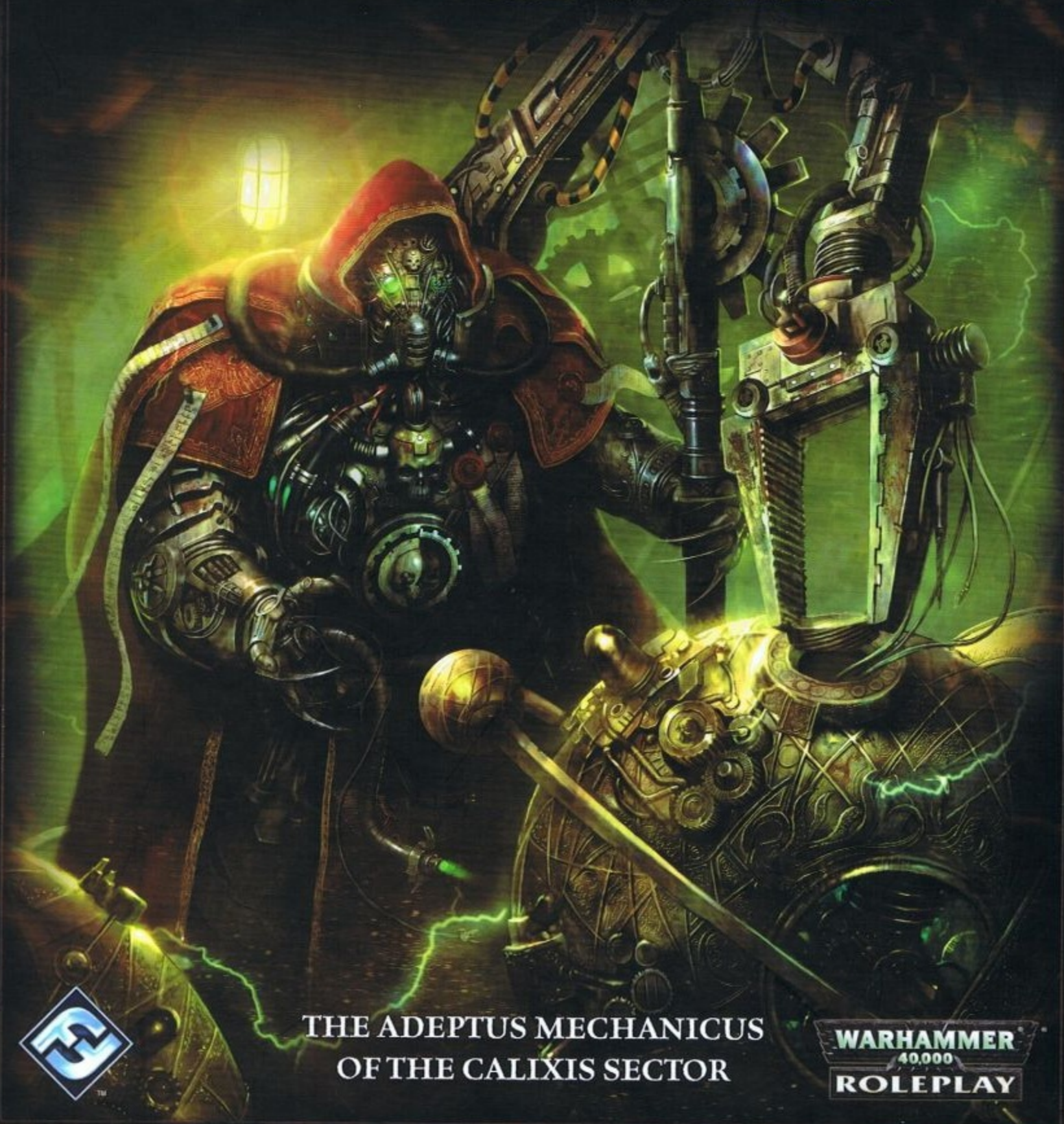


DARK HERESY™

THE LATHE WORLDS™

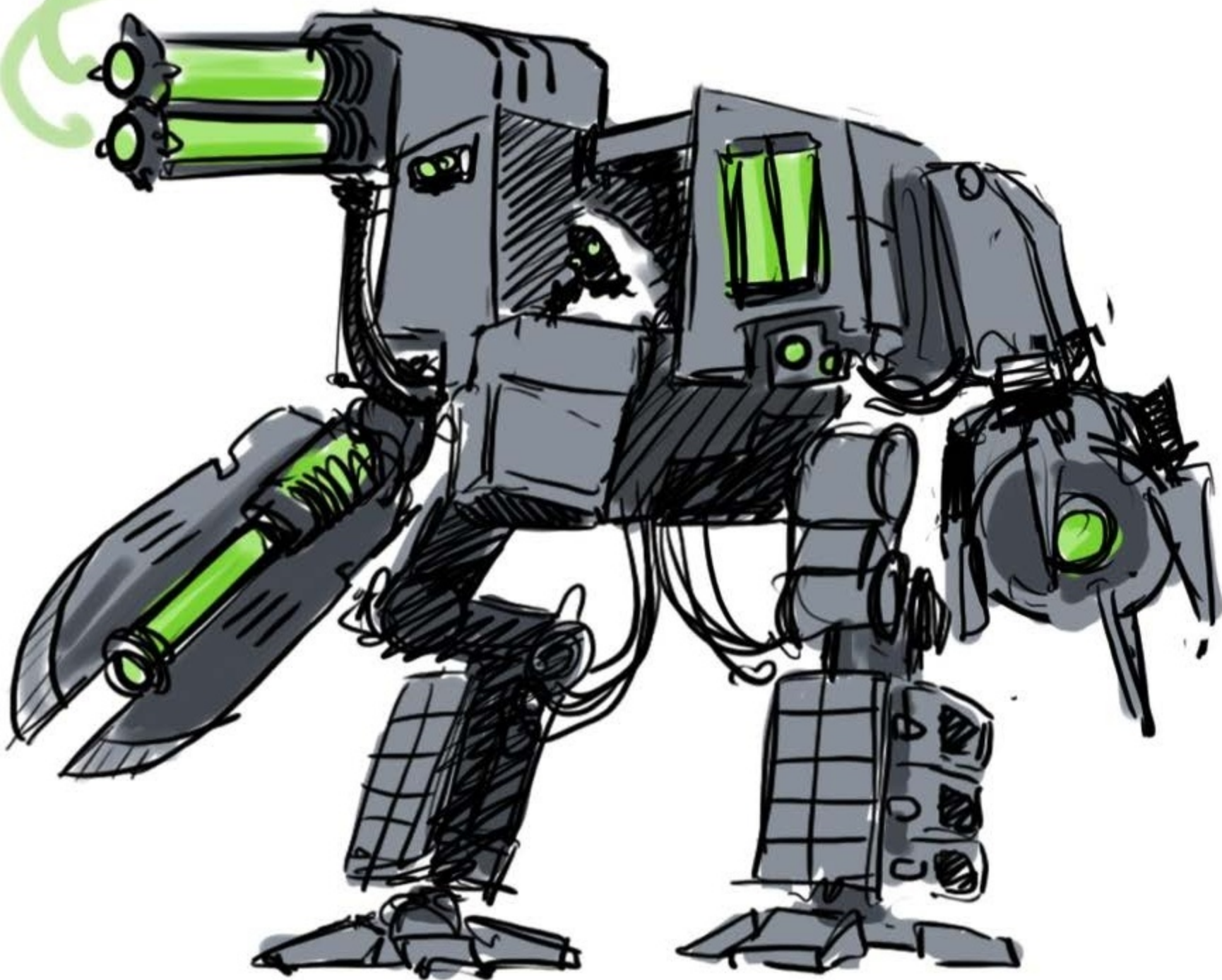


THE ADEPTUS MECHANICUS
OF THE CALIXIS SECTOR



WARHAMMER
40,000
ROLEPLAY

LALALALALALA
I CAN'T HEAR YOU



OVER THE SOUND OF
HOW HERETK I AM!

DARK HERESY™

THE LATHE WORLDS™



ROLEPLAYING IN THE GRIM
DARKNESS OF THE 4¹ST MILLENNIUM

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FANTASY
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INTRODUCTION

*"Hail the Ommissiah!
He is the God in the Machine, the Source of All Knowledge."*

—Magos-Lector Vad Kapellax,
at the first Convocation of the Lathes

In the Imperium of Man, while technology is commonplace it is also mysterious and unfathomable. Such knowledge is the carefully guarded domain of the Adeptus Mechanicus, and has been for thousands of years. They are the Cult of the Machine God, worshipping the Emperor as their Ommissiah, the Perfect Sum of All Knowledge. Their Explorator fleets search across the galaxy for lost knowledge from ages long ago. Their mechanically augmented Tech-Priests on thousands of forge worlds strive to preserve what precious little data they retain. Both quests, though, are mere flickering candles against the oppressive darkness of stagnation and ignorance. With each century, actual understanding descends to dogma, rote instruction, and myth, as priceless knowledge is lost forever.

Within the Calixis Sector, the Adeptus Mechanicus is centred on the Lathe Worlds, and from these three planets the Mechanicum oversees its domains of forge worlds, research stations, orbitals, and even entire systems. From these worlds, precious knowledge and holy technology flow throughout the Sector, while the Cult Mechanicus carefully hoards even greater secrets for its own, inscrutable purposes.



WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

THE LATHE WORLDS allows DARK HERESY players to delve deeper into the mysteries of the Adeptus Mechanicus within the Calixis Sector. The Cult of the Machine God stretches across this region and beyond, ruling each of its worlds in the name of the Ommissiah, outside the purview of the Inquisition or other Imperial agencies. The Lathes struggle to control their domains, however, and dark areas of the Sector hide countless tech-heresies and dangerous researches.

CHAPTER I: THE CULT MECHANICUS

The book begins with the history of the Adeptus Mechanicus, from their rise on the Martian sands to becoming the Imperium's Masters of Technology as the Cult Mechanicus discovered their Ommissiah. The Adeptus Mechanicus later established themselves within the newly won Calixis Sector, and this chapter covers their role in this region's history.

CHAPTER II: SERVANTS OF THE OMMISSIAH

Chapter 2 introduces new Alternate Career Ranks and other options for players such as powerful weapons, equipment, and even ancient archeotech devices from millennia long ago. Players seeking to learn more of the Cult Mechanicus may adopt such roles as investigative Agent of the Lords Dragon, deadly Acuitor Mech-Assassin, apostate Malatek Tech-Priest, and more, while those seeking to oppose the spread of technological augmentation might instead choose to join the Cult of the Pure Form.

CHAPTER III: DOMINIONS OF THE LATHES

This chapter covers the Lathes System, including the many planets and other bodies within, such as the Three Lathes and the dreaded Panopticon Orbital Station, as well as the Sector's turbulent Mechanicum factions and sects. It also features the varied holdings that make up the Lathe Worlds themselves, ranging from the prison-forge of Sheol 17 to the Heterodyne Agglomerations orbiting high above the dead world of Uziel.

CHAPTER IV: THE LIGHT OF REASON

The final chapter takes the Acolytes into the Lathes System to investigate mysterious psychic disturbances. Their search brings them to a forgotten comet where a renegade band of Tech-Priests is engaged in forbidden research and is poised to unwittingly unleash a cataclysmic Warp rupture upon the Sector!



THE CULT MECHANICUS

MARS

•

MECHANICUM
HIERARCHY

•

THE QUEST FOR
KNOWLEDGE

•

MECHANICUM
IN THE
CALIXIS SECTOR

•

TECH-HERESY

CHAPTER I: THE CULT MECHANICUS

"Knowledge is power, and power is dangerous."

—Unknown

In the 41st Millennium, it is said that the mighty Imperium of Mankind spans a million worlds. The vast fleets and billions-strong armies of the God-Emperor wage an unceasing war against aliens, traitors and heretics from the Halo Stars to the galactic core. The Imperium itself is a grim and uncompromising authority where any form of autonomy is the highest privilege. Among the Administratum of the Adeptus Terra, departments exist to oversee, monitor and control the countless souls within the Imperial domain. A hundred centuries of civil wars, heresies, pogroms, and coups have created a bureaucracy highly attuned to the dangers of granting too much independence to its citizens, whether they are planetary governors or lowly serfs.

However, there is one organisation in the Imperium that stands apart and virtually independent of the Adepts of Terra. This organisation's red-robed agents appear on every Imperial world and aboard all its ships. It holds entire worlds beneath its sole authority, it controls virtually all of the facilities necessary for the Imperium to make war, and yet it retains unprecedented autonomy and control. This organisation is called the Adeptus Mechanicus, and it has a history fully as long and as tumultuous as that of the Imperium itself.

In an age when so much knowledge has been lost, it is the Adeptus Mechanicus that supplies technical expertise to the Imperium. The Tech-Priests manufacture and maintain a myriad of essential items, from the mightiest plasma reactors to the humblest vox sets to the Golden Throne of Terra itself. The Tech-Priests are the ones who preserve knowledge from ages past and explore new sciences for the future. By Imperial decree, every new discovery made belongs to the Tech-Priests, whether it might be a reclaimed data-vault or a salvaged spaceship.

THE FORGE WORLDS

The forge worlds of the Tech-Priests are enormous weapon shops for the Imperium's war effort. The ships, tanks, and guns needed at the battlefronts pour forth in staggering quantities from continent-sized factories and orbital facilities. Like a beating heart, an active forge world forms a hub of activity for the surrounding sectors and sub-sectors of Imperial worlds. A constant flow of traders and merchantmen carry its production to where it is most needed, returning filled with raw materials to sate the voracious appetites of the manufactorums.

As mighty and powerful as a forge world can be, one left alone would quickly find itself in a dangerous position without the support and protection of its surrounding worlds and other forces. Without resources and manpower to draw upon, the Tech-Priests would be forced to concentrate solely on protecting their accumulated knowledge from scavengers and opportunists. Seclusion, while it might offer a forge world safety from attack, offers its own dangers. Warp storms have isolated many a forge world, causing some to develop various peculiarities, often leading to heresies unimagined generations earlier.

Protection and trade from the Imperium allow the Tech-Priests to dedicate themselves fully to their true calling: The quest for knowledge. To a Tech-Priest, knowledge is the supreme manifestation of divinity and striving for comprehension of it is an act of worship. Preservation and re-discovery of past knowledge is the most sacred act of all and a motivating spark for any member of the Adeptus Mechanicus.

MARS

In the current age, Mars has evolved into the workshop of the Adeptus Mechanicus. Its factory hives produce the bulk of the most sophisticated technical equipment used in the Imperium. Starships and other specialised constructs are fabricated at the orbital manufactorums that spin around the equatorial belt. Ships of Warfleet Solar are based in these huge floating docks, and other vessels from all over the Imperium visit what are thought to be the largest man-made objects in the entire galaxy.

The Martian factory hives are some of the first hives ever built, and all are at least partially ruined. Some districts are well maintained, and contain many areas of new construction, while areas that are no longer in use are simply allowed to rot.

A journey through the internal travel tubes of Mars would allow a visitor to view areas of rising towers of plasteel and crystal, marking new construction on vast tracts of industrial wasteland. The travel lines weave between shining new building columns with nets of spun steel bracings like the rigging of sailing ships, to darkened older zones where broken condensation traps spill their vaporous contents and enmesh speeding tram liners in a perpetual fog. Wastelands cover vast parts of the cities, deserts of broken plasteel slabs and twisted girders, with the occasional solitary tower pointing purposelessly towards the pink Martian sky.

The beliefs of the Tech-Priests have been handed down from their earliest forebears in the form of data-stacks and illumined holo-scrolls, but sure knowledge of the days prior to their rise is fragmentary and conflicting. It is said that before the beginning of currently recorded history, there existed an age of technological marvels unequalled in later millennia. This time is called the Dark Age of Technology by archaeo-historians, and it began Man's conquest of the stars. Mars was allegedly the first planet to be terraformed in this golden age. The Red Planet was gifted with atmosphere, and its arid deserts made fertile by the titanic technological prowess of the men of those times. However, as the Tech-Priests tell it, agriculture was never very significant to early Mars. Rather its true wealth lay beneath the surface in the form of gems, minerals and metal ores.



Studies of the oldest structures on Mars show that great cities spread rapidly across the planet as Mars developed into the first human hive world. All this was to be brought to the brink of disaster by the galaxy-wide period of collapse known as the Age of Strife.

THE AGE OF STRIFE

If records dating back to those years can be said to be fragmentary, those of the Age of Strife are no more than dust. What little is known implies that two catastrophic events occurred. First, the emergence of uncontrolled psykers unleashed plagues of Warp-dwelling entities and daemonic possession on many worlds. Only planets where the most rigorous control and persecution of psykers was exercised escaped the catastrophe. Second, great Warp storms engulfed the galaxy in this period, and rendered interstellar travel virtually impossible. The vast empire of early Man collapsed almost overnight into isolated worlds that quickly regressed technologically. Sensing Mankind's weakness, foul aliens invaded and enslaved many of the surviving enclaves, even as ravaging Warp-spawned Daemons claimed others.

Even Mars and Earth were beset, and initially fought one another for possession of the few resources left in the Sol system. However, famine quickly devastated the vast populations of both worlds, and the weakened remnants were reduced to little more than a form of techno-barbarism, with individual warlords squabbling over domination of their own territories. It appears that on Mars, the technologies that had

permitted its settlement were either forgotten or lost, and the whole planet teetered at the edge of extinction as its terraforming broke down. As the Tech-Priests tell it, in this, their darkest hour, a new creed emerged among the Martians. It was a creed of survival based around selfless dedication to a higher purpose, and it bound the last true men together against the anarchy that beset them. Science became their religion, and the Cult of the Machine God emerged to be their ward against the encroaching darkness.

THE RISE OF THE MACHINE GOD

It is said that the first devotees of the Machine God undertook terrible risks to seek out fragments of technology from their devastated cities. The Tech-Priests recall that their forebears used what they learned to set up protected enclaves that could shelter them against the continuing rad-storms. Piece-by-piece, they must have set about rebuilding the oxygen recyclers, moisture traps, and food processors that would be necessary to support themselves in the long term on an increasingly hostile Mars.

The enclaves had barely enough space for the devotees of the Machine God, and none at all for unbelievers. It can be imagined that mutants and marauders frequently assailed the hastily-built shelters, and perhaps some of the earliest were wiped out, yet after every setback the followers of the Machine God learned and rebuilt. The Cult of the Machine

God demanded absolute devotion and self-sacrifice from its followers, and to them a functioning machine became more valuable than the lives of many men.

From the earliest records, it appears that the Priesthood of Mars grew in strength and confidence, and the scattered enclaves began to unite and share their knowledge. Every partial database or ruined document was carefully preserved and added to their store of understanding. Every broken machine was examined, catalogued, and collected. To the devotees of the Machine God, their survival through the dark times was nothing less than miraculous, an event divinely inspired by the God In The Machine, Deus Ex Mechanicus. The savants with the greatest understanding of technology saw themselves as Tech-Priests, prophets able to interpret the will of the Machine God through the rattle of Cogitators and the whine of compressors. The reward for their dedication was manifest to all: they could communicate with the machine-spirits present in every mechanism and persuade them to do their bidding.

The Cult of the Machine God adopted the name 'Mechanicum' for themselves, disciples of the Machine God. As their philosophy developed, the Tech-Priests came to realise that knowledge itself was the purest expression of divinity. That meant any object or being that was a receptacle of knowledge became in some part holy. A data-stack or machine intelligence that carried knowledge from ancient times was no less divine than a man of flesh and blood. Indeed, they began to see men as organic machines subject to many failings, with their only true worth lying in the knowledge they accumulated through the application of intellect. The Tech-Priests pushed themselves ever harder to overcome the weaknesses of the flesh and become more akin to machines; logical and dispassionate, untroubled by passion or emotion. Bionic replacement and augmentation became increasingly commonplace as they sought to emulate machine-kind.

Over the span of generations, the Mechanicum set about rebuilding Mars into something very different to what had come before. The great structures of steel and glass they now raised were built not to house men but machines. The manufactories and forges they rekindled were devoted to the creation of engines and devices that would not serve the Mechanicum, but be served by them. Plainsong machine-cant echoed through the cathedral-like engine halls as ever more information was laid upon the altars of knowledge.

It must have been during this period, while Earth was still beset by conflicts, that the Tech-Priests began to look outward. They looked beyond the rim of the solar system to where their records told them early Man had colonised the stars. Warp storms still girdled the Sol system, but through study and observation the Tech-Priests realised that the storms waxed and waned periodically. They concluded that during the brief lulls between the storms it would be possible to send ships through the Warp and out into the wider galaxy once more.

It took centuries more for the Mechanicum to rebuild the orbital shipyards of Mars, and further centuries to construct the first Explorator fleet, but the task was pursued with zealous devotion. Thereafter, expeditionary fleets departed from Mars whenever the conditions in the Warp permitted it. The expeditions were sent to whatever worlds the Tech-Priests could find mentioned in their archives as being colonised in earlier times. Some fleets vanished without trace while others were flung far off course by the ongoing Warp storms, but a portion of them eventually arrived at their intended destinations. New forge worlds were established, each a reproduction of Mars and its temples to the Machine-God. Until the Great Crusade, contact with the expeditions was so sporadic that only a trickle of rediscovered technology was ever returned to Mars. Nevertheless, the Tech-Priests persisted in this holy mission, secure in their faith that the pursuit of knowledge justified any cost.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE OMNISSIAH

On Terra, a new ruler had emerged, uniting the planet for the first time in ages. Known only as the Emperor, he seemed to desire alliance with Mars, and debate had raged among the Tech-Priests about how to receive this being. For many, the vast breadth of knowledge the Emperor had demonstrated during his conquest of Earth was adequate proof that he was the earthly representative of the Machine God, a perfect fusion of mortal flesh and divine intellect they referred to as the Omnisiah. Some Mechanicum members would not accept the proclamation of the Emperor as the Omnisiah, and a schism threatened the unity of Mars. A small rebellion by senior Tech-Priests gained little support and was quickly put down. The fires of combat were still burning in the manufactories when the Fabricator General and the Emperor signed the Treaty of Mars to formally ally their two empires and guarantee sovereignty to each. Under the terms of the treaty the Mechanicum undertook to supply the weapons, ships, and war machines necessary for the Great Crusade and for the defence of the burgeoning Imperium. In exchange, they demanded that the Emperor's forces turn over to them all of the technologies they discovered.

THE GREAT CRUSADE AND THE HORUS HERESY

Despite the Treaty of Mars and the crushed rebellion, there were still many among the Mechanicum that did not truly accept the divinity of the Emperor. As the Warp storms subsided and the Great Crusade moved through the galaxy to re-unite Mankind under one rule, it discovered forge worlds established by the Explorator fleets and re-absorbed them into the widening circle of Mechanicum power. On occasion, the wildly divergent philosophies developed by forge worlds brought fresh schisms to the Mechanicum and led to further minor rebellions. The demands placed on the Mechanicum grew higher and discontent mounted as the Great Crusade pushed ever onward, but the Emperor remained dogmatic that it must be maintained until all of humanity was freed from the influence of the Daemon and the alien.

During this time other dark forces were growing. The Emperor's own Warmaster, Horus, began to lay plans against his master and sought support from all quarters for his treachery. Much of the Mechanicum sided with the traitors in the ensuing galaxy-wide conflict known as the Horus Heresy, and Mars was once again riven by nuclear fires and titanic weaponry as the Mechanicum turned against itself.

The Horus Heresy and the purges that came after it set the Mechanicum back immeasurably. Entire archives of accumulated knowledge were burned, priceless data-stacks toppled, and giant facilities ravaged in the fighting. It was a terrible wound that continues to echo down the millennia, as the Adeptus Mechanicus still struggles to recover many of those priceless, lost achievements of the glorious past.

THE CULT MECHANICUS

The authority of the Adeptus Mechanicus in matters technological is unquestioned. The common Imperial citizen would consider it sacrilege to intentionally misuse a machine, and believes that diverging from specific rites of maintenance courts disaster from a machine's angry spirit. Adeptus Mechanicus engineers are a part of every crusading fleet and expeditionary force, and Tech-Priests tend the essential machineries of the Imperium on every world and every ship. The forge worlds have become essential centres of manufacture and commerce for entire sectors of space. Legions of Adeptus Mechanicus war engines are kept fully engaged scourging the enemies of Mankind. Even the mighty Adeptus Astartes send their own to Mars to learn the secrets of the Machine and become Techmarines. Without the Adeptus Mechanicus, the Imperium would undoubtedly crumble.

Perhaps because of this very importance, some of the autonomy of the Adeptus Mechanicus has also been gradually eroded over the millennia. The events of the Horus Heresy and subsequent convulsions in the Imperium have made forge worlds subject to Inquisitorial scrutiny on a level unthinkable in the earliest days of the Treaty of Mars. Fear of accusations of heresy have limited the discussion of ideas to safely prescribed paths. True knowledge has gradually been replaced by rote-learning and understanding by dogma.

In hidden quarters, far from the harsh lumens of the Mechanicum, some hold the heretical view that the Machine Cult's greatest failing is that only the oldest of technology is still worthy of study and use. The Tech-Priests continue to analyse, catalogue and examine every piece they find, but only in the few rare cases that they discover a working example can

it be reproduced. Even their copies of thousand year-old machines are inferior and often dangerous to their operators. The Cult Mechanicus treats any form of innovation with supreme scepticism, and some posit that gaining knowledge of the Machine has been supplanted by simple worship of its function. As a result, with the exception of a few notable individuals, there are few Tech-Priests in the 41st Millennium who can approach the technical brilliance of their ancient predecessors. With each century, a little more of Mankind's accumulated technological lore passes beyond understanding and becomes myth and legend.



MECHANICUM HIERARCHY

"A man may die and still endure if his work enters the greater work, for time is carried upon a current of forgotten deeds, and events of great moment are but the culmination of a single carefully placed thought. As all men must thank progenitors obscured by the past, so we must endure the present, so that those who follow may continue the endeavour."

—The Chime of Eons, Garba Mojaro
Techno-Magos of the Adeptus Mechanicus

The head of the Adeptus Mechanicus is the Fabricator General of Mars. He holds a position as a High Lord of Terra, and also leads the entire Cult Mechanicus in his capacity as the Magos Mechanicus. The hierarchies on individual forge worlds may vary, but they generally fall into common patterns familiar to any member of the Adeptus Mechanicus. The Fabricator General of a particular forge world is supported by a council of senior Tech-Priests selected from the world's population. The most frequently seen council is a form of gerontocracy where the oldest Tech-Priests hold sway over the forge world by dint of their superior knowledge and insight into their chosen fields. In some instances a meritocracy may be used to promote the most brilliant and upcoming Tech-Priests into positions of authority on the council. Isolated or socially degraded Adeptus Mechanicus societies might have councils that take the form of aristocracies, democracies, or even lotteries.

THE HIGH TECH-PRIESTS

The ruling Tech-Priests in a forge world's hierarchy may form a seamlessly united front to keep ordinary Mechanicum members in line, or might be at odds with one another over esoteric matters of funding, priority, and core beliefs. Excessively ambitious individuals are likely to fall foul of the Inquisition or their own peers in the Adeptus Mechanicus at some point. This means most ruling members of the Priesthood of Mars have a tendency to be circumspect and dispassionate about their duties.

MAGOS

A Magos is an acknowledged master in a field of technological achievement, one who has spent a lifetime (perhaps several) refining his understanding of a particular branch of knowledge. Many divisions of Magos exist, including ones unique to particular forge worlds where especially rare expertise is preserved. Some more commonly encountered examples of Magos include Magos Biologis, Magos Alchemys, Magos Physic, Magos Technicus, Magos Metallurgicus, and Magos Xenologis.

LOGIS

The Logis form the body of logisticians and analysts that indirectly control a forge world's resources. They predict future trends and make forecasts based around a plethora of seemingly unrelated factors to advise on projected needs. Among the Adeptus Mechanicus, Logis are regarded as prophetic figures and their dispassionate analysis is given great weight in decision making.

THE UNIVERSAL LAWS

To understand a Tech-Priest's mind is to understand an intellect that has been manufactured and processed to work as smoothly and seamlessly as a Cogitator. The purpose of his being is encapsulated in the tenets of the Adeptus Mechanicus, his goals and purposes laid out by prior generations of Tech-Priests attempting to map the perfect path to enlightenment. Many of these concepts are embodied in what are called the "Universal Laws" or sometimes "The Sixteen Universal Laws," a set of holy commandments passed down through the centuries. Whether sixteen "Universal" laws truly exist, and whether all forge worlds would fully agree upon them, is a subject of fierce debate, but most of the Universal Laws have been enshrined and widely proclaimed as core principles of the Creed Mechanicus. Some of the more famous or controversial laws are presented below.

GENETOR

Genetors are genetic scientists with great insight into the human genome and all its multitudinous variants. They are very heavily represented among the Adeptus Mechanicus, perhaps in part due to the Mechanicum's experiences with mutants on Mars during the Age of Strife. Genetors often accompany Imperial forces engaged in the exploration of new worlds to test populations for signs of mutation outside prescribed norms.

ARTISAN

Artisans are constructors who design machines, structures, spaceships, weapons, and other military hardware. An Artisan commonly begins any project by examining the sacred records to find out if anything similar has been attempted before; if it has, then the previous plans are used with only minor adaptation where necessary. Artisans exercise overall control of the vast labour force of servitors on any given forge world.

THE INITIATES OF THE CULT MECHANICUS

The vast bulk of the Tech-Priests on a forge world are workers, scientists, and engineers who direct and oversee the functions of servitors, tend to the manifold requirements of the machine-spirits, and conduct the experiments dictated by the ruling Tech-Priests. Many initiates of the Adeptus Mechanicus are assigned to serve in technical support of the Imperial authorities at some point in their lives. Tech-Priests given extended assignments away from their forge world for such duties typically view it as a punishment.

ELECTRO-PRIEST

Electro-Priests dedicate themselves to the mysteries of energy, its flow through conductive bodies and the motivating spark it provides to machine-spirits. The most fanatical Electro-Priests are heavily modified to permit them to generate electrical energy within their own bodies, transforming them into living fonts of crackling power.



ENGINEERS

These warrior Tech-Priests operate on battlefields across the Imperium alongside Imperial Guard units. Here, they use their technical abilities to ensure that the mighty war machines of the Hammer of the Emperor function properly. Wielding their mighty double-handed wrench-axes in power-armoured fists, they stalk the front lines as red-robed avatars of the Machine God, smiting all who would stand against the will of the Omnissiah.

TRANSMECHANIC

Transmechanics are specialists in the field of communications technology. By the nature of their speciality, Transmechanics are often called upon to serve in other Imperial organisations for extended periods of time, and often spend their entire existence aboard Naval vessels or on Imperial Guard bastion-worlds.

LEXMECHANIC

Lexmechanics compile and rationalise information so that it can be entered into centralised data-stacks. Thanks to their implants and conditioning, they function with machine speed and accuracy, whether assembling battlefield reports, economic statistics, planetary analysis, or other matters of interest. Like Transmechanics, Lexmechanics are commonly assigned duties outside the Adeptus Mechanicus assisting the Adeptus Terra.

SERVITORS

Those without the capacity for knowledge and those who betray the secrets entrusted to them by the Tech-Priests are re-purposed into living machines by the Cult Mechanicus. Servitors are mindless slaves, manufactured from living flesh and purposeful metal. They lack all volition of their own and are usually programmed only for extremely limited tasks. A servitor is fitted with specialised prosthetics for their purpose: a cargo-hauler might have arms replaced with hooks, for example, and legs reinforced with pistons for additional lifting power. The overwhelming majority of any forge world's population are made up of servitors, ranging in form and function from mono-task mining cyborgs and holomats (holographic recording units), to Gun Servitors and armoured Praetorians.

THE COLLEGIA TITANICA

Probably the most significant military organisation of the Adeptus Mechanicus is the Collegia Titanica, more commonly called the Titan Legions. Most forge worlds have their own Legion, and particularly important worlds often have more than one. A Titan Legion is a military force of almost incomparable power in the galaxy, one that is capable of protecting or conquering the most sophisticated worlds. The mere rumour of a Legion being dispatched is enough to force the retreat or capitulation of most foes. Those who choose to fight must be ready to do so on an unprecedented scale. The reason for this is simple—the sheer might of the Titans themselves.

It is said that when the Emperor first came to Mars, He found that the Tech-Priests had created immense war engines they called Titans. The Titans were great humanoid-shaped fighting machines, bristling with the most potent weapons the Tech-Priests could devise, towering entities that the Cult Mechanicus viewed as being sacred avatars of the Machine God. On the barren expanses of Mars, the Titans could step across fissures and stride effortlessly through seas of poisonous dust that would have engulfed conventional troopers. The great war engines were also thickly armoured and powered by plasma reactors, so that they could operate continuously for years at a time with only limited maintenance. When the Great Crusade swept outward from Terra, the Titan Legions of Mars accompanied it and proved their worth a thousand times over in the battles that followed.

During the Horus Heresy, the Collegia Titanica was split between traitors and loyalists along Legion lines. Titans fought on both sides during the Siege of the Imperial Palace. Some, such as the Legio Ignatum, covered themselves with glory, while others, including the Legio Mortis, gained a reputation for vile infamy that has not been forgotten in ten thousand years. The traitor Titan Legions fled to the Eye of Terror when Horus was defeated, and there they have become warped into strange, daemoniac beasts of adamantium and steel. Many of the most powerful loyalist Titan Legions stand permanent vigil around the Eye of Terror to guard against the return of their corrupted brethren.

