBEASTS: Minion Farrow non-character warbeasts

UNITS: Farrow units

SOLOS: Farrow solos, Rorsh & Brine

TIER 1
Requirements: The army can include only the models listed above.

Benefit: Before determining which player deploys first at the start of the game declare whether Sturm or Drang will be dominant during the first round of the game. If Drang is dominant, warbeasts in this army gain +2 SPD during your first turn of the game. If Sturm is dominant, friendly models/units can begin the game affected by Sturm's upkeep spells. These spells and their targets must be declared before either player sets up models. Sturm does not pay focus to upkeep these spells during your first turn.

TIER 2
Requirements: The army includes Targ.

Benefit: You gain +1 on your starting roll for the game.

TIER 3
Requirements: The army includes one or more Farrow Slaughterhouser units.

Benefit: Farrow Slaughterhouser units gain Advance Move. (Before the start of the game but after both players have deployed, a model with Advance Move can make a full advance.)

TIER 4
Requirements: The army includes two or more Road Hog warbeasts.

Benefit: Reduce the point cost of Road Hog warbeasts by 1.

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MAELOK THE DREADBOUND

MINION GATORMAN WARLOCK

Even in the depths of death I feel the ripple of his hatred, and it pleases me.

—Calaban the Gravewalker

MAELOK

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	7	6	4	14	17	7

BITE

POW	P+S
5	12

CLAW ×2

POW	P+S
5	12

FURY	6
DAMAGE	17
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARBEAST POINTS	+6
MEDIUM BASE	

FEAT: SPIRIT WORLD

Maelok sees into the spirit world as easily as the realm of the living, for he exists in a perverse state between both, his flesh perished and his soul imprisoned. By his dark magic he can pull his allies into the spirit world to become as insubstantial as vapor. The dead entering this realm are empowered by its dark energies against the mystical attacks of Maelok's enemies.

Friendly Faction models currently in Maelok's control area gain Incorporeal for one turn. While within Maelok's control area, friendly Faction undead models gain +2 ARM. Spirit World lasts for one round.

Minion – This model will work for Circle, Legion, Skorne, and Trollbloods.

MAELOK

Terror

Undead

Amphibious – This model ignores the effects of deep and shallow water and can move through them without penalty. While completely in deep water, it cannot be targeted by ranged or magic attacks and can make attacks only against other models in deep water. While completely in deep water, this model does not block LOS.

Cull Soul – This model gains one soul token for each living enemy model destroyed within 2" of it. After this model leaches during your next Control Phase, replace each soul token on it with 1 fury point.

Gatorman Warlock – This model can have only Minion Gatorman warbeasts in its battlegroup.

BITE

Magical Weapon

Spirit Eater – This model can reave fury points from enemy warbeasts destroyed by this weapon. Other models cannot reave fury points from enemy warbeasts destroyed by this weapon.

CLAW

Magical Weapon

SPELLS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
DEATH PACT	2	6	-	-	YES	NO
Target friendly Faction model/unit gains +2 ARM and Undead						
MALEDICTION	2	SELF	*	-	YES	NO
While within 2" of this model, enemy models suffer -2 DEF and ARM						
REVIVE	3	CTRL	-	-	NO	NO
Return one destroyed friendly Faction Grunt to play with one unmarked damage box. It must be placed in this model's control area in formation and within 3" of another model in its unit.						
VENOM	2	SP 8	-	10	NO	YES
Venom causes corrosion damage. Models hit suffer the Corrosion continuous effect.						

TACTICAL TIPS

Amphibious – This model can attack other models that are in deep water.

Cull Soul – A model can have more fury points than its FURY as a result of Cull Soul.

Revive – Remember, the Grunt can activate normally with its unit this turn. If all models in the Grunt's unit have been destroyed, it cannot be placed within 3" of a model in its unit and therefore cannot return to play.

With his festering hide and dead eyes Maelok the Dreadbound is not just a terrifying monster to the enemies of the Blindwater Congregation but also a fearsome warning to its own congregants. The terrible ritual that animates the corpse of this hulking bokor has left him a husk, an empty necromantic weapon wielded by Calaban, the Gravewalker. Maelok barely remembers his former life and takes little notice of the slaughter he wreaks. Hollow though he is, his evocations are terribly effective, and the army he leads embodies the cold death that stirs amid the rotted fens and swamps of Immoren.

Maelok was once a powerful and respected bokor among the gatorman tribes of the Bloodsmeath Marsh. He was revered for his wise and fearsome counsel and had led his people to victory in defense of their home on many occasions. When he heard tales of Barnabas' efforts to unite the gatormen beneath his rule and lead them toward carnage, Maelok knew he must oppose the warmonger's schemes with all his formidable power.

Even as Maelok prepared to make his move, he was unexpectedly approached by Calaban, the Gravewalker. The two bokors had long been rivals—Maelok the superior in necromantic power, Calaban possessed of broader influence—although their tribes had rarely clashed in open conflict. Calaban spoke persuasively to Maelok of putting aside their differences to defeat Barnabas, clearly the greater threat. Underestimating his peer's treachery, Maelok accepted this truce and began invoking a ritual to summon powerful spirits of the dead to assail their foe. Calaban struck in the midst of this rite, siphoning its great power for himself. The two fought viciously by tooth, claw, and black magic. Even channeling the power of the ceremony, Calaban was barely able to defeat his foe, but eventually he stood triumphantly over Maelok's corpse.

Calaban immediately captured Maelok's soul and bound it to him, then used his power to animate the bokor's remains. Since then, Maelok has endured a tortured existence. When he is not directly serving Calaban's bidding he sits idle, his eyes dimmed. His few remaining emotions involve his new master, whom he hates beyond words and can only dream to consume.

STURM & DRANG

MINION FARROW WARLOCK

It is from paradox that their power arises: two minds fighting for control of a single body, their actions dictated by the mutual hatred and loathing that spills forth to flood the world with unleashed rage!

—Dr. Arkadius

STURM

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	6	5	5	14	16	9

BRAIN BURN

RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
SP 8	1		12

MECHANO FIST

POW	P+S
5	11

DRANG

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	10	7	3	14	16	6

MECHANO FIST

POW	P+S
5	15

FURY	7
DAMAGE	18
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARBEAST POINTS	+5
MEDIUM BASE	

FEAT: PSYCHIC APOCALYPSE

There are no limits to the discordant mental energy built up and eventually unleashed by the tormented psyche of Sturm and Drang. In a mind-rending burst of brutal psychic power they provoke psychosis and confusion across the minds of impressionable warbeasts and can even interfere with the delicate inner workings of warjacks. Both nerve synapses and mechanikal conduits overheat and misfire amid a storm of howling psychic torment.

Enemy warbeasts currently in Sturm & Drang's control area have their FURY reduced to 1, and enemy warjacks currently in Sturm & Drang's control area cannot be allocated more than 1 focus. While in Sturm & Drang's control area, enemy models cannot be used to channel spells. Psychic Apocalypse lasts for one round.

Minion – This model will work for Circle, Legion, Skorne, and Trollbloods.

STURM

Farrow Warlock – This model can have only Minion Farrow warbeasts in its battlegroup.

Struggle of Wills – At the start of your Maintenance Phase, choose which mind is dominant: Sturm or Drang. Use that mind's stats and rules for one round.

DRANG

Farrow Warlock – See above.

Goad – When a warbeast in this model's battlegroup destroys one or more enemy models with a melee attack during its combat action, immediately after the attack is resolved this model can force the warbeast to advance up to 2".

Pack Hunters – Living warbeasts in this model's battlegroup in its control area gain +2 on melee attack rolls.

Shortsighted – This model cannot upkeep spells.

Struggle of Wills – See above.

BRAIN BURN

Magical Weapon

DRANG'S MECHANO FIST

Critical Pitch – On a critical hit, instead of rolling damage normally you can choose to have this model throw the model hit. Treat the throw as if this model had hit with and passed the STR check of a throw power attack. The thrown model suffers a damage roll with POW equal to this model's STR plus the POW of this weapon. The POW of collateral damage is equal to this model's STR.

STURM'S SPELLS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
DEFLECTION	2	SELF	CTRL	-	NO	NO

While in this model's control area, friendly Faction warrior models gain +2 ARM against ranged and magic attack damage rolls. Deflection lasts for one round.

TELEKINESIS	2	8	-	-	NO	*

Place target model completely within 2" of its current location. When Telekinesis targets an enemy model, it is an offensive spell and requires a magic attack roll. A model can be affected by Telekinesis only once per turn.

VISION	2	6	-	-	YES	NO

The next time target friendly Faction model is directly hit by an attack, it suffers no damage roll from the attack, then Vision expires.

WATCHER	3	SELF	-	-	YES	NO

When an enemy model advances and ends its movement within 6" of this model, choose a warbeast in this model's battlegroup that is in its control area. That warbeast can immediately make a full advance and then can make one normal melee or ranged attack targeting the enemy model. The attack and damage rolls against that model are boosted. After the attack is resolved, Watcher expires.

DRANG'S SPELLS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
KILLING GROUND	2	SELF	CTRL	-	NO	NO

Friendly Faction models beginning a charge in this model's control area gain Pathfinder. Warbeasts in this model's battlegroup beginning their activations in this model's control area can charge or make slam power attacks against enemy models without being forced. Killing Ground lasts for one turn.

OBLITERATION	4	10	4	15	NO	YES

The force of this attack blasts apart the earth itself.

TACTICAL TIPS

CRITICAL PITCH – A model cannot throw a model whose base is larger than its own.

GOAD – Because the warbeast is forced, it gains 1 fury point.

The monstrous creation called Sturm and Drang is proof of Dr. Arkadius' mad genius. Psychic feedback crackles between their minds, driving them into a battle frenzy of escalating power. Engineered to dominate and subjugate, the pair have perfect command over the war hogs of the farrow and can unleash magic of mind-rending power and explosive force.

Even Arkadius himself is unnerved by what he has made, which grew out of an experiment in artificially stimulating psychic output of lesser beings' tortured minds. The key breakthrough was placing two strong wills in opposition. Sturm was one of those chosen, a farrow as viciously stubborn and megalomaniacal as he was domineering. The doctor joined him with the crazed berserker Drang, using parts of other porcine creatures and mechanikal apparatus to perfect their form. Through surgical alterations and alchemical conditioning, the tension between their minds catapulted their mental power to unprecedented levels.

After the creation nearly destroyed the laboratory in which they were joined, Arkadius hastily instituted several controls, both by scalpel and injection, adding a layer of dementia to Sturm while reducing Drang nearly to simple-minded psychosis. Sturm and Drang have proven devastatingly powerful when unleashed on the battlefield, and only Arkadius knows how to calm them until they are needed again.

BONESWARM

MINION GATORMAN LIGHT WARBEAST

Only a hunger that persists beyond the grave can so perfectly serve the bokors.

—Viktor Pendrake

BONESWARM						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	8	6	4	13	15	7

BONE STRIKE	
POW	P+S
4	12

FURY	3
THRESHOLD	9
FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	4
MEDIUM BASE	

BONESWARM

Terror

Undead

Amphibious – This model ignores the effects of deep and shallow water and can move through them without penalty. While completely in deep water, it cannot be targeted by ranged or magic attacks and can make attacks only against other models in deep water. While completely in deep water, this model does not block LOS.

Bone Picker – This model gains a corpse token each time it destroys a living or undead enemy model with a melee attack. This model can have up to three corpse tokens at a time. For each corpse token on this model it gains +1 STR and ARM.

Gatorman Warbeast – This model can be included only in a battlegroup controlled by a Minion Gatorman warlock.

Gross Anatomy – During its activation, this model can spend corpse tokens to heal damage. For each corpse token spent remove d3 damage from this model.

ANIMUS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
SWARM	2	SELF	-	-	NO	NO

This model has concealment. Living enemy models suffer –2 to attack rolls while within 2" of this model. Swarm lasts for one round.

TACTICAL TIPS

AMPHIBIOUS – This model can attack other models that are in deep water.

Strangely serpentine and unquestionably terrifying, the shapeless mass of a boneswarm is often the last thing seen by those who venture too far into the black waters of western Immoren's swamps. The animate bones that constitute a swarm are a realized nightmare rising from the muck, the suffering of an agonizing death given form and fueled by a thirst for pain and fear. A swarm's clacking jaws tear at the living and pull them down into the darkness of the swamp, where they join their killer for eternity.

Although boneswarms occasionally generate spontaneously at sites of great atrocity, the bokors and witch doctors of the gatorman tribes have mastered the necromantic rites necessary to create them. They conduct bloody sacrifices in the deepest marshes, stripping flesh from bone while chanting words of power. Lingering spirits, whose horrific fates prevented them from passing on, begin to coalesce around the bones and animate them into a horrific amalgamation of suffering enslaved to the will of the bokors.

ROAD HOG

MINION FARROW HEAVY WARBEAST

The only thing louder than the roar of its engine are the screams of its victims.

—Lord Carver

ANIMUS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
LIGHTNING STRIKE	2	6	-	-	NO	NO

Target friendly model gains Sprint. Lightning Strike lasts for one turn. (At the end of its activation, if a model with Sprint destroyed one or more enemy models with melee attacks this activation it can make a full advance.)

TACTICAL TIPS

ASSAULT – The assaulting model ignores the target in melee penalty even if is not in melee range of its charge target after moving.

The pitiful enemies of the Thornfall Alliance scatter like leaves in the wind before the assault of the deadly road hogs. These mighty beasts hurl themselves upon their foes with supercharged fury, unleashing gouts of flame and mechanically enhanced brutality upon any foolish enough to stand in their way.