THE SKITARII

The Skitarii are the ubiquitous warriors of the Adeptus Mechanicus, and the term is often used to describe all of the Mechanicum's fighting forces with the exception of the Titan Legions. They protect the Tech-Priests' expeditions when they venture into hostile regions, and help to guard the forge worlds, ships, and facilities of the Adeptus Mechanicus. When Titan Legions go to war, they are commonly supported by huge numbers of Skitarii (also dismissively known as Tech-Guard to outsiders) acting as auxiliary infantry. The types and classifications of Skitarii vary immensely from forge world to forge world and even between the retinues of individual Techno-Magos. Common to all Skitarii is an utter devotion to the Cult Mechanicus and a willingness to lay down their lives in defence of the Tech-Priests and their sacred machines.

THE CENTURIO ORDINATUS

The Centurio Ordinatus is the branch of the Adeptus Mechanicus responsible for the huge siege machines known as Ordinati. Most of the Ordinati were built during the Horus Heresy, when the Mechanicum turned their most heinous technologies upon each other, and represent a level of sophistication unachievable by later generations. After the Heresy many of the giant weapons were lost or abandoned, while others were purposefully hidden in secret armouries or remote locations. The Centurio Ordinatus is responsible for the recovery and operation of all surviving Ordinati. The re-discovery of an Ordinatus often triggers local civil wars over its possession due to its incredible power. In these circumstances it is the duty of the Centurio Ordinatus to secure the weapon using any means necessary.

Each Ordinati is a unique weapon of destruction, constructed for a specific purpose or even for a single battle. The Ordinati are named after the planet where they were built to fight, and always carry that name with them in the rare instances they are transported from one world to another. One example is Ordinatus Armageddon, which was constructed during the First Armageddon War to destroy Titans with a single hyper-powered shot from its nova cannon. Another is Ordinatus Mars, which was built during the Horus Heresy to level the walls of Jericho Castellum with the pounding of sonic waves. Not all of the Ordinati are giant weapons; Ordinatus Priam was made to bypass defences by tunnelling directly through the planet's crust, for example.



THE QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE

"The universe is not like a puzzle-box that you can take apart and put back together again and so solve its secrets. It is a shifting, uncertain thing which changes as you consider it, which is changed by the very act of observation. A powerful man is not a man who dissects the universe like a puzzle box, examining it piece by piece and measuring each piece with scientific precision. A powerful man has only to look upon the universe to change it."

—Techno-Magos Gaelos

Individually and collectively, the Adeptus Mechanicus is driven by what the Tech-Priests refer to as "the Quest for Knowledge." The Quest can take many forms, such as research and exploration, or scouring ancient worlds for archeotech, but its ultimate embodiment is in the pursuit of ancient, near mythological devices known as STC systems.

STC systems were created at the height of the Dark Age of Technology, when humanity was thought to have colonised many hundreds of worlds. Some colonies prospered, some failed, and others failed to achieve more than a subsistence-level existence. However, all of the ancient colonies consistently maintained a high level of technology, thanks to a huge database of information they carried from Terra. This massive storehouse of technical knowledge was called the Standard Template Construction (STC) system.

The STCs are believed to hold the sum total of human knowledge in the fields of technical accomplishment and material sciences. The system included designs for every imaginable device, from simple agricultural machinery to data-cores and nuclear power-grids; in theory, every possible advancement a growing colony might need or eventually aspire to. However, the early colonists' needs were simple, and fulfilled with more conventional power sources and low level technologies, so these form the majority of the STC data the Adeptus Mechanicus have retrieved. Little, if any, of the advanced theoretical knowledge contained in the STC databanks was ever transcribed into the fragmentary physical copies that have survived the intervening thousands of years.

No intact STC system has survived into the 41st Millennium, and very few examples of first-generation STC design schematics exist. Even so, the vast majority of the most common weapons, vehicles, and systems in use throughout the Imperium have been faithfully copied from ancient STC information. Where such information exists, it is precious and sacred to its keepers, an artefact that has been passed down over hundreds of generations. Magos Arkhan Land is still remembered and celebrated thousands of years after his death for his discovery of a single STC fragment in the 31st Millennium. That single fragment yielded construction templates for the famous Land Raider battle tank and Land Speeder aerial attack vehicle, both named in honour of their discoverer.

THE FOURTH UNIVERSAL LAW

"Intellect is the Understanding of Knowledge."

The Fourth Law is most commonly interpreted as stating that the ability to comprehend and utilise knowledge is the basis for the measurement of Intellect. It is entirely possible for any sentience to realise the value of knowledge (or stimulus, as some members of the Cult Mechanicus might refer to it) while only possessing simplistic levels of it. It is also possible for an Archive or Holomat to contain vast quantities of knowledge and the understanding thereof, without apprehending the value of that Knowledge. Neither of these two examples would possess true intellect in the eyes of a Tech-Priest.

Wars have been fought and worlds ruined over fragments of STC data. The Adeptus Mechanicus has pursued any trace of STC information with truly religious fervour for thousands of years. For them it is the most holy of texts, a truly sanctified connection to enlightenment from a lost age. It is their lost bible, their holy grail, their cup of knowledge. The slightest rumour of a new discovery or a hidden cache of STC materials brings multitudes of Tech-Priests to investigate. Any resistance is apt to bring the full force of the Adeptus Mechanicus to bear without reference to any kind of Imperial authority. The Imperium itself is bound by the Treaty of Mars to ensure that any such discoveries are handed over to the Tech-Priests, but that has not prevented avaricious Planetary Governors, Rogue Traders, and even Inquisitors from ignoring the Treaty for their own gain.

THE EXPLORATOR FLEETS

The Quest for Knowledge has long carried the Tech-Priests far into the depths of the hostile void, far outside of charted areas of the galaxy. The Explorator fleets are those tasked with the highly perilous task of entering unexplored regions to analyse and catalogue them, securing important data or artefacts by force if necessary. Wilderness space harbours many secrets such as lost colonies, wrecked ships, alien ruins, and hidden repositories of knowledge. Explorator fleets often spend centuries at a time away from their home forge worlds, working their way methodically through a star cluster or nebula. Only the discovery of something truly significant brings the fleet back early. More often, an Explorator fleet vanishes into the unforgiving black, only years of silence betraying its fate and prompting the dispatch of another fleet to the same area centuries later.

The deep void harbours many dangers. There are aliens, fugitives, and renegades that would destroy an Explorator fleet on sight just for the vast haul of technological plunder it represents. There are lost colonies that do not desire to be rediscovered, perhaps wishing to continue their own petty fiefdom and not return to the Imperium's fold, or worshipping heathen gods that would bring the fires of the Ministorum upon them. There are uncharted natural and unnatural phenomena that can wreck a fleet, or strand it for an eternity.

The number of ships the Adeptus Mechanicus dispatches on such quests amount to only a fraction of those in service with the Imperium, but they are exceptionally well-protected and well-armed. Perhaps the best example of this is the near-legendary Ark Mechanicus, a class of ship with more firepower, greater range, and significantly stronger defences than any Imperial battleship operating today. Such is the power of the Machine God and his servants in the holy pursuit of knowledge.



MECHANICUM OF THE CALIXIS SECTOR

"These worlds were entrusted to us by the Ommissiah—the Machine God's breath is in every gravitic ebb and flow. It is the will of the Ommissiah that we continue the Quest for Knowledge through all travails and all tragedies; the Calixis Sector is the Machine God testing us, my brethren, and we shall not be found wanting."

—High Fabricator Castellar

Most agencies of the Imperium in the Calixis Sector view the Adeptus Mechanicus as a singular, monolithic organization that thinks and acts with one logical mind, each Tech-Priest moving in lockstep with the others towards the inscrutable goals set down by the Cult of the Machine God. However, the truth is something more complex. In the Calixis Sector, the Adeptus Mechanicus has many internecine challenges of its own. Over the centuries since the Sector's founding, the Calixian Mechanicus has been riven by factionalism and rarely has been truly united. It is said that even the machine altars of the Calixis forge worlds conspire and whisper with secrets amongst the formulae and schematics normally transmitted from one to the other.

Despite these difficulties, the Adeptus Mechanicus is nevertheless firmly entrenched in the Calixis Sector, a vital part of the operations of nearly every planet, and a distinct, significant power of its own that commands respect. This is due in no small part to the strong leadership that has guided the Calixian Mechanicus over a millennia, centred around the influential and tradition-bound Forge Masters of the Lathe Worlds.

PERSONALITIES OF THE LATHES

It is no accident that the Lathes are the central concentration of authority within the Calixis Sector—the three worlds that make up the Lathes contain the greatest Forges, the most advanced technology, the most revered secrets of knowledge, and the most experienced adepts of the Cult of the Machine God. It is a truism amongst the Calixian Mechanicus that "as go the Lathes, as goes the Sector."

HIGH FABRICATOR CASTELLAR

At the apex of authority for the Adeptus Mechanicus in the Calixis Sector is a singular title: the High Fabricator of the Lathes. Currently, Arch-Magos Castellar holds this position. A well-respected Arch-Magos who ascended to his current title through diligence and shrewd political manoeuvring, he took over from the disgraced High Fabricator Garamond. However, during his lengthy tenure as High Fabricator, Castellar has grown increasingly aloof and detached from the Mechanicus interests within the Calixis Sector, preferring

THE FIFTH UNIVERSAL LAW

"Sentience is the basest form of Intellect."

The so-called Fifth Law is often seen as being closely related to the Fourth Law. Tech-Priests often view Sentience as a commonly held trait, and they see it as only the first "tier" of Intellect, the lowest rung on the ladder of Understanding. Superior Intellect is generally agreed to be developed through the acquisition and understanding of knowledge.

to focus on the Explorator fleets and expansion through the Koronus Passage. It is commonly suspected that Castellar, a former daring Explorator himself, has distinct leanings towards the somewhat radical beliefs of the Disciples of Thule. Whatever the truth, Castellar's vision seems to be firmly fixed beyond the concerns of the Calixian Mechanicus and directed towards exterior operations.

One of the High Fabricator's accomplishments include the establishment of a sophisticated network of vox-heralds throughout the forge worlds of the Sector, and in many important Imperial planets as well, such as Scintilla, Malfi, and Sepheris Secundus.

Chrono-gladiators are another particular interest of Castellar's, and it is he who helped establish the great slaughter-wheels of Hive Volg. The High Fabricator selects a new cadre of bodyguards from the champions of the Chrono-gladiators every decade. These matchless warriors serve with fanatical loyalty, due in no small part to the knowledge that the High Fabricator's continued function is tied directly into the life-timers of each Chrono-gladiator. Nominally, these timers are kept stilled as a reward for the Chrono-gladiators' service. However, should the High Fabricator come to any harm, his bodyguards soon see their lifespans measured in a handful of seconds.

ARCH-MAGOS RALWURE THE GOLDEN

The High Fabricator selects a single Arch-Magos to serve as his second, an heir-apparent to share the burden of organising and ruling the varied interests of the Mechanicus in the Calixis Sector. Currently, this Arch-Magos is Ralwure the Golden, Keeper of the Prime Logis Key.

The appointment of Ralwure was a surprise to the Lathe-Covenant council. Previously infamous as an extremely conservative Suspensor Magos, Ralwure's elevation polarised the council between those welcoming his positions and others displeased at his growth in personal power. He represents the Imperio-Cognostician faction on the Lathe-Covenant council, and has escalated the significance of his role more and more over the last few years, as the High Fabricator pulled away, obsessed with events outside the core of the Calixis Sector.

Ralwure the Golden is not as politically astute as many would wish, and has made enemies amongst the various sects of the Calixian Mechanicus. It is well known, for example, that Ralwure considers the Techsorcists and Secutors to be misguided at best, and it is rumoured that the Arch-Magos reserves a particular distaste for high-level support requests from the Inquisition.

PATH OF THE LATHES

The birth of the Lathe Worlds began with the birth of the Calixis Sector itself, during the Angevin Crusade. A memorable amalgamation of brilliant victory and tragic setback, the Crusade set out in the fourth century of the 39th Millennium to conquer the region then known as the Calyx Expanse. Praetor Golgenna Angevin was placed at the head of this grand military force consisting of millions of loyal Imperial souls, and directed his efforts to cleanse the Calyx Expanse from debased human cultures and several minor xenos cultures that opposed the Emperor's glory. Angevin's remit was to purge the Expanse of these obstacles to pave the way for Imperial colonisation. Naturally, such a prospect intrigued the Tech-Priesthood of Mars, and a sizable contingent of Adeptus Mechanicus forces accompanied the Crusade.

THE ANGEVIN CRUSADE (322.M39)

Lord Militant Angevin's grand strategy included a sweep through the Calyx Expanse on two fronts, pushing the enemies of the Emperor who chose flight over destruction before him, and then trapping them all together in the Adrantis Region. Here, the full power of the Crusade would come crashing down in one masterstroke. Ahead of the forces of the Lord Militant raced a score of ships, such as Rogue Trader vessels and the Explorator fleets of the Adeptus Mechanicus. These ships helped identify potential targets and scouted enemy strongholds for the more powerful naval units arriving in their wake. At the sharp end of Angevin's thrust into the Calyx Expanse, these Rogue Trader and Explorator fleets saw furious action on a regular basis. Acts of heroism and sacrifice were common, and on many occasions, the Lord Militant acknowledged that his decisive successes would have been impossible without the services and sacrifices of these irregular forces. The glory the Explorator Fleets gained in these actions helped set the Adeptus Mechanicus a position of honour in the Calixis Sector for centuries to come.

CONQUERING ADRANTIS

(359-369.M39)

The first actions of the Crusade proceeded exactly as planned by the Lord Militant, and the greater part of the Calyx Expanse had been brought under the control of the Imperium in a few short decades. Unfortunately, after the enormous successes of these early phases, the commanders in charge of the final push into the Adrantis region failed to make allowances for the desperation of foes pushed to the very edge of extinction. The Crusade's offensive ground to a bloody halt, and Imperial forces suffered far more grievous losses in four years than had been inflicted during the first two decades of the Crusade's advance. These losses were so devastating that the Lord Militant was obliged to order his forces to regroup in defensive positions within the Golgenna Reach.

THE PRIME LOGIS KEY

One of the most prestigious objects linked to a forge world in the Calixis Sector is the Prime Logis Key. It is the master-cipher to the most revered knowledge of a forge world, handed down from one Fabricator to the next as part of his investiture. Upon the completion of each Calixian forge world, the Prime Logis Key is crafted at the planet's core, encoded by tech-rituals inspired, it is said, by the Omnissiah himself. The Prime Logis Key opens any door, activates any machine, and unlocks even the deepest data-vault upon the forge world for which it is linked.

Every Logis Key is irreplaceable, and the Prime Logis Key even more so—for if it is lost, the innermost sanctums of the forge world become nigh-inaccessible, their content only provided upon receipt of the correct blessed code-ciphers. Naturally, few Forge Masters wish to risk the wrath of the Omnissiah in attempting to create a replacement Logis Key.

Shaken by the defeat, Lord Militant Angevin abdicated command of the Crusade to a council of his generals as he himself went into seclusion to mourn. Lacking coherent leadership, the council of generals began to quarrel over the authority that the Lord Militant set aside. The Adeptus Mechanicus forces accompanying the Crusade considered their agreements to lie with the Lord Militant, and held themselves apart from these squabbles for power.

The situation worsened as the enemies of Mankind began to exploit areas thought safely subdued; ravaging warbands of Orks, the Warp-worshipping Yu'vath race, and a mysterious group of shadowy, xenos pirate raiders were amongst the greatest of these opportunistic enemies that threatened the Crusade's flanks.

When it seemed that the Crusade was on the verge of losing all the territory gained by Lord Militant Angevin, command of the main Crusade was seized by Lord General Drusus. A leading personality amongst the followers of the Lord Militant, Drusus was a popular and gifted commander, and he organised a daring series of counter-attacks that pushed the enemy forces back long enough for the Crusade to gather its considerable strength. Drusus' strength of character was apparent to the Adeptus Mechanicus forces, and they swiftly agreed to lend their forces to his command. Once more, the Rogue Trader dynasties and the Explorator fleets of the Mechanicus led the way for the redeployment and reinforcement of the Crusade's offensives.



DAWN OF THE LATHE WORLDS

(380.M39)

The Adrantis region was finally subdued through great acts of valour and much struggle. The victory could not have been assured without the assistance of the Adeptus Mechanicus. A major force under the leadership of Arch-Magos Mat Aleph Xenon turned the tide, and in gratitude, High General Drusus signed a pact with the Adeptus Mechanicus ceding control of several worlds in the Sector to the Tech-Priesthood of Mars. These worlds included Hadd, Het, and Hesh, a trio of worlds that were declared unsuitable for other Imperial agencies due to the unusual gravimetric effects of the system upon all three planets.

The effort of transforming the Lathe Worlds into their present forge world status was the work of many centuries. Layer by layer, building by building, the planets evolved. The bones of infrastructure were joined by a viscera of pipelines, tram-tracks, and transportation tunnels. Soaring into the atmosphere rose the towering structures of the Adeptus Mechanicus, its cog-wheeled iconography glaring down from scaffold-enshrouded factories, research facilities, and transmat altars alike. As the Lathe Worlds and their system developed, so too did the Mechanicus holdings throughout the newborn Calixis Sector.



THE SIXTH UNIVERSAL LAW

"Understanding is the True Path to Comprehension."

The concept of "Comprehension" holds special significance for Tech-Priests. It is often viewed as a state of transcendence, a level of Intellect that encompasses all Knowledge.

THE PRAECURSATOR AFTERMATH

(580.M39)

Two centuries after the establishment of the Lathe Worlds, the system was only partially tamed and the far-flung holdings of the Adeptus Mechanicus were still in the turbulent process of consolidation. It was then that the fledgling Calixis Sector was thrown into violent disarray. A conspiracy soon emerged that reached tendrils into many different power bases, from the Governor's Council to the Imperial Guard. Even the Adeptus Mechanicus and the Inquisition were not spared. The ultimate goal of the conspiracy was never revealed (although it is rumoured that entire data-vaults in the Tricorn contain detailed theories and evidence), but what is known is that the conspiracy centred around a group of agents known only as the Praecursators. According to official reports, no upper level members of the conspiracy were captured alive. Agents of the Praecursators had infiltrated their target organisations at the highest levels, which meant that rooting out the conspiracy was extremely difficult, even after the agents were discovered.

An uneasy alliance of mid-level Administratum functionaries, Adepts, and specialists from the various infiltrated groups was formed and tasked with tracking down the Praecursators, isolating them from their power base, and then taking them into custody. The Adeptus Mechanicus was essential to this effort, providing transportation, cogitator support, data-sifting, and tailored meme-viruses to help root out the Praecursators.

Ultimately, the Tech-Priests of the Lathes concluded that a rogue Inquisitor Lord was at the heart of the conspiracy, although much suspicion was also cast upon sects of the Mechanicum as well, due to the heretical tech-rituals the Praecursators' activities displayed.

The Praecursators had gone to great lengths to isolate the command structures of the Sector governance from several key Mechanicus facilities. Theories amongst the Lathes suspect that the conspirators were attempting to preserve these facilities for general use by Calixian citizens. This populist element of the conspiracy was particularly abhorrent to all of the affected organisations.

In the years following the unravelling of the conspiracy, the Fabricators of the Lathe Worlds bent every effort to lessen the strength of the Inquisition, within the Calixis Sector in general and over the holdings of the Mechanicus in particular. A great deal of infighting arose from the collapse of the Praecursator plot, and the Arch-Magos of the Lathe-Covenant demanded that the Sector Governor cede control of the planet Synford. Since then, Synford has become the primary producer of Baneblade super-heavy tanks for the Sector.

THE SEVENTH UNIVERSAL LAW

"Comprehension is the Key to all things."

The Seventh Law is widely seen as relating to the Sixth. Debate rages about whether "the Key to all things" is a literal or figurative expression. Many believe the Seventh Law means that Comprehension of the forces of the universe brings with it the keys to reality, the ability to implement any change or creation desired.

Despite the ancient nature of the plot, there is still lingering ill will among some members of the Inquisition who trace their ideological roots back to the lords and masters of that earlier time. Some Inquisitors still hold suspicions that the entire plot originated in the Lathe Worlds, in an effort to consolidate and expand their control within the Calixis Sector. Centuries after the end of the conspiracy, reports from the Inquisition claimed that the Praecursators eventually evolved into a particular cult of tech-heresy known as the Logicians.

THE WAR OF BRASS (738-740.M40)

Over a thousand years after the initial founding of the Lathe Covenant, the hive worlds of the Gelmiro Cluster fell into apostasy. Their leader in this descent into heresy was a charismatic ruler who called himself the Emperor of Brass. This mysterious figure led his followers into the foul worship of the Ruinous Powers. Loyal to the Emperor of Brass, frenzied fanatics from the wealthy and powerful worlds of the Gelmiro Cluster murdered every functionary of the Adeptus Administratum, ritually desecrating the bodies of the fallen. Significant portions of the affected planetary populations accompanied their new overlords into treachery beyond redemption.

Dissatisfied with holding the powerful worlds of the Gelmiro Cluster in his augmented fist, the Emperor of Brass sponsored bloody uprisings on several other nearby worlds. Soon after, a full-scale rebellion threatened the wider Calixis Sector. The death toll continued to rise as he publicly tortured and executed loyal Imperial servants and citizens. The Sector Governor was forced to call upon all available forces to stem the bloody tide. From across the Calixis Sector and beyond, loyal units converged upon the Gelmiro Cluster. These Imperial forces first pushed through the neighbouring regions, and crushed the nascent rebellions there with heartless efficiency. Amongst these forces that rose to answer the Governor's call were several battle Titans of the Legio Venator, and an entire Explorator fleet with support from the mysterious Ordo Reductor.

The campaign against the Emperor of Brass and his burgeoning rebellion, known as the War of Brass, lasted just over three years, but even in that short time the fighting proved especially vicious. In the end, several companies of Space Marines were needed to reduce the final hives to rubble. In the final, desperate battles at the heart of the Gelmiro Cluster, several records were discovered hinting that support and reinforcement had been supplied directly from the Eye of Terror itself, linking the Emperor of Brass to far more dangerous threats.

At the end of the conflict, the once-rich worlds of the Gelmiro Cluster had been reduced to smoking remnants of ruin and shame. Many planetary populations had become nothing more than scav-mutants, doomed to wander across the devastated wastes, surviving off the rotting remains of their once-great civilisations. The Imperial agencies of the Calixis Sector avoid the haunted worlds of the Cluster, now classified as war worlds, to this day.

THE IRON WALL OF SILENCE DESCENDS (740.M40)

The Calixian Mechanicus forces suffered staggering losses during the War of Brass. In the end, the battlefields of the Gelmiro Cluster were strewn with countless corpses of Skitarii and the scattered remains of many more combat servitors. Indeed, so high was the cost that the High Fabricator of the Lathes, Arch-Magos Kovikal Quietus, declared the imposition of the "The Iron Wall of Silence," a steadfast rule of segregation from all other groups within the Calixis Sector. From that point onwards, any cooperation, beyond minimal requirements of existing pacts, were strictly forbidden in an effort to preserve the Calixian Mechanicus forces and allow for a period of rebuilding.



THE MERITECH WARS (211-226.M41)

Roughly five centuries after the final collapse of the Emperor of Brass and the scouring of the Gelmiro Cluster, a far more insidious danger arose from the Merates Clans. Rebelling against the Imperium of Mankind, the Clans drew many renegades and other malcontents to their cause. They declared independence from the Imperium, and began a systemic series of raids and heavier incursions into surrounding Imperial space, threatening both the Calixis and Ixaniad Sectors. At the height of the conflict, the very survival of both sectors was thrown into doubt as the seeds of rebellion and anarchy were sown far and wide by the forces of the Merates Clans.

Such confusion and violent resentment was unleashed throughout the regions afflicted by the Clans that civil war threatened to soak both sectors in blood. Production across the affected regions ground to a halt, as those who were not dragged into the conflict withdrew to defend their holdings and hope for intervention. Trust was an impossible hope in the wake of the Clans' attacks, as entire populations that had seemed docile and loyal for generations rose up to support the rebels.

When all appeared lost to those loyal few who remained within the beleaguered systems, the leadership of now-legendary Calixis Sector Governor Myram Harvala surged to the rescue. A coalition of forces brought together from across the Calixis and Ixaniad Sectors swept into the advancing rebels along multiple fronts, crushing their forces and knocking their reserves back into the Merates Cluster. Imperial Guard, Imperial Navy, Adeptus Astartes, and Inquisition forces ground the opposition to tatters as they pushed them deeper and deeper into the heart of the now defunct rebellion. With victory all but assured, the High Fabricator of the Lathes, Forge Master Kovikal Quietus, sent three full Explorator fleets directly from the Lathe System. The centuries-old Iron Wall of Silence was finally broken, without prior notification or coordination. The Explorator fleets, with support from the Legio Venator, were at the forefront of the purification of the Merates Cluster. From that point on, there was no mercy and no quarter. Entire worlds were cleansed with weapons of such enormous destructive

power that many of the planets were shattered into asteroids. By the time the forces of the Imperium and the Mechanicus were finished sweeping through the Merates Cluster, not a planet remained that had not been scourged of all life.

A thorough Inquisitorial investigation was conducted after Sector Governor Harvala declared the rebellion at an end. While laudable, the brutal zeal with which the forces of the Imperium, and the Adeptus Mechanicus in particular, had conducted the final phases of the counter-attack, had left not a single witness or prisoner to be questioned or paraded before the victorious processions along the avenues of Scintilla. Even those prisoners who had been taken prior to the arrival of the Mechanicum's elite Crimson Guard were eventually lost to a rash of unusual malfunctions and sudden, mysterious deaths.

The Inquisitors exhausted all possible avenues of inquest, and soon followed whispered rumours of the Logician Tech-Heresy to the very doorstep of the Lathe System itself. However, rather than cooperate with the forces of the Governor, Fabricator Davos Phar responded with a brittle show of icy indifference, imperiously dismissive of the envoys' requests, and accused the Inquisitors, their masters, and the very Sector Governor himself of blatant disrespect and towering hubris. Referring to them as "the miserable curs of a thankless master", the Fabricator ordered the frontiers of the Lathe System and all other Adeptus Mechanicus holdings in the Calixis Sector closed, and all the force at the Fabricator's disposal was bent to keep outsiders from penetrating the sovereign territory of the Ommissiah. The ancient Iron Wall of Silence was re-instituted, and stood again unbroken for over five hundred years with brief exceptions, until the Malygrisian Tech-Heresy erupted across the Calixis Sector, forcing the Adeptus Mechanicus once again into the affairs of the Sector at large.

THE SECOND SIEGE OF VAXANIDE (507.M41)

Three centuries passed after the conclusion of the Meritech Wars and the re-establishment of the Iron Wall of Silence before the forces of the Lathes once again ventured forth, answering the call of the Sector Governor to stop the incursion of the Ork-infested space hulk *Pinnacle of Savagery*. Ninety years earlier, a similar attack had cost the system greatly, and the lack of response from the Lathes lessened their standings amongst the notable rulers of the Sector. In response to this fall from grace, and its attendant loss in trading status and support, the Calixian Mechanicus sent out two full Explorator fleets to assist Battlefleet Calixis in facing the Ork menace.

The *Pinnacle of Savagery* and its supporting fleet were met at the edge of the Vaxanide system. A dramatic battle ensued as the massive space hulk pushed deeper and deeper into the system towards planets that still bore the scars from the earlier Ork assault. The loyal ships of the Battlefleet Calixis Squadrons peeled away attending Ork vessels from the enormous space hulk and defeated them in detail. Meanwhile, the brutal weapons of the Ordo Reductor and the Explorator fleets pounded into the space hulk itself, ultimately shattering the vessel's spine and spilling its vile contents into the void.

THE LITANIES OF LEVITATION

The College Cult Graviticus in the Calixis Sector have developed their own variations of the tech-rituals needed to properly prepare and activate grav-plates. An incomplete translation from the original techna-lingua is kept on record in the Tricorn Palace on Scintilla:

//Strike the rune of activation to rouse the machine-spirit//

It is by the will of the Ommissiah that the plate acquires energy

It is by the energy of the plate that the machine acquires activation

It is by the activation of the machine that the Ommissiah speaks

That the plate acquires function

That the function acquires velocity and altitude

That the grav-plate then rises

Oh, arise, arise!

It is by the will of the Ommissiah that the grav-plate now functions.

//All praise the machine-spirit!//

THE EIGHTH UNIVERSAL LAW

"The Ommissiah knows all, comprehends all."

The Eighth Law enshrines the Ommissiah as the supreme being, the entity able to comprehend all Knowledge in the universe.

The danger to the system was not yet halted, however, as the significant chunks of the space hulk continued to hurtle through space towards the vulnerable planet. Again the Adeptus Mechanicus moved to intervene, putting lives and ships at great risk to slow the wreckage down, and ultimately bring it to a halt. However, when the ranking admiral of the Battlefleet suggested that any intact wreckage be destroyed, Arch-Magos Haverill Gemm, commander of the Mechanicus forces, denied the request, and the remains were claimed for the Lathe Worlds as recompense. With no further consultation of the Imperial Navy, the Explorator fleets secured several ships to each chunk of wreckage, fired their engines, and brought the largest sections back to the Lathe System for reasons unknown. The Imperial Navy, concerned that xenos hostiles might still pose a threat, lodged several complaints against this action, to no avail.

The disposition of any salvage from the *Pinnacle of Savagery* was never released, and its present location is listed as "unknown" in all Administratum sources. Though ancient treaties grant the Mechanicum rights to new technological discoveries, claiming the hulk while it still was categorised as a threat was singularly uncommon in the Sector. Many amongst the Inquisition and Imperial Navy suspect that the Calixian Mechanicus had planned all along to secure the space hulk's secrets for themselves.



THE MALYGRISIAN TECH-HERESY (742-770.M41)

In the middle of the seventh century of M41, the insular and isolationist Calixian Mechanicus was again thrust into the spotlight when one of their own turned violently, irrevocably renegade and dragged the Lathe Worlds into a sector-wide path of carnage.

Explorator Arch-Magos Umbra Malygris was a militant renowned for his dedication to the destructive potential of technology. Malygris devoted decades to studying the weapons and munitions of bygone eras, poring for years over ancient tomes and datastacks of ancient and suspect provenance. A devotee of the Divine Light of Sollex, the Arch-Magos attracted many of the most gifted weaponsmiths and researchers under the aegis of his organisation. Leery of the growing popularity of the militant adept, High Fabricator Castellar moved to sanction Malygris and attempted to break up the cabal he had surrounded himself with, fearing a recurrence of the False Fabricator affair several decades earlier. However, Malygris refused to relinquish any of his power, and declared Castellar as nothing more than an "ineffectual bureaucrat." Thus, the stage was set for a massive conflict that would reach across the breadth of the Calixian Mechanicus.

Castellar attempted to use the Forge Guard to force compliance upon the errant Arch-Magos. However, bizarre system failures and binary invert-afflictions—themselves creations of the inventive and insane mind of Malygris—rendered even the vaunted and mighty Forge Guard ineffectual. Warned of the imminent attack, Malygris fled the Lathe System with a fully provisioned Explorator fleet containing vast amounts of research, ancient weapons, and blasphemous examples of his own tech-craft. A surprising number of Tech-Adepts rose up in support of Malygris, swayed by his charismatic data-cants and heretical approach to advancing technology. As a result, many of the ongoing works of the Calixian Mechanicus became abandoned, threatening a full dogmatic schism within the Lathe Worlds and the far-flung holdings of the Omnissiah's Cult.

Aware of the danger posed to the entire Calixis Sector by the renegade Arch-Magos and his deluded followers, the High Fabricator formally declared Malygris and all who obeyed him as Apostate in the eyes of the Omnissiah. Next, Castellar contacted Lord Sector Marius Hax upon Scintilla, and requested assistance. This unprecedented outreach from the formerly isolationist Mechanicus quickly drew Hax's attention to Malygris' threat. Convinced of the seriousness of the situation, Hax used his influence to dispatch several major concentrations of Battlefleet Calixis to assist in the search for the missing Explorator fleet. No less than five full battle groups of ships, comprising both loyalist Explorator vessels and detachments of the Imperial Navy, formed the pursuit of the heretical Arch-Magos. Malygris and his followers fled to the furthest reaches of the Sector, always managing to stay at least one step ahead of his pursuers. Along the way, Malygris tested his research and weapons systems in a series of attacks that laid waste to several planets in his path rimwards towards the Halo Stars. Malygris and his followers subjected Xeiros Prime, Loss, and world-designate MMX215 to terrifying experiments. Orbital apostasic arrays drove entire planets into

raving insanity. Bio-forged horrors stalked formerly-bountiful wastelands, transgenic atrocities ravaged entire cities, and enormous gene-lathes processed entire populations into ulcerous, writhing seas of living tissue.

The renegade Arch-Magos' pattern was broken when his fleet arrived at Synford II. Many of his materials exhausted, Malygris turned to raiding Mechanicus facilities to acquire the technology and resources he needed to continue his mad schemes. The raids were indiscriminate and widespread, and it was the Synford system that suffered Malygris' attentions the most—after scouring Synford II down to bare rock for raw materials, the renegade's fleet bombarded the planet to destruction, leaving only a shattered husk in their wake.

However, the Calixian Mechanicus and Battlefleet detachments had tightened the noose. Malygris was cornered at the edge of the Synford system, caught between the advancing Mechanicus Explorator fleets and the flanking Imperial Navy detachments. At the forefront of the assault was High Fabricator Castellar's flagship, *Iron Promise*. One of the Adeptus Mechanicus' few true battleships, *Iron Promise* was a heavy combat vessel bearing a proud and long lineage.

Malygris' fleet opened fire, attempting to overwhelm *Iron Promise* with a storm of macrocannon batteries and lance weapons. However, Castellar's vessel had been retrofitted with several unusual devices of war from the High Fabricator's personal vaults, and it was the blessings of these modifications that granted the mighty ship a chance to survive the attack. Void shields shorted out one after the other, and the massive vessel trembled under repeated hammer blows of nova cannon fire. Reeling in flames, with several decks exposed to the void, the ship seemed nearly crippled, but *Iron Promise* had finally reached optimal range for its killing blow.

The jutting prow split like a blossoming flower and gaped wide, exposing an enormous weapon that rapidly gathered coposant energy from the system's sun. In moments, *Iron Promise* struck back with one final, searing blast of unspeakable power and blinding light. The weapon's scything beam engulfed the enemy fleet and shattered all but the largest ships in one blow.

The battle did not last much longer, as the Imperial Navy and the Mechanicus fleets ruthlessly destroyed any surviving enemy ships—including any intact pieces of debris large enough to support survivors. With a curt message of gratitude to the Imperial Navy, Castellar and his forces turned about and headed for their home port in the Lathe System.

Whilst Malygris and his followers had been decisively dealt with in the Synford system, extensive purges of sympathisers and secret partisans of the renegade Arch-Magos shook the Calixian Mechanicus for years afterwards. The Divine Light of Sollex sect was severely scrutinised, with many suspect Tech-Adepts quietly replaced and sent back to the Lathes for re-indoctrination. The taint brought through Malygris' actions kindled a distrust of the more militant groups of the Calixian Mechanicus that exists to this day. Many fear that the tech-heresies of Umbra Malygris most likely live on, hidden in secret laboratories and locked away in dark stasis chambers throughout the Malfian sub-sector.

THE RITE OF WAKING

The Princes of the Legio Venator cherish their ancient traditions and ties to Mars. These traditions include the many rituals and binary-cants required to rouse their mighty Titans to war. Within each Titan slumbers an ancient and complex machine-spirit. The Legio Venator follow an obscure and long-forgotten tech-ritual to fully awaken the God-machine and prepare it for the coming battle.

A massed congregation of Tech-Priests chant the blessing in techna-lingua, asking for the Ommissiah to lend strength to his creations. A senior Tech-Priest, often accompanied by the Titan's Princes, sprinkles the feet of the God-machine with sanctified oils and holy unguents, that it may walk with purity. Honoured apprentices and tech-adepts swing censers containing purifying herbs that burn with scented smoke, warding off any baleful influence. A slain Grox, chosen for its ferocity and strength, provides the Titan's first taste of blood.

Through this ritual is the machine-spirit of the Titan roused and readied for battle. Upon the Titan's activation, the congregation is then assured that the will of the Ommissiah is done.

Few proper translations exist of techna-lingua as the Calixian Mechanicus perform it. The Iron Wall of Silence has done much to hinder such learning, but the Inquisition vaults within the Tricorn on Scintilla contain one partial transcription of this most holy and exceptional rite:

As the blood of the slain is laid upon you, so may you lay the enemy's blood at the feet of the Ommissiah.

Lay blood at the Machine God's feet.

As the rune of protection is inscribed upon you, so may the litanies of protection ward your soul.

May your soul be guarded from impurity.

As the warriors within you guide your weapons, may you, in your turn, guide their lives.

Stand true against the trials of war.



SECTS OF THE CALIXIAN MECHANICUS

"Nothing and no one escapes the judgment of the Lords Dragon. The Universal Laws are absolute, therefore so are we absolute."

—Magos-Draco Corsiva

The Priesthood of Mars contains many sub-groups and organisations. These range from the Titan Legions to the Knight Worlds, from the Theoriticans and Lectors who catalogue and excavate ancient knowledge to the Lexmechanics and Calculus Logi who analyse and craft the holy code-rituals enshrined in the machine altars, from the Electro-Priests and Skitarii who defend the mighty forge worlds to the Magos of the Ordo Reductor who eliminate the enemies of the Machine God—the methods of serving the Omnissiah are vast and varied. The Calixis Sector itself also encompasses a number of unique additional sects, cults, and divisions.

THE COLLEGE CULT GRAVITICUS

High Fabricator Davos Phar established this sect within the Lathe Worlds in an attempt to re-create some of the wondrous technologies found on Mars. The College Cult Graviticus operate and maintain grav-plate technology, ranging from the relatively small plates found in Space Marine Land Speeders up to the massive decks of the Imperial Navy, and the even larger Suspensor Forges of Lathe-Hadd. The unique gravitational properties of the Lathe System provides a particular importance for the College Cult Graviticus, and it is from their ranks that many Suspensor Magos have been raised since the Calixis Sector's founding.

It is common for the College Cult Graviticus of the Lathe Worlds to work with Explorator fleets, as many devices and conveyances suitable for surveying worlds contain grav-plate technology, such as the rare and agile Lathe-pattern speeders. Many of the re-discoveries of the Explorator fleets have assisted the College Cult Graviticus in making grav-plates more widely available, and the Lathe Worlds are one of the premier locations for the manufacture and refurbishment of this rare technology.

THE DIVISIO INVESTIGATUS

After a pilgrimage to Mars in 199.M41, High Fabricator Davos Phar chose to re-create at the Lathe Worlds some of the wonders he had witnessed on the home planet of the Adeptus Mechanicus. Thus, High Fabricator Phar chose to build a small research group dedicated to the development and testing of weapon systems, which he named the Divisio Investigatus. Despite most considering its creation a tribute to similar organisations on Mars, the Lathe-Covenant Council considered it a radical and unwelcome innovation. Given only a minimum amount of resources, personnel, and equipment, the Divisio Investigatus has laboured without recognition or even acknowledgement for centuries. The recent suspicion of many militant groups of the Mechanicus sparked by the Malygrisian tech-heresy has not helped the Divisio's fortunes. Nevertheless, the Divisio Investigatus has, from time to time, presented small discoveries that the Magos of the Lathes have (after exhaustive review) grudgingly accepted.

TECHSORCISTS

A little-understood sect that acquires only a handful of recruits every few years, the Techsorcists occupy an unusual role amongst the Calixian Mechanicus. Techsorcists possess a deep understanding of the effects of the Warp upon technology and machine-spirits. They also have a particular interest in the tech-heresy of the Empyric Device, and are often involved in investigations of suspected technology that channels Warp energy.

Magos Eremor created the Techsorcists in 824.M36. The Magos had directed his Explorator fleet to pass through a region of space then known as the Calyx Expanse. A chance meeting with Rogue Trader Solomon Haarlock led the two forces to jointly explore a newly emerged space hulk, named *Fatum Posterius*. The expedition ended with deep misgivings in the Magos' heart regarding the role of technology and the corruptive nature of the Warp. From that moment, the Magos dedicated his research to the task, and began teaching his Tech-Adepts in methods to identify and cast out unclean machine-spirits. Eremor believed that once the true code of a corrupt machine-spirit is known, it can be recorded in a sealed data-vault, so that it may forevermore be banished from the pure machine.

Many Techsorcists are lost or mind-cleansed in the line of duty, and their association with the Inquisition—specifically, the Ordo Malleus—renders the sect highly unpopular with Arch-Magos Ralwure the Golden and the more orthodox members of the Lathe-Covenant Council.

Techsorcists are trained in the use of special electrogrammatic wards and meme-chants to clear their minds of corruption. However, as a precaution, all Techsorcists are forbidden from uploading their knowledge to the Machine Altar without extensive trials and neuro-cleansing.



THE LORDS DRAGON

When it comes to the judgment and enforcement of the Universal Laws across the Adeptus Mechanicus, there are many names that conjure dread. Within the Calixis Sector, one of the most secret and most influential of these names is the Lords Dragon. On Lathe-Hadd, menials whisper that the Lords Dragon are also known as the Collegiate Extremis. On Sheol 17, the prisoners who still retain their sanity refer to them as the Scaled Ones, the Correctors of the Balance. In the frozen corridors of Altar-Templum-Calixis-Est-17, they are dismissed only as myth.

In truth, the Lords Dragon exist in the Lathe System; they sit in judgment from the orbiting Panopticon Station, ever vigilant to uphold the sanctity of the Universal Laws. Tasked with policing the Calixian Mechanicus and sworn to preserve the Tech-Priesthood from corruption and tech-heresy, the Lords Dragon are shadowy figures who are far more rumour than fact. What is known with certainty is that this group of Arch-Magos is entrusted with vast authority and resources to carry out their judicial task. Numerous agents exist amongst the Calixian Mechanicus who report to the Lords Dragon and serve their will, but the Lords Dragon possess more fearsome tools: the Logicutioners, the Magos Juris, and the Dragon Secutorii.

The Magos Juris

The visible face of the Lords Dragon in the Calixis Sector are the Magos Juris, a group of Tech-Priests who have focused themselves solely on preserving the Omnissiah's will, instead of the never-ending Quest for Knowledge that permeates much of Adeptus Mechanicus culture. The Magos Juris devote themselves fully to their cause, seeking to preserve the Cult of the Machine God from any who threaten it.

Magos Juris are most often involved in tracking down and eliminating tech-heretics, smugglers, and others who have justly earned the wrath of the Adeptus Mechanicus. Unlike the Secutors and the Divine Light of Sollex, however, the Magos Juris are primarily investigative in nature, rather than militant, and amongst their number are many Lexmechanics, Rubricators, and other such scholars who relentlessly sift through data seeking their prey.

The connection between the Magos Juris and the Lords Dragon is kept strictly secret from any outside the Adeptus Mechanicus, and it is common for many, even amongst the vaunted Inquisition, to believe that the Magos Juris are completely independent of any other presumed-mythical agencies.

The Logicutioners

To enforce the edicts of the Lords Dragon, masked and hooded Logicutioners, swathed in robes of deepest black, descend from the Panopticon bearing devices of ancient and baroque manufacture. The Praecursor Grid and the Agents of the Lords Dragon provide the Logicutioners with peerless evidence and information. There are no recorded instances of any suspect escaping a Logicutioner unleashed upon his trail.

The Logicutioners are the implacable hands of the Lords Dragon, and are said to possess master code-ciphers second only to the Prime Logis Key.

THE FALSE FABRICATOR

In 624.M41, the Lords Dragon formally accused the Forge Master of Ryboth, Fabricator Garamond, of tech-heresy. Garamond's crime, according to his accusers, was that he had tampered with a number of servitors and cogitators, edging over the line towards Abominable Intelligence and into the tech-heresy of the Silica Animus. Garamond's defence was spirited, and the evidence against him was weak. After four months of debate and an appeal to the High Fabricator, the issue was still in doubt.

At the end, the judgment of the Lords Dragon would not be denied. Garamond was stripped of his position, but his influence, the length of his service, the sheer amount of knowledge and technology he had provided to the Calixian Mechanicus, and his eloquent defence had swayed his fate away from the Logicutioners. Instead, Garamond was to be exiled, sent away to the far Sargos Sector, there to toil with the common tech-adepts for his remaining length of function.

The Dragon Secutorii

On the final day of 815.M41, an encoded data-fragment contained in a crystalline stasis shell was delivered to Inquisitor Lord Caidin at the Tricorn Palace on Scintilla. The Inquisition labelled it "the Euhedral datalith," and the data-fragment's advanced cipher decay required several high-function cogitators to fully decrypt the partial message within. Purported to be an urgent communication from an unknown Tech-Priest on Lathe-Hesh, the data-fragment described an encounter aboard the Panopticon with a nightmarish force named "the Dragon Secutorii."

According to the Euhedral datalith's unknown author, the Dragon Secutorii are a force of exactly three hundred Mechanicus Secutors—all specially selected veteran warriors—sworn to the Lords Dragon upon the annihilatrix altar in the Panopticon. These warriors are not elite soldiers. Instead, they are the ultimate sanction of the Lords Dragon, deployed only as a measure of undeniable last resort. Furthermore, the Euhedral datalith claims that the Dragon Secutorii have been involved in a handful of decisive military actions in the Calixis Sector, notably during the final assault in the War of Brass, as the centre of a deep-strike assassination of a Merates Clan leader in the Meritech Wars, and as part of a boarding party sent on a secret mission against the renegade fleet of the Malygrisian Tech-Heresy.

Only a small amount of technical data was recovered from the Euhedral datalith, but there are hints that the Dragon Secutorii go into battle encased in massive suits of specially augmented armour, and bear ancient weapons from the deepest Lathe vaults. All inquiries from the Inquisition have been rebuffed, and Lord Caidin considers the file scant evidence for a formal investigation.

THE DIVINE LIGHT OF SOLLEX

The Divine Light of Sollex is a mystical group of Tech-Priests, fanatical in their desire to destroy all those whom they believe have dared blaspheme against the Omnissiah. Its followers specialize in technology that involves photonic and laser components, including some very sophisticated hololith projectors. Much about the Divine Light of Sollex remains unknown even to other Tech-Priests in the Sector, as they are an aloof group, preferring to remain within their facilities upon the death world of Haddrack. According to reports in the Panopticon, a group of the Divine Light of Sollex encountered upon Sozomen's Last Stand conducted themselves much like duellists, boasting that they enjoyed testing their expertise and re-discoveries against each other in ritual combat with precise rules.

High Fabricator Castellar is said to be quite sympathetic to the Divine Light of Sollex, but if they have a true patron, it is in Arch-Magos Ralwure the Golden. From his position in the Lathes, Ralwure has often attempted to build influence with the Divine Light of Sollex in order to turn their particular zeal towards targets of his choosing.

There have been many advanced examples of technology and machine-spirits that the Divine Light has displayed in carrying out its particular agenda. The Lords Dragon have collected data regarding hololiths of startling accuracy—and there are rumours that some are so lifelike that they act as holo-decoy systems, luring enemies into overlapping fields of fire. Laseweapons with an extremely high cyclic rate of fire have also been displayed during a battle between Tech-Priests of the Divine Light and a group of Obliviates under the control of a heretek on Turanshush.

THE AUXILIA MYRMIDON

One of the major power blocks for the Calixian Mechanicus, the Auxilia Myrmidon is primarily concerned with the protection of Cult Mechanicus strongholds, siegecraft, and maintaining a high level of skill with the various weapons systems and devices of war the Tech-Priesthood prized.

In the Calixis Sector, the Auxilia Myrmidon enjoys the patronage of most of the Lathe-Covenant Council, meaning that the Auxilia receives a great deal of influence and favour. Of late, a large number of Auxilia Myrmidon Secutors have been marshalling their forces for war—some say to get involved in the fighting on the Spinward Front of the Calixis Sector. The High Fabricator has made note that the Myrmidons are gathering together in unprecedented numbers on Heterodyne Station, and a number of dataliths regarding large-scale tactics and organisation have been channelled there via transmat.

THE FIFTEENTH UNIVERSAL LAW

"Flesh is fallible, but Ritual Honours the Machine Spirit."

To a Tech-Priest, organic components (like people) are weak, forgetful, and ultimately expendable for the greater glories of the Machine God. Only the correctly prescribed rituals can purify the fallibilities of the flesh, and enable the enlightened to interact with a machine-spirit. It would be a grave crime for a Tech-Priest to dishonour a machine spirit by not enacting the proper rituals in its presence.

THE DISCIPLES OF THULE

The guiding philosophy of Arch-Magos Paracelsus Thule is alive and well throughout the Adeptus Mechanicus in the Calixis Sector. During his infrequent visits, the Arch-Magos has inspired widespread loyalty to his vision for the Quest for Knowledge, and a significant portion of Calixian Tech-Priests respect his wisdom. None are more fervent in their admiration than High Fabricator Castellar—he once served aboard Thule's fleet as a lowly Electro-Priest, and has never forgotten the wonders that Thule showed him during his travels aboard the Explorer's ship.

Disciples can be found at nearly all levels of Adeptus Mechanicus society within the Calixis Sector—large numbers of them act as archeoexhumators, searching locations such as Seedworld AFG:218, Lythea Haarlock's tomb, and the planet known only as Designate 228-18. The Disciples were the first to locate and study the drifting sepulchres of the Yu'vath, and then only after a direct order from the High Fabricator.

THE EXPLORATORS

The Explorer fleets are not an uncommon visitor to Adeptus Mechanicus outposts throughout the Calixis Sector. The tempting presence of the nearby Koronus Passage, leading into the unexplored reaches of the Halo Stars, acts as a siren song for those Tech-Priests sworn to the Quest for Knowledge. Explorators have arrived in the Calixis Sector in great numbers, eager to explore the Koronus Expanse and claim any treasures or useful knowledge for the glory of the Machine God. Naturally, the overwhelming majority of these Explorators are members of the Disciples of Thule and venerate the teachings of its founder.

Currently, an Explorer fleet under the command of Artisan Chaparral is forming in orbit over Lathe-Het, given the blessings of High Fabricator Castellar. The High Fabricator's favour for the Explorators is in no small part responsible for the influx of support the group receives in the Calixis Sector. Chaparral has petitioned the High Fabricator for the right to add two Goliath-class factory ships to his fleet. The Artisan's political manoeuvring is adroit, and it is rumoured that he may have secured a number of mass conveyors en route to the region from another forge world in a faraway sector, perhaps even Ryza or Gryphon IV.

There are some high-ranked Tech-Priests who have objected to Chaparral's plan, amongst them Magos Juris Konstantyn Ambolic. Ambolic is concerned that the seemingly endemic tech-heresy of the Calixis Sector should not taint any expeditions into the Koronus Expanse. Caution, the Magos Juris insists, should be applied rigorously to ensure that expeditions into the Expanse are purely interested in the service of the Omnissiah.



TECH-HERESY

"Heresy, they call it. They are fools. The heresy is to have the technology to achieve your will, and to renounce it in favour of politics and outdated traditions. I spit upon the Opus Machina, and I am damned in the eyes of the Ommissiah. I am strangely content, knowing that."

-Magos Vathek, infamous heretek known as the Unkillable

Throughout the tumultuous history of the Calixis Sector, the spectre of tech-heresy has often plagued the Adeptus Mechanicus of the Lathe Worlds. Threads of tech-heresy have spread from the far reaches of the Sleeper Outworld to the centre of Scintilla itself. The halls of the Panopticon have often rung with binary-cant curses and dire oaths against the pernicious hereteks that infest the Sector.

The reasons behind the prevalence of such tech-heresy in the Calixis Sector are many, but one theory from Arch-Magos Korvikal Quietus was that the Sector's remote location, far from the centre of Imperial control, is a major factor. Others claim that the opportunities the Koronus Passage provides and the unique features of the nearby Jericho Warp gate have drawn hereteks like moths to a flame. Whatever the truth, the Lords Dragon have ruthlessly sought out and crushed tech-heresy wherever it can be found, often working alongside the Inquisition—though the Iron Wall of Silence sharply limits such cooperation.

Amongst the most notable groups tasked with eliminating and purging hereteks are the militant sects of the Adeptus Mechanicus, such as the Myrmidons and the Divine Light of Sollex—but there are other groups also highly interested in keeping tech-heresy from corrupting the pure knowledge of the Ommissiah. These organizations include the Magos Juris and, indirectly, the Lathe-Covenant Council itself.

A CLEAR AND PRESENT HERESY

Among the greatest threats these groups encounter in the course of their duties are the Logicians. This particular cult embraces a philosophy of progress based upon a single tome, *In Defence of the Future: A Logical Discourse*.

The Logicians are well equipped and supplied, but their greatest dangers come from their seductive ideology and their allies. Few amongst the Calixian Mechanicus suspect that the Logicians are assisted by the secretive Recongregators faction of the Inquisition, but given the relations between these two rival organisations most would not register surprise at this revelation.

To a lesser extent, the Phaenonite faction also dabbles in tech-heresy and has connections to the Stygiasts, a group of apostate Tech-Priests. The Phaenonites have acquired through their Stygiast partners a collection of cyber-augmented elite warriors known as Maltek Stalkers, and the battles between the Malteks and the Lathe Forge Guard have been savage clashes that leave countless dead on both sides.

WHAT IS TECH-HERESY?

Tech-heresy is often interpreted differently across the galaxy. There are many common schemes that the Mechanicus often label as such, but it is rarely found in such prevalence as in the Calixis Sector. The masters of the Lathes have placed their own stamp upon the tolerance and definitions of tech-heresy; for example, acquiring and studying xenos technology is rarely considered such, due to the particular focus on Explorator matters and the Thulian doctrine of High Fabricator Castellar. Ralwure the Golden leads a conservative faction that considers harming or interfering with an ordained Tech-Priest's person to be tech-heresy. In particular, this faction advocates severely prosecuting Rogue Traders of the Koronus Expanse who sometimes abduct Tech-Adepts and force them to serve as Engineers on their vessels.

The High Fabricators of the Lathes decree (and the Lords Dragon enforce) the following to be tech-heresy across the Calixis Sector and the Lathe Worlds (including those domains outside the Sector), though this is, of course, not a complete listing.

CENSURE BETRAYAL OF THE CULT MECHANICUS

Simply put, all those who break a pact with the Adeptus Mechanicus are to be reviled. Any apostates of the Ommissiah, outcasts or exiles, and especially those who dare truck with the daemonic, must be given no assistance, no quarter, and no mercy. As enforced in the Calixis Sector, the Lathe-Covenant Council has a number of rulings applying this censure to the Tech-Witches of Ammicus Tole.

Ammicus Tole, one of the Logician hereteks on Sinophia, abruptly broke all ties with his parent group and began gathering his own followers. It is presumed that Tole was serially disloyal, for he had earlier also abandoned the Cult Mechanicus for the Logicians.

The Magos Juris assigned to the case discovered that Tole's group had become a cult, and he had led them into rituals of the Warp that had irrevocably corrupted the technology that they came into contact with. The Lathe-Covenant Council acted quickly to alert the Inquisition, and assisted them in rooting out the majority of the cult, although some remnants did manage to escape offworld to Cyclopea. Among the most egregious of Tole's creations was the Prognosticaon, a device of divination that could, with the proper use of sacrificial blood, closely predict the future.

THE SIXTEENTH UNIVERSAL LAW

"To Break with Ritual is to Break with Faith."

As imperfect, organic beings, most Tech-Priests believe that they must rely on Ritual over understanding. Every screw turn and button press is precisely documented for every mechanism they build or use. There is a strong belief that the slightest deviation from ritual is an invitation to disaster and will lead to the unleashing of uncontrollable forces. In matters such as plasma reactor maintenance rituals, this has been demonstrably true.

AVERT ANY TWISTING OF THE SACRED GENES OF MANKIND

There are many amongst the Calixian Mechanicus, particularly Magos Biologis, who are devout to the belief that the form of Man is, in itself, to be revered. This creed states that the gene-structure of humanity is as the Emperor intended it—any unnecessary alterations to the human gene-code is, therefore, anathema. The exact definition of what is “unnecessary” meddling has waxed and waned over the centuries since the founding of the Lathes, but there are currently many amongst the Lathe-Covenant Council who cast great doubt upon even the smallest changes. Most shun more elaborate modifications such as those procedures that produce enhanced Gland Warriors, though when enough thrones are applied it is still discretely carried out.

The Sector itself was nearly rent asunder by the tech-heresies of Umbra Malygris only a few decades ago, and the blasphemies he was responsible for are still strong in the memory banks of the Calixian Mechanicus. Malygris pioneered the dark art of bioforging, a horrific forced mutation of the human body into a hulking, armoured thing capable of surviving for brief periods in vacuum. The Apostatic Matrix, another of Malygris’ inventions, twists the very fabric of the mind to turn faith into heresy. He also developed a method of fusing human biology with that of alien races, mixing xenos gene-code into his captives with a process that became known as transgenics. The High Fabricator has decreed that Malygris’ name be accursed forevermore within the transmit data-streams, but not even he can deny that Malygris possessed a formidable genius.

RENOUNCE THE EMPYRIC DEVICE

This tech-heresy involves studying and constructing the device-patterns of the Archenemy. To the Calixian Mechanicus, any technology that touches upon or manipulates the Warp, such as the hallowed Gellar field that protects voidships during Warp transit, is to be considered cautiously and is often suspect, for any malfunction or deviation can spell disaster. Thus, tech that directly seeks to channel and direct the corruption of the Warp is tech-heresy of the worst sort and is often seen as a direct link to apostasy. Using technology to bind a Daemon is but one example of this tech-heresy.

The Arch-Magos Callophe once studied the effects of human psykers upon the material world, but her research violated many of the Mechanicus’

most sacred precepts. In time, she was incinerated through Inquisitorial edict, but she had left behind a staggering number of empyric devices and an organised group of hereteks known as the Empyric Engineers.

One of Callophe’s most well-known developments was the psy-engine, a crude weapon capable of harnessing and directing the power of a number of disembodied psyker brains. Her followers also built aetheric resonators, weaponised frames that channelled Warp energy into vicious, crackling blades.

ABJURE THE UNLIVING

The Calixian Mechanicus refers to the protean engineering for returning life to the dead as the tech-heresy Unliving. Adapting technology to raise or communicate with the dead is considered vile by the Lathe-Covenant Council, and is to be stamped out wherever it is encountered. This has much to do with a former member of that council, the outcast Magos Vathek. Infamous both in the Tech-Priesthood and amongst the Inquisition, Vathek devised several machines that operate on a principle known as the “Sarcosan wave.” Sarcosan wave

generators restore a measure of life to the dead, animating corpses with an unnatural hunger in an unspeakable mockery of the living. The Sarcosan wave generators built into Vathek’s own carapace have allowed his survival in many encounters that should have been fatal. According to the agents of the Lords Dragon, Vathek has made preparations to leave the Calixis Sector for some distant destination. He has begun forming around him a group of similarly apostate Tech-Priests that has been dubbed “the Stygiasts.”

The speculum umbrae is a similar creation of the Animal Mori, that purports to allow communication with spirits of the dead. Firmly renounced by the Lathe-Covenant Council, the current theory within the Calixian Mechanicus is that such devices instead are contacting the Warp or are somehow transmitting “echoes” of living souls rather than the truly dead. This has not tempered the Logicitioners when they find those possessing such heresies.

ABHOR THE SILICA ANIMUS

Few things are more loathsome to the Calixian Tech-Priesthood than any who seek to resurrect the Iron Men or other horrors of the Dark Age of Technology. Tech-Adepts of the Lathes reject with horror any idea of soulless sentience, called by some the Silica Animus or “Abominable Intelligence.” Without a machine-spirit, a device is but a shell. If that



device, however, contains an animating intelligent force, it is no longer technology that can be trusted and relied upon, it is no longer part of the Ommissiah's great plan—it is nothing less than damnation made real.

Both the Inquisition and the Magos Juris have hunted the heretek Nomen Ryne for his blasphemies of the Silica Animus. Ryne's most infamous discovery was that of the so-called 13th Pattern of Cogitation, an outlawed set of rubrications that can give life and sentience to a soulless machine. Many claim that the schismatical data-patterns in the deep infotombs of Lathe-Hadd are also his work, but no connection has been proven. Naturally, the Calixian Mechanicus purges any and all machines found to possess any data-markers of this 13th Pattern, and in many cases the Techsorcists have been called in to assist.

Ryne has so far escaped justice due to his cunning—he has constructed a number of frighteningly lifelike automatons shrouded in the robes of a Tech-Priest. These "False-Men" spread as far as Alactra, and the Magos Juris intercepted a number of them attempting to book passage into the Koronus Expanse. Ryne's work has also birthed other abominations, such as the beast-minded mech spiders and murder-cogitators, hand-held devices that can assassinate a machine-spirit. One of Ryne's greatest followers is a Tech-Priest formerly associated with the Inquisition, Cyrrik Scayl.

Other examples of this tech-heresy include the mech-assassin automata known as Gholams and Golephs, both of which have plagued the Calixis Sector for decades. Of late, an entirely new pattern—the Caryatid—has emerged, bearing far more advanced weapon systems and hunting protocols. The Lords Dragon are said to be intensely interested to find out more about the Caryatids and destroy their source.

LESSER TECH-HERESIES

The true nature of what constitutes tech-heresy is vague enough that it can encompass a truly wide variety of subject and activities. Generally speaking, in the Calixis Sector there are several definite actions that are considered amongst the lesser tech-heresies (called such because they do not fall under one of the other major categories).

Misuse of Technology

An extremely broad category, this usually refers to the adaptation of technology to a use other than that for which it was intended. Such misuse can be as simple as otherwise innocent technology used against the Adeptus Mechanicus rather than for it, transmitting blasphemies against the Ommissiah through a vox-network, or even abusing a chronically recalcitrant machine-spirit (such as venting one's frustration with the offending machine in the presence of a Tech-Priest). Naturally, due to the imprecise nature of this category, it is easily misunderstood and rarely draws major attention from the Calixian Mechanicus.

The case of Illucius Grizvaldi is an excellent illustration of this particular lesser tech-heresy. Grizvaldi, a previously low-profile heretek, took over a small section of Scintilla and began liberally transforming its citizens into bestial servitors loyal only to him. The Inquisition intervened in the matter and Grizvaldi was summarily executed, although his legacy lived on. From time to time, other hereteks seek to match or copy Grizvaldi's atrocity.

Unsanctioned Communion with the Machine

The influence of the Lathe-Covenant Council can be quite powerful on the attitudes and outlooks of the Tech-Priesthood at large within the Calixis Sector. The extremely conservative faction, led by Arch-Magos Ralwure the Golden, has campaigned at length to establish a set of activities as tech-heresy. Ralwure's diatribes on this subject are the stuff of the legend, and thanks to his influence, the Council has decreed in his favour. Thus, for the lay citizen (one not belonging to the Calixian Mechanicus) to craft unsanctioned augments, or scavenge technology (particularly the pernicious Reclaimators lurking in the depths of the Calixian hive cities) has been declared tech-heresy. This policy has sought to go so far as to also include interfering with or harming a Tech-Priest's person, but that has yet to be fully adopted. The extent of this particular category is replete with a complex set of precedents and exceptions that only those within the Cult Mechanicus could truly understand.

THE PRICE OF HERESY

Those condemned for tech-heresy face a variety of punishments, depending not only on the severity of their actions but also their accusers. Minor slights that do not draw untoward attention might only result in loss of resource access or, more often, exile to the far regions of the Calixis Sector, there for the Tech-Priest to reflect on the nature of his incorrect thoughts. These often include actions not technically heretical, but against the current tenets of the Council or moduli-scholem of the Lathes hierarchies; such apostasies result in the individual being labelled Malatek.

More serious heresies require greater punishments, such as permanent removal of blessed augmentations, cranial scouring, and corrective re-engramation, all followed with the heretic's formal declarations to the Lathes on the errors of their ways.

The most serious crimes demand the most serious of punishments, with mere cessation of thought and bodily disposal being the least imposed. Those found guilty of heresies that would shake the Lathes are often sentenced in closed tribunals, the better to ensure that others do not learn such heresies exist. Their fate is often Servitude, and their minds are destroyed as their bodies are transformed into base servitors for the rest of their wretched lives. Especially heretical Tech-Priests might be sent to the horrors of Sheol-17 first, so that every possible datum can be extracted from their brains, the better to root out the extent of their heresies. Such is the will of the Machine God, and the will of those who rule in his name.





SERVANTS OF THE OMNISSIAH

ALTERNATE
CAREER RANKS

•

ELITE ADVANCE
PACKAGES

•

NEW SKILLS AND
TALENTS

•

MECHANICUM
ARMOURY

CHAPTER II: SERVANTS OF THE OMNISSIAH

"Your banal chattering is unnecessary. Are you able to grasp the importance of my experiments? Begone from my sensory range, lest I have you disassembled for servitor parts."

—Malatek identified only as "The Fabricator"

To most within the Calixis Sector, the domains of the Adeptus Mechanicus appear as a single, impenetrable edifice. To the outside observer, they seem to be a unified organisation whose presence and influence is felt almost everywhere. Those privy to the secrets of the Mechanicus, though, know all too well of the overlapping layers of military might, of the conciliators who promise things beyond imagination, and of the factions that cast out any who fail to conform. Some even know of the darker side of the Mechanicus—the watchers and assassins who bring swift and unyielding punishment to the enemies of the Mechanicus. Some choose to reject the institutions of the Machine Cult, forming rival cults to oppose them. Others are born directly into the system, their lives an endless torrent of work and toil from birth to death. It is a horrific system, one not understood by many, but one that is vital to all.



ALTERNATE CAREER RANKS

"Keep your voices down! You don't want the Lords Dragon to hear, do you? They spy on everyone!"

—Talsia Yantor, Agent of the Lords Dragon

The following section details a number of Ranks that may be taken during a character's Career progression as alternatives to the normal path of his Career. These Alternate Ranks change the character's potential abilities and direction, and in some cases their prior history. A player does not swap his character's Career Path, but rather his character's fate takes an unusual detour for one Rank along the way. These Alternate Career Ranks serve two functions: the first is to offer players the opportunity to personalise his character, and the second is to give characters a very definite place within the Adeptus Mechanicus within the Calixis Sector.