ROAD HOG

Assault – As part of a charge, after moving but before making its charge attack, this model can make one ranged attack targeting the model charged unless they were in melee with each other at the start of this model's activation. When resolving an Assault ranged attack, the attacking model does not suffer the target in melee penalty. If the target is not in melee range after moving, this model can make the Assault ranged attack before its activation ends.

Farrow Warbeast – This model can be included only in a battlegroup controlled by a Minion Farrow warlock.

Full Boar – This model can be forced during its activation to gain +2 SPD and Pathfinder for one turn but suffers d3 damage points.

ROAD HOG						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	10	6	5	12	18	6

HEAVY FLAMETHROWER			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
SP 10	1	–	12

MECHANO-CLAW	
POW	P+S
4	14

GORE	
POW	P+S
4	14

FURY	4
THRESHOLD	8
FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	9
LARGE BASE	

HEAVY FLAMETHROWER

Continuous Effect: Fire

Damage Type: Fire

MECHANO-CLAW

Open Fist

GORE

Critical Knockdown – On a critical hit, the model hit is knocked down.

The road hogs are proof there is no end to the fiendish genius of Dr. Arkadius. The doctor and the farrow he has trained to help create these beasts of war graft devastating weapons to the flesh of great hogs and remove their lower limbs, replacing them with prosthetic mechanikal legs that grant the beasts shocking swiftness. That these bursts of speed sometimes cause agonizing trauma to the creatures themselves is of little concern to Arkadius—it is a trivial cost weighed against the brutal carnage the road hogs can inflict upon their unprepared foes.

SWAMP HORROR

MINION GATORMAN HEAVY WARBEAST

You hear stories about hundred-foot-long tentacled monsters eating whole caravans in the swamps. Well, it ain't a hundred feet long, but it still scares the hell out of me.

—Allen Ashley

SWAMP HORROR

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
4	10	6	1	10	17	6

BEAK (H)

POW	P+S
6	16

TENTACLES (—)

POW	P+S
2	12

TENTACLES (—)

POW	P+S
2	12

TENTACLES (—)

POW	P+S
2	12

FURY	4
THRESHOLD	8
FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	8
LARGE BASE	

SWAMP HORROR

Amphibious – This model ignores the effects of deep and shallow water and can move through them without penalty. While completely in deep water, it cannot be targeted by ranged or magic attacks and can make attacks only against other models in deep water. While completely in deep water, this model does not block LOS.

Impervious Flesh – When this model is hit by a ranged attack, the attacker rolls one less damage die.

Steady – This model cannot be knocked down.

BEAK

Critical Catastrophic Damage – On a critical hit on a warjack or warbeast, fill in the unmarked damage boxes or circles on the last column or branch damaged.

TENTACLES

Open Fist

Reach

Pull – If this weapon hits an enemy model with an equal or smaller base, immediately after the attack is resolved the hit model can be pushed any distance directly toward this model.

ANIMUS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
ELASTICITY	2	6	-	-	NO	NO

Target friendly Faction model's melee weapons gain Reach. Elasticity lasts for one turn.

TACTICAL TIPS

Amphibious – This model can attack other models that are in deep water.

Pull – "Any distance" means "as much as necessary," not "any distance the player chooses."

The dark swamps around Corvis are so forbidding that the people living nearby have barely explored them, venturing little into the imposing environs. Those few who have tread deep within and survived to speak of what they saw report strange and terrible things. Some claim to have seen monstrous tentacled creatures pull their companions to terrible deaths. The wild-eyed survivors speak of these beasts rising from the muck, wicked tentacles striking out to grasp men and draw them into a gaping mouth where razor-sharp fangs snap bone like twigs. These horrors are said to disappear back into the depths of the swamp after claiming their prey, leaving behind only a film of blood upon the waters and the echo of snapping bones. Most who hear these tales dismiss them as the drunken exaggerations of would-be adventurers—but those who have seen the growing war bands of the Blindwater Congregation know the truth.

Tribes of gatormen have long endured an uneasy coexistence with the swamp horrors that share their hunting grounds. These huge creatures are indiscriminate predators, willing to fill their maws with even the tough and scaly forms of gatormen. Most tribes simply skirt areas known to be the territory of swamp horrors, granting them as wide a berth as possible; very few are willing to venture into such dangerous ground except for the most dire of needs, and even fewer will fight a swamp horror directly if given any option. The minds of these great, predatory mollusks are alien, almost unnatural, and only the most exceptional bokors and shamans are capable of subduing them. Such gatormen gladly take the creatures into combat, but swamp horrors are more than just beasts of war to them; they are symbols of status and power revered as devouring forces of the untamed swamp.

The powerful tentacles of the swamp horrors propel them tenaciously across both mud and solid ground. The slow pace of the lurching beasts belies the danger they represent as predators. All it takes is one slip, and fleeing prey find themselves seized by lashing tentacles from a terrifying distance and pulled inexorably closer. Their terrified screams end beneath the decisive snap of the swamp horror's jaw.

FARROW SLAUGHTERHOUSERS

MINION UNIT

They cut down men like butchers among cattle.

—Lord Carver

LEADER & GRUNTS						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	7	6	4	12	15	8

POLE CLEAVER	
POW	P+S
4	11

FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
LEADER & 5 GRUNTS	6
SMALL BASE	

Minions – These models will work for Circle, Legion, Skorne, and Trollbloods.

LEADER & GRUNTS

Fearless

Tough

Finisher – This model gains an additional die on damage rolls against damaged models.

Take Down – Models disabled by a melee attack made by this model cannot make a Tough roll. Models boxed by a melee attack made by this model are removed from play.

POLE CLEAVER

Reach

Powerful Charge – This model gains +2 to charge attack rolls with this weapon.

TACTICAL TIPS

Take Down – Because a boxed model is removed from play before being destroyed, it does not generate a soul or corpse token.

The slaughterhousers are a vicious farrow assault force that leads the charge for Lord Carver's war bands in the Thornfall Alliance. They have enthusiastically embraced the ideas in the ranting diatribes of Lord Carver, who believes the farrow have a destiny of conquest and subjugation. Spurred on by their lord, slaughterhousers enjoy few tasks more than hacking apart humans.

Individual slaughterhousers are chosen for their size, enthusiasm for battle, and vicious demeanor and given heavy pole cleavers to indulge their predilections for bloodshed and mayhem. Expert at delivering finishing blows, they wield their brutal weapons with savage glee.

GATORMAN WITCH DOCTOR

MINION GATORMAN SOLO

It's easy enough to die in the swamp. What's hard is staying dead.
—Alten Ashley

TACTICAL TIPS

AMPHIBIOUS – This model can attack other models that are in deep water.

MAGIC ABILITY – Performing a Magic Ability special action or special attack counts as casting a spell.

SACRIFICIAL STRIKE – This special action is not an attack. The damage roll is boostable.

Subordinate to the greatest bokors, witch doctors hold an important position in serving their local communities and individual bands of warriors with their dark magic. Each witch doctor is a powerful mystic who lives and breathes the foul necromantic arts that are his birthright. Life and death are two edges of the same bloody knife to the witch doctor, who often sees his allies as nothing more than tools of battle to be moved between those two states as required.

Minion – This model will work for Circle, Legion, Skorne, and Trollbloods.

WITCH DOCTOR

Amphibious – This model ignores the effects of deep and shallow water and can move through them without penalty. While completely in deep water, it cannot be targeted by ranged or magic attacks and can make attacks only against other models in deep water. While completely in deep water, this model does not block LOS.

WITCH DOCTOR						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	7	6	3	13	16	8

BITE	
POW	P+S
5	12

SACRAL BLADE	
POW	P+S
4	11

DAMAGE	8
FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
POINT COST	3
MEDIUM BASE	

Beast Master – This model can force friendly Faction warbeasts in its command range as if it were their controlling warlock.

Magic Ability [7]

- **Dominate Undead (★Attack)** – Dominate Undead is a RNG 10 magic attack. Take control of target enemy non-warcaster, non-warlock undead model hit. You can immediately make a full advance with the undead model followed by a normal melee attack, then Dominate Undead expires. The undead model cannot be targeted by free strikes during this movement.
- **Sacrificial Strike (★Action)** – RNG CMD. Target a model in this model's LOS. If that model is in range, remove one friendly Faction trooper model within 1" of this model from play. The target model suffers a magical damage roll with POW equal to the base ARM of the removed model.
- **Zombify (★Action)** – RNG 5. Target friendly non-warcaster, non-warlock warrior model/unit. If the model/unit is in range, it gains Tough and Undead for one round.

SACRAL BLADE

Magical Weapon

Gatorman combat forces often include a witch doctor, for the tribes' bokors are expected to do their part in battle. It is amid the morass of combat that they gather the vile totems they require to power their spells, tearing the fleshy trophies directly from the carcasses of vanquished foes. Raising sacral blades aloft, the witch doctors utter sibilant incantations that impel the huge beasts they control forward in a wave of scaled death.

TARG
MINION FARROW CHARACTER SOLO

It's remarkable what a little encouragement can do for a warbeast—almost as remarkable as what passes for "encouragement" among the farrow.

–Alten Ashley

TARG						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	7	5	4	13	14	7

BUTCHER KNIFE	
POW	P+S
3	10

DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
POINT COST	2
SMALL BASE	

Minion – This model will work for Circle, Legion, Skorne, and Trollbloods.

TARG

Tough

Ancillary Attack
(★Action) – RNG 5. Target friendly Faction warbeast. If the warbeast is in range, it immediately makes one normal melee or ranged attack. A warbeast can make an Ancillary Attack special action only once per turn.

Attached – Before the start of the game, attach this model to a friendly Minion warlock for the rest of the game. Each Minion warlock can have only one model attached to it.

Herding – While this model is in its warlock's control area, the warlock can force, leach, reave, heal, and transfer damage to the warbeasts in its battlegroup that are in this model's command range.

Medicate (★Action) – RNG 3. Target friendly Faction warbeast. If the warbeast is in range, it heals d3 damage points. A warbeast can be affected by Medicate only once per turn.

TACTICAL TIPS

Ancillary Attack / Medicate – Ancillary Attack and Medicate work only on Minion warbeasts, and Targ attaches only to Minion warlocks. Because he works for other factions, he can be fielded in large armies that include at least one Minion warlock.

Attached – This model cannot be reassigned if its warlock is destroyed or removed from play.

Wherever other farrow snarl and fight with abandon, Targ lurches amid the fray with his knives and surgical tools in hand, focusing on wounded warbeasts with an intensity that borders on obsessive. Incoming shells explode near him and bullets zip past his ears, but he pays them no mind, calmly injecting Arkadius' unique blend of painkilling stimulants into enraged war hogs in the midst of the deadly fray or applying needle and thread to sew up gaping wounds. Because Targ has assisted Dr. Arkadius in modifying many of his creations, the beasts have been conditioned to recognize the hunched farrow as an extension of his deranged master and obey when he drives them where they need to be. Targ is often tasked to herd freshly engineered beasts to Lord Carver or others in the Thornfall Alliance requiring reinforcements.

Targ stood out among the farrow at a young age, both for his physical deformity and for his oddly inquisitive and single-minded personality. He often followed along behind village shamans and others that piqued his curiosity, mimicking their behaviors. Some thought him daft and useless, but others took his habit for mockery and beat him for it. Only his raw strength prevented him from being further victimized by his neighbors. Few farrow were willing to put up with this odd, misshapen creature, and shortly before he reached maturity he was finally banished to the outskirts of his village. For years Targ eked out a squalid existence on the fringes of farrow society, subsisting on scavenged scraps and what edible creatures he could trap in crude snares. The malformed farrow might have lived out the rest of his life in misery were it not for the arrival of Dr. Arkadius.

Targ's tribe was among the first to be conquered by Lord Carver, backed by Arkadius and his war hogs. The outcast farrow was mesmerized by the sight of the doctor's creations and took to shadowing him as he went about his business, seeking to emulate his actions. This behavior agitated other farrow just as it had in earlier years, but Arkadius found it flattering. He took an interest in the crippled creature that followed on his heels and wondered what could be made of him. It was after Targ borrowed some of the doctor's surgical tools from his laboratory and began to try to sew up injured warbeasts that Arkadius decided he might serve as an assistant. Although Arkadius had initially intended to experiment upon Targ's uniquely deformed anatomy, he discovered he enjoyed speaking to the farrow and considered him a good listener. None can say whether Targ understands the doctor's lessons on anatomy and fringe scientific theory or is merely too placid or focused on the tasks at hand to bother objecting. To Targ, the monotonous drone might simply offer a pleasing respite between more sharply barked orders.

Whatever his mental capacity, Targ possesses considerable manual dexterity and has shown an ability to replicate some of the doctor's basic surgical procedures adeptly, particularly the sewing of flesh. The farrow shows no aversion to blood and gore and is as fascinated by internal organs as by complex machinery. He seeks out every opportunity to practice his skills and seems oblivious to both the horrors and the dangers of the battlefield. Thus far his luck has held: Targ has survived even as many others have fallen around him, always returning to the doctor's side to patiently endure the next lecture.

MODEL GALLERY

JARL SKULD, DEVIL OF THE THORNWOOD
Trollblood Warlock

GRAYLE THE FARSTRIDER
Circle Orboros Warlock

MASTER ASCETIC NAARESH
Skorne Warlock

STURM & DRANG
Minions Warlock

MAELOK THE DREADBOUND
Minions Warlock

KALLUS, WRATH OF EVERBLIGHT
Legion of Everblight Warlock

BALDUR THE STONESOUL
Circle Orboros Epic Warlock

CYCLOPS RAIDER
Skorne Light Warbeast

STORM TROLL
Trollblood Light Warbeast

WINTER ARGUS
Circle Orboros Light Warbeast

TARG
Minions Solo

BONESWARM
Minions Light Warbeast

SWAMP HORROR
Minions Heavy Warbeast

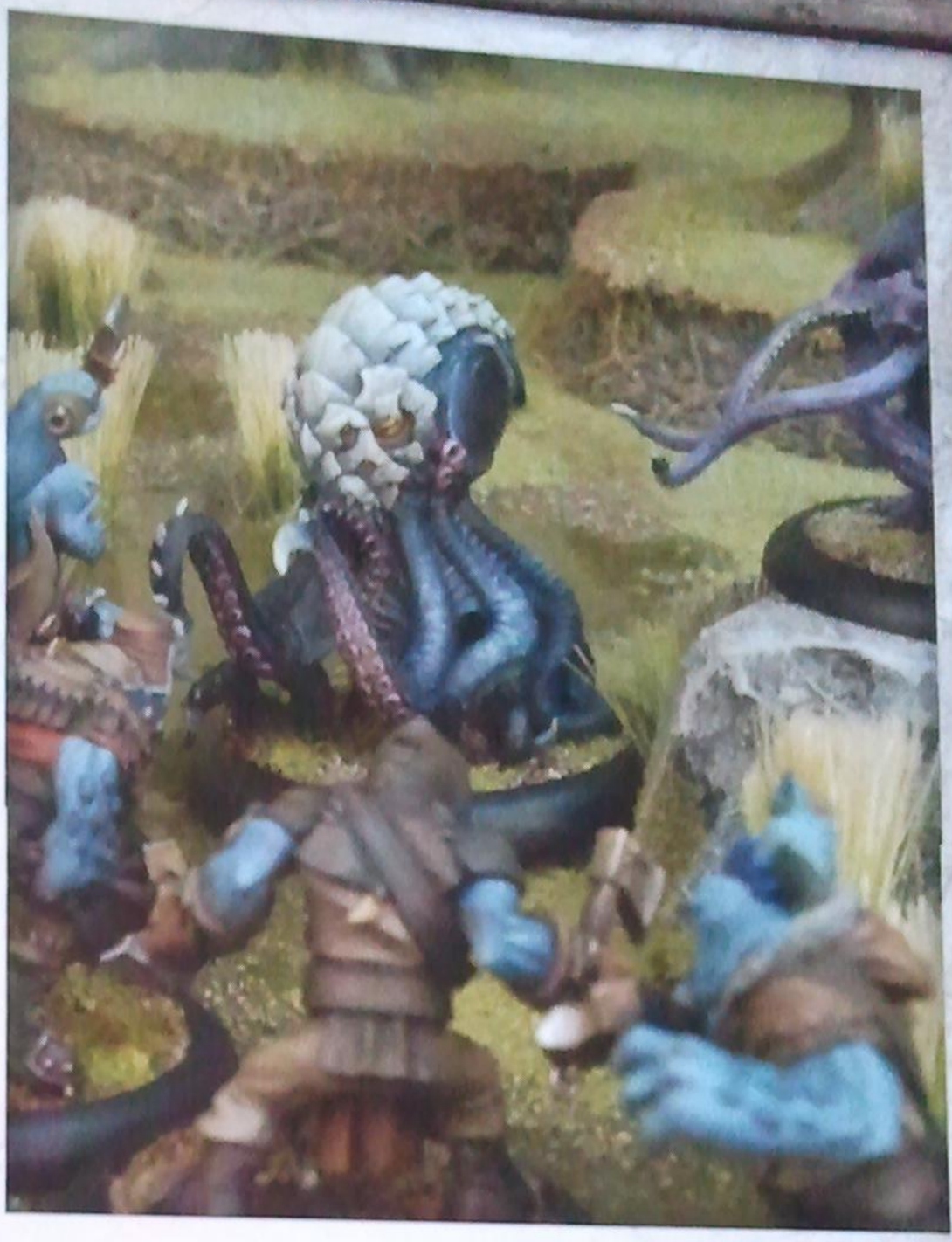
FARROW SLAUGHTERHOUSERS
Minions Unit

SCATTERGUNNER OFFICER & STANDARD
Trollblood Unit Attachment

CELESTIAL FULCRUM
Circle Orboros Battle Engine

GALLOWS GROVE
Circle Orboros Solo

UNLEASH THE FURY WITHIN



PAINTING THE SWAMP HORROR

INTRO

The Swamp Horror presents some unique opportunities to experiment with wild color combos and patterns. For the studio model we started with a very light basecoat with some patterning and then shaded the flesh down to a colorful black. By starting with different basecoats for the skin and suction cups but using the same colors to shade both elements we were able to make the areas appear distinct while maintaining a unified color scheme.

NEW TERMINOLOGY

Glaze: A glaze is a very thin layer of paint added to a model to tint the layer of paint underneath. The glaze should be somewhat translucent so the previous layer can still be seen through it. Glazes helps smooth out transitions between highlighted and shadowed areas.

SKIN

- Thrall Flesh
- Exile Blue
- Red Ink
- Meridius Blue
- Underbelly Blue
- Ordic Olive
- Muderous Magenta
- Brown Ink
- Sanguine Highlight
- Greatcoat Grey
- Coal Black
- Turquoise Ink
- Skorne Red
- Menoth White Base
- Cryx Bane Base
- Blue Ink
- Cygnar Blue Highlight
- Beaten Purple
- Cygnar Blue Base
- Thamar Black

Step 1) Basecoat the skin with a mixture of Thrall Flesh and Underbelly Blue. Basecoat the suction cups with a mixture of Thrall Flesh and Sanguine Highlight.

Step 2) Using a small drybrush, apply Skorne Red blotches to the skin in a dabbing motion.

Step 3) Add Cygnar Blue Highlight blotches to the skin using the same method as in step 2.

Step 4) Shade the suction cups and the skin with a mixture of Exile Blue, Ordic Olive, Greatcoat Grey, and a drop of mixing medium.

Step 5) Highlight the skin and suction cups with Menoth White Base. This highlight layer should stand out starkly but will be toned down in the following steps.

Step 6) Blend a mixture of Exile Blue and Beaten Purple into the skin of the tentacles, leaving the color more concentrated toward the tips.

Step 7) Apply thin glazes of Red Ink mixed with Murderous Magenta to the suction cups and key areas of the skin.

Step 8) Shade the skin and suction cups with a mixture of Coal Black, Exile Blue, and Cryx Bane Base.

Step 9) Shade small portions of the skin with a mixture of Cygnar Blue Base and Meridius Blue.

Step 10) For the deep shading on the skin and tentacles, use a mixture of Brown Ink, Turquoise Ink, and Coal Black.

Step 11) Apply a final layer of shading to the skin using a mixture of Turquoise Ink, Blue Ink, and Thamar Black.

ARMOR

Menoth White Base · Thrall Flesh · Underbelly Blue · Beasthide · Greatcoat Grey
Beaten Purple · Bootstrap Leather · Trollblood Base · Exile Blue · Battlefield Brown
Frostbite · Ryn Flesh

Step 1) Basecoat the chitonous armor plates and claws in a solid coat of Menoth White Base.

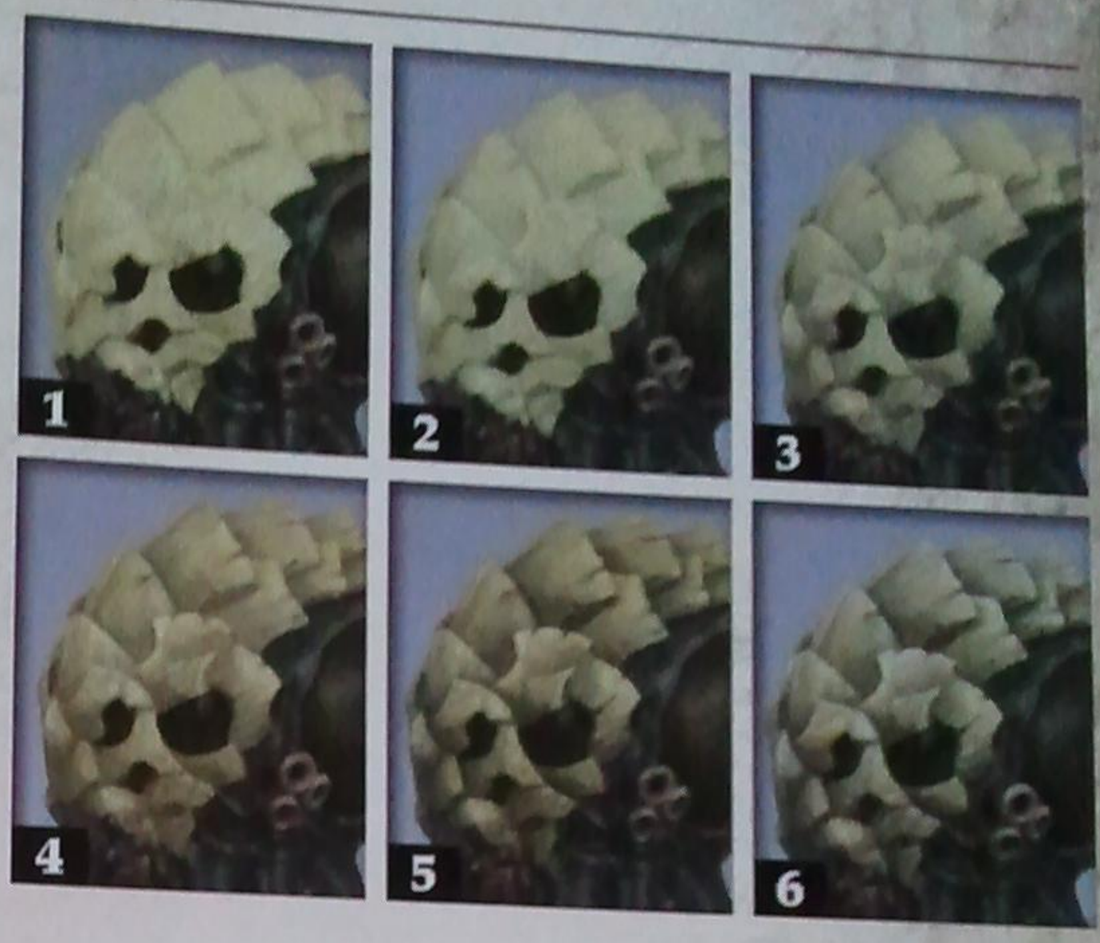
Step 2) Shade the armor and claws with a mixture of Thrall Flesh and Underbelly Blue.

Step 3) Add a second layer of shading with a mixture of Beasthide, Greatcoat Grey, and Beaten Purple.

Step 4) Continue shading with a mixture of Bootstrap Leather and Trollblood Base.

Step 5) Sparingly apply final shading to the armor and claws with a mixture of Exile Blue and Battlefield Brown.

Step 6) Highlights the striated ridges of the armor plates with a mixture of Frostbite and Ryn Flesh.



BUBBLE

Beaten Purple · Coal Black · Frostbite · Menoth White Highlight

The bubble at the back of the Swamp Horror's head is painted like a dark gem, with under-highlights and a reflection.

Step 1) The first layer of under-highlighting is a mixture of Beaten Purple, Coal Black, and Frostbite.

Step 2) Add more Frostbite to the previous mixture and apply additional under-highlighting.

Step 3) Add Menoth White Highlight to the mixture for the final under-highlights. Also use this mixture to paint a reflection onto the dark area at the top of the bubble.

EYES

Sulfuric Yellow · Wurm Green · Ember Orange · Ordic Olive · Red Ink · Menoth White Highlight

Step 1) Basecoat the eyes in layers of Sulfuric Yellow.

Step 2) Paint an unusual oblong pupil onto each eyeball. (Octopus eyes provide great inspiration.)

Step 3) Blend a mixture of Wurm Green and Ember Orange into the outer edge of each eye.

Step 4) Shade the outer edge of each eye with a thin layer of Ordic Olive.

Step 5) Carefully apply Red Ink around the pupil, and finish with a dot of Menoth White Highlight at the top of each eye to simulate reflected light.

PAINTING THE CELESTIAL FULCRUM

BASE

- Gun Corps Brown
- Ordic Olive
- Rucksack Tan
- Wurm Green
- Bloodstone
- Coal Black
- Idrian Flesh
- Cryx Bane Base
- Brown Ink
- Bootstrap Leather
- Sanguine Base
- Menoth White Highlight

The rocky base of the celestial fulcrum is painted to simulate the effect of light being cast from the hundreds of runes that cover its surface.

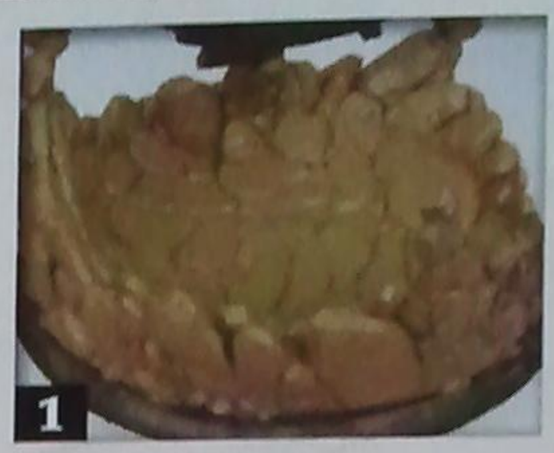
Step 1) Roughly block out the lit areas with a mixture of Gun Corps Brown and Wurm Green. Basecoat the remaining areas with Bootstrap Leather.