TAKING AN ALTERNATE RANK

Alternate Ranks are attractive, and for good reason. Gaining new Skills, Talents, and tools to distinguish a character from others of the same path are all excellent reasons for acquiring an Alternate Rank. To select an Alternate Rank, a Player must first secure his GM's permission. Several of the Alternate Ranks require adopting a specific social role that may be at odds with an existing plot line or campaign. Second, most Alternate Ranks include one or more prerequisites that a player must fulfil before taking the rank. Finally, Alternate Career Ranks have a minimum Rank at which the character can take them (and some can be taken by more than one Career Path). The Rank can be taken at this minimum Rank, or at any Rank thereafter (unless noted otherwise).

Once his character meets all the requirements, and the GM agrees, the player may select the Alternate Rank. In every case, the Alternate Rank is "swapped" for the Rank he would otherwise take, and its Advance Scheme is exchanged for the one found in his Career's normal Path. From this point onward, the character has access to these Advances, and the Player may spend his xp freely on them. The Rank may also indicate some unique ability or Trait that is gained as well—apply this immediately.

Despite offering up a slew of new abilities and potential, taking an Alternate Career has its downsides. A character may (and probably will) miss out on certain Skills and Talents from his original Rank, have his maximum ability with certain Skills capped out early, or be forced to pay more xp for them. This is the price a character pays to study a new and specialised area. The GM may allow a player to pick up missed Skills and Talents if appropriate, but only as Elite Advances (see **Missed Career Ranks** on page 29) during the Player's next Career Rank.

Because taking an Alternate Rank complicates the character progression system, it is only recommended for experienced players and GMs.



EXAMPLE

Grasson, an Assassin with close ties to the Adeptus Mechanicus, decides to accept the offer to become an Agent of the Lords Dragon, the secret observers of the Lathe Worlds. He exchanges his usual Rank 4 of the Assassin Career for Rank 4: Agent of the Lords Dragon and fulfils the requirements listed in the Agent of the Lords Dragon Alternate Career Rank. He does not cease to be an Assassin, he is now just an Assassin who also trained for a specific purpose. Grasson's player now has access to the Skills and Talents listed under the Agent of the Lords Dragon Advances at the costs listed there, and may spend xp freely on them from this point forward. However, all the time he spends learning the secrets of binary interrogation and fighting against tech-heresy means that he misses out on certain opportunities from Assassin Rank 4. When he moves on to Assassin Rank 5, if he wishes to still obtain Assassin Rank 4 Advances, and has the xp to spend, he must take them as Elite Advances and pay additional Experience Points for them.

MOVING ON

Once a player has accumulated and spent enough xp to advance to the next Rank, he does so as normal. If his Career Path splits, he must choose one path as he normally would, his Alternate Career standing in the stead of any previous choice he needed to make. The player must then follow his chosen Career Path normally, although again, he may find that this tangent has left him missing certain Skills needed as prerequisites for some of

the Advances offered by the new Rank, and to acquire them he must obtain them as Elite Advances. More likely, however, he continues to develop Advances from his Alternate Career to make up for missed Advances.

MISSED CAREER RANKS

Having taken an Alternate Career means that a character has deviated from the regular path of experience and training he would have undergone, and while the character has gained new and often unique abilities from this extracurricular activity, he misses out on what would have been his regular development. In this case, Talents and Skills from the missed Rank that can be reasonably obtained by the character (with the GM's approval) can be gained as Elite Advances for their listed costs in the missed Rank plus an additional 50 xp.

MORE FORGE WORLD INFORMATION

Further background information on life within a forge world, as well as additional weapons, equipment, and cybernetics can be found in **THE INQUISITOR'S HANDBOOK**. These extra rules can add more depth to any **DARK HERESY** campaign, and are an invaluable resource for GMs looking to further emphasise the role of the Adeptus Mechanicus in their games.

ACUITOR MECH-ASSASSIN

"We still have no explanation for the death of the passenger. The only witness claims the void-lock unexpectedly opened just as that poor soul walked nearby, while the outer lock was also open. For both to be open is impossible when the auspex registers open void against the hull, yet it happened. I doubt we will ever know why he was so desperate to leave that system, though I am relieved he did pay in advance."

—Captain Artesia Carnelline, *Killian's Prize*

Killers come in all sizes and shapes, some silent and subtle, others brazen, some clad in flesh, some in cloth, and some in steel. There are countless orders dedicated to the art of death in the Calixis Sector, and one among them is the Acuitor Set of the Lathes, less formally called the Mech-Assassins. These executioners are answerable only to Magisters Samadhi of their own order, and usually move according to their masters' will without scrutiny, hidden beneath heavy red robes. Though most are trained in the art of stealth, initiates of the Acuitor Set often infiltrate in plain sight; after all, the Priesthood of Mars is a wholly inscrutable order to all but the most knowledgeable outsiders, and even the greatest citizens across the Calixis Sector do well to treat these strange, mechanical half-men with reverence and fear. It is rare for lay folk to question the actions of even a lowly initiate of the Adeptus Mechanicus, odd or arcane as his behaviours may be, and so the Acuitors pass, seen but ignored. To anyone but the great lords of the Machine Cult, and certain individual Inquisitors with close ties to the Adeptus Mechanicus (or bitter enemies within it), nothing distinguishes an Acuitor Mech-Assassin from the shuffling, augmented, and veiled ranks of Tech-Priests who fulfil the innumerable duties that allow the Sector to grind forward one more day. Nothing, at least, until it is far too late. It is, in no small part, this anonymity that makes the Acuitor Set so very deadly.

Though the truth of the origins of the Acuitor Set is scattered throughout the Lathe Worlds like scraps of data disrupted with an ferromagnetic purge, some shadowy records still remain. During the days of the Angevin Crusade, a pious Magos by the name of Samadhi led his modest forces to several key victories in the Mechanicus' grand campaign against the Adrantians in what would eventually become the Calixis Sector. After the Grant of the Lathes in 380.M39, when the Lathe Worlds were granted to the Cult Mechanicus for their efforts in the Crusade, Samadhi used his new-wrought influence to form a secret organisation. Some stories say that this was with the tacit permission of the already-powerful Lords Dragon, based on a promise of future service to their cause. He then trained and dedicated the members of this sub-cult to the art of eliminating the enemies of the Ommissiah. Samadhi established the hidden fortresses scattered throughout the realm of the Lathes, such as Rasamal on Lathe-Hesh and Tumala in the heart of the shrouded Panopticon, in which his disciples could be sharpened into perfect tools of the Ommissiah and terrifying instruments of death.

TALENT: COGS WITHIN COGS

Prerequisites: Int 35

An Acuitor Mech-Assassin who interfaces with any machine may make a **Challenging (+0) Tech-Use Test**. If he succeeds, he may pre-set that machine to activate, deactivate, or follow another such simple protocol within its usual repertoire, at either a given time within the next 24 hours or upon his remote command, provided that he is within a number of kilometres equal to his Intelligence Bonus of the machine when he wishes to activate it. The Acuitor must choose the machine's action upon making his Tech-Use Test, and makes any other necessary Tests (such as Security to bypass a guarded cogitator's internal defences or Forbidden Lore (Archeotech) to decipher an ancient device's function) while programming the action.

TALENT: WHISPER OF SAMADHI

Prerequisites: Int 35, Mimic, Deceive

Acuitor Mech-Assassins are consummate infiltrators, and while they have little trouble passing as normal Tech-Priests when dealing with commoners across the Sector, their targets are hardly limited to those outside of the Adeptus Mechanicus. Part of the ancient data tracks of Samadhi helps them to overcome this problem, however. When dealing with other Tech-Priests, an Acuitor may lace portions of the Secret Archive of Samadhi into his binaric cant, subtly scrambling the judgement of the listener. As such, when dealing with other Tech-Priests, Acuitor Mech-Assassins may use their Intelligence Characteristic instead of their Fellowship when using the Deceive Skill, and may use the Mimic Talent to copy the subtleties of the vocal codes and ciphers of any Tech-Priest they impersonate with it.

It is whispered that, one day, Samadhi himself vanished into the depths of the archive of Tumala, perhaps finally betrayed by the frailty of flesh, or perhaps becoming one with the ancient cogitators contained in the fortress. No matter the circumstances of his departure, Samadhi's disciples rallied around the data-tracts that the first Grand Magister of the Acuitor Set left in his wake. His adherents believe that these data-tracts, based on recordings of his own cogitations, contain his ultimate scheme—a plan in which all disciples participate, but that none fully understand. Decanting his stored knowledge into their own minds, the agents of the Acuitor Set followed in their patron's footsteps and tirelessly hunted any they saw as obstacles to the Adeptus Mechanicus. Starting with the first disciples to succeed the patron of the Acuitor Set, all those who have claimed the title of Magister within the organisation have taken on the cognomen "Magister Samadhi" upon their ascension to this elevated rank, and through them, Samadhi's name has become death itself.

In this day and age, the Acuitor Set has quietly expanded, and though its members are still fleetingly rare, there are several worlds upon which they recruit those gifted in treading the Ommissiah's darker paths. Most of the recruits are already seasoned Tech-Priests, those who have already had to call upon their unique skills to slay their foes, either because of battlefield appointments, poor luck, or a logical reason that required violent conflict. After passing rigorous trials, recruits are infused with the data-tracks of the order's long-missing founder. Though recruits remain individuals, each carries a part of the vast, calculating mind that spun the Acuitor Set into being. With the knowledge contained in the ancient data-tracks, all Acuitor Mech-Assassins can act according to a single, immense plan without ever setting eyes on other agents after their training or even grasping the true extent of the design. The labours of all become one in the shadows, casting the grim silhouette of Magister Samadhi over the Calixis Sector long ages after his disappearance.

So it is that these disguised agents roam the Sector, maintaining voidships, repairing cogitators, unjamming weapons, and occasionally slaughtering their unsuspecting prey. The methods by which a Mech-Assassin can kill are varied; some value a clean kill at a distance, while others prefer to slay with elaborately created traps or carefully scripted malfunctions. There are also those who like to feel the "wet-iron" of their victims run in crimson rivulets down their bladed mechadendrites. Many Acuitors also train themselves to enter a state of terrible frenzy on command, flooding their minds with the Samadhi data-tracks that it might guide their movements in the thick of battle. This practice makes them fearless in the knowledge that all proceeds according to the Grand Magister's plan. These counterpoints—clinical, razor-sharp forethought, and savage battle-fury—balance to make a fully trained Acuitor Mech-Assassin one of the deadliest individuals the Lathes have ever honed.

In all cases, however, the sharpest weapon an Acuitor possesses is his mind. Whenever possible, an Acuitor elaborately plans a kill, running simulation after simulation in his augmented cranium and including a wide array of factors that few without the gifts of the Ommissiah could effectively consider. He might stalk his target for months or years at a time, gathering ever more information to be filed away for his grim purpose.

An Acuitor Mech-Assassin's honed, clicking mind allows him to utilise nearly anything as a lethal weapon; steam pipes become a scalding trap to an unwary passer-by, a firearm becomes a time-bomb for its user, and an ancient cogitator becomes a shadowy maze from which a known Heretek's mind cannot escape, even as his body sits helpless before it. Even if he cannot kill with his surroundings, an Acuitor might depressurise a voidship's cabin or redirect a reactor's vent into a nearby air duct, all to force an enemy into a vulnerable position. Infinite possibilities for murder unfold before a member of the Acuitor Set, and finding the best one for an enemy of the Ommissiah is simply his role in the great Quest for Knowledge.

BECOMING AN ACUITOR MECH-ASSASSIN

Tech-Priests who are chosen to become Acuitors are pulled from across the Lathes and beyond, and instructed in secret fortresses scattered throughout the Calixis Sector, such as Tumala and Rasamal. Most candidates are those who have proven both faithful and capable of using the skills of the Adeptus Mechanicus to deadly effect. To become an Acuitor is to become a part of a pattern greater than oneself, as all members of the Set mentally carry the data-tracks of Magister Samadhi, which guide them to the targets of their wrath and aid them in making short work of those who oppose the Lathes. Those who can survive the weight of the data-tracks and even begin to decipher the ancient, inscrutable memories, become killers of the greatest calculable efficiency and ruthlessness.

Required Career: Tech-Priest

Alternate Rank: Rank 2 or Higher (500 xp)

Requirements: Logic

Benefits: Cogs Within Cogs (Talent)



ACUITOR MECH-ASSASSIN ADVANCES

| Advance | Cost | Type | Prerequisites |
|----------------------------------|------|--------|--|
| Concealment | 100 | Skill | — |
| Contortionist | 100 | Skill | — |
| Deceive | 100 | Skill | — |
| Demolition | 100 | Skill | — |
| Security | 100 | Skill | — |
| Silent Move | 100 | Skill | — |
| Sleight of Hand | 100 | Skill | — |
| Shadowing | 100 | Skill | — |
| Tracking | 100 | Skill | — |
| Arms Master | 100 | Talent | BS 30, Basic Weapon Training (any two) |
| Blind Fighting | 100 | Talent | Per 30 |
| Deadeye Shot | 100 | Talent | BS 30 |
| Marksman | 100 | Talent | BS 35 |
| Mimic | 100 | Talent | — |
| Orthoproxy | 100 | Talent | — |
| Paranoia | 100 | Talent | — |
| Quick Draw | 100 | Talent | — |
| Sure Strike | 100 | Talent | WS 30 |
| Silent Move +10 | 100 | Skill | Silent Move |
| Tech-Use +10 | 100 | Skill | Tech-Use |
| Battle Rage | 100 | Talent | Frenzy |
| Exotic Weapon Training (Any One) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Frenzy | 200 | Talent | — |
| Whisper of Samadhi | 300 | Talent | Int 35, Mimic, Deceive |



AGENT OF THE LORDS DRAGON

"The phrase 'be seeing you' has a different meaning for us, my dear Inquisitor Caidin. When we say this, it is to be taken quite... literally."

—Arch-Magos Karolinious Benz,
Magos-Draco of the Lords Dragon

Shrouded in mystery, and whispered about only by fools and madmen, is the legend of the Panopticon. Supposedly hidden deep within the Lathes System, this orbiting void station is rumoured to be the real authority behind the Calixian Mechanicum, and the seat of power for an organisation whose name is synonymous with dread: the Lords Dragon.

Dispatched to the then-unconquered Calix Expanse thousands of years ago through Logis-Prophesies, secretive Tech-Priests sought out worlds to eventually bring under the Mechanicum's control. They were to locate any sites that would be advantageous once the upcoming Angevin Crusade had finished, and to ensure that the Mechanicum claimed the most important worlds as their own, before the Adeptus Ministorum gained a foothold in the new Sector. The first agents to arrive quickly discovered a small system colonised aeons ago during Mankind's earliest steps into the galaxy. The irregular orbits of its main worlds created violent shifts of gravity, and had resulted in the formation of three unusual asteroid belts. Only the bravest or most foolish of ship captains could ever hope to safely navigate the gravitic nightmare of the system's asteroids, and thus the Lords Dragon, the ancient cabal of Arch-Magos tasked with policing the Mechanicum within the Sector, took the hidden centre of these belts as their new home.

The Panopticon Orbital was built as a habitat and headquarters for the Lords Dragon, but more importantly as a hub of observation. The Lords Dragon knew that they would need to observe the emerging Calixis Sector to ensure that tech-heresy and affronts to the Machine God never went unpunished. Using scarcely understood devices from the Dark Age of Technology, the Lords Dragon established an extensive monitoring network—the Praecursor Grid—across the Pondus system, using the space around their new home as a field test. If their system allowed observation without direct interference, then they knew that they could expand the grid to cover all the forge worlds that would eventually be built, and even some worlds outside the Mechanicum's sphere of authority.



They soon discovered that the surviving descendants of the original colonists had actually thrived in their cruel environment, and performed genetic modifications to improve their usefulness even further. Lest others such as the Ecclesiarchy claim them, the population was interred into massive Great Holds and kept in stasis in the fringes of the cometary clouds surrounding the system. When the Crusade arrived in the system many years later, it would find a group of harsh, uninhabited worlds suitable only for the Adeptus Mechanicus, and once established, the Lords Dragon could bring the population back, each one of them ready and willing to work for the glory of the Omnissiah. Such is the scope of the Lords Dragon and their guidance for the greater good of the Machine Cult.

With the success of their observation technology, the Lords Dragon began to involve themselves directly in the Angevin Crusade. They went back to their usual methods of seeking out corruption from within, ensuring that the worlds the crusade conquered were purged of tech-heresy. They took steps to ensure that the Explorator fleets found their way to what would become the Lathes System, and then did what they could to engineer the ceding of the worlds to the Mechanicum. As each new forge world was lit, the

Lords Dragon monitored. Within each new voidship hull laid or Skitarii regiment raised, their surveillance kept close watch for any signs of deviant thought or deed. Hardly a moment went by when the Lords Dragon were unable to view exactly what the Mechanicum was doing within the gestating Calixis Sector, or, at least, that is what they would wish all who dwell in the Lathes Worlds to believe.

The Lords Dragon have always made the Inquisition wary. From the Inquisition's perspective, only it has the proper remit and power to safeguard humanity against the terrors within, without, and beyond, and it does not relish the idea of others, operating outside of its purview, attempting to do the same. The Tricorn Palace has spent many fruitless years petitioning the Lathes for access to the Panopticon Orbital, but every request has been denied. To make matters worse, the Inquisition is seemingly unable to even prove its existence, though many suppose this is unlikely given the nature of the Holy Ordos.

More disturbing are the continued reports that the Praecursor Grid extends beyond the borders of the Cult Mechanicum, and that the Lords Dragon have the ability to spy upon many important Ecclesiarchical holdings, the domain of Sector Lord Hax, and the Tricorn Palace itself. Some even believe that all

the cybernetics manufactured within the Calixis Sector are part of this Grid, and that everyone who has ever received a bionic is actually an unwitting spy in service to the Lords Dragon. If such a revelation were found to be true then the outrage, especially from groups such as the Cult of the Pure Form, would be immense, and the Calixis Sector could find itself in a civil war the likes of which it has never seen. The Inquisition has mounted numerous operations to infiltrate the Lords Dragon but has not met with any reported success, their agents either returning empty-handed, or simply not returning at all.

Yet for all their clandestine work and surprisingly adroit political manoeuvring, the Lords Dragon are surprisingly willing to work alongside the Inquisition when the situation demands (and often when it does not). Unlike most within the Calixian Mechanicus, the Lords Dragon are not especially secretive when it comes to cooperation with other organisations, as long as they can stay behind the scenes. This has given the Lords Dragon a fearful reputation amongst the Lathe populations, and they seem to intentionally foster this dread. They actively encourage the servants of the Mechanicus to believe the stories—that they are always watching, that they can operate in plain sight without anyone knowing, and that the fabled Dragon Secutorii are waiting for the moment when they will swoop down and destroy everyone who has ever cursed at a machine. This could be a ruse to disguise possible gaps in their observational systems or limitations of their power, creating the impression that the Lords Dragon are more effective than they actually are. Some even whisper that the dreaded Praecursor Grid does not exist at all, and only the threat that it exists acts to keep the Lathe Worlds properly respectful of the Ommissiah. Few are willing to determine if these rumours might be correct, and only those dwelling within the Panopticon Orbital know the real truth.

To be such an agent is to act in the name of the Ommissiah and to always watch for tech-heresy in any form, no matter the source. Such deviance within the Sector often comes from the highest Magos as well as the least disciplined novice Tech-Priests, as well as from unsanctified xenos abominations that would pollute the Machine Spirit. Their extensive surveillance technologies across the Lathe Worlds are not absolute, and only through extensive travel and investigation can they properly act to ensure the preservation of the Mechanicum. Agents may have differing standards as to what constitutes tech-heresy, however, despite what appear to be rigid definitions. The cabal is remarkably united in its goals, though, for the Cult of the Machine God's survival is of paramount importance. Only through the proper worship of the Ommissiah and his blessed technologies can humanity continue, let alone achieve the perfection of the Holy Machine. All who serve the Dragon in the Lathes know that Mankind is but one blasphemous experiment or unholy xenotech activation away from falling once again into darkness, and it is their duty to prevent this, no matter what the rest of the Sector might wish.

TALENT: ALL-SEEING EYE

At some point during his service to the Lords Dragon, an Agent will be instructed in how to gain limited access to the Praecursor Grid. To access to the Praecursor Grid, the Acolyte should make a **Hard (-20) Tech-Use Test**. If he succeeds, the Acolyte gains the most recently recorded information, usually no more than a day old. If the Acolyte gains 3 or more Degrees of Success, he gains complete access to the Grid on that planet, and may look through any pict feed and access any archived data. Access to the Praecursor Grid must be gained personally, and the GM has final determination on whether the Acolyte can access the Grid, as well as whether the Grid is functioning within the requested area.

TALENT: METAL FATIGUE

Tech-heresy is a grave matter, and one that the Mechanicus does not take lightly. Hereteks and others who would misuse the Ommissiah's gifts are the greatest enemies of the Lords Dragon, and they have developed many ways to drive information from those they capture. One of the more insidious interrogation methods is that of Metal Fatigue, where a small bionic implant is used to slowly disintegrate the subject's cybernetic components. This causes an excruciating pain that very few can resist, and those who do often die in agony, bereft of their bionics. The Acolyte can use Metal Fatigue by making an **Opposed Tech-Use Test** against the subject's Toughness. For every Degree of Success the Acolyte gains, the subject takes 1 Damage and suffers a -10 penalty to the Interrogation Test that follows. If the subject takes Damage equal to his Toughness Bonus, he permanently loses one randomly chosen cybernetic. The subject of the interrogation must have at least one cybernetic implant for the Acolyte to use this Talent.

BECOMING AN AGENT OF THE LORDS DRAGON

Like the Inquisition, the Lords Dragon are quite cautious when it comes to whom they pick as their representatives. Each carefully selected Agent must be trustworthy and incorruptible, and they must take the secrets of the Lords Dragon to their graves. To join the Lords Dragon is to gain knowledge of one of the greatest secrets in the Calixis Sector, the Praecursor Grid, and although most Agents never see the Panopticon Orbital, all are aware of its unique ability to use this Grid to observe and gather data from every forge world across the Calixis Sector. Agents of the Lord Dragon are loaned to Inquisitors on a surprisingly regular basis, although many within the Inquisition see this apparent high level of assistance as just another example of the Lords Dragon's desire to infiltrate all aspects of the Sector.

Upon becoming an Agent of the Lords Dragon, the character gains the Rigor Mentis Trait.

AGENT OF THE LORDS DRAGON ADVANCES

| Advance | Cost | Type | Prerequisites |
|---|------|--------|---|
| Common Lore (Machine Cult) | 100 | Skill | — |
| Common Lore (Machine Cult) +10 | 100 | Skill | Common Lore (Machine Cult) |
| Common Lore (Tech) | 100 | Skill | — |
| Common Lore (Tech) +10 | 100 | Skill | Common Lore (Tech) |
| Deceive | 100 | Skill | — |
| Inquiry | 100 | Skill | — |
| Interrogation | 100 | Skill | — |
| Scrutiny | 100 | Skill | — |
| Search | 100 | Skill | — |
| Shadowing | 100 | Skill | — |
| Silent Move | 100 | Skill | — |
| Tech-Use | 100 | Skill | — |
| Hatred (Tech-Heretics) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Resistance (Fear) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Resistance (Psychic Powers) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Strong-Minded | 100 | Talent | Willpower 30, Resistance (Psychic Powers) |
| Deceive +10 | 200 | Skill | Deceive |
| Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus) | 200 | Skill | — |
| Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus) +10 | 200 | Skill | Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus) |
| Forbidden Lore (Heresy) | 200 | Skill | — |
| Forbidden Lore (Inquisition) | 200 | Skill | — |
| Inquiry +10 | 200 | Skill | Inquiry |
| Interrogation +10 | 200 | Skill | Interrogation |
| Scrutiny +10 | 200 | Skill | Scrutiny |
| Search +10 | 200 | Skill | Search |
| Shadowing +10 | 200 | Skill | Shadowing |
| Silent Move +10 | 200 | Skill | Silent Move |
| Tech-Use +10 | 200 | Skill | Tech-Use |
| All-Seeing Eye | 200 | Talent | Willpower 40, Tech-Use |
| Mental Fortress | 200 | Talent | Willpower 50, Strong-Minded |
| Metal Fatigue | 200 | Talent | Interrogation |
| Peer (Adeptus Mechanicus) | 200 | Talent | Fellowship 30 |

Required Career: Adept, Arbitrator, Assassin, Tech-Priest

Alternate Rank: Rank 4 or higher (2,000 xp)

Monthly Income: The Acolyte changes to Mechanicus Class for income.

Other Requirements: Cannot have Peer (Ecclesiarchy) or Good Reputation (Ecclesiarchy).



TRAIT: RIGOR MENTIS

The Lords Dragon might enjoy the level of dread that they inspire within the Lathe Worlds, but even they would not risk their greatest secrets for something as trivial as a reputation. Those who find themselves selected to join the Lords Dragon's ranks undergo significant hypnoath conditioning that makes them resistant to interrogation, specifically interrogation related to the Lords Dragon themselves or anything to do with the Panopticon Orbital. It is an unconscious form of mental defence, and even if the Agent were aware of it, he would be unable to crack it intentionally.

The Acolyte may re-roll any Interaction Test made to resist the effects of Interrogation, Charm, Deceive, or any other method that an adversary might use to gain information relating to the Lords Dragon, the Panopticon Orbital, or anything related to the Praecursor Grid.

CALIXIAN MALATEK

"They think me mad... but I shall show them! Their very eyes will burn with the power of my genius!"

—Tech-Priest Nohant Wyller,
after ejection from the Diogenes Sect

The Quest for Knowledge has always been the guiding light that all in service to the Omnisiah throughout the Sector follow in one way or another, but this is most frequently displayed in the form of gathering lost knowledge, not expanding upon existing knowledge. The sheer quantity of data that is known to be lost from ages long ago would keep most Tech-Priests of the Lathes content with such tasks. Combined with glacial approval processes, as well as factional rivalries that tend to stifle what little progress is ever made, the final dictates governing the proper manners for the expansion of technology is enough to frustrate even the most serene of Calixian researchers.

Not all Tech-Priests are willing to follow such dictates, and there are some in the region who break this obstructed method of thinking, not just out of necessity, but because they believe they have a duty to do so—a divine duty in some cases. These radicals often choose to take a more intuitive or practical approach to the gathering and expansion of knowledge, even when that approach goes against the cold logic of typical Mechanicus doctrine. These individuals take risks with existing technologies, and spend long years studying devices deemed worthless, unsafe, or too powerful. Many develop eccentricities beyond even the norm within the Cult Mechanicus. In most cases, these traits cause them to be shunned by their colleagues, and often they have been cast out from their forge worlds.

Nevertheless these Tech-Priests within the Sector are not considered Heretekks, but are instead are branded with the epithet Malatek. Their actions are not considered criminal or heretical, but at the same time they cannot be allowed to continue either—at least within view of anyone who might consider them heretical. Tech-Priests branded in this manner tend to flee into exile away from the Lathes, but most consider their expulsion to be a minor setback. They usually take their research to a new location, far from the blessed trio of worlds, to begin from scratch, all the while hoping that they can one day return to their forge world in triumph, proving their detractors wrong with a string of undeniable technological successes and scientific marvels.



Some within the Inquisition of the Sector see useful tools amongst these apostates. The Ordo Xenos takes a particular interest in many such Tech-Priests, as so many of them are attempting to use or study xenos technology in ways that others within the Mechanicum would not dare. Those Inquisitors and their Acolytes whom their peers have deemed Radical often have Calixian Malateks at their side when conducting investigations into these and other areas. Already operating outside of the usual dogma of the Inquisition, these Inquisitors gain the power of science run rampant when taking on Malateks as Acolytes and Throne Agents. Better yet, they can often justify the use of these wild and unpredictable individuals to their fellow Inquisitors by ensuring that they are guarding against tech-heresy, even if they might be exploiting it.

BECOMING A CALIXIAN MALATEK

There is no set process for a Tech-Priest of the Lathes System or from the Lathe Worlds to becoming a Malatek, and in most cases the title is bestowed by others, rather than voluntarily selected. What is common, though, is that the Tech-Priest reaches a point in his life where his own goals and beliefs start to exist at odds with the predominant line of thinking within the Mechanicus, enough so that the Tech-Priest's peers form the opinion that he is uncontrollable and potentially destabilising to the sanctity of the forge world. Nevertheless, some Tech-Priests may see the adoption of the title Malatek as a liberating experience, something that frees them from the bonds of their superiors, and allows them to achieve their true potential in the eyes of the Omnisiah. Still, whatever the reasoning or circumstances that led to the Tech-Priest's branding as apostate, there is often no way back, and even those who consider themselves successful in their extreme endeavours often fail to regain their status among their former colleagues on the Lathes.

Upon becoming a Malatek, the character gains the Outside Looking In Trait.

Required Career: Tech-Priest

Alternate Rank: Rank 6 or higher
(6,000 xp)

Other Requirements: At least one Forbidden Lore Skill.

CALIXIAN MALATEK ADVANCES

| Advance | Cost | Type | Prerequisites |
|-------------------------------------|------|--------|--|
| Deceive | 100 | Skill | — |
| Forbidden Lore (Pick One) † | 100 | Skill | — |
| Inquiry | 100 | Skill | — |
| Scholastic Lore (Pick One) † | 100 | Skill | — |
| Scrutiny | 100 | Skill | — |
| Armour of Contempt | 100 | Talent | Willpower 40 |
| Exotic Weapon Training (Pick One) † | 100 | Talent | — |
| Paranoia | 100 | Talent | — |
| Peer (Academics) | 100 | Talent | Fellowship 10 |
| Peer (Astropaths) | 100 | Talent | Fellowship 20 |
| Peer (Inquisition) | 100 | Talent | Fellowship 20 |
| Peer (Underworld) | 100 | Talent | Fellowship 10 |
| Forbidden Lore +10 | 200 | Skill | The same Forbidden Lore Skill |
| Forbidden Lore +20 | 200 | Skill | The same Forbidden Lore +10 Skill |
| Search | 200 | Skill | — |
| The Power Within †† | 200 | Talent | Armour of Contempt, Forbidden Lore (Psykers) and/or Forbidden Lore (Warp) |
| The Power Without †† | 200 | Talent | Armour of Contempt, Forbidden Lore (Archeotech) and/or Forbidden Lore (Xenos) |
| The Power Beyond †† | 200 | Talent | Armour of Contempt, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) and/or Scholastic Lore (Occult) |
| Scholastic Lore +10 | 300 | Skill | The same Scholastic Lore Skill |
| Scholastic Lore +20 | 300 | Skill | The same Scholastic Lore +10 Skill |

† May be taken up to 3 times at this Rank.

†† Can only select one of these.

TRAIT: OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

Despite the fact that Calixian Malateks are not hunted outlaws or hated hereteks to be executed on the spot (at least, not yet), they do stand apart from their Mechanicum brethren in the Sector. They may continue to hold whatever titles they once had, and in rare cases may even be allowed to stay on their forge world, but they will never shake the stigma of being one who stands on the outside of Mechanicum society, looking in at what they once were. Malateks treat the Disposition of any member of the Adeptus Mechanicus as being two steps lower than whatever it would normally be. This effect is cumulative with other Malateks that happen to be part of the same cell of Acolytes, as larger concentrations of these outsiders are likely to make the Mechanicum trust them even less than they already do.





TALENT: THE POWER WITHIN

The Malatek's dangerous experiments with captured psykers lead him to believe that either true progress can be made by looking inwards to the emerging psychic race that is humanity, or that there is a technological means to stop the psychic downfall of Mankind. The Acolyte is treated as having the Resistance (Psychic Powers) Talent, takes all Fear Tests caused by psychic powers at one level lower (Fear (2) becomes Fear (1), Fear (1) is ignored, etc), and once per session may automatically pass a **Forbidden Lore (Psykers)** or **Forbidden Lore (Warp)** Test with the Degrees of Success equal to his Intelligence Bonus.

TALENT: THE POWER WITHOUT

The Malatek's iconoclastic work with Cold Trade prizes lead him to believe that the lack of true divinity is what makes xenos technology so inferior, or that only by harnessing the power of xenos technology can the alien's foul presence be vanquished from the Ommissiah's domain. The Acolyte can use all xenos weapons and wargear with only a -10 penalty to their operation, takes all Fear Tests caused by xenos at one level lower (Fear (2) becomes Fear (1), Fear (1) is ignored, etc), and once per session may automatically pass a **Forbidden Lore (Archeotech)** or **Forbidden Lore (Xenos)** Test with the Degrees of Success equal to his Intelligence Bonus.

TALENT: THE POWER BEYOND

The Malatek's unsanctioned tests on captured heretek devices lead him to believe that the power of Chaos is something to be pitied, as it will never know the purity of the machine, or that harnessing the weapons of the Warp in conjunction with the blessings of the Ommissiah is the true path to defeating Chaos. The Acolyte can use all daemonic weapons and wargear, as well as any equipment deemed "corrupted" by the power of the Warp, with only a -10 penalty to their operation, takes all Fear Tests caused by Daemons at one level lower (Fear (2) becomes Fear (1), Fear (1) is ignored, etc.), and once per session may automatically pass a **Forbidden Lore (Daemonology)** or **Forbidden Lore (Occult)** Test with the Degrees of Success equal to his Intelligence Bonus.

CRIMSON GUARD

"They came upon our position like a river of red; an unbroken line of armour and guns stretching across our battle lines. Without a word they opened fire, and I witnessed destruction the likes of which I had never seen. Minutes passed, and still they kept firing. With so few of us left, I knew it was the end, and at that moment, as I took one last look at the grim facades of these soldiers, I knew the Machine God was real. I threw my weapon away and awaited his judgement."