Step 2) Shade the lit areas with a wash of Gun Corps Brown and the rest with Idrian Flesh.

Step 3) Add a second layer of shading. For the lit areas use a mixture of Ordic Olive and Bloodstone, and for the rest use a mixture of Cryx Bane Base and Sanguine Base.

Step 4) Highlight the lit areas with a mixture of Rucksack Tan and Wurm Green. Use a mix of Coal Black, Sanguine Base, and Brown Ink to add additional shading to the unlit areas.

Step 5) Add some Menoth White Highlight to the mix of Rucksack Tan and Wurm Green from step 4 and use this to highlight the lit areas. Glaze the unlit areas in thin layers of Brown Ink to bring out the richness of the color.



STONE

- Ironhull Grey
- Sanguine Base
- Wurm Green
- Bastion Grey
- Coal Black
- Green Ink
- Trollblood Highlight
- Thrall Flesh
- Yellow Ink
- Greatcoat Grey
- Menoth White Highlight
- Turquoise Ink

Step 1) For the basecoat, use a large drybrush to roughly block out areas of shading with Ironhull Grey, midtones with Bastion Grey, and highlights with Trollblood Highlight.

Step 2) Apply shading with a mixture of Greatcoat Grey and Sanguine Base thinned enough that the texture of the drybrushing shows through. Blend Trollblood Highlight into the highlighted areas.

Step 3) Mix Coal Black and Sanguine Base for the deep shading under the overhanging and deep areas of the stone. Highlight with a mixture of Trollblood Highlight, Thrall Flesh, and Menoth White Highlight.

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Step 4) Carefully pick out the runes using a thinned mixture of Wurm Green and Menoth White Highlight. The paint should flow easily into runes; quickly clean up any overflow.

Step 5) Using Menoth White Highlight, apply a lighting effect to the runes, concentrating the paint in the lower part of each one.

Step 6) Glaze each rune with a thin, even layer of Green Ink, Yellow Ink, and Turquoise Ink. Take care not to allow the ink to pool at the bottom of the runes.

GEMS AND WOOD

- Battlefield Brown
- Iosan Green
- Coal Black
- Red Ink
- Menoth White Base
- Cygnar Blue Base
- Gnarls Green
- Menoth White Highlight
- Rucksack Tan
- Skorne Red
- Exile Blue
- Brown Ink
- Arcane Blue
- Sanguine Base
- Green Ink
- Meridius Blue
- Frostbite

The gems found on each of the Celestial Fulcrum's spheres correspond to the elements of earth, ice, fire, and lightning.

Step 1) Use Battlefield Brown to basecoat the wood sections joining the various parts of the Celestial Fulcrum together. Next apply a wood grain texture to the wood with a mixture of Menoth White Base and Rucksack Tan.

Step 2) Shade the wood with a wash of Brown Ink mixed with a smaller amount of Green Ink.

Step 3) Basecoat the central earth gems with Iosan Green, the ice gems with Cygnar Blue Base, the fire gems with Skorne Red, and the lightning gems with a mixture of Arcane Blue and Meridius Blue.

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GEMS AND WOOD (CONTINUED)

Step 4) For shading, mix Coal Black with a different color for each gem type and apply these mixtures to the upper portion of each gem. Use Gnarls Green for the earth gems, Exile Blue for the ice gems, Sanguine Base for the fire gems, and Meridius Blue for the lightning gems.

Step 5) Highlight the underside of each gem to simulate light being refracted. For each gem, add Frostbite to its basecoat color to create its highlight color.

Step 6) Using Frostbite, paint a thin line of highlighting to the bottom of each gem. Apply a few thin glazes of Red Ink to the fire gems. Finally, add a dot of Menoth White Highlight to the center of the shaded areas on all the gems to simulate reflected light.

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METALS

- Thamar Black
- Cold Steel
- Molten Bronze
- Greatcoat Grey
- Sanguine Base
- Cryx Bane Base
- Exile Blue
- Umbral Umber
- Coal Black
- Quick Silver
- Solid Gold

Step 1) Block out each of the metal areas with Thamar Black before applying metallics.

Step 2) Basecoat the metal binding on the arms in Cold Steel. Use Molten Bronze to apply a solid basecoat on the blocks of bronze and the rings around the gems.

Step 3) Shade the steel with a layer of Greatcoat Grey. Shade the bronze with a mixture of Sanguine Base and Cryx Bane Base.

Step 4) Use a mixture of Exile Blue and Umbral Umber to apply additional shading to the steel. For the bronze, use a mixture of Sanguine Base and Coal Black.

Step 5) Attach the Celestial Fulcrum body to the base, spray the model with a matte sealant, and allow it to dry thoroughly. Return to the metal areas and highlight the steel with Quick Silver. Highlight the bronze with a mixture of Molten Bronze and Solid Gold.

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PAINTING DRUIDS OF ORBOROS

METALS

- Molten Bronze
- Brass Balls
- Umbral Umber
- Brown Ink
- Brown Ink
- Solid Gold
- Rhulic Gold
- Radiant Platinum

Step 1) Mix Molten Bronze, Umbral Umber, and Brown Ink together and basecoat the metal surfaces with two coats.

Step 2) Using Molten Bronze, add highlights to the top three-quarters of the bracelet, leaving the bottom quarter in shadow. Highlight the upper two-thirds of the designs on the cloak to the very top of the design on the hood. (To determine the placement of highlights, hold the model where light shines down on it and note where the metal appears brightest.)

Step 3) Using a mixture of Rhulic Gold and Brass Balls, highlight the top half of the bracelets, the filigree on the cloak, and a few points on the top of the hood. Add deeper shadows to the filigree with thinned Brown Ink.

Step 4) Add a layer of matte sealant to reduce the shine of the metals and emphasize the contrast between the metallic paint and the highest highlight. Finally, mix Solid Gold with Radiant Platinum and pick out the very tops of the bracelets, the filigree on the cloak, and the hood.

RUNE STONES

- Bastion Grey
- Iosan Green
- Greatcoat Grey
- Necrotite Green
- Thamar Black
- Trollblood Highlight
- Gnarls Green
- Menoth White Highlight

Step 1) Basecoat the rune stones with Bastion Grey.

Step 2) Glaze shadows into the rune stones with thinned Greatcoat Grey.

Step 3) Use a mix of Thamar Black and Greatcoat Grey to shade around the lip of the stones. Apply thinned Gnarls Green to the runes on the stones.

Step 4) Apply thinned Iosan Green to the glowing runes. Be careful not to cover the Gnarls Green completely; there should be some contrast for a more convincing glow.

Step 5) Add thinned Necrotite Green to the runes. Mix Trollblood Highlight with Bastion Grey and use this to highlight the edges of the stones.

Step 6) Apply a mixture of Menoth White Highlight and Necrotite Green to the glowing runes. Using Trollblood Highlight, continue to highlight the edges of the stones. Smooth out transitions with Bastion Grey, and touch up the shadows using Thamar Black and a Greatcoat Grey glaze.

ALL WAR IS DECEPTION
PART TWO

BONES OF ORBOROS, HAWKSMIRE RIVER

The runes of the standing stones glowed with pulsing light, each to its own tempo, as though responding to different heartbeats thrumming below the earth. Multiple rings of runic power surrounded each of them, interlocking in a complex pattern slowly orbiting the center of the ritual clearing. Baldur and Morvahna paced in measured circles as they gesticulated and chanted to guide powers only they could see. From within the trance of an extended rite of tremendous power, the passage of time became inconsequential. Baldur could feel the flow of magma deep below the earth, the very movement of the continents, and the endless shifting of the caverns that riddled the crust of Caen. The leyline network was the arterial system of Orboros, and he felt it vibrate as certain streams were conjoined.

Days had passed like this. The ceremony was taxing and would soon intensify. Energy flowed out from the two druids to regulate the delicate patterns they wove but also flowed from the ground up through their bodies, aligning with the constellations above. Being immersed in this flow allowed them to remain alert without sleep, but it took a heavy toll. Morvahna's steps had become tremulous, and sweat beaded her brow. Her power arose less from the earth itself than from the flowing river and rooted trees, from a section of the leyline network along distant coasts and islands to the south. Baldur viewed her efforts with admiration.

He might have sought out additional support from the omnipotents, but he did not know how they would react to what he was attempting. They might consider his plan too risky, or—more likely—they might bicker and debate while the Cryxians marched ever closer to their master. The forces of the Legion of Everblight, which might be able to withstand the tunnels where Cryx had established mastery, were also on the move. While they seemed reluctant to follow Cryx underground until they had gathered sufficient forces, it was only a matter of time before they also disappeared into the tunnels in hopes of claiming Cryx's prize.

The thought of another athanc falling to Everblight was horrific beyond imagining. Were that dragon to act boldly, Baldur felt no doubt the Legion could overcome the Cryxian column in its present state. The lich lords were involved in a delicate web of intrigue and misdirection, their forces scattered to strike across Llael, Khador, and Cygnar, seeking to tie down armies that might otherwise interfere with Venethrax's procession. There were other great powers at play. Wurmwood had not been reachable since this began, although Baldur thought that ancient being would approve his actions, and he sensed the crone in the north as the shadow beneath the wings of ravens. She swept across the frozen northlands and peered through the eyes of those born to ancient bloodlines. Baldur could not perceive her purposes but knew she had played a hand in setting this chain of events in motion.

Baldur focused on the tidal flows of natural power invoked in his ritual. There was vital work yet to do. He was gratified the site had not yet come under assault; he had anticipated the trollkin would respond to his intrusion, but there had been no sign of them since he had seized the bridges. His wolds stood ready, and Morvahna had called upon her alliances to muster a number of beasts as well as a sizable force of Wolves, Tharn, and skinwalkers.

A wayfarer appeared with a peal of thunder next to one of several stone keepers positioned around the massive pillars of the site helping regulate the flow of energies. He strode toward the center of the circles with an apologetic expression beneath his cowled hood. "Potents Baldur, Morvahna," he said and inclined his head respectfully, "other enemies approach. The skorne have scattered the trollkin kriels around the lake, and their armies are converging. They come from the east and the south."

Baldur heard the words but his mind was divided, still locked on the patterns he was controlling. He shared a look with Morvahna and saw fierce determination in her expression, but dark circles lay beneath her eyes. The strain of the ceremony was taking its toll, though pride would not allow her to admit weakness. He said to her, "We will need more protection here. Send out the call." She nodded and momentarily pulled herself out of the ritual to invoke a summons. As the full mystical weight of the ceremony fell entirely upon Baldur he gritted his teeth and drew on the strength loaned to him from Orboros, his skin glowing with energy.

EAST OF LAKE SCARLEFORTH

Grissel Bloodsong felt her temper rise to a boil as she charged down the incline against the skorne forces trying to surround the thick-walled stone-and-wood fortress guarding the Claysoil Wash crossing. The rains had been heavy recently, swelling this stream into a better obstacle than was sometimes the case. One of the massive War Wagons had become mired near the bank as it attempted to maneuver toward a better firing position, and Praetorians rushed it heedless of the scattergun shot fired by the pyg along the rails. Grissel unleashed a powerful roar of sonic force that shimmered the air and blasted through the Praetorians to tear limbs apart, leaving an echo of thunder to deafen those nearest.

The bison pulling the War Wagon finally freed it and smashed through several skorne in their way, clearing the muddiest section of the stream bank as the gunner fired the

massive cannon. Its heavy shell fell with a cataclysmic explosion into those marching across the bridge, rending flesh and stone alike as it sent Cataphracts into the water. Kriel warriors and scattergunners came forward alongside Grissel to clash into the remaining soldiers seeking to cross the water, turning it red with skorne blood. Axers and impalers closed with the armored cyclopes among the foe. From atop the fortress walls thumper cannons fired to send cannonballs careening into the skorne ranks. A massive dire troll bomber stood atop a half-shattered platform and hefted successive lit powder kegs onto the enemy.

Across the stream several catapults lobbed explosive balls at the trollkin atop the battlements. A line of formidably armored karax with their interlocking shields had marched forward, while Cataphracts crossed the bridge, urged onward by their relentless masters. Behind them at a decreasing distance was a far larger horde of armored figures, most in red armor but some in black, yellow, and other colors. They marched with a sense of inexorable weight, their footsteps echoing across the dusty landscape.

Grissel directed her kin with a commanding voice and sharp gestures, sending a wall of scattergunners to guard the narrowest section of the stream, backed by kriel warriors to watch their flank. They let the skorne corpses wash down the river or sink below. The fell caller herself, still furious, strode to the back gate of the fortress. She had her hammer on her shoulder and was just about to raise it in both hands to break down the portcullis when she heard shouting and the clanking of chains and it was raised. The inner doors swung wide, and the trollkin defenders within backed away to allow her entry, none meeting her glare. The garrison was a clamor of hectic motion, with kin rushing to or from the battlements, seeing to the wounded, or running ammunition where it was needed. Just above the wall facing the bridge stood Gunnbjorn. He launched a rocket as she watched, sending it hurling outward to explode amid the Cataphracts the War Wagon had knocked to the deck of the collapsing bridge.

"Gunnbjorn, son of Bjarkur, son of Harald!" Grissel bellowed, the volume so great it knocked the hats off several of the sluggers and caused two pygs to drop their rifles over the wall. "Get down here!"

"I'm in the middle of a battle!" he shouted over his shoulder reloading his bazooka.

"I noticed. So help me, if you don't come down from there I'm going to shatter that wall!" He looked down, saw her

expression, and grimaced before jumping down from the battlement, landing heavily and letting out a grunt as he hit the dirt. The other trollkin did their best to pretend the pair were not arguing in their midst. Even the dire troll bomber Truk seemed disinclined to leave his post.

"This position is sound, Grissel," Gunnbjorn began, adjusting the cap on his head. "I expect we can hold here for several more hours—and inflict a heavy toll on the skorne."

"I just prevented a force from surrounding your rear and trapping your War Wagon." Grissel said angrily.

"I was about to deal with that. What were those Praetorians going to do, wave their swords? We'd have gunned them down just like the rest. As for the s—"

"THIS LAND IS JUST DIRT. IT'S THE LIVES OF THE KIN HERE THAT MATTER."

The marshal scowled and cut him off. "*And* there's a sizable skorne force northeast of here, possibly maneuvering toward our refugees!" She did not mention that those refugees were being capably protected by Calandra, since it was irrelevant to her point.

"News to me," Gunnbjorn insisted. "I haven't let anyone past. If it's moved on us, we've taken it down."

"This place wasn't built to stand against what's coming. The next wave has enough titan cannoneers to make short work of your walls even without the giant fortress-shattering reptiles they brought! What in Dhunia's name got into your head? The northern kriels have evacuated. You saw to it the southern ones cleared the river. You were supposed to follow them as escort *yesterday*. Surrender the fortress!"

Gunnbjorn glared back at her, shaking his head. "We bled to take this land, Grissel. We worked to build these forts. Why not use them? Why pull back when we can make the skorne feel pain for each bridge, each battlement? We should make them pay."

The fell caller made a dangerous sound deep in her throat. "This land is just dirt. It's the lives of the kin here that matter. There's no point to bleeding the skorne now. You'll just give them reason to hound us even as we withdraw! I'm giving them other enemies to fight. Let them take the bait."

A shout went up from the wall. "There's kin approaching from the lake!"

Both Gunnbjorn and Grissel ran up the nearest stairs to the battlements as the thumper cannons continued to fire. Grissel looked out and felt even greater apprehension at the full scope of the skorne forces coming their way. It was difficult to believe this sea of skorne did not even represent their entire army. She knew from her scouts that another column had gone west south of the lake, seizing what forts were there as they circled the shore in the other direction. She hoped the gatormen would at least make for an unpleasant surprise. While some brave kriel volunteers had stayed behind to present the appearance of resistance, they would not hold out long.

It was startling now to see a small group of trollkin escorted by an impaler and a swamp troll heading their way on the near side of the river. It looked as though they had taken a swim. She recognized the red bandana on one of the kin in the lead. "That's Jarl Skuld," she said in surprise. Even as she watched, the group came under fire by Venator reivers and slingers. The reivers stayed on their bank while the slingers waded across the shallow water, escorted by Praetorians.

"See?" Gunnbjorn said stubbornly. "Good thing we stayed!"

Ignoring him, Grissel leapt down from the battlements onto the other side even as Gunnbjorn coordinated fire into the Venators. She gave a shout toward some of her additional forces that had kept nearer to cover behind the fortress instead of following her inside. A squad of long riders spurred into motion and charged with thunderous hooves across the ground. By her power she loaned a burst of speed to the feet of all the nearby kin, simultaneously turning the ground to mire for the skorne. Charging the nearest Praetorians, she unleashed a shout loud enough to knock several back into the river. She hammered the leader with Resounder, breaking through his breastplate and killing him in an instant.

The long riders smashed through the skorne swordsmen before crashing into the nearest slingers. Meanwhile explosions across the river tore apart the reivers and forced them to pull back. Jarl's group added their own firepower as the two forces came together. The swamp troll managed to seize one of the retreating Praetorians with his tongue and drew him back into its mouth as the band moved back toward the fortress.

"How did it go?" Grissel asked, scanning Jarl's considerably diminished force.

Jarl gave a shrug but smiled. "We led that Tharn army right into their western forces. Should tie them up a while. Looks like there's quite a few more, though. You holing up in there?" He eyed the fortress dubiously.

"No." Grissel glared up at Gunnbjorn and yelled, "We're moving! Get your people underway. I'll knock down this fortress myself if I have to."

He gave her a sour look followed by a somewhat lackluster salute. "Yes, sir." He shouted his own orders to his men.

"You heard her, let's get on the move! Ammunition first! Those on the walls—keep up your fire, we're last out. Double time, people. We don't have all day!"

Grissel turned back to Jarl, who was drawing on the power of his impaler to extend his effective range and taking shots of opportunity across the river. "We're moving northeast, along with the kriels that pulled out from above the lake. I expect we'll come under attack on the march to rejoin them. Come with us. We'll help get you clear of this."

He paused while reloading and gave her a long-suffering look. "I did as promised. It's time for you to do your part. You said you'd loan me some warriors to help with our troubles in the Thornwood."

She glanced emphatically back across the river to where the larger mass of skorne was getting closer with every minute. "We're a little busy. Besides, the people I was going to send with you are where we're headed. Come with me, and I'll see you're taken care of." Jarl gave her a look similar to Gunnbjorn's but then nodded and waved his followers forward. Grissel turned to direct her people to help the fortress defenders disengage. She did not even flinch as the explosion from a catapulted bomb went off just behind her, spraying them all with dirt and mud. A plan was already forming in her mind for a way to use her storm trolls and the river to buy them time.

Lord Arbiter Hexeris stood over his fallen foe for several seconds before accepting the creature was dead. He had entered into the trancelike state that allowed him to perceive spiritual energies, a process made considerably easier by his extensive studies into the passage of souls. He had witnessed the ineffable essence of the other blighted elves flee their remains as his forces had eliminated the last of those following the dragonstone-bearing swordsman, yet this one had expired without any sign of escaping spirit. The same was true of the beasts that had accompanied them. Their bodies appeared to contain organs and biological systems like other living things, but he knew he would need to do a systematic study.

Hexeris had never wished to join the extoller caste, but once again he found himself envious of the oculi they bore. Even augmented by rites and rituals, his sight lacked the sensitivity of extollers like Supreme Aptimus Zaal. In this case, however, he could clearly see the radiance of the dragonstone within the chest of his fallen foe. The energy pouring from that stone was almost hypnotically complex; he could understand why Zaal was fascinated with them. He wondered if this one had captured the soul of its bearer on death, similar to the receptive sacral stones borne by ancestral guardians.

He keenly anticipated the prospect of examining the corpse, the dragonstone itself, and other samples gathered from several of the slain beasts, but he knew his absence would be noted. He would have to wait. He turned to one of his subordinates and said, "Rukaash, secure the samples and see they are safely conveyed to my dissection chamber." The mortitheurge bowed hastily. Hexeris looked to one of his Praetorian dakars and ordered, "Escort them back, and do not allow anyone access to these specimens in my absence."

With the warlock defeated, Hexeris' soldiers had swiftly eliminated the rest of the blighted elves in the vicinity, but he could see there was still fighting to the north.

"Lord Arbiter!" Cataphract Cetrati Primus Kelhax shouted, pointing north. "Master Naaresh has fallen!"

Hexeris looked toward the choke point among the steep hills where his forces had split the enemy column. He had sent the master ascetic to ambush the other dragonstone bearer there. It appeared Naaresh had underestimated the enemy and been defeated, a surprising and inconvenient outcome. His soldiers were already on the march, hurrying north at the behest of his tyrants.

He saw the strangely disfigured enemy warlock looming over Naaresh, slashing him repeatedly with her claws. Skorne soldiers gave a cry and charged in her direction. She looked up as if to assess her odds, then fled. As she withdrew she sent down several flying spawn to beset Hexeris' soldiers and buy herself time to escape.

Hexeris considered giving chase but decided he had spent enough time in this diversion. He had no idea how many other dragonspawn monstrosities might be in the region, perhaps lying in wait to ambush pursuit. Given he had already succeeded in his goal, the risk was not worth it. He advanced north past the line of his karax and Cataphracts to where a familiar form knelt in the sands, blood seeping from multiple wounds. Many corpses lay around the master ascetic—he had made an accounting of himself, at least. Dismembered skorne lay scattered around the perimeter as well. Hexeris could not fathom what strategy had required the warrior-philosopher to stand alone inviting destruction.

Naaresh pulled himself to his feet as Hexeris approached. The master ascetic was clearly heavily injured, but his eyes suggested triumph. Hexeris said, "Next time, perhaps you should try to kill your adversary quickly with overwhelming force?"

Without answering, the master ascetic walked to where several of the smaller winged enemies lay wounded and writhing on the ground. He finished them with efficient thrusts of his katara, drinking of their vitality and closing his most serious wounds. He turned back to say, "Thank

you for this opportunity, Lord Arbiter. When you locate another worthy adversary, send for me."

He strode past Hexeris with a serene expression, showing no sign of rejoining the lord arbiter's force. Hexeris called, "There is still battle ahead. We rejoin Tyrant Xerxis' army."

Naaresh glanced back over his scarred shoulder, the blades piercing through his flesh twitching slightly. "I have done what I sought. I withdraw now to meditate upon this battle. Do not seek me for some days. Any messengers you send will not return."

THE CASTLE OF THE KEYS

Mortitheurge Rukaash and his escort hastened back to the fortress held by the lord arbiter, pushing his slaves to their physical limits to speed their progress. He ignored the protests of the Praetorians; they were disgruntled at being removed from battle, but Rukaash cared little for their desire for glory. The wagon contained a treasure of great importance to Lord Hexeris, and being chosen to see to its security might elevate his stature.

On the last leg of the journey his eyes were continually drawn to the strange corpses they carried. He saw to his distress that they appeared to be decomposing swiftly. He used his power to slow the rot but knew he would require the apparatus in the fortress to do the job properly. The smell of the creatures was peculiar, with a putrescence entirely its own, the blood of an odd hue and retaining heat long after death. Everything Rukaash saw he first committed to memory and then wrote in a hide-bound book. He found himself fascinated with the armored swordsman Hexeris had defeated. There was something unusual about that one, even in death. If he stared too long at it his vision blurred slightly and the air above its body shimmered like the heat-haze of a mirage.

Rukaash put the matter out of his mind as they neared the fortress and hastened inside. He immediately took the rotting specimens into the confines of the lord arbiter's dissection chambers, where mystical techniques had been employed to lower the temperature. After emptying the rooms of other servants and mortitheurgical assistants, he sealed the doors. He then carefully separated and arranged each of the flesh samples, making use of special oils and unguents from the shelves before gathering his will to reinforce the mortitheurgy that inhibited their decay.

He was turning to leave when something like the ghost of movement caught his attention. He looked toward the armored form of the swordsman and felt a strange spasm twist through his muscles just as a hot spike of pain exploded in the back of his head. Groaning, he clasped a hand to his skull and felt himself stagger toward the body. He clasped the metal edge of the dissection table and shook his head to clear it. When he opened his mouth to call for help only a thin, strangled sound emerged as his hands moved toward the corpse of their own volition.

He fought to regain control of his muscles to no avail, his head swimming in confusion and panic as his hands tore at the armored torso before him. Horrified, he watched his sharpened fingernails dig into the flesh below the creature's ribcage, opening a hole. He reached within the gory cavity and grasped something hard and unyielding. His fingers tingled painfully at the touch. With a sharp yank, he pulled forth a blood-smeared length of crystal that pulsed with alternating scalding heat and freezing cold beneath his fingers. He drove the sharp point of the shard directly into his own chest with all his strength. Excruciating pain obliterated all else.

Unconscious and not breathing, Rukaash fell to the floor and began to convulse. His flesh bubbled as if worms slowly wriggled beneath the skin, and his bones snapped as his limbs lengthened. The flesh ripped and reformed into something else, paler and of an entirely different hue. Strange black spurs exploded from his back. His face twisted and transformed, every bone shifting. After several minutes he gasped loudly, sucking in air to reawaken his lungs.

Standing up from the floor of the dissection chamber was not a skorne, but a blighted form that was the twin of the corpse on the table, although more emaciated. He cocked his head as he looked down at that body, then began to remove and don the armor it wore. This done, the newly formed Kallus took hold of Hellbrand and lifted it in his hands, feeling the sword's familiar weight and balance as a touchstone.

"Not a tactic I would have advised," a voice spoke through his athanc. Kallus realized it was Thagrosh, whose mental voice conveyed approval. "But now you are closer to your goal. Absylonia escaped and reinforcements are not so far away as you might fear, but proceed carefully."

"I tried to reach you during the battle," Kallus said in his mind, "but I could not."

"It was a trial. You have much to learn, but we are pleased."

The surge of pride Kallus felt washed away a gnawing uncertainty. The images of his last battle were playing in his mind, and he recognized many things he would do differently were he in such a position again. He absorbed this learning even as he also gathered, from the mind of Everblight, his most likely position and a prediction of the layout of the fortress. Kallus weighed his options. The dragon bones would be his, and he sensed they were near. He must not fail.

HAWKSMIRE RIVER

Archdomina Makeda surveyed the river ahead as her army came to a halt at her command. The waters ran higher and faster than seemed natural, and the crossing now looked treacherous. This only magnified the importance of seizing the bridges. Ahead lay the stoutest of the three that connected to the strip of higher land surrounded by the rushing river; it was there the dirt mystics had fortified while conducting some powerful ritual. With the proximity of the lake and the river, vegetation had taken hold in the soil here, unlike elsewhere in the Marches. The vibrant and thick forest across the river, however, seemed unnatural. The trees extended all the way to the river's edge and dark shapes moved within the shadows between them. Paingiver bloodrunners scouting ahead had reported a number of the stone constructs favored by the dirt mystics occupying the other side.