—Last recorded testament of Vasallis Noch, the Butcher of Sahcrin

In the wake of the War of Brass, the Skitarii Legions of the Lathe Worlds were in utter ruin. Entire forge worlds found themselves with virtually no troops left, their warrior cohorts smashed and their command structures decimated. Outside of the wounded Legio Venator, the Mechanicum of Calixis lacked a strong standing army, and for the first time in hundreds of years were suddenly vulnerable.

To alleviate this weakness, High Fabricator Kovikal Quietus used the Iron Wall of Silence to start a discreet rearmament drive throughout the Calixian forge worlds. A number of the more militarily minded Tech-Priests were moved into positions where they could work to replenish the fighting ranks, and the remnants of the Calixian Explorator Fleets were used to ferry these new recruits to various training installations, usually under the guise of supply runs to keep their true nature hidden.

It took many years to bring this grand plan together, but once everything was in place Quietus found himself with a new force consisting of some of the best-trained and best-equipped troops in the Sector. He dubbed this new force the Venatorii, the new hunters of the Calixis Sector, a force that was to remain separate to the recovering Skitarii forces and act as the true elite of the Lathes. With their unique organisation and frightening red armour, the few outside of Mechanicum circles aware of them soon began to call this untested army the Crimson Guard.

The Calixian Conclave, always watching when new powers appear in the Sector, took a keen interest in the formation. Quietus may have instigated a wall of silence, but the eyes and ears of the Inquisition were everywhere, and hidden agents of the Ordo Hereticus watched

each step of the Venatorii's development. But the Conclave unexpectedly decided this Crimson Guard was not a threat for their concern. They would keep their eyes upon them though, and perhaps even call upon them should the need arise.

The Inquisition has called upon the Venatorii on numerous later occasions since their formation, most dramatically during the Meritech Wars. The savagery with which the Venatorii fought cemented their reputation throughout the Calixis Sector, but the Inquisition soon found themselves shut off once again as the Iron Wall of Silence slid back into place.

It took another five hundred years, and a new heresy born of the Tech-Priest Malygris, to end this era of exclusion. Those Inquisitors whom the Mechanicum approve of have received Venatorii support. The Inquisition guardedly uses such forces, knowing that they are undoubtedly reporting back to their Mechanicum masters, but viewing it as an opportunity to see these Crimson Guards in action and gauge their prowess.

To be a single Venatorius within the Crimson Guard is to walk at a level above common warriors, even the Skitarii. Equipped with powerful integrated weapon technologies that draw their energy from the soldier's own Potentia Coil, a single maniple of Venatorii can unleash a ceaseless storm of death at their enemy. The Venatorii wear thick crimson carapace armour recovered from the deepest data crypts of Lathe-Het, and use millennia-old designs for powerful lasrifles. This unique armour, itself a product of the peculiar gravity of the Lathe Worlds, covers

their features entirely, leading to a solid and inexorable wall of faceless red and black that can often defeat enemies with fear before a single shot is even fired.

The higher ranks of the Crimson Guard are more frightening still. The Triarii maniples are amongst the most experienced, their bodies altered with additional cybernetics and ancient las technologies that few outside of the Lathes can match. The graceful Celerii, taken from the best the Triarii have to offer, rise on broad Alatus-pattern jump packs and act as the Venatorii's shock troops. The elite Celerii Tribuni officers, far more machine than man, represent not only the best fighters but also the finest strategic thinkers within the Crimson Guard. These dread commanders can bring a terrifying array of weapons to bear, and their presence can quickly turn the tide of a conflict.

Through the power of their unique organisation, their training, their augmentation, and the weapons technology each soldier carries, the Crimson Guard rival any of the armed forces within the Calixis Sector, and the Fabricators of the Lathes have done everything in their power to make sure this fact is well known among their would-be rivals.



TRAIT: HEART OF STEEL

Not known for being warm or personable, the soldiers of the Crimson Guard are unforgiving, blunt, and at times quite harsh to those unfamiliar with the cold, logical way the Adeptus Mechanicus operates. The same things that make them difficult to relate to for others actually make them more trustworthy in the eyes of the Adeptus Mechanicus, and thus a Crimson Guard soldier may substitute their Intelligence Characteristic for their Fellowship Characteristic whenever interacting with other members of the Cult Mechanicus.

TRAIT: SKIN OF IRON

Mechanical augmentation and cybernetic replacements are not only common, but also expected for the Machine Cult. By the end of their careers, most Tech-Priests have very little of their original body remaining; their flesh, blood, and sometimes even parts of their brain replaced by pure synthetic and mechanical components. The Crimson Guard are no different in this respect, and as a Venatorius advances through the ranks he usually gains more and more enhancements. Upon selecting this Alternate Rank, the character must select one Common Quality cybernetic that their character automatically gains. Every two Ranks after this (so Ranks 3, 5, and 7) the Acolyte must either select an additional cybernetic, or upgrade one of his existing cybernetics to Good Quality.

BECOMING A CRIMSON GUARD SOLDIER

Although originally built from the remnants of the Lathe's Skitarii legions, modern Venatorii are recruited far earlier in their military careers. Taken from the most promising of recruits, they are further augmented with additional cybernetics and implants, including the Potentia Coil that powers their unique and dangerous integrated weapons. Once their basic training and augmentation is complete, a process that usually takes between five and eight years, they join the lower ranks of the Venatorii cohorts, and are stationed on the various Mechanicus installations and forge worlds throughout the Calixis Sector. Those who prove more skilled than their fellow soldiers might find themselves fast-tracked for Triarius augmentation training, or even secondment to the Inquisition should such a request be made.

All Starting Skills, Talents, Traits, Gear, and Wealth listed here fully replace the Rank 1 Guardsman listing on pages 25 and 68 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook.

Required Career: Guardsman

Starting Skills: Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech), Speak Language (Low Gothic), Tech-Use.

Starting Talents: Exotic Weapon Training (Integrated Melee Weapon), Exotic Weapon Training (Integrated Ranged Weapon), Melee Weapon Training (Primitive).

Starting Traits: Heart of Steel, Mechanicus Implants, Skin of Iron.

Starting Gear: Crimson armour, red Mechanicus robes (Good Quality clothing), Venator Blade, charm (Mechanicus devotional icon), Integrated Lathe-Lasriffler.

Starting Wealth: 100+1d10 Thrones

Monthly Income: Military Class

Restrictions: Must have the Forge World Home World Origin.

ALTERNATE RANK STRUCTURE

It is likely that as the Acolyte spends experience on this Alternative Career, he will advance several Ranks in the Crimson Guard path. Players can use the following titles for their Venatorius within the Crimson Guard at those Ranks, instead of the standard ones listed for the Guardsman Career. These titles do not change the paths the Acolyte may choose when moving through the Guardsman Career.

| Rank Name | XP |
|------------------------|---------------|
| 1 Venatorius Novicius | 0-499 |
| 2 Venatorius | 500-999 |
| 3 Venatorius Veteranus | 1,000-1,999 |
| 4 Venatorius Decani | 2,000-2,999 |
| 5 Triarius | 3,000-5,999 |
| 6 Triarius Executus | 6,000-7,999 |
| 7 Celerius | 8,000-9,999 |
| 8 Celerius Tribuni | 10,000-14,999 |

FORGE TRAINING

The Venatorii differ from the Imperial Guard in virtually every way, and as a result the skill sets and personality traits that they bring into combat are quite removed from the norm. Crimson Guard do not use **Table 2-6 Guardsman Characteristic Advances** from page 69 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook, but instead use **Table 2-1: Crimson Guard Characteristic Advances** below.

TABLE 2-1: CRIMSON GUARD CHARACTERISTIC ADVANCES

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

CRIMSON GUARD ADVANCES

| Advance | Cost | Type | Prerequisites |
|-------------------------------------|------|--------|-------------------------------------|
| Awareness | 100 | Skill | — |
| Drive (Ground Vehicle) | 100 | Skill | — |
| Secret Tongue (Tech) | 100 | Skill | — |
| Speak Language (High Gothic) | 100 | Skill | — |
| Speak Language (Low Gothic) | 100 | Skill | — |
| Basic Weapon Training (Las) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Electro-Graft Use | 100 | Talent | — |
| Exotic Weapon Training (Pick One) † | 100 | Talent | — |
| Luminen Charge | 100 | Talent | Mechanicus Implants |
| Melee Weapon Training (Chain) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Pistol Training (Las) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Pistol Training (Plasma) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Sound Constitution † | 100 | Talent | — |
| Technical Knock | 100 | Talent | Intelligence 30 |
| Common Lore (Machine Cult) +10 | 200 | Skill | Common Lore (Machine Cult) |
| Common Lore (Tech) +10 | 200 | Skill | Common Lore (Tech) |
| Drive (Hover Vehicle) | 200 | Skill | — |
| Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus) | 200 | Skill | — |
| Logic | 200 | Skill | — |
| Pilot (Alatus Jump Pack) | 200 | Skill | Mechanicus Implants |
| Security | 200 | Skill | — |
| Binary Chatter | 200 | Talent | — |
| Disturbing Voice | 200 | Talent | — |
| Electrical Succour | 200 | Talent | Mechanicus Implants |
| Ferric Lure | 200 | Talent | Mechanicus Implants |
| Luminen Blast | 200 | Talent | Mechanicus Implants |
| Luminen Shock | 200 | Talent | Mechanicus Implants |
| Maglev Grace | 200 | Talent | Mechanicus Implants |
| Mechadendrite Use (Pick One) | 200 | Talent | Mechanicus Implants |
| Melee Weapon Training (Power) | 200 | Talent | — |
| The Flesh is Weak † | 200 | Talent | Mechanicus Implants |
| Forbidden Lore (Archeotech) | 300 | Skill | — |
| Pilot (Alatus Jump Pack) +10 | 300 | Skill | Pilot (Alatus-Pattern Jump Pack) |
| Secret Tongue (Tech) +10 | 300 | Skill | Secret Tongue (Tech) |
| Tech-Use +10 | 300 | Skill | Tech-Use |
| Tech-Use +20 | 300 | Skill | Tech-Use +10 |
| Energy Cache | 300 | Talent | Mechanicus Implants |
| Ferric Summons | 300 | Talent | Ferric Lure, Mechanicus Implants |
| Luminen Shield | 300 | Talent | Mechanicus Implants |
| Peer (Adeptus Mechanicus) | 300 | Talent | Fel 30 |
| Luminen Barrier | 400 | Talent | Luminen Shield, Mechanicus Implants |
| Luminen Flare | 400 | Talent | Luminen Blast, Mechanicus Implants |
| Luminen Surge | 400 | Talent | Luminen Shock, Mechanicus Implants |
| Maglev Transcendence | 400 | Talent | Maglev Grace, Mechanicus Implants |

†May be taken up to 2 times at this Rank.

CULT OF THE PURE FORM

"The flesh is strong!"

—Common Pure Form maxim

The Adeptus Ministorum and the Adeptus Mechanicus have never enjoyed a healthy working relationship within the Calixis Sector. Conflicts between the two organisations tend to be wars of words, though, political battles fought in the capital worlds of the Sector, rather than outright conflict between men and machines. Nevertheless, there have been several overt conflicts, such as the attack on the Explorator vessel Omega Inquiry from an Adepta Sororitas strike force on the far edges of the Halo Stars. There are no official records of the encounter, but the Tricorn contains sealed datavaults hinting at an abhuman strain that the Mechanicus had uncovered far from civilised space, and the Ministorum's reactions of horror when their spies reported the discovery. Retaliatory bombardments obliterated two outpost convents, and was about to escalate further before secretive diplomacy and unnamed offerings settled the matter. Such incidents are still rare, but with the gradual rise of a group calling itself the Cult of the Pure Form this could begin to change.

It is not known exactly who founded the Cult of the Pure Form, but their influence began in the Malfian Sub-Sector in the immediate aftermath of the Malygrisian Heresy. The traitorous Tech-Priest and his followers decimated untold worlds with their devastating weaponry, and some began to think that the existence of the Adeptus Mechanicus would lead to another, inevitable war. The followers of this emerging cult feared that this coming doom would scour humankind from the galaxy, leaving only the cold, barely-human flesh and machine hybrids of the Mechanicum behind. This twisted line of logic grew quickly until the first major anti-Mechanicum movement of the Calixis Sector's history began to swell, with loud marches and violent demonstrations.

In an unexpected move, and one that likely came about due to Cult Mechanicus political manoeuvring on Scintilla, the Sector Synod declared the leaders of the emergent cult Apostate. Over the next fifty years these leaders began to disappear, some dying in mysterious accidents and others in outright assassinations. Some thought that the Inquisition was to blame, and others whispered of the Officio Assassinorum's involvement, but very few were aware that the Lords Dragon had carried out this early intervention, and that their clandestine methods had managed to stifle the movement before it could truly become established. Displeased that the Lords Dragon had stepped beyond their usual bounds and were acting outside of the domains of the Lathes Worlds, the Inquisition sought to move against them. To appease the Calixian Conclave, the Lords Dragon handed over what information they had on the new sect. Their hope was that the Inquisition would continue the aggressive work against the Cult, but the Inquisition instead scaled back these efforts to more passive monitoring.

For a time, it seemed as though this early intercession had succeeded, but, like an unchecked weed, the Cult of the Pure Form rose once again. This time, the cult threw out its previous methods in favour of a slower approach, and rather than attempting to whip the people of a single sub-sector into a frenzy, the new Pure Form leaders instead chose to let their hatred for the Mechanicus simmer on worlds across the entire Sector. Unlike before, the Sector Synod made no moves to denounce the Cult of the Pure Form; some even whispered they had begun to covertly support it. Many Inquisitors began investigating the cult to see if they had been motivated by something other than a fervent love of the Emperor, but over time, some members of the Calixian Conclave—especially puritans of the Ordo Hereticus—began to see them as actually displaying agreeable philosophies, as well as acting as a valuable check against the Mechanicum within the Sector. This has not gone unnoticed in the Lathes. Slowly but surely, the rising cult is sparking a conflict, one that has edged closer to ignition with each passing year.



TALENT: REFORMED SKIN

Either because he has decided to bring the word of the Pure Form to the Calixis Sector, or because he simply cannot live without his cybernetic implants, the Acolyte has chosen to take on the new flesh and join the ranks of the Reformed. A member of the Cult of the Pure Form can take this Talent as many times as he has missing limbs/senses/respiratory systems/etc. due to removing them via the Purity of Flesh talent, or any time he loses a limb due to Critical Damage. When taken, he gains a replacement that will either be a vat-grown limb, or perhaps the reclaimed and purified flesh from a Servitor. Treat this replacement as a Poor-Quality cybernetic of the same, although it is not a cybernetic and does not add to the his Toughness Bonus. There are no vat-grown equivalents for Auger Arrays, Cortex Implants, Cranial Armour, Mechadendrites of any type, Mechanicus Implants, Mind Impulse Units, or any other form of cybernetic from any other **DARK HERESY** supplement. Any Fate Points gained from the Purity of Flesh Talent are lost when the limbs/senses/etc. are replaced. This Talent costs no experience to purchase, and other than in life-threatening situations the character is under no obligation to replace his missing limbs with vat-grown alternatives.

The Cult of the Pure Form's members differ from other Ministorum sects within the Calixis Sector in that they do not hate the Adeptus Mechanicus purely for their worship of the Omnisiah (although that certainly is part of it). They are not anti-technology either; they simply wish to wrest control of such power away from the Mechanicum so that "uncorrupted" humans might control it. Their true ire stems from the extensive use of cybernetics and other mechanical implants that virtually every member of the Adeptus Mechanicus possesses. To the cult, the most pure form in the universe is that of the human body, and to defile it by removing untainted flesh and grafting on artificial limbs is nothing short of heresy.

Many of the members of the Cult of the Pure Form have cybernetic implants when they join, and soon undergo a ritual known as the Purity of Flesh to remove the implants from their bodies. This violent ritual usually leaves the participant missing limbs or eyes, and can rob them of their ability to hear or even speak, but once completed the new cult member enters the ranks of the "Shriven," blessed men and women who have seen the purity of Mankind, have unshackled themselves from their prisons of cybernetic augmentation, and who now walk the path of the God-Emperor. The bulk of the cult's ranks are made up of those lucky enough to have lived without the defilement of cybernetics, and are referred to as the "Untouched." Each Untouched member comes to the sect for different reasons, but most are spurred on by a love of the God-Emperor and an inherent mistrust of the Adeptus Mechanicus.

However, the Cult of the Pure Form does not sit by and wait for people to see its point of view, and has instituted their own group of missionaries. This third group is the most powerful within the cult, and are known as the "Reformed." Acting as the

TALENT: GIFT OF PURITY

The Acolyte has forsaken the cybernetic, cast out the desire for the bionic, and joined the ranks of the Untouched. Never will sacred flesh be sullied by the implantation of devices that rob the Acolyte of his purity. The character cannot, under any circumstances, choose or accept the implantation of cybernetics/bionics, even if the result of refusing them would be death. If the character finds himself implanted with cybernetics/bionics against his will, then he must remove them as soon as possible, exchanging this Talent for the Purity of Flesh Talent. This Talent costs no xp to purchase, and is automatically granted to members of the Cult of the Pure Form who have no cybernetics/bionics when they take the alternate rank.

TALENT: PURITY OF FLESH

The Acolyte has participated in the Purity of Flesh ritual and emerged alive. Taking his place amongst the Shriven, he has become truly blessed, and despite his missing limbs, eyes, and other organs, he feels more complete now than he ever did with his soulless metallic attachments. Truly the God-Emperor of Mankind is watching him! All cybernetics/bionics that the character had previously must be removed, including internal cybernetic implants. If doing so would normally result in the character's death, such as in the case of a Bionic Respiratory System, the character instead permanently reduces his Toughness by 1d5 and Wounds by 1 (and the character must immediately take the Reformed Skin Talent to stop himself from dying). The effects of removing these cybernetic implants follow the rules for Critical Damage (see page 201, **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook), and for implants that have additional effects (MIUs, Cranial Armour, etc.), these benefits are lost once the cybernetics have been removed. The character gains 1 additional Fate Point for every two bionics that he has removed (with the exception of Mechadendrites) and the character *must* remove all his cybernetics/bionics. This Talent costs no experience to purchase and is automatically granted to members of the Cult of the Pure Form who have cybernetics/bionics when they take the Alternate Rank. The character counts as having the Gift of Purity Talent for the purposes of refusing new cybernetics.

public face of the cult, the Reformed are a large, sector-spanning network. They commonly preach that the God-Emperor had not a single cybernetic in the days when He walked amongst mortals, and that if He was pure of flesh, then so too should His subjects be. The Reformed consist of Shriven who have reversed the process of bionic implantation, creating implants not of unholy cybernetics, but instead made out of pure flesh. These vat-grown limbs and organs are often quite crude, and in many cases misshapen, but in the eyes of the cult they are pure and represent the future that it sees for Mankind.

CULT OF THE PURE FORM ADVANCES

| Advance | Cost | Type | Prerequisites |
|-----------------------------------|---------|--------|-----------------------------------|
| Blather | 100 | Skill | — |
| Charm | 100 | Skill | — |
| Ciphers (Cult of the Pure Form) | 100 | Skill | — |
| Common Lore (Ecclesiarchy) | 100 | Skill | — |
| Common Lore (Imperial Creed) | 100 | Skill | — |
| Basic Weapon Training (Primitive) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Flagellant | 100 | Talent | — |
| Hatred (Adeptus Mechanicus) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Peer (Ecclesiarchy) | 100 | Talent | Fellowship 30 |
| Pistol Training (Primitive) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Command | 200 | Skill | — |
| Common Lore (Machine Cult) | 200 | Skill | — |
| Deceive | 200 | Skill | — |
| Intimidate | 200 | Skill | — |
| Basic Weapon Training (Melta) | 200 | Talent | — |
| Air of Authority | 200 | Talent | Fellowship 30 |
| Iron Discipline | 200 | Talent | Willpower 30, Command |
| Pistol Training (Melta) | 200 | Talent | — |
| Medicae | 300 | Skill | — |
| Litany of Hate | 300 | Talent | Hatred |
| Peer (Inquisition) | 300 | Talent | Fellowship 30 |
| Gift of Purity † | Free | Talent | — |
| Purity of Flesh † | Free | Talent | — |
| Reformed Skin † | Special | Talent | Gift of Purity or Purity of Flesh |

†Can only be taken under specific circumstances. See page 43 for details.

BECOMING A CULTIST OF THE PURE FORM

There are many ways to be tempted to join the Cult of the Pure Form. For some, it is due to a feeling of betrayal, where replacement cybernetics have caused more harm than good, and the poor soul shackled by them is looking for a form of release among the ranks of the Shrivens. Others, after hearing the words of the Reformed, have come to understand that the continued existence of the Adeptus Mechanicus is nothing but a disaster waiting to happen, and that it is their holy duty to do something to stop them. Others join out of a fear that if they begin to receive cybernetics that they will lose something of their own souls, and eagerly join the ranks of the Untouched to avoid this horrific fate. A select few might even be contacted directly by the cult's senior members, as their membership would greatly benefit the cult's standing and appeal across the Sector. The cult also offers a strong brotherhood and a cause to motivate new meaning into previously meaningless lives. Those who achieve such purity in their flesh may find their spirit even stronger than before, and certainly stronger than those who foolishly trust their bodies to the machine.

Upon becoming a member of the Cult of the Pure Form, the character gains the Excommunicate Mechanicum Trait.

Required Career: Adept, Arbitrator, Assassin, Cleric, Guardsman, Imperial Psyker, Scum

Alternate Rank: Cleric—Rank 2 or higher (500 xp); All others—Rank 4 or higher (2,000 xp)

Other Requirements: Any Acolyte who possess any bionics/cybernetics when taking this Alternate Rank *must* take the Purity of Flesh Talent before he may take any further advances. Acolytes who do not possess any bionics/cybernetics when selecting this Rank *must* select the Gift of Purity Talent before they may take any further advances.

TRAIT:

EXCOMMUNICATE MECHANICUM

The Cult of the Pure Form is not a secretive group, in which members meet covertly in dank basements or crumbling hab blocks. They have made their presence felt and do not feel the need to hide their beliefs. The Mechanicum, in turn, view them as dangerous, misguided fools, and treat them with open disdain at best. Should any member of the Machine Cult learn of the Acolyte's true allegiance, there could be dire consequences. If discovered, treat any member of the Mechanicum as having the lowest possible Disposition towards the character (and vice versa). The GM may even, in extreme situations, determine that acts of violence might be called for. Additionally, all forms of Interaction—even just speaking with members of the Machine Cult—are to be treated as **Arduous (-40)** before factoring in other modifiers.

FACTOR OF THE LATHES

"The subtleties of human society are often dismissed by our brothers and sisters, but these mysteries too tick in accordance with the ordered principles of the Omnissiah. Like a fine chronograph, the human mind clicks and grinds in complex patterns set out in His image. And like a cogitator or a manufactorium or a voidship, this machine must be understood—and mastered—by some Priests of our order, so that the grand Quest for Knowledge can continue."

—Factor Jhuston, to his disciples

Many members of the Adeptus Mechanicus often choose to ignore the niceties of Imperial society, cleaving instead to their own esoteric, arcane practices. The Priests of Mars, however, must oftentimes negotiate, wheedle, and bargain with the flesh-flapping and uncouth individuals who hold themselves highly in the Imperium, that they might further the Quest for Knowledge. Within the Lathes, the Magos devised a common solution to this problem, through the use of specialisation. The Lathes trains their Magos Metallurgicus to refine the secrets of the true flesh, Magos Alchemys to create mystic unguents, and even Magos Biologos to unwrap the riddle of the helix; therefore, the Magos of the Lathes determined that they would utilise specialised personnel here as well. Instead of wasting the valuable cognitive-cycles of its highest members, the



Lathes instead trains a small portion of its initiates to read the muddy and inscrutable outputs generated by outsiders as well as the pure, precise language of the machine. The Factors of the Lathes are ambassadors to the wider Sector, used when the Lathe Worlds find the most expedient path is to deal with the uninitiated on their own fleshy terms.

Myth has it that a forgotten Mech-Deacon created this class, in the wake of a cataclysmic misunderstanding that began with a Scintillan Priest mistaking a particularly venerable Adept of Mars for a malfunctioning cogitator, and ended with several orbital bombardments. Since then, the Factors of the Lathes have served for centuries with distinction as ambassadors between the Lathe Worlds and the rest of the Calixis Sector. While the Factors are not loved by all members of the Cult Mechanicus, they nonetheless efficiently bring about the desired results, and thus are supported and employed heavily within the Lathes. Those chosen undergo decades of intense training and physical modification in the Hesh Protocol Academies, that they might become optimised instruments of the Omnissiah. As a result, not only do Factors of the Lathes lack the typical look of a Tech-Priest, having shed their bulky augmetics in favour of subtle but no less potent equivalents, but they are also capable of regurgitating vast amounts of data that most of their brethren would deem worthless. Such information ranges from a clinically thorough knowledge of the political history of the Calixis Sector to truly inscrutable subjects, such as the how to properly input and cycle nutrients when meeting with the hive nobles of various planets.

To be a Factor is to accept that imperfection itself can be a part of a perfect plan. The Omnissiah's purity may be found in steel and circuitry, but a Factor must also be able to understand, and even appreciate, what he sees as the inferior workings of bone, blood, and tissue. Though Factors are often as heavily augmented as their brethren, they bear few visible signs of their metallic ascension. Their augmetics are instead crafted with loving precision to resemble flesh; usually the Factor conducts this work himself, as few others within the Priesthood of Mars would deign or desire to make such things. Mechadendrites are kept small, subtle, and hidden in clothes, or able to collapse into sub-dermal compartments when not needed. Few Factors permanently incorporate larger mechadendrites into their bodies, but some of these ambassadors find servo-arms and other artificial limbs too useful for their tasks within the Machine Cult to forgo entirely, and thus have studied the difficult art of attaching and removing their external augmetics as required.

Whether a Factor revels in his unique position or bemoans the travails that it entails, all ambassadors of the Lathes maintain a certainty of purpose. Time and time again, the Factors have been critical to the successes of the Adeptus Mechanicus of the Calixis Sector, moving one Lord Governor to support a purge of a unique new form of tech-heresy, or securing promises of assistance from a Rogue Trader whose resources can reach a becalmed Explorator Fleet in the Koronus Expanse. Certain Factors are even involved with the Inquisition, using these invaluable connections to further the causes of the dread Lords Dragon, and some become Acolytes of Inquisitors who value their subtlety, or simply find their company less grating than that of others from the Martian Priesthood. Further, while their order does not specialise in such things, Factors can be excellent infiltrators, as each is a fully trained Tech-Priest in his own right, whose form betrays

FACTOR OF THE LATHES ADVANCES

| Advance | Cost | Type | Prerequisites |
|----------------------------------|------|--------|---------------|
| Blather | 100 | Skill | — |
| Blather +10 | 100 | Skill | Blather |
| Carouse | 100 | Skill | — |
| Charm | 100 | Skill | — |
| Deceive | 100 | Skill | — |
| Diplomacy | 100 | Skill | Fel 30 |
| Disguise | 100 | Skill | — |
| Inquiry | 100 | Skill | — |
| Inquiry +10 | 100 | Skill | Inquiry |
| Logic | 100 | Skill | — |
| Scholastic Lore (Bureaucracy) | 100 | Skill | — |
| Scholastic Lore (Heraldry) | 100 | Skill | — |
| Scholastic Lore (Imperial Creed) | 100 | Skill | — |
| Mimic | 100 | Talent | — |
| Peer (Administratum) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Peer (Government) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Peer (Military) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Peer (Nobility) | 100 | Talent | — |
| Charm +10 | 200 | Skill | Charm |
| Deceive +10 | 200 | Skill | Deceive |
| Diplomacy +10 | 200 | Skill | Diplomacy |
| Scrutiny | 200 | Skill | — |
| Master Orator | 300 | Talent | Fel 30 |
| Talented (Diplomacy) | 400 | Talent | Diplomacy +10 |

no overt signs of its true nature. While their apparent lack of augmentation is usually used to put others at ease, several Factors have become embroiled in political and even military conflicts, catching foes unawares thanks to their appearance.

As they are not immediately recognisable as Priests of the Machine Cult, Factors of the Lathes often signify their office via their garb or other ornamentation. They usually wear heavily adorned Mechanicum robes, and sometimes even have shifting electroos embedded in their skin, emblazoned with the sign of the Cogwheel, visible when they wish to state their allegiance but vanishing if they need to act more covertly.

BECOMING A FACTOR OF THE LATHES

Calixis Sector Tech-Priests chosen to become Factors train on Lathe-Hesh, where their bodies and minds are shaped so that they can fulfil the function for which they have been selected. This training and augmentation (or modification of existing augmetics) can take a highly variable span of time—some Factors pass through the Protocol Academy within years, while others take decades to integrate the subtle etiquette sub-routines needed for proper interaction with the myriad factions of the Calixis Sector.

Required Career: Tech-Priest

Alternate Rank: Rank 1 or Higher (0 xp)

Benefits: Fabricated Flesh (Trait)

Characteristic Advancements: The Agent may purchase Fellowship Advances at 100 (Simple), 250 (Intermediate), 500 (Trained), and 750 (Expert), replacing that Characteristic entry in **Table 2-9: Tech-Priest Characteristic Advancements** on page 89 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook.

TRAIT: FABRICATED FLESH

Prerequisites: Tech-Priest

A Factor of the Lathes bears few of the usual marks of being a Tech-Priest; his cyber-mantle is fully hidden by false flesh or even vat-grown skin, and any augmetics or bionic limbs that he possesses appear to be a part of his body, or at least as common augmetics that many within the Imperium possess.

The Tech-Priest retains all of his standard abilities and Traits as described on page 27 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook, but it requires a **Hard (-20) Scrutiny** or **Tech-Use Test** to notice any significantly off-putting signs of his mechanical parts that mark him as a Tech-Priest. If he possesses mehadendrites or other large attachments that would obviously set him aside as a member of the Adeptus Mechanicus, he may attach or remove any number of them at will, in a ritual that takes 1d5 hours to complete and causes 1 level of Fatigue but has no other deleterious side-effects. So long as his augmentations are not distractingly noticeable to those he is interacting with, a Factor of the Lathes gains a +5 bonus to all Fellowship-based Tests when dealing with Imperial citizens outside of the Adeptus Mechanicus.

LATHESMASTER

"It should be working now! If not, try praying some more, or strike it again!"

—Foreman-Primus Sarnia Maufry

The public face of the Adeptus Mechanicus—or the portion they allow Calixian society to see—are the Tech-Priests and Enginseers that roam the Sector. Bedecked in their deep crimson robes and adorned with all manner of machines and mechadendrites, these arcane beings talk of the great Omnissiah, pray before machines of all shapes and sizes, and speak in a language indecipherable to the average citizen. What most do not know is that the Mechanicus in the Sector is made up of far more than just Tech-Priests. There are, of course, the legions of servitors, but within the Lathes, and across their various Calixian enclaves, there is a secondary class of workers—the Lathesmasters. These people make up most of the population of many Calixian forge worlds, and it is their skilled labour and mechanical expertise that has kept the Lathes functioning for generations.

There are few surviving records detailing the origins of the Lathesmasters. Many simply assume they are natives of the system, but most records indicate there were no inhabitants when the Mechanicum took possession of the Lathes. Common tales say they were imported as labour at some later time, just as the Mechanicus would import any required tool. Some even whisper of improbable genetic experiments of the Lords Dragon, surely another of the cabal's self-aggrandising rumours. Whatever their origins, the Lathesmasters appeared to be perfectly adapted to forge world life. Each is far stronger and visibly shorter than most other humans in the Sector, but this was not seen as a downside as their stocky bodies made for tough, rugged workers. They possessed innate resistances and immunities to the harsh, polluted environments typical of most forge worlds, and seemed unaffected by the unforgiving and ever-changing gravity that was common to the Lathes. They were, in essence, the perfect workforce for the system, smaller in number but even better than the standard servitor complements most forge worlds use exclusively.

As decades passed and the Lathes grew in power, a strong family-lodge mentality began to grow. This impressed into their work, and forge-groups developed fierce rivalries over

performance. Soon, these transformed into direct competition between the three main Lathes. The Tech-Priest overlords fostered this competition, channelling the Lathesmasters' drive back into their work, and soon work quotas were filled at an ever-faster rate. Motivated by their leaders and the divinity of the Omnissiah, this unseen worker army helped shape the earliest days of the Calixis Sector.

Eventually this drive for exceptional work effort decreased. When the reward for meeting a work quota ahead of schedule was simply to move onto the next quota, certain elements began to question not only their purpose, but also their place within the Omnissiah's plans. In response, large swathes of Lathesmasters organised into groups called "Cores," and made demands that the priesthood of the Lathes were unwilling to grant. On Lathe-Hadd, a world where primary production was focused around ammunition, discontent was at its highest, and if not for the Forge-Provost's swift response, a rebellion might have spilled out across the world.

Deciding that the risk to productivity was too great, a collection of Tech-Priests from Lathe-Het gathered to create what would be called "Rerum Novarum." This charter described the exact requirements of the workforce, but at the same time also made provisions to reward those that met their work quotas with something other than just another work quota. Most importantly, however, it declared that there would be no distinction between the work conducted by the priesthood and that of the Lathesmasters—all work, no matter who completed it, was to be done in the name of the Omnissiah, and therefore all work was considered divine. It was a mostly symbolic declaration, and in truth much of the priesthood saw the edict as nothing more than a hollow appeasement of a society one step above the servitors, but the Lathesmasters accepted it, and soon quotas were being filled once again.

For decades, the Lathes returned to peaceful production, with only the occasional flare of civil unrest. The Lathesmasters were allowed to keep their work-groups, and canny members of the priesthood used these groups against one another in competition. It was not until after the War of Brass that the spectre of rebellion from the Cores once again appeared, but this time it was the fault of the priesthood, specifically the Divisio Genetor, a highly experimental faction within the Lathes consisting of Tech-Priests with little or no oversight.





Fascinated with the Lathesmasters' biological differences, the Divisio Genetor began to delve deeper into the genetic history of the Lathesmasters. Some scattered reports from the time indicated that the Divisio Genetor's sudden interest was actually prompted by the Lords Dragon, but if true it has never been confirmed. The Divisio Genetor had lofty goals for their experiments, and planned to see if further modifications of the Lathesmaster genome were possible. If successful, they could move Lathesmaster populations to other forge worlds with even harsher conditions, creating a workforce that did not rely on programmed servitors but rather comprised motivated workers dedicated to the glory of the Ommissiah.

Starting with coerced and abducted Lathesmasters who worked in the Lathe's harshest conditions, the Divisio Genetor set to work on modifying their genetics to acclimatise them to extreme temperatures and areas of low oxygen. These invasive experiments, which would later be called the Grinder Atrocities, had an unusually high mortality rate, and once news of cruelty and mass fatalities spread the Cores of Lathe-Hesh rose as one in anger. Word travelled quickly to Lathe-Het and Lathe-Hadd, and soon all the Cores were demanding the cranial drives of the Divisio Genetor's leaders. Thinking that previous suppression tactics would suffice, the Forge-Provosts were sent in to quell the populace. This backfired horribly, and three of Lathe-Hadd's most prominent Cores—nearly a half-million men and women—were massacred. All work within the Lathes came to a grinding halt.

With pressure on all sides, and rumours that the vengeful Dragon Secutorii might soon involve themselves in the conflict, the priesthood delivered a series of encyclicals in the hope of bringing the matter to rest. Edict 1311-188-7 gave over much of the freedoms that the work-guilds desired and put an end to the experiments. At the same time, the edict gave the Mechanicum greater authority to transplant Lathesmasters to other areas of the Calixis Sector. The Cores never got their desired retribution for the actions of the Divisio Genetor, but numerous leading Genetor Magos soon found themselves transferred to the Panopticon Orbital, where they were never heard from again. After a ceremony of reunification within the Nidus Omega on Lathe-Het, a place where, until that day, no Lathesmaster had ever set foot, the Lathesmasters collectively agreed to the new conditions, and production started once again.

As it turned out, the Divisio Genetor's experiments had been rather prescient, as it was not long before Lathe-Het was stripped of its manufacturing capability and the vast Lathesmaster population found itself transferred to other forge worlds across the Sector. With so many different areas needing the expertise of these skilled workers, the information from the Divisio Genetor's experiments allowed the Mechanicus to ensure that Lathesmaster populations were always the right fit for whatever environment they found themselves in. As for the Lathesmasters that now inhabit almost every major Mechanicus installation across the Sector, they have yet to rebel again, and seem genuinely content with their position in the Ommissiah's plan and their place in Calixian history.

TALENT: RITE OF IGNITION

The Adeptus Mechanicus has many rites and rituals associated with coaxing machine spirits to life, so many, in fact, that knowing all of them would be quite impossible. Lathesmasters tend to be more practical than their Tech-Priest masters, and often there are tense conditions when it is not always practical to chant a three hundred line Cantic of Initiation. Most have their own, self-taught "rite of ignition," a form of prayer to the machine-spirit that involves striking the object in question several times, usually with sufficient force for activation. They tend not to enact this rite in the presence of Tech-Priests, as many would consider it heresy, but few can argue with its effectiveness. The Lathesmaster may substitute their Strength Characteristic for their Intelligence Characteristic when making a **Tech-Use Test** to start or activate machinery. More sophisticated or delicate machinery may not respond well to the Rite of Ignition, so GMs have the final say regarding which objects this Talent may be used upon.

TALENT: STRENGTH OF THE LATHES

Blistering heat, dense smog, toxic fumes, open flames, and exposed electrical conduits are all common sights on the forge worlds of the Calixis Sector. To most people this sort of environment would be a death sentence, but to the Lathesmasters it is home. After long years in such settings, these hardy workers never shy away from such conditions, and most even thrive in such dreadful environments. Any time a Lathesmaster would gain a level of Fatigue, except those caused by psychic powers, he may make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** and if successful, he does not gain the level of Fatigue. Additionally, Lathesmasters take half as long to recover from Fatigue as normal.

BECOMING A LATHESMASTER

A Lathesmaster is not something a citizen becomes, but is more something he is born into. They are the hardy and intractable workers of the Lathe Worlds, immune to the extremes of forge life, and differ considerably from other Calixian populations. Shorter, bulkier, and far stronger than the average hiveborn, a Lathesmaster could almost be considered genetically designed for heavy manual labour. Some Inquisitors respect these traits, as well as their technical expertise and familiarity with the Cult Mechanicus, and take promising Lathesmasters from their guilds so that they might serve a higher purpose. Their Mechanicum Masters often encourage such efforts, perhaps the better to gather information, and implant their own agents within rival organisations.

All Starting Skills, Talents, Traits, Gear and Wealth listed here totally replace the Rank 1 Scum listing on pages 27 and 83 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook.

Required Career: Scum

TRAIT: GENETIC PANTROPY

Lathesmasters are capable of withstanding more extreme environments than most humans, and have their own unique traits and abilities that make them such a hardy workforce. The Grinder Atrocities took this one step further, actively manipulating their genes in order to prepare them for varied environments, especially dangerous ones. In the years since these controversial experiments, most have undergone some level of genetic manipulation and are capable of surviving in very difficult conditions. A Lathesmaster may re-roll any Test that is the result of extreme environments, such as very hot or cold conditions, areas of low oxygen, or even toxic atmospheres. Additionally, he suffers no adverse effects in areas of slightly higher and lower gravity, and can move normally in them.

TRAIT: LABOURER BUILD

Whilst they are still very much human, Lathesmasters have certain physical aspects that mark them apart from what might be considered "normal." They are thick and heavyset, with broad shoulders and large, tightly packed muscle groups. They are not quick on their feet, but make up for that with their endurance levels and above-average strength. Lathesmasters do not use the Fit for Purpose Trait that is usually part of the Forge World Homeworld Origin. Instead, they gain +3 Strength and +3 Toughness upon creation, but start with -5 Agility.

Starting Skills: Climb, Contortionist, Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech), Speak Language (Low Gothic), Survival, Tech-Use.

Starting Talents: Iron Jaw, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Melee Weapon Training (Power), Pistol Training (SP).

Starting Traits: Dark Sight, Genetic Pantropy, Labourer Build.

Starting Gear: Light Flak Coat, Flak Helmet, work tunic (Common Quality clothing), charm (Mechanicus devotional icon), vial of Sacred Machine Oil, Combi-Tool *or* Lascutter, Good Quality Bionic Arm *or* Common Quality MIU, Stub Automatic with 2 reloads, Percussion Mallet.

Starting Wealth: 40+1d10 Thrones

Monthly Income: Drudging Class

Restrictions: Must have the Forge World Home World Origin.

RUGGED GENETICS

Lathesmasters are naturally strong and quite sturdy, and tend to get stronger as they grow older. They also have a natural affinity for technology, a trait needed for the role they play in the Adeptus Mechanicus. Lathesmasters do not use **Table 2-8 Scum Characteristic Advances** from page 83 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook, but instead use **Table 2-2: Lathesmaster Characteristic Advances** on page 50.

TABLE 2-2: LATHESMASTER CHARACTERISTIC ADVANCES

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

LATHESMASTER ADVANCES

| Advance | Cost | Type | Prerequisites |
|------------------------------|--------|------|--------------------------|
| Intimidate | Skill | 100 | — |
| Survival +10 | Skill | 100 | Survival |
| Tech-Use +10 | Skill | 100 | Tech-Use |
| Tech-Use +20 | Skill | 100 | Tech-Use +10 |
| Trade (Any One) † | Skill | 100 | — |
| Trade (Any One) +10 † | Skill | 100 | The same Trade Skill |
| Basic Weapon Training (Las) | Talent | 100 | — |
| Blind Fighting | Talent | 100 | Perception 30 |
| Bulging Biceps | Talent | 100 | Strength 45 |
| Die Hard | Talent | 100 | Willpower 40 |
| Hardy | Talent | 100 | Toughness 40 |
| Pistol Training (Las) | Talent | 100 | — |
| Resistance (Cold) | Talent | 100 | — |
| Resistance (Heat) | Talent | 100 | — |
| Resistance (Poison) | Talent | 100 | — |
| Rite of Ignition | Talent | 100 | — |
| Sound Constitution †† | Talent | 100 | — |
| Strength of the Lathes | Talent | 100 | — |
| Talented (Trade) (Any One) † | Talent | 100 | The same Trade Skill |
| True Grit | Talent | 100 | Toughness 40 |
| Awareness | Skill | 200 | — |
| Demolition | Skill | 200 | — |
| Logic | Skill | 200 | — |
| Trade (Pick One) +20 † | Skill | 200 | The same Trade Skill +10 |
| Binary Chatter | Talent | 200 | — |
| Crushing Blow | Talent | 200 | Strength 40 |
| The Flesh is Weak †† | Talent | 200 | — |

† May be taken up to 4 times at this rank.

†† May be taken up to 2 times at this rank.

ELITE ADVANCE PACKAGES

"Travelling is a brutality. It forces you to mix with heretics, and lose sight of all the calming structure of the Lathes. You are constantly off balance. Even the essentials of air, the land, and the waters are not yours. All that you have is your soul and your unshakable faith in the Ommissiah. And that, my pupil, can be enough to last you."

—Arch-Magos Pavese, to his most recent recruit for Cistrion training

In Advanced Character Creation, Alternate Careers allow a change in a character's advancement by way of his ongoing experience. Beyond, this there are also things that can dramatically change a character's motivations or his base behaviours that have little or nothing to do with his Career. This may be due to a character's personal philosophy, a traumatic occurrence in their past, or possibly a twist of fate that has made the character something more than just his Career. Whatever the reason, the character is now looking at other options for personal advancement. One way of reflecting these occurrences is by the use of Elite Advance packages. These build on the rules for Elite Advances (see sidebar below), which allow an Acolyte to spend his xp outside the usual development found in his Career Path. This allows the character to gain unusual Skills or Talents to which he otherwise would not have access. Regardless of how the character's xp is spent, he advances through the Ranks of his Career path normally.

For every potential life-altering event that can happen to an Acolyte, there is a corresponding Elite Advance Package, and as such a GM should use Elite Packages as a kind of campaign toolbox, a framework to show off his creativity and customise the development of his campaign and the Player Characters.

There are no exact rules for creating Elite Advance Packages; it is up to the GM to decide what these packages should cost relative to their abilities or the potential advances that they grant. While trying to create such a package, the GM should keep in mind that in the 41st Millennium, nothing can be gained without paying a real price. This does not mean just the xp cost, but also costs to an Acolyte's sanity, his Characteristics, and possibly even the degradation of his very soul. This means that Insanity Points, Characteristic Point loss, and Corruption Points are all on the table for Elite Advance Package creation. There can also be other costs such as restrictions on behaviour, dress codes, food or drink intake, medicinal use, or others. These packages can also have hitherto-unknown personal enemies or masters that the Acolyte must now recognise, and quite possibly, confront.

To develop other, unique packages, players should look to the Character options shown in Chapter 2 and the examples that follow for ideas. Other Elite Advance Packages can be found in other **DARK HERESY** books, such as **THE INQUISITOR'S HANDBOOK**. The rules for Dark Pacts (see page 241 of the

ELITE ADVANCES RULE SUMMARY

A character's nature and development is broadly determined by his Career Path. However, the Advancements listed are not the sum total of all that a character could learn. A character might be exposed to certain Skills or Talents during play, or, as a result of his experience, deliberately seek out new abilities to combat or exploit the things he encounters.

Sometimes the GM offers an Acolyte an opportunity to take an Elite Advance as a consequence of the character's actions, or developing events in the adventure. These Elite Advances may come with additional side effects, such as Corruption or Insanity Points, or the character becoming indebted to an NPC or part of a conspiracy.

An Acolyte can also request an Elite Advance for a Skill or Talent not listed on his Advancement Scheme, but this must be reasonable and appropriate for the character and the situation he is in. To make a request an Acolyte needs the following:

- Logical justification for the character to have the Elite Advance.
- An explanation for how the Acolyte gained the Advance, how he got it, time taken, resources expended, etc.
- An offer of how many Experience Points or other costs the player is willing to pay to gain the Advance. The further a Skill or Talent lies outside the character's normal frame of expertise, the more it should cost; likewise for particularly rare or unusual knowledge.

The GM may decide not to grant the Elite Advance, or request a higher xp cost than that suggested, or impose some other counterbalancing penalty. The GM may also rule that the player needs to pass a series of Tests on order to successfully learn the required Skill or Talent; this usually ties into the explanation for how the Acolyte gained the Advance.

DARK HERESY Core Rulebook) also offer a similar system for accounting for unusual abilities. Elite Advance Packages should always be led by the narrative, and should reflect on some force, ideology, faction, or an in-game occurrence, not just as an excuse to give Skills and Talents to a character that he cannot normally acquire.

The examples shown here allow a GM to offer an Acolyte a new element to his base make up, such as the emergence of a new kind of psychic ability, or to bring forward an event that happened to the character long ago, one that was hidden from their mind, and now that past memory begins to come to the surface.

The use of an Elite Advance Package is, of course, optional, as they modify and can potentially upset the balance of the usual character progression system. These packages are recommended for experienced groups only, and GM guidance and approval is required.

CISTRON

"The eyes and ears of a Cistron are deadlier than any weapon they carry."

—Magos De Jeffari, to his disciples.

On the Lathes, beyond the ancient and dark workshops and manufactorums, there sit hidden laboratories full of aged and decrepit cogitators, whose function is to create the dark functionaries. Here, candidates are brought to go through a series of technotic engram-branding and implant procedures that transform an apostle of the Machine God into a sleeper agent for the Lords Dragon—a Cistron.

The process for doing so is laborious and the chances for success are very low; more often than not, the candidate is found to be mentally incapable handling the transformation of their skills and personality into someone totally unlike themselves. Of those who might be able to handle the conditioning, the psychic readjustment of the candidate's personality and memory may crush the candidate's psyche, and they become no more than another flesh source for servitors. Those who do survive, and even thrive, under the process, are then made ready for a new personality and skill set.

Cistrions are then loaded with a new identity, a series of false memories, and the skills and talents necessary to become another anonymous person in some part of the Sector. They quickly become another cog in the world of which they are to be located. The candidates understand that while their original persona is in torpor, they unknowingly work hard to foster a sense of well being and complacency in those whose lives they will touch. They want to be seen as trustworthy and valued wherever they are, thereby making it easier for them to gather the necessary intelligence for their assignment.

Once a Cistron is ready, both physiologically and psychologically, he is then placed into stasis. Then the agent is taken clandestinely to a location somewhere in the Calixis Sector (and rumours abound that Cistrions are also sometimes sent into the lawless Koronus Expanse) and released into the general population. The Cistron is also given the proper documentation, work permits, and a false identity trail, enough to establish the persona in this new setting. Once on site, the Cistron seeks out a position allowing him to accomplish its programmed task. This can take days, weeks or even years. The agent is not consciously aware of his assignment, which may even change over time as circumstances dictate. In that case, another hidden agent, the Minder who watches over flocks of Cistrions in a region, conducts subconscious upgrade-cants to the Cistron. The patience of the Mechanicus can know no bounds if the knowledge they wish to uncover is important enough, and most agents spend years carefully embedding themselves into readiness. Once a Cistron has accomplished his mission, the agent returns to his Minder, guided through more layers of engram-branding.



Occasionally, a Cistron's programming never takes complete hold or becomes eroded, or his Minder may perish before he can implement the agent's activation protocols. Often the Cistron is simply forgotten, his existence lost in accidental Lathe data-purges or datastack failures, living an entire life without activation unless unlikely events somehow trigger their primary persona. A Cistron might wander throughout the Sector with the knowledge he has gained, never knowing why the urge to wander has become so powerful.

ANYONE, ANYWHERE, AND WAITING TO AWAKEN

Cistrions are the hidden Mechanicum agents who are rumoured to be seeded all throughout the Calixis Sector. These agents of the Lords Dragon are in place for a number of reasons. Some are believed to be there to record and bring back information about the other factions of the Imperium who may not want the Mechanicus to further its pursuits. Others are thought to exist to execute intricate plans to remove stubborn obstacles to the Quest for Knowledge and the increased glory of the Lathes, in the name of the Ommissiah. Some Cistrions are in place as insurance against outside attacks, watching and waiting for the correct activation cant-protocol to send them out against those who would threaten the Lathes.

TABLE 2-3: CISTRON ADVANCES

| Advance | Cost | Type |
|-------------------------------------|------|--------|
| Concealment | 100 | Skill |
| Contortionist | 100 | Skill |
| Deceive | 100 | Skill |
| Disguise | 100 | Skill |
| Inquiry | 100 | Skill |
| Logic | 100 | Skill |
| Search | 100 | Skill |
| Shadowing | 100 | Skill |
| Silent Move | 100 | Skill |
| Tech-Use | 100 | Skill |
| Basic Weapon Training (choose one) | 100 | Talent |
| Melee Weapon Training (choose one) | 100 | Talent |
| Pistol Weapon Training (choose one) | 100 | Talent |

While this shadowy world of intrigue and espionage is dangerous, there are things in the Cistron's own psyche that are even more frightening. While the technotic conditioning and other engram implants are usually foolproof, occasionally one of these extremely well trained and talented individuals finds their true self fighting against their false past to gain dominance again. A Cistron's Minder is drilled to recognise the signs of an unplanned awakening and to bring the agent in for retraining, or neutralise the agent outright. Occasionally though, a Minder misses the signs, or the Cistron has lost his Minder, and the agent is now awakening without knowledge of what is true about the Cistron's past, or what the Cistron should do next.

Once the awakening has begun, the Cistron is now fighting a war on two fronts. The Cistron's very identity is being torn in different directions, and only time will tell which persona will prove dominant. Another worry to those who may be in the vicinity of a rogue Cistron is that some agents were conditioned against their will. Now this trained and conditioned operative, who may or may not believe in the path that was laid out in his indoctrination, is looking for closure, or maybe revenge.

TAKING THE CISTRON ELITE ADVANCE

In taking this advance, the character's background and origin are literally recreated. The past the character knows is revealed to be no more than technophasic engrams that have been branded into the character's mind. While the character still remembers them, they are no more real than simple fictions. The real history of the character is now breaking through the false memories, and coming to the fore.

Career: Any career can take this Elite Advance, but it may be the most rewarding for Adepts, Arbitrators, and Clerics.

Advance Cost: 300xp

EFFECTS

Skills and Talents: The character gains either the Nerves of Steel *or* Talented (Any Skill) Talent, as well as the Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus), and the Secret Tongue (Tech) Skills. Additionally, the character now uses TABLE 2-9 TECH-PRIEST CHARACTERISTIC ADVANCES on page 89 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook. The character also has the ability to spend xp on the Cistron Advances shown in Table 2-3: Cistron Advances.

Insanity Points: For each Advance purchase taken from the Cistron Advances chart, the character gains 1d5 Insanity Points, as the psyche of the character battles between the two minds lodged within it.

Hunted: The character must take Hatred (Adeptus Mechanicus) *or* Hatred (Other Organisation) depending on how the character proceeds with this new knowledge. Is the Mechanicus hunting the character for betraying them, or is some other Imperial organisation, such as the Adeptus Ministorum or the Navis Noblite, hunting the Cistron for spying on them?

Easy to Control: The Cistron's mind has been realigned to make him more susceptible to reprogramming, so he suffers a -10 Penalty on Willpower Tests to resist mind control or interrogation.



DISCORDANT

"They, in their audacity, silence the holy machine spirit. With their touch, they quiet the chattering of the cogitator. With a thought, they can eliminate the ballowed cacophony of the manufactorums. They are an Anathema to the Ommissiah, and they can not be allowed to exist."

—Arch-Legos Breathed, while in an audience with Arch-Magos Mat Aleph Xenon

There are tales told in the dark and shadowy hovels that are home to the Lathe-World workers. There, in the smoke and haze, while drinking bottles of locally-made spirits, one can hear rumours and stories of a kind told nowhere else. One such story, tells of those who have become more than human. Those who can reach out and, with a thought, access and disrupt the most holy machines of the Ommissiah. Those who work the forges hold these beings in equal parts horror and awe. Some who toil in the Lathes might see them as liberators from the crushing labour and despair of their forge emplacement, while others might cringe at the chaos and disruption such monstrosities might bring to the order and structure of the workers' lives.

These beings, which the Lathes formally label Discordants, are still more rumour than reality. Such data that exists on them indicates that they are extremely rare, possibly one in a trillion within the Calixis Sector. Once born, many Discordants never realise their frightening potential, as their ability stays quiescent until stress or high emotion triggers it in a moment of need.

Once active, they soon realise there are many who will hunt them relentlessly, either to exploit or destroy.

ANATHEMA TO THE MACHINE SPIRIT

Discordants are truly rare individuals, who can suppress a machine spirit and effectively force a machine to turn off, halt its function, or possibly even explode. Just by being near higher forms of machinery, the Discordant can cause them to freeze, break down, or even alter their function for short periods of time. Those who possess such ability are usually cut off from most societies that require these machines to continue their existence. Some may even be seen, by more superstitious factions, to harbour some kind of curse that brings trouble and ruination to everything and everyone they work with. Those who do not find an "accidental" death are sure to find their unusual talents more called upon by those of a criminal or

heretical mindset than those who labour to bring the plans of the Lords Dragon to fruition. With such an unsettling ability, it is little wonder that at times the entirety of the Lathes are bent on finding, controlling, or destroying Discordants (often all three). Various factions of the Adeptus Mechanicus may try to harness such gifts to use against their political or social enemies. Certainly, members of the Inquisition would love to bring such a force against not only the Mechanicum, but also those who hide from the Emperor's Light. All in all, the life of a Discordant is one of constant fear and hiding.

TAKING THE DISCORDANT ELITE ADVANCE

Nearly any character can become a Discordant, yet to do so places the character in extreme danger. Discordants are anathema to almost everything in the Calixis Sector. Their ability to quiet a machine-spirit is horrifying, not only to the Mechanicum, but also to those who rely on those very technologies. Those who are not trying to destroy the character will instead want to capture him and find out how he can do such a thing. Taking this Package could very well result in not only the character, but anyone the character is with, to

be hunted down or worse.

While this can allow for exciting gameplay, a player must understand exactly the risks he is introducing for his character and fellow Acolytes.

Career: Any Career.

Restrictions: Any character with a Psy rating or cybernetics of any sort can not take this Elite Advance Package. Also, once he has taken this Elite Advance, the character can never have any psychic, Faith, or Warp based powers.

Advance Cost: 300 xp

EFFECTS

Denormal Fault: A Discordant suffers a -10 Penalty to all Fellowship Tests involving any character who has bionics or any implanted machinery in his body.



TABLE 2-4: MACHINE SPIRIT DISCORDIA

| Machine Spirit | Level |
|--|-------|
| Slight (simple bionics, lasgun, chainsword) | 13 |
| Common (simple cogitators, auspex, power armour, explosive collar) | 12 |
| Advanced (cortex implants, other large cogitators, MIU, cybernetic senses) | 11 |
| Elite (Land Raider, manufactorum cogitators, advanced automaton units) | 9 |

Sysop Failure: The character may never have any kind of Bionics or implanted machinery, as they will instantly fail in a spectacular fashion.

Mechanical Disruption: A Discordant cannot be tracked, targeted, or in any way viewed by any kind of machinery. This means that auspex, auger arrays, and imaging cogitators of all kinds do not "see" the Discordant, and instead merely show empty space where the Discordant is, or the cogitator screen becomes covered in interference, or some other malfunction the GM wishes to impose. Targeters cannot focus on the Discordant. Characters using cybernetic senses such as sight or hearing do not register the Discordant. Medicae cogitators cannot diagnose or treat a Discordant, and the character must rely on others with medical knowledge to treat any wounds. This does not mean that a Discordant can not be shot, but it does mean that the character shooting the Discordant cannot use a targeter or sight to gain a bonus to hit the Discordant. While it is up to the discretion of the GM what does and does not affect the character, this should offer a solid basis for comparison.

Discordia: This is the ability to allow a Discordant to use his will to reach out and quiet a machine-spirit located within a piece of technology, effectively shutting it down for a certain length of time. To do this, a Discordant must be within touching distance of the machinery he wants to affect, and make Discordant Test as a Full Action. To do this, he makes a Discordant Roll by rolling 2d10 and adding his Willpower Bonus. Compare that to the level number relating to the device's machine spirit as listed on **Table 2-4: Machine Spirit Discordia**. The numbers assigned in this table are to be used as suggested baseline values, and the GM should feel free to adjust them as needed for the individual item to be affected and the nature of the adventure setting.



If the roll equals or exceeds the Discordia Level for that device, then the machine spirit has been momentarily silenced and the device fails for one Round. This ability is more difficult to use against more simplistic machine spirits, as their spirits are more diffuse and harder to quiet, so many basic weapons and cybernetics are nearly immune to the power. More advanced machine spirits of a cogitator or a vehicle, however, like those in a Gun Cutter or Land Raider, are somewhat easier to disrupt as they are more pronounced and integral to their device's proper function. If the character is trying to affect more than one item at a time, then add +1 to the difficulty of the roll for each additional piece of tech the character wants to affect. If the character wants to shut the tech down for a longer period, add +2 to the difficulty of the roll for each additional Round desired. If the character wishes to silence the machine spirit in the tech permanently, add +7 to the difficulty to the roll. All of these effects can be attempted together, in which case the modifications are cumulative.

ON THE RUN

Things were not going well for Karinne Tarydo. The last ambush should have sliced razor-sharp, and instead she and her fellow gangers had barely got out alive. One of the Deathskins nearly took her down and she'd been lucky when his heavy stubber blew up in his flabby hands. She'd used his own flensing knife to carve him up good. Stupid blunter had no edge to him, but now his gang would remember her whenever they saw what she'd left of his face.

She smiled at the thought, her ritual scars exaggerating the action, but that had been her last good memory. The gang's condenser-tap had failed, and she'd gone out in search of parts but none of the local Ironmongers could help, their own tech sapping flat in each visit. She'd returned though to find her gang ribboned, flesh scattered and blood painting the crèche walls. No other gang could have taken out the Bloodlines like that, none even knew of their latest hole. And none had the blades to carry out such a deed. Even the Babyfaces with their upper-tower tech couldn't have sliced that well.

She'd been running ever since. Word somehow got to the other Fleshcutter gangs, and none would touch her. No gang when you were below the Line in Hive Desoleum didn't cut well. That only left Down, and the days had blended depending on if any lumins were active where she was at. Most failed just as she found shelter.

It found her just as she'd managed to get her scanner to finally work, only for it to shower her with arcs that hurt like her initiation cuts. Her eyed had cleared, only to see red death studying her in the dark. The form was female but made of tech like bloody metal, and Tarydo knew it was the thing that had sliced her gang.

The killer leap at her, and reflex brought her twin blades up as Tarydo screamed her warcry at it. And the thing just exploded, ribboned like her gang.

Tarydo smiled and spat on the largest lump of viscera and wiring. Things were now looking sharp.

NEW SKILLS AND TALENTS

The ways of the Cult Mechanicus are many, and even the most proficient of Tech-Priests knows that there can be no perfection other than the Omnisiah. Through training and study, the weak flesh is improved so that it can better defend itself, convince others of the correctness of the Mechanicum, bring down the unfaithful, and even predict the future.

SKILLS

DIPLOMACY

Advanced, Fellowship, Interaction

Diplomacy is the art of conducting negotiations between two or more factions. This allows the character opportunities to handle business, social, or state affairs without arousing hostility. A Diplomacy Test is an Opposed Test, as each party tries to convince the other that his desires in the situation should be given priority.

To start a Diplomacy Test, the GM determines how many Rounds the Acolyte and his target or targets have to discuss the current situation. Each Round, the Acolytes and all target(s) involved make Fellowship Tests. If the Acolyte succeeds and his opponent(s) fail, then he has been able to sway his target or targets to agree to one point in the discussions. For each Degree of Success, the winner is able to bring his target or targets into agreement for another point in the discussions. If all parties succeed, then the character who had the most Degrees of Success has been able to sway the others to agree to one point in the discussion for each of Degree of Success he had beyond the others. If the Acolyte gets the target to agree to all of his points in the negotiations, before the targets have convinced him of theirs, then the Acolyte has succeeded in the talks. If none of the factions in the discussions are able to sway all of the targets in the talks to his viewpoint before the limit the GM created, then the discussions end with all agreeing to only the points that have been succeeded so far. If at any time in the discussions all parties fail the Test, then the discussions are broken off, as talks fall to petty bickering and retorts.

This Skill costs 200 xp and is available to all Acolytes at Rank 3 or above with Fellowship of 40 or higher. Diplomacy +10 is available at Rank 5 or higher for 300 xp, and Talented (Diplomacy) is available at Rank 6 for 300 xp.



LOGIS PROPHESYING

Advanced, Intelligence

This skill encompasses the ability to analyse all of the past and present information available for a given situation, in order to be able to find the most probable future outcome. This method of techno-divination has many forms, from data stack analysis, to neural pathway insight, and even systematic binary omens. The use of this skill allows one to focus so perfectly on the past and current events centring on a specific person, place, or thing, that the user can then predict the next logical step or event that object will experience. While the user is able to extract the most probable future outcome, that is by no means the outcome that will happen. The roles of outside influences, no matter how minute, can lead to outcomes that the user of this skill can not even hypothesise.

To use this Skill, the GM assigns a Test Difficulty depending on the outcome the character is trying to discern; **Table 2-5: Logis Propheying Examples** gives guidance on the Difficulty to be assigned on the Test. The more information the character has about the object or person, the easier the Skill Test becomes. As a rough guide, a Success with this Skill allows the user to know the most probable outcome or location, with each additional Degree of Success either offering the next step in the chain of events for the object or the next most probable location.

This skill costs 300 xp and is available to Tech-Priests at Rank 4 and above. The Logis Propheying +10 for this Skill is available to Tech-Priests at Rank 7.

TALENTS

LUMINEN BARRIER

Prerequisites: Luminen Shield, Electoo Inductors, Potentia Coil.

Much like the celebrated Electro-Priests, the Acolyte can draw upon all of his power to create a shimmering barrier of pure energy, one capable of deflecting any attack. As a Full Action, the player can activate a Luminen Barrier which remains active for a number of Rounds equal to the Acolyte's base Willpower Bonus. The barrier has a Rating equal to the Acolyte's base Willpower Characteristic. As long as the barrier is active, the Acolyte can attempt to stop incoming Ranged and Melee attacks by rolling a 1d100 and comparing it to the barrier's Rating. If the roll is equal to or under the Rating, the attack is stopped completely. If the roll is over the Rating, the attack penetrates the barrier and causes Damage as normal. This roll is made before reductions for Armour and Toughness Bonus. If the 1d100 roll ever results in a 01-05, the barrier stops the attack, but is overloaded in the process. It instantly collapses, and the Acolyte must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or gain 1 level of Fatigue. An Acolyte can use Luminen Barrier a number of times equal to his Willpower Bonus every 24 hours; however, upon the second activation of the ability within 24 hours, and upon each subsequent activation in that time, he gains 1 level of Fatigue.

Luminen Barrier is available to Tech-Priests Rank 6 (Technomancer or Mech-Deacon) and above and costs 400 xp.

TABLE 2-5: LOGIS PROPHEYSING EXAMPLES

| Test Difficulty | Example |
|-----------------|---|
| Easy (+30) | Determining the location of a Servitor drone on the following day after studying its schedule for several weeks; picking the system a transport visits next based on reviewing passenger manifests of the last year. |
| Ordinary (+10) | Discerning the whereabouts of a labourer after reviewing the last several days of his work schedule; determining the details of a hive noble's meal next week based on his dining habits of the last month. |
| Difficult (-10) | Predicting the tavern a local merchant will go for his drinks three nights hence after examining the last several days of store receipts; foretelling the weapon a heretic uses in his next combat through analysis of what gambling dens he frequents. |
| Very Hard (-30) | Anticipating a Spook-addled scum's next supplier with only fragmented vid-captures of his dress style; predicting a cult's new meeting location based on waste debris patterns along hab walkways. |

LUMINEN FLARE

Prerequisites: Luminen Blast, Electoo Inductors, Potentia Coil.

The Acolyte has mastered the ability to channel his will through the Potentia Coil into a powerful blast of energy that brings the fury of the Ommissiah to all who might stand in his path. On a successful Ballistic Skill Test, he may direct this energy at a single target within 20 metres. The attack deals 1d10 plus his Willpower Bonus in Energy Damage, and has the Blast (X) Quality, where X equals the Acolyte's Willpower Bonus. This counts as a Half Action, and each time the Acolyte uses this Talent, he must first pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or gain a level of Fatigue.