She glanced back at the skorne army arrayed behind her. It stretched far along the lake's northern shore and was only one of several forces closing now on this site. Despite several gatorman attacks, they had made swift progress. The reports of *duzusk* holding the lake seemed to have been premature, or at least the trollkin had opted not to defend most of their holdings. Fires dotted the horizon behind Makeda's army where small clashes had occurred and trollkin villages were put to the torch. She had expected more resistance, but given their numbers it was only sensible the enemy should flee. She thought the dirt mystics might do the same once battle began; they had never offered meaningful resistance to frontal assault in previous engagements.

Still, she was not in the habit of underestimating adversaries. Her plan had been to close on the fortified site from four directions, forcing the enemy to endure a steadily tightening noose. The blackclads, as the humans called them, favored mobility and speed, which she would deny them. The bridges were still intact, which seemed to her a significant tactical error by her enemy, but likely they had not expected so large an army to hasten to attack them. She had sent Void Seer Mordikaar circling around toward the northwestern one.

Morghoul, who had helped secure the southern lake, had been slated to close on the southwestern bridge, but her Praetorian ferox riders had recently reported the lord assassin was delayed, caught up in an unexpected battle closer to the lake. She had dispatched additional soldiers to free him of this distraction, but she could not delay to await their return.

Tyrant Xerxis was presently marching west after circling north of the river to approach the ritual site by the one narrow strip of land that reached it. His attack approach offered the fewest obstacles, although his soldiers would be fatigued. She had hoped Hexeris would be at his side to help sustain the army, but she was confident Xerxis would be sufficient for the task on his own.

She still had considerable doubts about the esoteric nature of this objective. She summoned Supreme Aptimus Zaal while she directed her titan cannoneers to line up in proper formation and her army prepared for the next phase of the assault. As soon as her soldiers made their move on the bridge the cannoneers would begin their bombardment of the opposite shore, aided by numerous catapults and Venator flayer cannons. She intended to seize the bridges before the enemy could bring them down. Even should that happen, her army could ford a narrow section of the river downriver, although that would incur greater casualties.

The supreme aptimus approached and offered obeisance. "Supreme Archdomina, how can I serve?"

"The haste with which you have bid me attack will result in higher casualties than seems necessary."

THE DRAGON BONES WOULD BE HIS, AND HE SENSED THEY WERE NEAR. HE MUST NOT FAIL.

Zaal answered evenly, "The threat represented by this ritual is real. Venerable ancestor Jyvox has keen insight into the future and his predictions have always come to pass. Whatever transpires here, it is imperative we put an end to it."

Makeda's eyes suggested she was unmoved. "And yet you can offer no insight into the nature of that ritual or the threat it may pose?"

"I apologize, Archdomina, but the ancestors are difficult to interpret, and the dirt mystics are an enigma."

"Your reputation is at stake here, Supreme Aptimus." He bowed deeply but offered no additional persuasions. She stared back to the bridge and made her decision. "Very well, let the assault begin."

Grayle and Kaya could hear the battle well before they reached the river. Once there, they could see skorne massing along the banks and swarming across the nearest bridge. By linking his vision to one of his Scarsfell griffins and sending it soaring above, Grayle was able to see the other bridges similarly beset. Circle forces were battling at each of them, while wolds unleashed their power to thin the ranks of the

attacking forces. He reported what he saw to Kaya with some reluctance, anticipating her response.

"We need to get down there!" she insisted, her argus and warpwolves tensing in response to her urgency.

Their force was presently keeping to one of the thinner copses of woods northwest of the river's bend at a slight elevation. Their angles of approach to the bridges were limited if they wanted to remain unseen. Across the flat plain, interrupted only by dry scrub, it would be difficult to avoid detection. Kaya had the mystical means to hide herself and her beasts, but Grayle's forces required at least some cover to facilitate their hunting expertise.

Alten Ashley answered before Grayle could, "Look at the skorne down there. What we can see is the least part of them. Rushing in will get you killed."

SHE WAS EDGY AND SEEMED READY TO SPRING INTO ACTION AT ANY MOMENT.

"We should strike against the rear edge there." She pointed at the force clustered beyond the nearest bridge. She was edgy and seemed ready to spring into action at any moment.

"Wait," Grayle said. "Let me take a better look."

His griffon had been circling higher up ahead, going almost beyond the limit of his ability to control it. From this height he could look down to the Bones of Orboros. He had heard the site had been destroyed during the exodus of the Legion of Everblight from the Castle of the Keys, yet the stones now stood intact and glowing with primal power. The entire center of the unnaturally forested region seemed to pulse with verdant energies, and the bright shimmer of the air pained his eyes even through the intermediary of his warbeast. It was a relief to look away to the fringes where the battles raged.

The main skorne army was amassed just beyond the eastern bridge. Grayle recognized two of the region's potents directing the defenses: Bradigus the Runecarver and Tamora the Longshadow. This suggested reinforcements had already arrived. He knew, however, that even so impressive a gathering of the Circle Orboros could not hope to withstand an army this large.

"They are holding their ground," he said as he peered through the griffon's eyes. "Tamora and Bradigus are there."

"They need our help," Kaya insisted, while Laris growled impatiently.

At last he found what he had feared. Another skorne host was making swift progress on the other side of the river, along the land route toward the Bones of Orboros. A number of wolds watched the perimeter on that side, but most defenders had been drawn to the bridges. "*That* is where we are needed," Grayle said vehemently, pointing. "Across the river and to the northeast. A separate army approaches; we must slow them down."

"With so few of us?" Alten asked. "Who's leading them?"

Grayle sent his griffon closer even as he felt his mental link to the creature fading. Before he lost the connection entirely, he spotted one of the largest and most heavily armored skorne he had ever seen, a tyrant with horns jutting over his shoulders like fangs and wielding an impossibly massive squared club in each hand. He described the figure.

"Tyrant Xerxis," Alten said darkly. "I've heard of him. That's not good. I say we fight here." He pointed to the fray ahead. "Easier to get away if need be."

From her expression Grayle could tell Kaya had changed her mind. She was looking northeast as she said, "If we kill their leader the rest may falter."

Grayle was still quite mindful of how far he had strayed from his orders. Given the situation they saw unfolding, though, he knew he could not let that army blindside Baldur. He nodded once and signaled his men to hurry northeast.

Against another enemy Grayle might have sought to have his Wolves attack from one side while he and Kaya struck from the opposite, luring the bulk of the soldiers away from their leaders in the rear. Most officers preferred to gain a wider perspective on the battle by directing their forces from a distance. Grayle did not see this as cowardice; a fighting force could not afford to lose its ranking leaders early in a battle. But watching Tyrant Xerxis as he marched at the fore of his soldiers, the Farstrider knew immediately this was an enemy who led from the front. His armor was burnished and ornamented but also bore many pocks and scars.

The vanguard of the skorne forces following the tyrant was an imposing sight: rank after rank of the heavily armored Cataphracts approached, with a daunting number of the reiver-wielding Venators behind. Obsidian ancestral guardians marched among the soldiers. Next to Xerxis on one side was a massive titan bearing a club clearly carved to match those wielded by the tyrant, while on the other was a similarly impressive bronzeback. A few other beasts were scattered amid the soldiers, including several of the toad-like basilisks with eyes sewn shut. This vanguard alone outnumbered his and Kaya's forces by a sizable margin. Grayle had expected the rocky ground and knots of thorny undergrowth in this region to hinder the skorne,

but Xerxis and a subordinate tyrant kept their soldiers in perfect formation, smoothly sending them around potential obstacles and maintaining a fluid advance. Their multitudinous footsteps sounded like drum beats, growing louder as they neared.

Grayle looked back at his Wolves and reeves with a pang of regret, knowing many of these loyal warriors would die in the clash ahead. Without their efforts, though, the approaching army would soon crash into Baldur's inadequate northeastern defenses. He said to his master of the hunt, "Remember, we just need to open a path to the tyrant. Strike and withdraw. Use your reeves and war wolves to cover your retreat. There is no need to throw your lives away."

The grim senior veteran gave him the slightest smile. He was at least ten years older than Grayle and like others of his rank had given up his name to embody the hunt. He said, "We will fight and die for you, Farstrider."

Grayle clapped him on his armored shoulder. "I know, but we are far fewer than they. I expect your pack warriors to make a good accounting of themselves." The master of the hunt nodded and signaled his subordinate huntsmen. With his warpwolf stalkers, Grayle went ahead to where Kaya, Laris, and her beasts were situated, cloaked in concealing shadows.

They watched with predatory stillness as the skorne line marched through an open stretch of barren soil alongside the thick hedges and thorny vines where the Circle forces lay in wait. To better traverse the terrain, the skorne column was narrow and long; it would not be easy for that army to quickly take advantage of their numbers.

Grayle whistled a birdcall, and the air filled with the thrum of crossbows unleashing their bolts. The reeves delivered enfilade fire into the first rows of the enemy at an angle where their shields gave them no protection. The heavy skorne armor deflected a few, but the majority of the quarrels found their marks to pierce joints and weaker joins between armor plates. Most of those warriors hit grunted and fell, perforated by multiple bolts. Others endured their injuries but kept their feet and turned to face the foe. The reeves were already aiming and firing the second quarrels from their double crossbows, but the cetrati moved with swift, practiced precision. The forward lines of shield-bearing Cataphracts came about and locked heavy shields, while the basilisks nearest them unleashed a wave of mystical energy to slow the incoming bolts. This time very few Cataphracts fell to the volley.

Even as the reeves began to reload, the Cataphracts split apart, every other one stepping behind his neighbor as Venators swiftly moved through into a firing line to deliver a withering cloud of razor-sharp needles into the trees. Their aim was imprecise, as the reeves remained hidden within the shadows, but the speed with which they had reacted was impressive. The Wolves charged from the trees with cleft spears, hoping to pin down and decimate the lightly armored Venators, but once again the skorne were already in motion. Even as the howling Wolves crossed the narrow stretch of open ground, Cataphract arcuarii advanced, stepping between Venators. Some fired their harpoons to pierce through the bronze and leather armor of the Wolves, while others simply let the warriors close and demonstrated their superlative skill with their lengthy bladed weapons. The Wolves suffered more casualties than they inflicted, finding the Cataphract armor difficult to penetrate, and those skorne warriors they did injure fought on as though their wounds were of little consequence.

Kaya's escorting druids chanted alongside their leading overseer to open a gaping maw in the earth that swallowed several skorne. Armored war wolves charged from the trees to latch their fanged jaws onto the wounded Cataphracts, bringing them down. Grayle allowed one of his stalkers to indulge its instincts and beset the nearest basilisk, leveraging its great sword in a massive strike that opened a bloody rent across the beast's thick-skinned belly. The stalker raked with its claw and then hacked with its sword again, finishing the skorne beast before turning its rage against the nearest soldiers.

Watching the smooth efficiency of the skorne Grayle felt a strong urge to send more beasts to aid his men, but he knew he could not. He extended his hand and summoned a swirling wind to arise amid the Venators, sending their next volley of projectiles astray. Beyond this, he had to trust in the experience of his master of the hunt. The dense skorne line had turned to confront the ambush from the trees, and with their tightly packed formation there was no room for Tyrant Xerxis or his titans to join the melee, leaving him as open as he was likely to get.

Kaya nodded to Grayle and as one they sent the rest of their warbeasts bursting from the trees, with Kaya's feral warpwolf pulling into the lead, followed closely by Laris and the three argus. Grayle drew on the power given him by Orboros to envelop their entire fighting force in shadows, lending them a foreboding aspect and making it nearly impossible for the Venators and arcuarii to target them accurately. The argus veered to the right, moving toward the far flank to cause havoc and prevent the soldiers there from interfering. Grayle sensed his griffon's desire to dive down and fight but he kept it leashed by his will, holding it in reserve.

Not far behind Grayle's other stalker came Kaya's shadowhorn satyr, snorting in great, wet gusts as it worked itself up to speed with lowered head and clenched fists. Kaya and Grayle had sent their minds forward, joined with their

ALL WAR IS DECEPTION, PART TWO

beasts. Grayle called upon the power of wind and storm to instill his blood with killing power. He raced toward the clash filled with the exhilaration he felt only in battle.

A loud rifle report announced Alten as he fired on the bronzeback titan. The bullet took the beast high in the upper left chest, piercing thick hide and muscle. Grayle knew the monster hunter was likely ready to race for the trees the moment any skorne took interest in him, but his expert shooting might make all the difference in the time they had. Kaya's feral warpwolf, augmented by her power, closed on the bronzeback and became a blur as it clawed and bit and then twisted to evade its heavy retaliating strikes.

The titan with a giant spiked club in one hand and a shield in the other turned and bellowed a challenge as Grayle's warpwolf stalker closed. At Grayle's urging the stalker attempted to smash into its prey and knock it aside, but the titan simply lowered its shield and absorbed the impact with its great mass, barely moving as the stalker rebounded painfully. The stalker hacked at the titan with its sword but found more armor than flesh—one mighty slash split through a shoulder plate, but the blade barely drew blood as it sank into the thick hide beneath. Nevertheless, the attack kept the titan occupied as Laris streaked past toward Xerxis.