Luminen Flare is available to Tech-Priests Rank 5 (Tech-Priest) and above and costs 300 xp.

LUMINEN SHIELD

Prerequisites: Electoo Inductors, Potentia Coil.

Focusing his energy in all directions at once, the Acolyte is capable of creating a hazy field of static, strong enough to turn aside incoming blows and stop weapons fire in its tracks. As a Full Action, he may activate a Luminen Shield which remains active for a number of Rounds equal to the Acolyte's base Willpower Bonus. The shield has a rating equal to the half the Acolyte's Willpower Characteristic, rounded up (e.g. an Acolyte with a Willpower of 43 would have a Luminen Shield with a Rating of 22). As long as the shield is active, the Acolyte may attempt to stop incoming Ranged and Melee attacks by rolling a 1d100 and comparing it to the shield's Rating. If the roll is equal to or under the Rating, the attack is stopped completely. If the roll is over the Rating, the attack penetrates the shield and causes Damage as normal. This roll is made before reductions for Toughness/Armour. If the 1d100 roll ever results in a 01-04, the shield stops the attack, but is overloaded in the process. It instantly collapses, and the Acolyte must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or gain 1 level of Fatigue. An Acolyte can use Luminen Shield a number of times equal to his Willpower Bonus every 24 hours; however, upon the second activation of the ability within 24 hours, and upon each subsequent activation in that time, he gains 1 level of Fatigue.

Luminen Shield is available to Tech-Priests Rank 4 (Enginseer) and above and costs 200 xp.

LUMINEN SURGE

Prerequisites: Luminen Shock, Electoo Inductors, Potentia Coil.

The Acolyte is able to channel even more power through his hands, sheathing them in a glowing torrent of power that can rend armour and bone alike. He must touch his enemy for this ability to work. In combat, he must either make a successful **Challenging (+0) Weapon Skill Test** or be Grappling to deliver the blast. Each Luminen Surge deals 2d10+3 points of Energy Damage. This counts as a Half Action, and each time the Acolyte uses this Talent, he must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or gain a level of Fatigue.

Luminen Surge is available to Tech-Priests Rank 4 (Enginseer) and above and costs 200 xp.

THE FLESH IS WEAK (X)

Prerequisites: None.

The Acolyte's body has undergone significant bionic replacement, to the point that he is far more machine than man. This Talent grants the character the Machine Trait (see page 330, **DARK HERESY CORE Rulebook**) with Armour Points equal to the number of times this Talent is taken. The Acolyte may purchase this Talent multiple times, in accordance with his Career Path. In this case, note the number of times this Talent has been taken (e.g. The Flesh is Weak [3]).

The Flesh is Weak is available to Tech-Priests at Rank 2, Rank 4, Rank 6, and Rank 8. It costs 100 xp at Ranks 2 and 4, 200 xp at Rank 6, and 300 xp at Rank 8.



MECHANICUM ARMOURY

"Ah yes, I remember these! It has been many long decades since I last saw one. They really don't construct them like they once did."

—Venerable Technomancer Kasmus Zhef

Masters of technology and the guardians of knowledge, the Tech-Priests of the Lathe Worlds are responsible for the weapons, wargear, ships, vehicles, and even the most basic tools that every citizen of the Calixis Sector uses. Each year, fragmented data from ancient designs are recovered from Lathe-Het, and the forges of Lathe-Hesh are put to work building them. Across the sector, starships are repaired and components constructed at the immense Perinetus shipyards, and strange technologies are studied and replicated within the Cyclopean research stations. Some forge worlds have items they are famous for, such as the stasis technology of Belacane, whereas others, like Lathe-Hadd, build whatever they can to maintain their faltering position in the Mechanicus hierarchy. There is no end to the patterns and peculiarities of Calixian technology, and the Adeptus Mechanicus toils constantly and without rest to uncover the next great technological marvel, or to rediscover a lost piece of archeotech that could turn the tide for the Imperium.

This section covers a range of some of the greatest creations and darkest technological secrets of the Lathe Worlds. New weapons, wargear, servitors, and even ancient pieces of Archeotech are all presented here for GMs and players, as well as the new weapon Qualities that govern their use.

INTEGRATED WEAPONS

Part weapon system and part bionic, the integrated weapons of the Crimson Guard give them a clear advantage over most conventional forces. Each one is linked directly to a Potentia Coil, giving them a near-endless amount of energy to draw from, and allowing these ancient weapons to deliver punishing volleys of fire without pause. Thanks to this type of weapon, the Crimson Guard rarely have to worry about logistical trains or the vagaries of ammunition quality, but as a downside, the weapons are virtually useless when separated from a constant power supply. This means that there is little chance of fallen Venatorius' weapon being taken and turned against the servants of the Machine God.

To use Integrated Weapons the character must have Exotic Weapon Training (Integrated Ranged Weapon) and/or Exotic Weapon Training (Integrated Melee Weapon).

INTEGRATED WEAPONS RULES

Integrated Weapons are linked to and draw power directly from the Potentia Coil, and as such, only those who possess this implant can make use of this weapon type. There are ways to jury rig Integrated Weapons so that they can be used without a Potentia Coil, as described in the **Jury Rigging Integrated Weapon Systems** sidebar on page 59. While

TABLE 2-6: WEAPON UPGRADES

| Name | Weight | Cost | Availability |
|------------------------------|---------|------|----------------|
| Integrated Weapon Components | +0.5 kg | 200 | Extremely Rare |

connected to a Potentia Coil, Integrated Weapons have unlimited ammunition and do not need to be reloaded (unless otherwise noted). Integrated Weapons do not Jam; whenever an Integrated Weapon would suffer a Jam, the user instead takes 1 Level of Fatigue as the drain on their own Potentia Coil starts to wear them down.

Integrated Weapons are always physically linked to their user, and cannot be dropped or discarded without first disconnecting them from the user's Potentia Coil or other power source. Disconnecting or reconnecting an Integrated Weapon to a Potentia Coil requires an **Ordinary (+10) Tech-Use Test** and is a Half Action. Some Integrated Weapons take the place of limbs, or are mounted within the body such as at a shoulder or above the hip. In these instances, quick removal might be impossible and might require dedicated medical staff and the correct facilities before they can be disconnected. It is up to the GM to determine how difficult removing such a weapon would be, as well as whether it is possible to remove it in the first place.

CREATING INTEGRATED WEAPONS

Aside from the selection of specific Integrated Weapons described below, other ranged weapons can be modified and converted into Integrated Weapons. Any Las weapon can be converted into an Integrated Weapon, gaining the benefits mentioned in the previous section. Plasma and Melta weapons can be modified to become Integrated Weapons; this has the effect of making them far more efficient, as they use less ammunition for each shot. Integrated Plasma and Melta weapons double their standard Clip Size as long as they remain connected to a Potentia Coil (or similar power source). Integrated Weapons that are also Plasma weapons can still Overheat, although they lose the Recharge Quality as long as they remain connected. Integrated Solid Projectile and Launcher weapons do not gain any of the usual benefits, but instead gain the Reliable and Storm Weapon Qualities.

Melee weapons can also be Integrated, although this can only be done to Chain, Shock, or Power weapon types. Integrated Chain weapons gain the Razor Sharp Quality. Toughness Tests to resist Stunning from Integrated Shock weapons suffer an additional -30 Penalty. Integrated Power weapons increase their Damage and Penetration by +2. Primitive weapons, ranged or melee, cannot be upgraded in this manner.

Upgrading a weapon to an Integrated Weapon follows the standard rules for weapon upgrades (see page 141 in the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**), except that the character attempting to upgrade the weapon requires Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus) as a Trained Skill before he may attempt the Test. The components required to create Integrated Weapons are only available on Forge Worlds.

DISCONNECTED INTEGRATED WEAPONS

Whenever an Integrated Weapon is disconnected, it quickly loses the benefits of its near-limitless power source. The weapon usually retains a residual charge, but this quickly fades until the weapon becomes useless. Ranged Integrated Weapons retain a clip size of 1d5, and once the remaining shots have been fired, it cannot be fired again until it has been reconnected or recharged. If the weapon had the Reliable Weapon Quality, it loses this Quality. Disconnected Integrated Weapons can Jam, and if this occurs they lose all their remaining ammunition immediately. Integrated Melee weapons lose all power within 1d5 rounds and revert to a Primitive weapon of the same type (e.g. an Integrated Power Sword will be treated as a standard Sword once its power has drained). Integrated Weapons only regain their special benefits once reconnected.

RECONNECTING AND RECHARGING INTEGRATED WEAPONS

Once a disconnected Integrated Weapon has been reconnected to a Potentia Coil or other power source, it regains all the usual benefits of being an Integrated Weapon. If an Integrated Weapon cannot be reconnected, it can be manually charged if the character has access to an external power source. This requires a **Hard (-20) Tech Use Test**, and grants an Integrated Ranged weapon an additional 1d5 shots and gives an Integrated Melee weapon 1d5 Rounds of power before it ceases operating again. If the Tech-Use Test is failed by two or more Degrees of Failure, the recharge attempt has damaged the weapon, rendering it useless. The Luminen Charge Talent can be used to recharge disconnected Integrated Weapons, treating the **Toughness Test as Hard (-20)**, with the same penalties as the Tech-Use Test above should the Toughness Test be failed.

WEAPONS OF THE LATHES

The Lathe Worlds are host to many astonishing weapon designs. As rare as they are deadly, these weapons sit high above the common small arms that permeate the Calixis Sector, and form the backbone of the Mechanicus' military in the sector.

Integrated Lathe-Laspistol

Despite being the smallest integrated weapon in standard use among the Crimson Guard, the Integrated Lathe-Laspistol is no less deadly than its larger cousin. It has a good rate of fire and decent penetrative abilities, but lacks the range of the rifle.

Integrated Lathe-Lasrifle

Originally derived from an ancient archeotech design, the Integrated Lathe-Lasrifle packs a greater punch than regular Lasguns. The standard weapon of the Crimson Guard, Lathe-Lasrifles are fast becoming a more and more common sight throughout the Calixis Sector.

JURY RIGGING INTEGRATED WEAPON SYSTEMS

The Potentia Coil is an arcane device that is, for the most part, simply unavailable to anyone outside the Cult of the Ommissiah. For that reason, integrated weapon systems are largely outside of the forces of the Mechanicus, as more conventional weapons are often more convenient than attempting to force an integrated weapon to work with a non-standard power source. That said, there are many who have tried to make captured or stolen integrated weapons operate without the need for a Potentia Coil. The results are often far from perfect, but at least the weapon can be used.

NON-STANDARD POWER SOURCES

Assuming the player has an external power source of some kind (Hellgun backpack, Isotropic Fuel Rod, etc.), it can be adapted for use with the Integrated Weapon by making either a **Hard (-20) Tech-Use Test** or a **Hard (-20) Trade (Armourer) Test**. If the Test is successful, the Integrated Weapon regains the benefits of being an Integrated Weapon, albeit with some disadvantages (see below). If the Test is failed, then the character has been unable to adapt this power source to the Integrated Weapon, but may try again with a different power source if he has one. If this Test is failed by two or more Degrees of Failure, something has gone horribly wrong, damaging the weapon and burning out the power source. Treat both items as destroyed.

IT'S WORKING... JUST!

As connecting an Integrated Weapon to something other than a Potentia Coil is tantamount to tech-heresy, it is unsurprising that the machine-spirits of these weapons would rebel against such an impure method of power generation, resulting in some significant drawbacks.

As noted above, once connected to a non-standard power source the Integrated Weapon regains all its usual benefits. However, if the Integrated Weapon is a ranged weapon, it also gains the Unreliable Weapon Quality (and loses the Reliable Weapon Quality if it happened to have it), and any Jam results in a forced disconnection from the power source, requiring it to be reconnected as described above. If the integrated weapon is a Melee weapon, then the unusual and unregulated energy currents flowing through the weapon give it the Unbalanced Weapon Quality (and cause it to lose the Balanced Weapon Quality if it happened to have it). If the user ever fails a Weapon Skill Test to Parry an incoming attack, a roll of 91 or higher results in a forced disconnection from the power source, requiring it to be reconnected as described above.

TABLE 2-7: INTEGRATED RANGED WEAPONS

| Name | Class | Range | RoF | Dam | Pen | Clip | Rld | Special | Wt. | Cost | Availability |
|-----------------------------|--------|-------|--------|----------|-----|------|-----|-----------------------|-------|------|----------------|
| Lathe-Laspistol | Pistol | 40m | S/2/- | 1d10+5 E | 2 | N/A | N/A | Tearing | 2kg | 150 | Very Rare |
| Lathe-Lasrifle | Basic | 100m | S/2/- | 1d10+5 E | 2 | N/A | N/A | Tearing | 4.5kg | 200 | Very Rare |
| Lathe-Lasblaster | Basic | 80m | S/-/4 | 1d10+5 E | 8 | N/A | N/A | Tearing | 6kg | 950 | Extremely Rare |
| Phased Plasma Rifle | Basic | 100m | S/2/4 | 2d10 E | 6 | N/A | N/A | — | 12 kg | 1200 | Very Rare |
| Catalytic Mass Driver | Basic | 120m | S/-/5 | 1d10 R | 12 | N/A | N/A | — | 7kg | 600 | Very Rare |
| Heavy Catalytic Mass Driver | Heavy | 150m | S/-/10 | 1d10+4 R | 12 | N/A | N/A | — | 16 kg | 2800 | Very Rare |
| Graviton Pulse Launcher | Heavy | 20m | S/-/- | † | — | N/A | N/A | Blast (6), Inaccurate | 24 kg | 4700 | Extremely Rare |

†See item entry for the details.

Integrated Lathe-Lasblaster

The Lathe-Lasblaster sits at the pinnacle of Lathe-based las technology. Issued only to Triarii Crimson Guard and higher, the Lathe-Lasblaster differs from the Lathe-Lasrifle in that the entire forearm is removed and replaced, making it almost a form of cybernetic weapon. With a targeting system linked to a user's bionic retinal implants, the Lathe-Lasblaster can cut down countless foes in a matter of seconds.

The Integrated Lathe-Lasblaster must replace either the user's left or right arm. The gun itself replaces the hand and forearm, joining at the elbow. The arm cannot be used for anything else once the Lathe-Lasblaster has been installed. Installing an Integrated Lathe-Lasblaster is a time-consuming and delicate procedure that requires trained professionals, and therefore follows the rules for attaching bionics and implants (see page 153 in the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook). An Integrated Lathe-Lasblaster is not a normal cybernetic, however, and thus does not add to the user's Toughness Bonus. Jury-rigging an Integrated Lathe-Lasblaster is an exceptionally difficult task; all Tests for adapting external power supplies, as well as recharging depleted Lathe-Lasblasters, suffer an additional -20 Penalty.

Phased Plasma Rifle

Once a technology that could have supplanted all other forms of offensive firepower, plasma technology is now all but lost to the Imperium. Very few forge worlds possess the knowledge to create plasma weapons, and most of those only manage to do so by following ancient sets of instructions created millennia ago. As one of the more dangerous special issue weapons within the Crimson Guard, the Phased Plasma Rifle does away with many of the drawbacks common to Imperial plasma weaponry, all but eliminating the need for recharging, and significantly reducing the excess heat that conventional plasma weapons tend to generate. This technology is guarded jealously, and since it was rediscovered the Tech-Priests of the Lathes have refused any attempts to adapt the technology for more general use. From their perspective, the Phased Plasma Rifle is a weapon of

purity, and to change it in any way would defile the machine-spirits that drive each weapon. With the Adeptus Mechanicus' glacial opinion unlikely to change, this weapon will remain only within the hands of the Crimson Guard.

Catalytic Mass Driver Weapons

Despite a strange and unexplained aversion to melta-weaponry, the Crimson Guard are not bereft of armour-cracking firepower. Catalytic Mass Drivers are one of the strongest weapons in service to the Venatorii, and one of the few known integrated ballistic weapons. The gun uses energy from the Potentia Coil to propel tiny shards of metal at alarmingly high velocities, enough to rip through most known types of personal armour. The basic Catalytic Mass Driver is also one of the few integrated weapons that is known to run out of ammunition, yet the projectiles it fires are so tiny that the drum-sized magazines can last for many hours of constant use. The Heavy Catalytic Mass Driver is a larger version of the standard rifle-sized weapon. It does only slightly more damage than the regular weapon, but its rate of fire is considerably higher.



NEW WEAPON SPECIAL QUALITIES

HAYWIRE (X)

Haywire weapons use blasts of electromagnetic radiation to destroy the inner workings of machines and technological devices. Everything within the field's radius (in metres), indicated by the number in parenthesis, is affected. Roll 1d10 on the table below (adding any modifiers from the weapon) to determine the strength of the effect. As the field dissipates, the effect lessens one step each Round until it becomes Insignificant (i.e. a result of Major Disruption would become Minor Disruption the following round and then cease to have an effect the round after that). Additional Haywire attacks in the same area do not stack, but instead create a new effect that will either be ignored if lower than the current effect or replace it if higher.

TABLE 2-8: HAYWIRE FIELD STRENGTHS

| Roll | Field Strength |
|------|--|
| 1-2 | Insignificant: There is no noticeable effect on nearby technology. |
| 3-4 | Minor Disruption: All actions utilising technology, including driving vehicles, firing Ranged weapons without the Primitive Quality, Tech-Use Tests, and any physical actions attempted while wearing power armour or employing cybernetics suffer a -10 penalty. The Base Movement of anyone in power armour is reduced by 1. |
| 5-6 | Major Disruption: All actions utilising technology, including driving vehicles, firing Ranged weapons without the Primitive Quality, Tech-Use Tests, and any physical actions attempted while wearing power armour or employing cybernetics suffer a -20 penalty. The Base Movement of anyone in power armour is reduced by 3. Melee weapons with technological components function as a Primitive weapon of the analogous type. |
| 7-8 | Dead Zone: Technology within the affected area completely ceases to function. Power armour becomes unpowered, reducing the wearer's Movement to 1. Vehicles slow to a halt. Characters with cybernetic replacements to any internal organ(s) suffer one level of Fatigue each round they remain in the Dead Zone. Melee weapons with technological components (i.e., power swords) function as a Primitive weapon of their type. |
| 9-10 | Prolonged Dead Zone: As Dead Zone (if this result is rolled, the field lasts for two Rounds as it lessens to Dead Zone during the following Round). |

MAXIMAL

Maximal weapons have two fire settings, allowing the wielder to either use the weapon at its lower setting to conserve ammo (and allow a higher rate of fire), or make single, powerful blasts requiring the weapon to recharge between shots. Before making an attack the user can choose to either fire the weapon normally, in which case it uses its regular listed profile, or to fire it on Maximal. When the weapon is fired on Maximal, it adds 10 to its range, adds 1d10 to its Damage, and +2 to its Penetration. If it has the Blast Quality then this is improved by +2, i.e., a weapon with Blast (3) becomes Blast (5). The weapon also uses three times the normal amount of ammo per shot and adds the Recharge Quality.

PROVEN (X)

Weapons with a Proven Quality always inflict massive trauma, and treat any die roll for Damage lower than the Proven rating (as indicated by the number in parenthesis) as if it were the Proven rating. For example, a Proven (3) weapon would treat any die roll of 1 or 2 as a 3 for the purposes of calculating Damage.

RAZOR SHARP

The edges of these claws or blades are honed to an unnatural degree and can slice through most armour with ease. When the Weapon Skill or Ballistic Skill Test for an attack with this weapon results in two or more Degrees of Success, double the weapon's Penetration Value for that attack.

STORM

The weapon doubles the amount of hits inflicted on the target. For example, when firing a weapon with the Storm Quality in fully automatic mode, each Degree of Success yields two additional hits (up to the weapon's firing rate, as normal). Storm Weapons consume ammunition at twice the normal rate.

TWIN-LINKED

A twin-linked weapon represents two identical weapons connected together and linked to fire at the same time, often through one pull of the trigger, increasing both the chances of hitting and the damage that can be caused. A weapon with the Twin-linked Quality gains a +20 bonus to hit when fired and uses twice as much ammunition. In addition, the weapon may score one additional hit if the attack roll succeeds by two or more Degrees of Success. Finally, the weapon's reload time is doubled.

TABLE 2-9: INTEGRATED MELEE WEAPONS

| Name | Class | Range | Dam | Pen | Special | Wt | Cost | Availability |
|-------------------|-------|-------|----------|-----|--------------------|-----|-------|--------------|
| Coil-Whip | Melee | — | 1d10+5 E | 4 | Flexible, Shocking | 3kg | 600 | Very Rare |
| Lathes Arc-Welder | Melee | — | 1d10+5†E | 10 | Unwieldy | 2kg | 1,700 | Very Rare |

†The User does not add his Strength Bonus to this weapon's Damage.

Graviton Pulse Launcher

Thanks to the unusual gravitic phenomena that affect the Lathes, the Calixis Mechanicus are experts in gravity manipulation, and the Graviton Pulse Launcher represents one of the many fruits of their expertise. Based upon the graviton gun, the launcher projects an orb or nucleus of barely contained gravitic energy. The orb descends rapidly, limiting its range, but once a target is struck, the field containing the energy collapses and a vast pulse of energy radiates outwards, violently crushing anything nearby.

Everything caught in the blast area is pressed to the ground and must take a **Hard (-20) Strength Test** or be knocked down. Being thrown to a solid surface from a standing position and forced to the ground in this way is enough to inflict 1d5 Impact Damage with the Primitive Quality to the Body, although what the character or object is thrown against and how far they fall may well make this effect far worse. Additionally, anyone attempting to move or perform physical actions within the blast radius for 1d5 Rounds afterwards must first pass an **Arduous (-40) Strength Test**. At the GM's discretion, the blast may shatter brittle objects, collapse loose flooring, rupture containment vessels, damage vehicles and machinery, plus wreak any other havoc deemed appropriate.

Coil Whip

Often seen in the hands of Venatorii Decani, and sometimes even the fabled Electro-Priests, Coil Whips are long, segmented chains that glow brightly with electrical energy. Swung in a great arc that fills the air with forks of man-made lightning, this integrated melee weapon can knock a man in full power armour off his feet with a single blow.

Lathes Arc-Welder

Whilst not technically a weapon, this manufactorum tool is mostly used for delicate construction work in the Lathes system, but can easily double as an extremely dangerous melee device. Capable of firing intense blasts of heat at very short ranges, an arc-welder easily cuts through most personal armour, and the resulting electrical damage to the target can fry organs from the inside out.

Aside from its profile in melee, an arc-welder is capable of cutting through metres of adamantine plating, up to 40 centimetres thick every minute (thinner material can be cut through faster). Arc-welders are usually mounted on the wrist and can rapidly extend outwards for use, making them easily concealable. All enemy Weapon Skill Tests to Parry arc-welder attacks suffer a -20 Penalty due to its method of operation.

WEAPON EMPLACEMENTS

As the primary source of munitions for both the Margin Crusade and the wars on the Spinward Front, the Lathe Worlds search endlessly for technologies to help the Imperium win decisive victories and break campaign deadlocks. In the Lathe-Het data-crypts, legions of scribes toil without rest for the next rediscovery, and scattered sects of Tech-Priests upon the dwindling world of Lathe-Hadd look through their own fragmented cogitator stacks, in the hope of discovering something that might give them relevance once more. These sects have met with some success, reviving weapon lines long thought lost to the ages. Ancient Rapier and Tarantula designs returned to production, and more soon followed. It remains to be seen if these re-engineered designs result in a technical renaissance of Lathe-Hadd, but it shows that even as their world slips into atrophy, some Tech-Priests remain dedicated to the Quest for Knowledge.

To use a Weapon Emplacement, the character must have Exotic Weapon Training (Rapier Laser Destroyer) or Exotic Weapon Training (Tarantula). Additionally, due to their complex control methods, characters using Weapon Emplacements must also have either Common Lore (Tech) or Tech-Use Skill before they can use these weapon types.

WEAPON EMPLACEMENT RULES

Weapon Emplacements are stationary platforms that act as small-scale artillery pieces. They can be targeted independently of their user as though they were a separate character, and have Toughness 60 and 30 wounds. They have the following Talents and Traits: Size (Hulking), Fearless, Machine (10), Strange Physiology, and Unnatural Toughness (x2), and are considered to have an Agility Bonus of 4 (for the purposes of Movement only). They cannot take actions independent of the controlling character, and cannot make Charge or Run Move Actions. If engaged in melee, they are struck automatically (although the Weapon Skill Test should be made to determine Degrees of Success/Failure). Weapon Emplacements do not suffer Critical Damage, and can only be repaired via a **Difficult (-10) Tech-Use Test** where each Degree of Success regains one Wound.

All Weapon Emplacements are supplied with control equipment, usually in the form of a large, detachable, hand-held control device, or sometimes a backpack control vox. These controls have a range of 500 metres. The character that controls a weapon emplacement can divide their Actions up between themselves and the Weapon Emplacement (e.g. a character might use a Half Action to make a Half Move

TABLE 2-10: WEAPON EMPLACEMENTS

| Name | Class | Range | RoF | Dam | Pen | Clip | Rld | Special | Wt | Cost | Availability |
|-----------|-------|-------|--------|-----------|-----|------|--------|----------------------|-----------|--------|--------------|
| Rapier | Heavy | 200m | S/--/- | 6d10+12 E | 14 | 15 | 2 Full | Reliable, Proven (4) | 100kg | 15,000 | Very Rare |
| Tarantula | Heavy | † | † | † | † | † | † | †, Twin-Linked | 50kg + †† | 1,100 | Very Rare |

†The weapon or ammunition type being used determines Range, RoF, Damage, Penetration, Clip Size and additional Special Rules.

††Plus the weight of both weapons.

Action, and then a Half-Action to make the Standard Attack Action needed to fire their Weapon Emplacement). As always, Actions cannot be repeated, so a character controlling a Weapon Emplacement cannot fire a ranged weapon and a Weapon Emplacement's weapon in the same turn.

Het-Pattern Rapier Laser Destroyer

When the designs for the Rapier were rediscovered deep within the data-crypts of Lathe-Het, the ancient artillery platform was rushed into production within the century. Still a relatively rare weapon, the Het-Pattern Rapier differs from the more common Graia-Pattern in that it has less armour. Its offensive abilities are no less potent, though, and it can still easily crack open a Leman Russ at 200 metres.

Hadd-Pattern Tarantula Sentry Gun

The Tarantula automated defence turret is a common sight across the Imperium. Many different patterns and configurations exist, and their ability to mount multiple weapon systems, from Lascannons to Multi-Meltas, make them efficient and flexible heavy weapon platforms. The Hadd-Pattern Tarantula, recently unearthed by the Tech-Priests of the secretive Aurora Novos sect, differs from most standard Tarantulas in that it lacks the automated point-defence machine-spirits that make them such excellent sentries. Nevertheless, the Hadd-pattern is capable of moving swiftly via its external controls, shifting its role from a defensive weapon or sentry gun to that of a more mobile heavy weapons carrier.

Each Hadd-pattern Tarantula has a pair of heavy weapons, slaved to fire as a single weapon with the Twin-Linked weapon Quality. The cost is for the Tarantula and its control systems; the cost of both heavy weapons (and any ammunition) must be added to the weapon.

A Hadd-pattern Tarantula can be configured in one of the following ways:

- Heavy Bolters (120m; --/10; 2D10 X; Pen 5; Clip 200; Reload 2 Full; Tearing): +4,000 Cost
- Lascannons (300m; S/--/-; 5D10+10 E; Pen 10; Clip 20; Reload 2 Full): +10,000 Cost
- Multi-Lasers (250m; --/10; 3D10+3 E; Pen 4; Clip 200; Reload 3 Full): +4,000 Cost
- Plasma Cannons (120m; S/--/-; 2D10+10 E; Pen 8; Clip 50; Reload 5 Full; Maximal, Overheats, Recharge, Unreliable): +17,000 Cost
- Multi-Meltas (60m; S/--/-; 4D10+12 E; Pen 12; Clip 10; Reload 2 Full; Blast [1]): +17,000 Cost

MELEE WEAPONS

Although the Omnisian Axe is by far the most commonly seen melee weapon of the Adeptus Mechanicus, the Tech-Priests possess a myriad of additional weapons for use in close combat. Like many other weapons in service to the Mechanicus, some of these devices began as simple tools that just happen to make excellent weapons. Others are designed to be both weapons and tools, ensuring that the Tech-Priest is fully prepared for whatever adversary or task comes his way.

Navitus-Pattern Percussion Mallet

Never intended for combat, the Navitus-Pattern Percussion Mallet was designed to enhance the brute strength of the user in any task that required a hammer—anything from beating weld-nails to hammering dents out of hull plating. Used widely among the menials that toil endlessly within the forges of the Lathe Worlds, Percussion Mallets are relatively common, although finding someone willing to sell one and risk the Adeptus Mechanicus' wrath is often a far harder task.

The Navitus-Pattern Percussion Mallet doubles the User's Strength Bonus when calculating Damage (or increases the users Unnatural Strength multiplier by 1), and can be used as a Thrown Weapon.



TABLE 2-11: MELEE WEAPONS

| Name | Class | Range | Dam | Pen | Special | Wt | Cost | Availability |
|-------------------|---------------|-------|-----------|-----|---------------------------------|-------|------|-------------------------|
| Percussion Mallet | Melee, Thrown | 6m | 1d10+2† E | 5 | Unwieldy | 4kg | 3000 | Rare |
| Omissian Rod †† | Melee | — | 1d10+10 E | 7 | Balanced, Flexible, Power Field | 9kg | — | Adeptus Mechanicus Only |
| Venator Blade | Melee, Thrown | 3m | 1d5+3 R | 4 | Razor Sharp | 0.5kg | 2500 | Very Rare |

†See item entry for additional rules.

††This weapon can also be used as a Phased Plasma Rifle in Ranged combat.

Omissian Rod

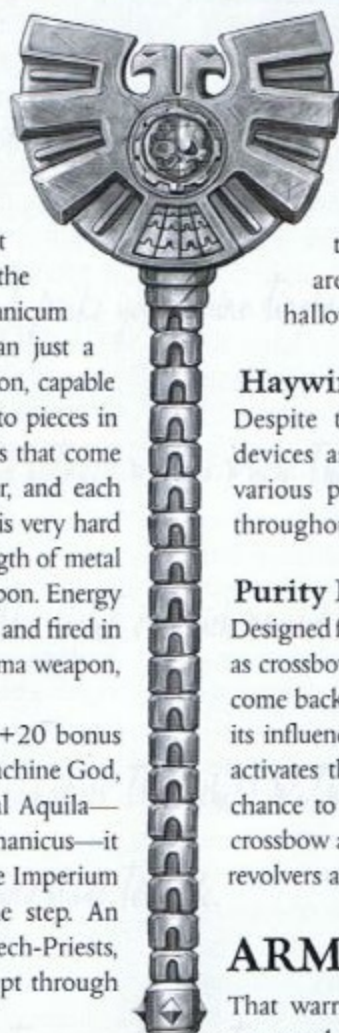
The Omissian Rod is an exceptionally rare device, gifted only to the highest-ranking members of the Cult Mechanicus. Longer than a man is tall, the rod is adorned with the double-headed eagle of the Imperium as well as the cog and skull symbol of the Mechanicum, in a way that shows the unity of the two organisations and the alliance the God-Emperor struck with the Mechanicum millennia ago. The Omissian Rod is more than just a symbol, however, but is in fact a dangerous weapon, capable of blasting enemies at range and smashing them to pieces in melee. The Rod comprises flexible, linked sections that come apart into a thick chain at the whim of the user, and each swing crackles with barely contained energy that is very hard to defend against. The rod can return to a rigid length of metal in an instant, making it an excellent defensive weapon. Energy can also be channelled along the length of the rod, and fired in a series of blasts that have a similar effect to a plasma weapon, meaning that no one can escape the Magos' fury.

The bearer of an Omissian Rod receives a +20 bonus to Interaction Tests involving followers of the Machine God, and due to its prominent display of the Imperial Aquila—something of an oddity among the Adeptus Mechanicus—it will improve the Disposition of those loyal to the Imperium interacting with the bearer of the rod by one step. An Omissian Rod is gifted only to high-ranking Tech-Priests, and thus not available for normal purchase except through illegal trading dens and the like.

Venator Blade

Only ever seen in the hands of the Crimson Guard, the Venator Blade is a long dagger of Lathe construction. Like other Lathe weapons, its exceptional craftsmanship makes it almost impossible to destroy, whilst dealing far more damage than normal.

A Venator Blade grants its user a +15 to **Weapon Skill Tests** and cannot be destroyed by the effects of a Power Field. It counts as having an Armour value of 35 if directly attacked. Venator Blades are always considered Best Craftsmanship, and these bonuses are already included in their rules.



GRENADES AND AMMUNITION

Many of these grenade patterns are ancient tech-relics, and the Mechanicus is loath to see them in use, even though it might preserve one of their own. Even some of the ammunition variants are issued sparingly, for flesh can be replaced, but hallowed technology cannot.

Haywire Grenades

Despite their harmful effects upon machines, haywire devices are sanctioned by the Adeptus Mechanicus, and various patterns of Haywire Grenade are manufactured throughout the Calixis Sector.

Purity Rounds

Designed for use within more primitive projectile weapons such as crossbows and hand bows, the "Purity" round has recently come back in to favour, as the Cult of the Pure Form expands its influence. Each round has a small haywire generator that activates the moment the shot strikes its target, leaving little chance to escape. Purity Rounds are purchased like regular crossbow and hand bow quarrels, and can be adapted for stub revolvers and stub automatics but their cost is doubled.