Behind Grayle, Kaya's druids invoked their combined power to open a whirling vortex of gnashing stone teeth to beset the shield-bearing titan. The beast pulled free from this manifestation with a bellow and retaliated with brutal ferocity, smashing the stalker to send it crashing through one of the druids behind it. The shadowhorn leapt forward to join the feral battling the bronzeback and drove its horns deep into the titan's side.

Grayle ignored the clash of beasts as he ran toward Xerxis. Several of the nearest Cataphract cetrati moved to intercept with their spears, but Grayle called upon his griffon's essence to augment his reflexes and perception. His blades flashed in his hands as he slid past the cetrati, easily anticipating and deflecting their incoming strikes. He plunged the point of his left sword along the gorget and into the neck of the last Cataphract in the line, leaving that one choking on blood as he slid past to cut down a Venator before crossing the last few feet to reach the tyrant.

Laris was there already, with runes of power from Kaya surrounding him to augment his fighting prowess. The wolf evaded a powerful downward stroke of the tyrant's first club, which hit the earth with a ground-shaking impact. He bit down on the tyrant's wrist, but that seemed to do

little other than distract the heavily armored warlock, who yanked loose and pulled back for another blow.

Kaya appeared suddenly, stepping from Laris' shadow. She struck at Xerxis with her spear to throw him off balance, allowing Laris to evade one club while she ducked under the other and thrust again. Blood coated the spearhead as she pulled it loose, but the wound seemed trivial. Even as Laris bit and she stabbed, Xerxis whirled his clubs around him, making closing with him a doubly dangerous proposition.

When Xerxis turned to face Kaya, Grayle saw his opening and darted in with his blades. He thrust and slashed, using all his skill to hit weaker points in the enemy's armor. He opened cuts—at least four that should have been substantial—yet Xerxis made no sound at them. Grayle barely managed to get his weapons up to block a retaliatory strike of the club; the impact sent him sliding back, and he nearly skewered himself on his own blades. Growling deep in his throat, he leapt to reengage.

Grayle felt as if a bond united him, Kaya, and Laris as they moved in the tight space with perfect coordination, darting around the skorne warlock, thrusting, stabbing, and dodging while Laris sought to hamstring the prey. Occasionally a few of the Cataphracts managed to drive past the pair's warbeasts to beset them, but those were quickly dispatched. After the first chaotic melee Xerxis' armor was scored and parting in several places and bore streaks of blood from countless cuts, but his inhuman face showed only fierce determination. Grayle sensed the skorne draw vitality from his titans only twice, stoically enduring all other strikes.

The tyrant swung his great clubs as easily as Baldur wielded his stone sword. Even a single blow from such weapons would be perilous. One of them caught Grayle in the side when he hesitated slightly too long before twisting away. It sent him stumbling back and shattered his ribs. He gasped and siphoned the life energy of his griffon, hearing the beast shriek at the sudden pain as Grayle's ribs fused back together. He stoked its anger and sent it flying to intercept the nearest of the Cataphracts charging Kaya from behind.

The ambush had been perfectly timed, but the tyrant's extraordinary resilience was an unexpected complication. Time was not on their side. They needed to fell Xerxis quickly and then withdraw. Already the Wolves and reeves were pulling back into the trees, pursued by part of the skorne column while many more of the soldiers had seen the plight of their embattled leader and surged to come to his aid. With fearsome howls, the argus tore into skorne beyond Xerxis on the side opposite where the Wolves had struck, but each was quickly surrounded, and their coats were soon matted with their own blood. The winter argus unleashed icy breath to freeze several enemies in their tracks, but more came. Grayle could see ferox riders racing forward from back amid the column.

Despite their regenerative powers, both his warpwolf stalkers were severely wounded, and his griffon had been forced to take to the air after killing two cetrati to evade a dozen other thrusting spears. Freed of that threat, those cetrati could now close on Kaya, coming at her from behind. Grayle had heard the report of Alten's rifle several times, but each shot sounded from farther away, indicating he was in retreat.

Xerxis' red-eyed bronzeback frothed at the mouth and blood streaked its flanks. With a mournful bellow it finally toppled just as it impaled Kaya's feral warpwolf with its tusks, landing atop the beast. Her shadowhorn leapt toward the nearest Cataphracts but received the concentrated fire of reiver needles as it landed and was subsequently impaled by arcuarus harpoons. It fought on, but there was not much life left in it. One of the cetrati closing on Kaya landed a lucky strike, piercing her side. With the adrenaline of combat she seemed unfazed by the injury and retaliated with a deadly thrust of her spear.

With his focus momentarily on the wider fight and concerned about the skorne closing on Kaya, Grayle took one step too far into Laris' path just as the wolf moved to evade a swing of Xerxis' club. Laris gave a pained yelp as the heavy weapon struck square in his ribs, shattering bones. Kaya reached out to her companion beast with a cry and sent her power to heal him, leaving herself vulnerable as the tyrant turned on her. The Farstrider had a premonition of doom, remembering Baldur's words. He desperately dove in front of Kaya, lunging toward Xerxis with his right blade. It skittered off armor with a trail of sparks before Xerxis brought both his clubs crashing into Grayle at the same time, sending him flying back into Kaya and tumbling head over heels beyond.

He instinctively latched onto his griffon's vital energy to save himself, killing it before he even realized how badly injured it already was. His chest throbbed with bone-numbing pain where his armor had taken the impact, and he thought he may have broken ribs. As he forced himself to his feet, he felt the death throes of his nearest stalker as the club-wielding titan hammered downward to shatter its shoulder.

Blood roared in his ears as he saw Xerxis striding toward where Kaya groaned upon the ground, still bleeding from her previous wound. Laris leapt at the tyrant but was battered back with a casual backhanded club strike. The wolf landed awkwardly and howled mournfully before running back toward the trees, limping on one leg. Grayle could spare no thought for the unexpected retreat as he tried to reach Xerxis. Before he could, the skorne's club descended onto Kaya with terrible impact. Grayle gritted

his teeth, hoping to see Kaya transfer the injury to one of the beleaguered argus, but she only coughed a spray of blood, either too spent or unwilling to harm her beasts.

He was already leaping through the air howling in rage as Kaya flickered and vanished. He brought his swords down into Xerxis' back, the tempered blades punching through steel to sink into flesh. He yanked them loose, unleashing gouts of blood, and stepped back warily. Xerxis staggered and slowly turned. His face was very pale, and his eyes had difficulty focusing. Seeing his plight, the subordinate tyrant shouted sharp orders and a line of Cataphracts rushed forward. The soldiers formed a wall in front of their faltering lord while the great titan bellowed and pushed its way through to its master. Grayle backed away, blades ready, deflecting several thrusting spears as he did.

As he fell back, he looked to see Kaya collapsed over Laris, her side now bleeding profusely. She held tight to the wolf's neck as he limped away. Even in this state she used her strength to heal her companion rather than herself, and his stride regained its vigor. With an outpouring of her power she summoned her injured shadowhorn to appear next to her as well, along with her winter argus, the last of her surviving beasts. She went slack, and Laris allowed the satyr to lift her from his back.

The Cataphracts shielding Xerxis withdrew, taking the tyrant between them. Grayle hoped their leader's condition might stall the main column long enough for Baldur to do what must be done, but he could see already that some among the vanguard were interested in vengeance. He turned and ran toward Kaya's retreating group, more concerned with her health than battling additional skorne.

BONES OF ORBOROS, HAWKSMIRE RIVER

Immersed within the ritual ceremony, Baldur conducted a crescendo of forces that had nearly reached their ultimate harmony, an orchestration with Immoren as his instrument. Even while his mind was focused hundreds of miles away, his consciousness remained joined to dozens of wolds surrounding the Bones of Orboros, many battling the skorne alongside the outer defenders.

The skorne had seized the bridges, although the enemy had paid dearly for every gain. Shelling from across the river had become constant, but the cannoneers and siege engines could not reach the inner circle where Baldur and Morvahna worked. All he needed was a little more time. Morvahna was with him—if his power was the music of Orboros, hers was an intricately woven tapestry, holding the lattice to its proper shape.

Divided as his mind was, one image drew his attention when he most needed to remain focused: through the eyes of an outer woldwatcher he saw a wounded shadowhorn satyr carrying Kaya, who was bleeding and appeared unconscious. An argus and the white wolf Laris raced alongside them, with a bloodied Grayle not far behind. They were being closely chased by Praetorian ferox riders. Additional skorne followed farther back.

He felt a powerful shock of recognition—this was precisely the sight he had foreseen while his soul had been joined with Orboros. In trying to evade this future he had actually facilitated it. Baldur grasped Tritus as anger welled up within him. For a moment all awareness of the ceremony was forgotten and he could think of nothing but marching forth to annihilate the skorne chasing Kaya.

"Baldur!" Morvahna groaned, staggering as the weight of the forces they were marshaling fell squarely on her shoulders. The tendons in her neck and arms strained as her hands curled into claws and she gritted her teeth against the onslaught. The green and white flows around the two of them rose and thrummed with destructive potential, barely held in check from tearing earth and sky asunder.

He could leave Morvahna and go to Kaya's aid, but if he did, not only would the Autumnblade perish, but all he had been sent back to set in motion would be undone. He recognized his anger was intensified by the influence of the Wurm. Gritting his teeth, he seized hold of the gathered energies again, taking the burden from Morvahna with a suddenness that left her gasping. He pointed sternly to the northeast and shouted, "Go! Save Kaya!"

They had come to a delicate balance in manipulating these energies, but he was better prepared than she to endure them alone for a time, thanks to his transformation. Megalith and other great wolds were here with him, and he shunted some of the overflow of power onto them. Morvahna looked at him for a moment as though she might argue but then vanished in a flicker as the shifting stones around her sent her where Baldur directed. So tightly were they attuned to him through the ritual that dozens of those stones had moved into a chain formation even before he had made the decision to make use of them.

When she appeared at the final shifting stone, Morvahna swiftly gathered the warriors congregating there. Following orders relayed at the outset of the battle, many had retreated to this location after suffering injuries fighting at the bridges. Druids had been positioned here to heal them and make them ready to fight again. Morvahna demonstrated her superior power over the flows of life by reinvigorating dozens of them at once. Those well enough to bear their weapons followed her to deal with the skorne pursuers as she hastened to intercept Kaya and Grayle.

Baldur had to turn his attention away from that quarter as he became aware of a new threat arising from the

west. Something unnatural and perverse neared, sending discordant notes into the energies he marshaled. The leyline flows shuddered and unraveled before it. One of the main leylines feeding into the Bones of Orboros suddenly vanished like a stream diverted into a hole in the earth. Through the eyes of a woldwarden watching the western approach, Baldur saw the western skorne attack force pushing toward his outer perimeter. They followed a warlock of insidious power, a mortitheurge carrying peculiar lanterns. Illuminated by these, countless ephemeral spirits seemed to follow him, moaning in maddened agony.

It was Void Seer Mordikaar—a skorne mystic who had garnered the attention of the omnipotents, though Baldur knew him solely by reputation. In his attuned state he now understood why even a man as stoic as Omnipotent Mohsar might be troubled by this entity. He could see a great emptiness behind the void seer, a yawning wound upon reality through which unnatural abominations tumbled into Caen. It was like a swirling vortex, a tidal pool that sucked down all natural energies and replaced them with emptiness. He directed his wolds to intercept the skorne warlock, but the enemy was ably protected by a vanguard of armored cyclopes and void spirits as well as rank upon rank of Praetorians and Venators. Without additional support the wolds would slow him only slightly.

All the perimeter defenses were failing. He saw through the crystal eye of a woldwyrd to the east that Supreme Archdomina Makeda had crossed that bridge, heedless of the rising river Bradigus Thorle had whipped into a violent frenzy. The supports were crumbling, but too late to stop Makeda's army from reaching the other side. This did not worry Baldur nearly as much as the approach of Mordikaar from the west. If that being reached the site now, the void attached to him might cause a critical failure in the ritual energies, with catastrophic consequences.

A wave of heat washed across the ritual site, and Baldur felt a fluctuation in its energies. Mohsar the Desertwalker had teleported into the center of the site with several weatherworn wolds. With a rush of wind and a sudden flurry of heavy snow that transformed into rain, a pair of giant spinning Celestial Fulcrums crackled into being, accompanied by their stone keepers. The orreries floated behind the Desertwalker, who paid Baldur no attention as he strode past in the direction of the void seer. The orbs of the Celestial Fulcrums spun and whirled to a fever pitch as they gathered the excess energy from Baldur's ritual site.

As the omnipotent neared the front line of Mordikaar's advancing force, Baldur saw Mohsar reach into the leyline flows below the Bones of Orboros as if cupping a hand into a stream for a drink. In an instant he held a tremendous torrent of power. The Desertwalker then raised his hands, and a blaze of golden light appeared between them and speared forth to intersect each of the Celestial Fulcrums, creating a triangle of unfathomable power between them. At its center floated a fiercely glowing orb like a miniature sun, so bright it was nearly impossible to look upon.

Baldur did not see exactly what transpired as this radiance struck Mordikaar. When next he looked the void seer was gone, as if erased from existence. Through some process Baldur had never witnessed, Mohsar had drawn on the leyline nexus to banish Mordikaar and his nearest allies, hurling them through the connected nodes deep into the desert to the southeast. Shortly thereafter, the distant desert node vanished from Baldur's awareness: Mordikaar was gone, but one of their sites had been sacrificed. Clearly this was a tactic not to be undertaken lightly.

Mohsar seemed to waver on his feet for a moment as the blazing light faded, but in the next moment he straightened and faced the bewildered skorne left behind. He gave a wave of his hand and the earth beneath their front line opened and swallowed them whole. One squad of Praetorians gathered their courage to charge him, but he unleashed howling winds from his scythe to tear them limb from limb. The Celestial Fulcrums crackled and disgorged tremendous energies, launching exploding orbs of fire at the nearest, freezing others with the raw essence of winter, and sending lightning through those farther back. What remained of Mordikaar's forces fell back, thrown into confusion by the sudden absence of their leader and the manifestation of natural power Mohsar unleashed.

THE URGENCY PLACED UPON HIM BY THE WURM DID NOT ALLOW HIM THE LUXURY OF BEING INTIMIDATED.

Seeing them cowed, the Desertwalker approached Baldur, keeping his face hooded as he leaned upon his scythe. "So you are alive," he said flatly. His voice turned ominous. He continued, "This is still *my* dominion. You did not ask permission to conduct this rite."

"I could not afford to risk your refusal," Baldur answered, his voice strained with the continued effort of the ritual.

"You have put our entire order at risk, should you fail," Mohsar said, his palpable power radiating throughout the clearing. "You have damaged the leylines, possibly beyond repair."

Baldur clenched his jaw and said, "If my failure worries you, lend your power." He might once have been daunted by the omnipotent's aura of authority, but the urgency

placed upon him by the Wurm did not allow him the luxury of being intimidated.

Mohsar stared at him for a long moment but then stepped forward. "Very well. Let us conclude this." He reached out with his will and seized hold of the energy flows to ease the pressure on Baldur. He had no difficulty restoring the patterns Morvahna had woven.

Baldur again turned his focus to the center of the site, where the leyline flows powering the complex rings of runic power converged. Mohsar served as his bulwark while he resumed the ritual. He sought to regain oneness with Orboros and sense the Cryxians moving beneath the earth. The runic circles around him pulsed, the pace rising with that of his own beating heart.

The eastern defenses quickly folded beneath the onslaught of Supreme Archdomina Makeda, forcing the Circle forces to fall back to the immediate perimeter. Baldur ignored the sounds of cannon blasts and reiver fire and the bellows of warbeasts as he reached through the leylines and found what he sought. There, in subterranean passages far to the northwest, moved the Cryxian army bearing the great apparatus that shielded a tremendous source of blight. He could not sense the athanc itself, but the energies of its impervious barrier left distinct scars on the surrounding stone.

The passages were ancient, connecting great vaults and caverns below the crust of Caen. Baldur sent his mind to strangle them, drawing on the power he had gathered to be his muscles and sinew. He could feel the earth hundreds of miles away shudder and tremble beneath his grasp as though he were a god, yet he was too weak to collapse the caverns. The bedrock resisted him. His skin glowed with the power raging within him, and light spilled from his form through miniscule cracks. He strained with all his will, but something was lacking.

He was only distantly aware of the shadowhorn satyr as it reached the clearing with Kaya in its arms. Morvahna and Grayle accompanied it, together with wounded beasts and other remnants of their fighting forces. Baldur felt the Wurm rising in him again when he saw Kaya's injuries. "You have not healed her!" he roared.

The Autumnblade ignored him but offered a bow to Mohsar as she passed, then bade the satyr lower Kaya to the earth at the center of the interlocking circles of runic power. When the blood from the wound in her side touched the ground, Baldur felt an immediate reaction in the earth. A wave of renewed power flowed through the ritual site as the body of Orboros recognized a sacrificial offering. Morvahna said, "The blood of a natural-born hunter, awakened by the wilding, spilled in battle. It has power."

Grayle moved to shield Kaya and glared at Morvahna. "Baldur, stop her!" he growled. Morvahna arched an eyebrow but said nothing.

Mohsar spoke. "She was always better at these rituals than you were, Stonesoul. You should heed her."

Baldur considered redirecting the tremendous flows of energy he held in his grasp to obliterate the smug woman who stood above Kaya as she bled. Perceiving his animosity, she drew herself up and said with contempt, "I don't intend to let her die. If you hurry, she will still be alive for me to heal when you are done."

He stiffened at this but nodded curtly and directed his anger inward. He turned back to the caverns where Cryx marched below the earth. Now when he grasped the tunnels with his mind they shook and quaked, the entire region trembling. He could feel the Cryxians scramble like insects as enormous stones began to fall upon them. Great roots burst through the soil into the caverns, tearing through earth and stone with equal ease. The tunnels collapsed with a roar as the Wurm, channeled through Baldur, brushed against the surface of Caen.

Baldur's mind was thrown back as the vast power he had accumulated over several days was unleashed. He fell to his knees panting, his hand on Tritus trembling with exertion. Doubtless some of the Cryxians would manage to escape to bring their prize to the surface, but it would take time and leave them vulnerable. The Legion would come for them. Now that chase could transpire in the open, and the Circle could intercept. Krueger the Stormlord's army was not far from that region. The omnipotents could send others.

He pushed himself to his feet, suddenly aware once more of the battle still raging around the site. The skorne were nearly through the perimeter, and both Bradigus and Tamora had fallen back to the ritual site with their remaining forces. Grayle had stepped aside, and Morvahna was bent over Kaya, holding a hand to her side to close the wound. Mohsar ordered, "Step to me. I will take us from here." He turned toward Baldur and said accusingly, "The leylines shift like rivers after a dam has burst, and the blood of Orboros pools where it should not. This was reckless. We will discuss this matter when the Grand Convocation convenes."

"The leylines will heal, in time," Baldur insisted. He respected Mohsar's power, experience, and lore, but he no longer felt inferior. The convocation could do whatever it thought best; he knew the Wurm would claim him soon enough. He looked to Kaya, who remained unconscious but rested more easily. In the end, it had been her blood that had made the success of the ritual possible. When he shared a look with Grayle, his eyes bore no recrimination.

Grayle mistook his expression and said, "She insisted it was her right to risk her life for you."

Baldur nodded. "You did what was needed. Stay by her."

Any additional conversation was forestalled when Mohsar completed the rite to take them from the site. Cannonballs began to explode against the monoliths that served as the Bones of Orboros even as the forms of the Circle forces vanished into shadow.

Lord Arbiter Hexeris had arrived in time to take command of the remnants of Xerxis' army even as the severely wounded tyrant was borne away by his loyal Cataphracts. Hexeris felt no worry—Xerxis was too stubborn to die, particularly outside battle. Indeed, he suspected the tyrant would rebuke his soldiers for removing him from the field.

Although the battle at the dirt mystics' sacred site had already been won, he had taken the opportunity to slay some of its last defenders, by which he could claim he had been involved. He sought Supreme Aptimus Zaal, leader of the extoller caste, whom he found directing a pair of titans in shattering the last of the rune-inscribed stones. Countless corpses from both sides lay strewn around the perimeter, as did dead or dying warbeasts and the remains of animated stone sentries and ancestral guardians. Noting the power in the region disappearing like water poured onto desert sands, he wished he had been present earlier.

As Hexeris approached, Zaal's expression conveyed his typical disdain. "Lord Arbiter."

"Supreme Aptimus." Hexeris smiled. "I take it you were victorious? I am pleased to see it." He added in a lower tone, "I, too, succeeded. We will examine my specimen together when we return."

Zaal's expression brightened slightly. "I look forward to it." He glanced around, then continued quietly, "But we did not succeed here. The dirt mystics concluded their ritual. That bodes very ill for us."

Hexeris bared his teeth in displeasure but looked around the site. He sensed nothing amiss. "I do not see any great calamity. What predicted disaster has come to pass?"

Zaal frowned. "I have seen none. But Jyvox is never wrong."

"Have you told the supreme archdomina of your failure?"

"*Our* failure—and no, not yet," the lord arbiter admitted. "I thought it best to destroy the site first."

"Good." Hexeris nodded, leaning closer to the frail-bodied extoller. "Tell her nothing. This attack was a success, do you understand?" He cut his words off as they saw Supreme Archdomina Makeda approaching. Hexeris was surprised to see a fortification force with her; a number of skorne slaves and builders were swiftly moving over the southern bridge, followed by titan-pulled wagons bearing construction materials.

Makeda's eyes fixed sharply on Hexeris and Zaal as they smoothly bowed to proper degrees of deference. "This was a costly victory," she said. "I trust it was worth the price?"

Hexeris answered, "Yes. The disaster predicted by our venerable ancestor Jyvox has been averted, thanks to your timely intervention." He paused, wondering if the supreme aptimus would contradict him, but Zaal remained silent. "It would seem your decision to bring so large an army on this expedition was fortuitous."

She gave him an appraising look and said, "I did not bring them for the purpose of securing the lake."

He could perceive she derived some enjoyment from his ignorance of her plans. In the interest of keeping her attention diverted from his earlier absence, he waved Gulgata toward the laborers and asked, "Are you fortifying here, Supreme Archdomina?"

"Yes. This is an excellent location for a northern fortress once we replace and reinforce that eastern bridge. The area is quite defensible. It will serve as an ideal mustering point."

"Mustering point?" Hexeris could not resist rising to the bait. He looked around with exaggerated confusion. "Against what enemy?"

Makeda gave him a cold smile and pointed north. "From here, we will attack the western defenses of Ios, their so-called Gate of Mists. Hakaar the Destroyer has divined our ancient enemy's borders are weak, as that degraded people have sent a substantial portion of their military strength abroad. They have grown soft and complacent, as is their nature. Such a victory should enable us to reap substantial resources and will give us a formidable foothold to seize considerably more fertile lands."

Hexeris eyes widened and he stared pointedly at Zaal, suspecting the supreme aptimus had already known. He looked back to Makeda with renewed respect. The prospect of dissecting Iosans and studying their spiritual essence pleased him greatly. "I serve at your behest, Supreme Archdomina. I will do everything I can to assist in this conquest." Once he unlocked the secrets of the dragonstone he had recently won, his contribution would be great indeed.

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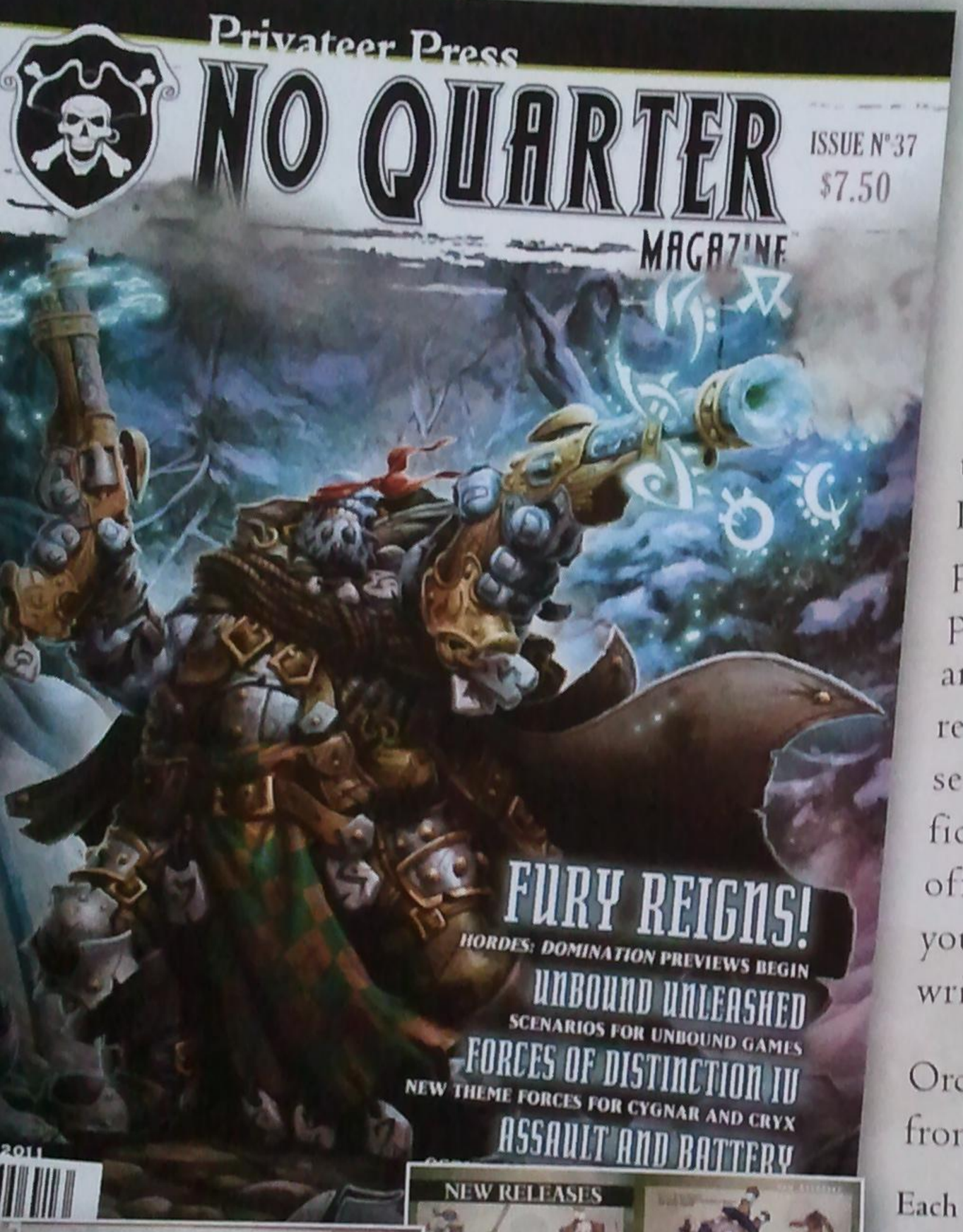

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