ARMOUR

That warriors in the service of the Machine God require armoured protection is yet another sign of the weakness of the flesh. That their own armour is amongst the finest in the Sector is yet another sign of the superiority of the Lathes.

Crimson Armour

Only issued to the Crimson Guard, this armour is in many ways a standard set of Storm Trooper carapace armour. Where it differs are both its weight, reduced significantly thanks to the extraordinary manufacturing techniques of the Lathes, and the internal systems built into the armour's intimidating, skull-shaped mask.

TABLE 2-12: ARMOUR

| Name | Locations Covered | AP | Wt | Cost | Availability |
|----------------|-------------------|----|------|--------|----------------|
| Crimson Armour | All | 6 | 6 kg | 12,500 | Extremely Rare |

TABLE 2-13: GRENADES AND AMMUNITION

| Name | Class | Range | RoF | Dam | Pen | Special | Wt | Cost | Availability |
|-----------------|--------|-------|--------|-----|-----|-------------|-------|------|--------------|
| Haywire Grenade | Thrown | SBx3 | S/--/— | — | 0 | Haywire (3) | 0.5kg | 200 | Very Rare |
| Purity Round | — | — | — | — | — | Haywire (2) | — | 300 | Very Rare |

Crimson Armour comes equipped with a Good Quality photo-visor, granting the Dark Sight trait and an immunity to flash grenades. The armour also gives the user a +10 bonus to Intimidate Tests.

WARGEAR AND EQUIPMENT

Those operating within the inner circles of the Lathes avail themselves of more ancient and powerful devices, the better to ensure the continued glory of the Machine God, as well as their own successful acquisition of Knowledge.

Core-Gel

Although the more stringent members of the Mechanicus Priesthood consider it heretical, this transparent material is fast becoming a necessary part of the day-to-day operations within the Lathe Worlds. Viscous and highly conductive, core-gel acts as a surrogate for Electoo-inducers and MIU links, giving those who lack these forms of implants access to cogitators and data-crypts. It is most often found on Lathe-Het, where the gel has become almost mandatory to access the older and more decrepit data-crypts with no longer supported interface technologies. A character can use an application of Core-Gel to access machinery that would otherwise require an Electro-Graft or MIU interface, even if he does not possess these implants. Core-Gel decays quickly, and must be cleaned away and reapplied every hour. Each canister of core-gel contains enough for two applications.

Scatter-Caster

The Scatter-Caster is an exceptionally heretical device, that the Tech-Priests of the Lathe Worlds despise for the way it disrupts their control over servitors and Servo-Skulls. Also known as binary bombs or cant grenades throughout the low echelons of Engineers, these heavy generators pump out discordant frequencies, lingua technis gibberish, and invalid scrapcode, blanketing a wide area in disruptive white noise that sounds like static to most people, but is unbearable to those of the Mechanicum. A Scatter-Caster has a range of 25 metres, and anyone with Mechanicus Implants suffers a -10 to all Tests whilst they remain within this area. Giving orders to servitors, Servo-Skulls and other familiars becomes next to impossible, imposing a -50 penalty to all Tests to control them. Good Quality scatter-casters have a range of 50 metres, and Best-Quality scatter-casters have a range of 100 metres.

TABLE 2-14: WARGEAR AND EQUIPMENT

| Name | Weight | Cost | Availability |
|----------------|--------|------|--------------|
| Core-Gel | — | 500 | Rare |
| Scatter-Caster | 10kg | 450 | Rare |



CYBERNETICS

Cybernetic augmentations are common throughout the Lathes; indeed, a Tech-Priest who does not continue his transformation from weak flesh to holy machine as he ascends in rank is rightly viewed with suspicion as to his faith.

Alatus-Pattern Jump Pack

Broad and baroque in design, the Alatus-pattern Jump Pack differs from other, similar, devices due to the way it is surgically attached to the user and draws its power internally from their Potentia Coil. Plugs and connections from the unit link directly into the user's nervous system, allowing them to control the Jump Pack's movements with the slightest thought. Often taking the form of a sweeping pair of mechanical wings, the Alatus-pattern Jump Pack is a common sight among the elite Celerii formations of the Crimson Guard—the personal bodyguards of the Venatorii commanders.

The Alatus-pattern Jump Pack doubles the user's base movement value, or can be used to gain the Flyer (12) Trait for up to one minute. Extended flights tend to drain Potentia Coils far quicker than short jumps, so the user must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** after using the jump pack to gain the Flyer Trait or gain one level of Fatigue. The mechanical wings grant the user the Fear (1) Trait, and can be used to buffet the enemy in combat, granting the user a +10 to all Parry Tests. The Pilot (Alatus Jump Pack) Skill, and the Mechanicus Implants Trait are required to use an Alatus-pattern Jump Pack.

TABLE 2-15: CYBERNETICS

| Name | Cost | Availability |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------|
| Alatus-Pattern Jump Pack | 3,000 | Adeptus Mechanicus Only |
| Enhanced Potentia Coil | 6,000 | Adeptus Mechanicus Only |
| Lathes Mechadendrite Stabilisers | 300 | Adeptus Mechanicus Only |
| Perinetus-Pattern Servo-Harness | 1,500 | Adeptus Mechanicus Only |
| Servo-Claw | 600 | Adeptus Mechanicus Only |

Enhanced Potentia Coil

Designed as a more heavy-duty replacement for standard internal power units, the Enhanced Potentia Coil can be taxed at a far greater level in order to enhance the many abilities common to members of the Machine Cult. Installation of an Enhanced Potentia Coil involves difficult and invasive surgery, and thus the time taken to add the Enhanced Potentia Coil is 1d5+1 weeks. Poor-Quality Enhanced Potentia Coils leave the user with a noticeably hunched form, permanently reducing their Agility by 1d10. An Enhanced Potentia Coil can be used for all of the following benefits:

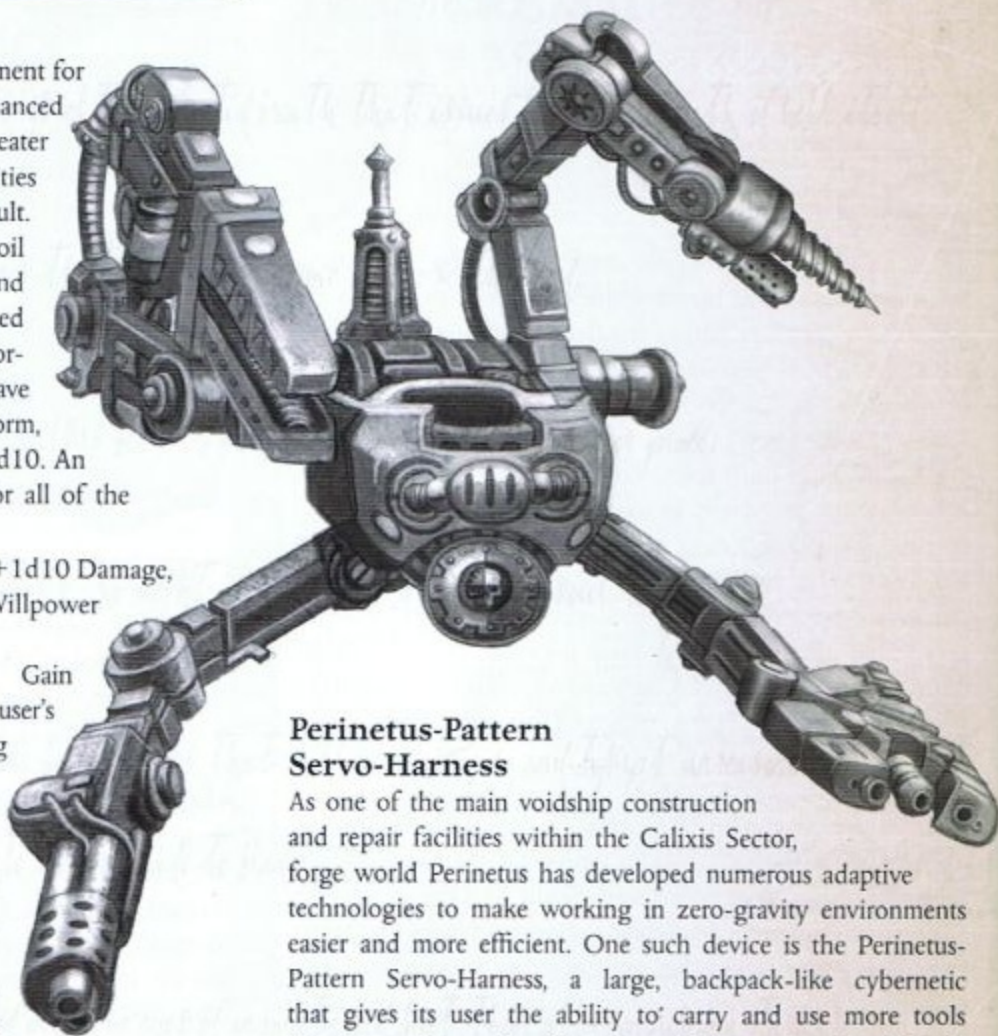
- Luminen Blast/Luminen Flare: Gain +1d10 Damage, a Penetration value equal to the user's Willpower Bonus, and the Shocking Quality.
- Luminen Shock/Luminen Surge: Gain a Penetration value equal to the user's Willpower Bonus as well as the Shocking and Tearing Qualities.
- Luminen Shield/Luminen Barrier: Can be activated as a Reaction.
- Luminen Charge: Tests are 2 steps easier (i.e. **Hard (-20) Test** becomes a **Challenging (+0) Test**).
- Maglev Grace/Maglev Transcendence: Maintaining these abilities becomes a Free Action. Maglev Grace can be performed once every 6 hours. Maglev Transcendence can be performed twice every 6 hours.
- Electrical Succour: Takes half a minute to conduct and becomes an **Easy (+30) Toughness Test**.
- Ferric Lure/Ferric Summons: Become Free Actions.
- Integrated Weapon: The weapon gains the Reliable Weapon Quality.

Lathes Mechadendrite Stabilisers

The Lathes are known for mysterious and frequent gravity shifts, which can overcome even experienced Tech-Priests when they are in areas not properly shielded with additional grav plating. Years of study indicated that replating the myriad facilities would be impractical, so many in the far edges of the system began surreptitiously developing a radical

mechadendrite design to aid in their work. Instead of adding additional manipulation capabilities, pairs of gyroscopically stabilised, heavily clawed talons can anchor a Tech-Priest firmly onto a surface, where he can conduct his furtive research more peacefully. Though somewhat heretical, more and more are appearing across the Lathe Worlds.

Lathes Stabilisers require a Half Action to activate or deactivate. Once active, if the Acolyte remains in place, he counts as being Braced and gains the Sturdy Trait. The Acolyte also ignores modifiers to his Movement in areas of High, Low, or Zero Gravity and in areas with Tremors or other uncertain stability, as well as gaining a bonus to Climb Tests. The Mechadendrite Use (Utility) Talent applies to this Mechadendrite.



Perinetus-Pattern Servo-Harness

As one of the main voidship construction and repair facilities within the Calixis Sector, forge world Perinetus has developed numerous adaptive technologies to make working in zero-gravity environments easier and more efficient. One such device is the Perinetus-Pattern Servo-Harness, a large, backpack-like cybernetic that gives its user the ability to carry and use more tools simultaneously as they float around damaged and unfinished vessels. Additionally, small manoeuvring thrusters sprout from various points across the harness, allowing for greater control in environments without gravity.

At a minimum, each Perinetus-Pattern Servo-Harness consists of one Manipulator Mechadendrite, one Utility Mechadendrite, a Combi-tool, a Fyceline Torch, and a Plasma Cutter. The torch is identical to a Flamer. The plasma cutter can burn through a metre of adamantine plating up to 20 centimetres thick every minute (thinner material can be cut through faster); it may also be used as a Plasma Pistol with a Range of 10m. A Perinetus-pattern Servo-Harness also has several manoeuvring thrusters, that grant the user the Flyer (6) Trait when used in areas with very low or no gravity.

A character with Talents that allow him to make Multiple Attacks may use any weapon (or equivalent) on his Perinetus-Pattern Servo-Harness for any of the attacks he would normally be allowed, subject to all normal limitations including weapon Class. Additionally, the user may use his normal Reaction to make a single shot or strike with any one weapon on the harness. The attachments on the Perinetus-pattern Servo-Harness can be swapped out for other items, such as other forms of Mechadendrites, Bulkhead Cutters, and even full-sized Servo-Arms. The Talents Mechadendrite Use (Manipulator) and (Utility) are required in order to use a Perinetus-pattern Servo-Harness, and the user must possess the Mechanicus Implants Trait.

Servo-Claw

A large number of Mechanicum technologies, such as Manipulator Mechadendrites and Servo-Arms, are designed for a specific practical purpose; whatever use they have as a weapon is often secondary and incidental. The Servo-Claw is the opposite, a form of Mechadendrite designed purely for its combat applications that can also be used as a makeshift tool. Consisting of tightly wound bundles of synthetic muscle fibres contained within a small metal framework, the Servo-Claw ends in a sharp, serrated claw that can cut through armour and snap bones with remarkable ease, leaving the user's hands free for other matters.

A Servo-Claw is usually mounted at waist height, as not to interfere with the movement of the arms or any other Mechadendrites. It can be used to make any normal Attack Action as if it were a regular Melee weapon, or can be used to make a Standard Attack as a Reaction (but never both in the same Round). This attack is made with the user's Weapon Skill, and deals 1d10+10 Rending Damage with a Penetration of 4 and the Tearing Quality. The servo-claw never adds the Strength of the user to its Damage. It can be used to grip and lift objects using its Strength of 50 and Unnatural Strength (x2) Trait, and can be used as a makeshift Manipulator Mechadendrite, with a -10 penalty to all associated Tests. The Mechadendrite Use (Manipulator) Talent applies to this Mechadendrite.

SERVITORS & AUTOMATONS

The Mechanicus of the Calixis Sector make use of a wide range of servants, often preferring the absolute loyalty and obedience of the mindless over the suspicions and ambitions of fellow sentients. Servitor retinues are common for many Tech-Priests in isolated areas where nothing can be allowed to disturb their forbidden experiments, or on extended Explorator quests. Mechanical automatons and drones, though often skirting the edges of tech-heresy, are also frequently used in situations where covert intelligence gathering is desired.

Spatha-Pattern Combat Servitor

Originally intended as a heavy-duty utility servitor that could operate in hazardous conditions, the Spatha-pattern servitor first gained notoriety during the ill-fated siege of Cyclopea. Home to a host of research stations manned only with servitors, three raider vessels entered the system in the hopes of boarding and pillaging whatever they could before Imperial forces could respond. The Fabricator that controlled the network of Cyclopean stations had no choice but to do the unthinkable, and

modify the Spatha engram patterns so that he could repel the invaders. Astonishingly, the Spatha-pattern servitors proved to be better at this task than their previous duty, their heavy armour and mechanical attachments making them natural combat servitors. It took a further fifty years for the leaders of the Lathe Worlds to sanction the Fabricator's variant design, a relatively short approval period by Mechanicus standards, but by then the notoriously impatient man had taken the design and left the Sector for greener pastures. In more recent years, Spatha-pattern servitors have been pressed into service as bodyguards in some of the more remote areas of the Lathe Worlds.

Spatha-Pattern Combat Servitor



| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|--------------------|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 45 | 45 | 50 ⁽¹⁰⁾ | 42 | 35 | 25 | 45 | 50 | 05 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 15

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Climb (S) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Combat Master, Fearless, Resistance (Heat).

Traits: Auto-stabilised, Dark Sight, Machine (4), Sturdy, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic), Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee), Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

Weapons: Integrated Archeotech Lasblaster (Basic; 80m; S/-/4; 1d10+6 E; Pen 8; Tearing) or Micro-Flamer (Pistol; 10m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 E; Pen 2; Clip 8; Reload 2Full; Flame, Reliable) or Micro-Plasma (Pistol; 30m; S/2/-; 1d10+6 E; Pen 6; Clip 12; Reload 3Full; Maximal, Overheats, Reliable) and either a Powered Gauntlet (1d10+12 E; Pen 6; Power Field, Unwieldy) or Electro-Claw (2d10+5 E; Pen 2; Shocking).

Armour: Servitor Machine-Flesh (All 4).

Gear: Internal micro-bead (to receive/relay instructions only).

Remidium-Pattern Medicae Servitor

One of a number of patterns used throughout the Calixis Sector, the Remidium-pattern servitor is known for its reliability and steady hands (such as they are). Often used when true medical staff are absent, the Remidium can perform numerous common procedures, including basic cybernetic implantation.

Remidium-Pattern Medicae Servitor



| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 20 | 10 | 45 | 40 | 45 | 45 | 35 | 15 | 05 |

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 10

Skills: Awareness (Per), Medicae (Int) +20.

Talents: Master Chirurgeon, Mechadendrite Use (Medicae), Talented (Medicae).

Traits: Dark Sight, Machine (1), Natural Weapons (Medicae Tools), Toxic.

Armour: Servitor Machine-Flesh (All 1).

Weapons: Medicae Tools (1d10+4 R; Pen 2; Toxic).

Gear: Internal micro-bead (to receive/relay instructions only), Medicae Mechadendrite (3 doses of De-Tox, 3 doses of Stimm).

TABLE 2-16: SERVITORS AND DRONES

| Name | Cost | Availability |
|---------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Spatha-Pattern Servitor | 25,000 | Extremely Rare |
| Remidium-Pattern Servitor | 4,500 | Scarce |
| Velox-Pattern Servitor | 18,000 | Rare |
| C.A.T. | 3,000 | Rare |

Velox-Pattern Security Servitor

Found mostly on research stations across the Lathe Worlds, as well as Explorator vessels leaving the Calixis Sector for regions unknown, the Velox is an exceptionally fast and overly aggressive type of combat servitor, programmed to track down and eliminate would-be intruders. Tightly bundled coils of vat-grown muscle give the servitor its incredible speed and dexterity, and its arms each mount an integrated coil-whip, which the Velox tends to use in a frenzied spinning motion, pulverising whatever happens to be in its way. Kept dormant when not in use, they are rightly feared by friend and foe alike.

Velox-Pattern Security Servitor

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 40 | — | (8) | (6) | (6) | 10 | 20 | 40 | 05 |

Movement: 6/12/18/36 **Wounds:** 12
Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Climb (S) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Survival (Int) +10.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Berserk Charge, Double-Team, Fearless, Frenzy, Leap Up, Lightning Reflexes, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee).

Traits: Dark Sight, Machine (4), Programmed Instinct†, Unnatural Agility (x2), Unnatural Speed, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

Weapons: A pair of Coil-Whips (1d10+13 E; Pen 4; Flexible, Shocking).

Armour: Servitor Machine-Flesh (All 4).

Gear: Internal micro-bead (to receive/relay instructions only).

†**Programmed Instinct:** Velox Servitors are programmed to defend specific areas, and often have the complete layout of their home facility or voidship imprinted upon their internal cogitators. Additionally, numerous patrol routes are pre-programmed, to ensure the most efficient sweep patterns whenever an intruder is detected. However, when used outside of their pre-programmed element, Velox Servitors tend to get quite confused, and can sometimes attack anyone they detect, whether they are trespassing or not. If a Velox-pattern Security Servitor is ever encountered outside of its natural patrol area, it loses the Lightning Reflexes Talent and always attacks the closest target, even if that target is an ally.

C.A.T. (Cyber Altered Task) Unit

A wondrous invention that stretches back into the earliest days of Mankind's exploration of space, the Cyber Altered Task unit is purpose built to infiltrate derelict space ships, enemy installations, and space hulks. C.A.T.s generate complete layouts of the areas they have been sent into, ascertain the presence of hostiles and other life forms, and then, most ingenious of all, tap into any local computer or cogitator system in order to download every single shred of data before recovery. Small and unassuming, they are often ignored by enemy forces, able to skulk about gathering data without alerting anyone to its presence. Many areas of the Imperium utilise these rugged machines, from Chartist Captains and Explorator Fleets, to Adeptus Astartes.

C.A.T. Unit

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 05 | — | 10 | 25 | 40 | (8) | (8) | 10 | 05 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 12

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Concealment (Ag) +10, Dodge (Ag), Security (Ag) +10, Silent Move (Ag) +10, Tech-Use (Int) +10.

Talents: Binary Chatter, Data Thief†, Total Recall, Unremarkable.

Traits: Dark Sight, Machine (3), Size (Scrawny), Unnatural Intelligence (x2), Unnatural Perception (x2).

Armour: 3 (All)

Weapons: Small Manipulator Claw (1d5-2 I; Pen 0; Primitive).

Gear: Auspex, Long-Range Vox-Thief, Electro Grafts, Internal micro-bead (to receive/relay instructions only), MIU Interface Port.

†**Data Thief:** The C.A.T.'s primary purpose is to gather and store information, and it is remarkably adept at breaking into computer systems, even ones not of human design, and raiding them for information. By making a **Security Test** as a Full Action, a C.A.T. can log into any computer system, and then spend several minutes downloading everything available within. The GM should determine how difficult it would be to break into the system (the more alien the computer system, the harder the Test would be); once the system has been cracked, the C.A.T. needs to spend one full minute per level of Difficulty downloading (for example, a **Hard (-30) Security Test** means would take 3 minutes to fully download the data).



ARCHEOTECH

"Take care with that! We have not fully ascertained its function, and the ticking is accelerating."

—Technographer Adar Millez

Mankind reached its technological zenith during the Dark Age of Technology. Masters of all things mechanical, there was nothing humans could not solve with the knowledge of science and logical thinking. As the millennia wore on, this knowledge began to slip away. The greatest advances were lost to the ages through war, carelessness, natural disasters, and other causes, and passed into the realm of what is now called archeotech. Every now and again a piece of archeotech is found, enough that these ancient wonders might be given life again, and their machine-spirits restored to a fraction of their former glory.

The items of archeotech listed below have no Cost or Availability Rating, as while they are not necessarily unique they are almost impossible to find, even in elite Cold Trade dens. Even identifying pieces of archeotech should be difficult, and characters that lack Forbidden Lore (Archeotech) should have next to no idea what the function of any found archeotech is (unless it would be obvious). GMs are encouraged to work archeotech into their campaigns, perhaps making it the goal of a group of Mechanicum-aligned Acolytes, or perhaps something that needs to be kept out of enemy hands. All of the archeotech weapons listed below requires Exotic Weapon Training specific to that item, and therefore can only be taken as an Elite Advance and with the permission of the GM.

Holo-Clone

The Holo-Clone's origins are a lingering Lathes mystery. Long ago, a work party of Lathesmasters discovered a cache of these ancient devices deep within one of Lathe-Het's many subterranean vaults. Word of the discovery spread quickly, and the entire cache was sent to Forge Master Castellar as a gift. However, before the venerable Magos could receive them, they were stolen and whisked away from the planet, possibly an act of the radical Disciples of Thule. Holo-Clones still show up from time to time, and fetch a heavy price on the Calixian black market.

A Holo-Clone creates a duplicate image of the user, and is used to fool attackers into thinking that the user is in two places at once. Anyone using a Holo-Clone gains a +30 bonus to all Dodge and Parry Tests that he is called to make for as long as the device is active. Attackers who pass a **Very Hard (-30) Perception Test** as a Half Action before making their attack can identify the holographic image, negating this bonus for that Round. Holo-Clones have enough power to last for 1d10+6 minutes, and take 1d5 hours to recharge. Each is small enough to be clipped on a belt, or worn about the neck.

Lucius-Pattern Vision Cowl

The so-called Vision Cowl appears to be a strange form of hyper-advanced auspex, often worn like a hood. It covers most of the face, and places a small data-display over each of the user's eyes. From here, a set of augmented reality holograms appear before the user, and a small control interface on the

side of the cowl allows the user to cycle through its functions. The Mechanicus no longer possesses the technology required to replicate the device, so examples of this ancient technology are closely guarded. The Calixian Conclave possesses a small number, and they are kept in equipment vaults and given only to the most trusted Inquisitorial agents.

Activating a Lucius-Pattern Vision Cowl requires a Half Action. Once active, the user can see any living creature within a 50-metre radius, even through walls and underground. The cowl can also be used to ascertain the vital signs (Wounds, Critical Damage, Fatigue) of a living creature via an **Ordinary (+10) Medicae Test**, or locate points of weakness in structures and walls with an **Ordinary (+10) Evaluate Test**. It can be used to find and track nearby chemicals and radiation trails, as well as to isolate and pinpoint vox-transmissions within five kilometres via an **Ordinary (+10) Tech-Use Test**. Once activated, the cowl tends to blur normal vision slightly, imposing a -10 penalty on all Weapon Skill and Ballistic Skill Tests, and the user's vision is limited to 50 metres. The cowl provides no armour to the head and cannot be worn over (or under) a helmet.

Midath-Pattern Power Glove

The forge world of Midath is a lingering enigma for the Calixian Mechanicus. Some of the Lathe's earliest records speak of Midath as a grand forge world, capable of building super-heavy vehicles, void-ships, and even Titan components. Such a forge world would be a wondrous boon to the Calixis Sector, if only it could be found. The forge world has been "missing" for as long as anyone can remember, to the point where some question whether it was ever real in the first place.

There are many arguments for and against the existence of Midath, but one of the strongest proofs is an exceptionally rare melee weapon known as the Midath-pattern Power Glove. Consisting of a single sheath that extends all the way to the shoulder, the flexible golden material that makes up most of the glove is of a substance unknown to the Mechanicus. It bends and flexes without resistance, and never crinkles or ruffles, maintaining its smooth, reflective surface at all times. Once active, the glove acts much like a standard power fist, albeit a low-powered one, but as the power field surrounds the entire length of the user's arm it can be used to parry quite effectively. Unfortunately, it is this same power field that tends to cause damage to the nervous system the longer the glove is activated, limiting its use in extended combat actions. Those who have studied the Midath glove determined that each glove was made to order, matching the specifications of their user in every way. Who these weapons once belonged to will likely never be known, and most of the remaining gloves sit in the private collections of high Calixian nobles.

A Midath-pattern Power Glove imposes a -10 penalty on all Weapon Skill Tests made when attacking, but a +10 bonus to Parry Tests. Every Round that a Midath-pattern Power Glove remains active, the user must take an **Ordinary (+10) Toughness Test** or suffer 1d10 Toxic Damage that ignores Armour and Toughness Bonus.

TABLE 2-16: ARCHEOTECH

| Name | Class | Range | RoF | Dam | Pen | Clip | Rld | Special | Wt. |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-----|------|-----|--------------------------|-------|
| Holo-Clone | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | † | 0.5kg |
| Midath-Pattern Power Glove | Melee | — | — | 2d10 E | 7 | — | — | Special, Power Field | 3kg |
| Psybernetics | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | † | N/A |
| Reclamator Rifle | Basic | 35m | S/-/- | 3d10 R | † | 18 | † | Special, Shocking, Toxic | 8kg |
| Vision Cowl | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | † | 3kg |

† See item entry for additional rules.

Psybernetics

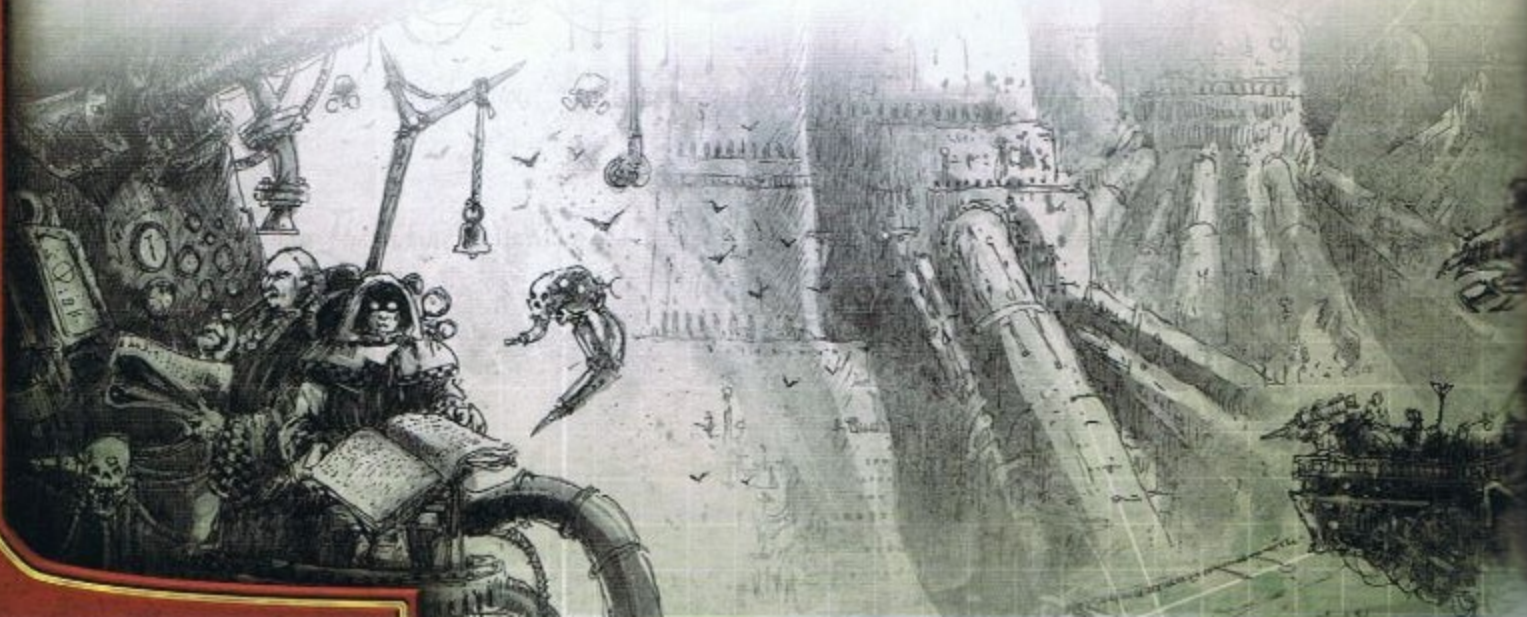
Throughout the ages, many Tech-Priests have studied humanity's disturbing ability to harness the Warp. Most of these studies have been conducted with a biological slant, as the Tech-Priests search for the root-causes of the mutations that grant these gifts. Some Tech-Priests have taken a different tact, looking for technologies that can harness the power of the Warp and, if implanted like a regular cybernetic, give the user psychic powers. Research into these "psybernetics" was deemed high tech-heresy millennia ago; within the Calixis Sector, any attempt to revive this technology is met with harsh sanctions from the Lords Dragon and the Inquisition. Nevertheless, this hasn't stopped some radical Tech-Priests on remote and hidden research installations across the Lathe Worlds from attempting to comprehend such mysteries.

Psybernetics are implanted within the user's head, and follow the standard rules for cybernetic implantation (see page 153 of the **DARK HERESY CORE RULEBOOK**). Once implanted, the user gains 2d10 Insanity and 1d10 Corruption Points as the ability to access the raw power of the Warp floods their psyche. Assuming he is not driven insane, the user automatically gains a Psy-Rating equal to half his Willpower Bonus (rounded up) and one randomly generated Minor Psychic Power for every point of Psy-Rating. He gains a new, randomly generated Minor Psychic Power every time his Psy-Rating increases, but cannot take Discipline Powers. Psybernetics are extremely heretical devices, and unauthorised possession is a highly dangerous affair.

Reclamator Rifle

The self-styled "Fabricator" of the Cyclopean Network, a man with no patience for the weaker minds of his peers and the impediments they caused to his research, eventually left the Calixis Sector in disgust. Various Lathes factions fell upon the abandoned stations in orbit of Cyclopea, hungry for the knowledge the Fabricator had left behind, and one small sect of Tech-Priests discovered a hidden data-core filled with research into lost forms of radiation weaponry. The first result of the Fabricator's research appeared to be the proscribed Rad Cleanser, but it hinted at a more dangerous process that could reclaim implanted cybernetics from still-living targets without damaging them. The sect took the data to the Lathe System to create the first of these "Reclamators," but the peculiar shifts in gravity made the process extremely difficult. To protect its fragile inner workings, they kept the incomplete Reclamator in stasis for long periods of the year, and the first prototype took over a decade to build. The results, however, were both remarkable and deadly, and the sect has since begun secretly manufacturing more of the rifles to fund their research into large scale "Reclamator Chambers," one of the many other items hinted at in the Fabricator's notes.

The Reclamator Rifle completely ignores Armour and has no effect on technological items. Victims killed in this manner leave any weapons, armour, cybernetics, and any other non-living items completely intact and undamaged. Reclamator Rifles require six hours and some sort of power source to recharge. They also take a very long time to construct, and tend to fail catastrophically in areas of high and low gravity, gaining the Inaccurate, Overheats, and Unreliable Weapon Qualities.





DOMINIONS OF THE LATHES

THE FOUNDING
OF THE LATHES

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TAMING OF
THE LATHES

•

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•

THE THREE LATHES

•

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•

THE LATHE WORLDS

CHAPTER III: DOMINIONS OF THE LATHES

"The Imperium is a vast and divine machine, with each cog, wheel, belt, and pin serving all the others in a complex and sanctified pavane of advantage and support. Today, we usher in a new era of cooperation and prosperity for all within the domains and demesnes of this newly established Calixis Sector, as we cede these worlds to our brothers of the Adeptus Mechanicus, to hold and bend to their will in perpetuity, to the betterment of all."

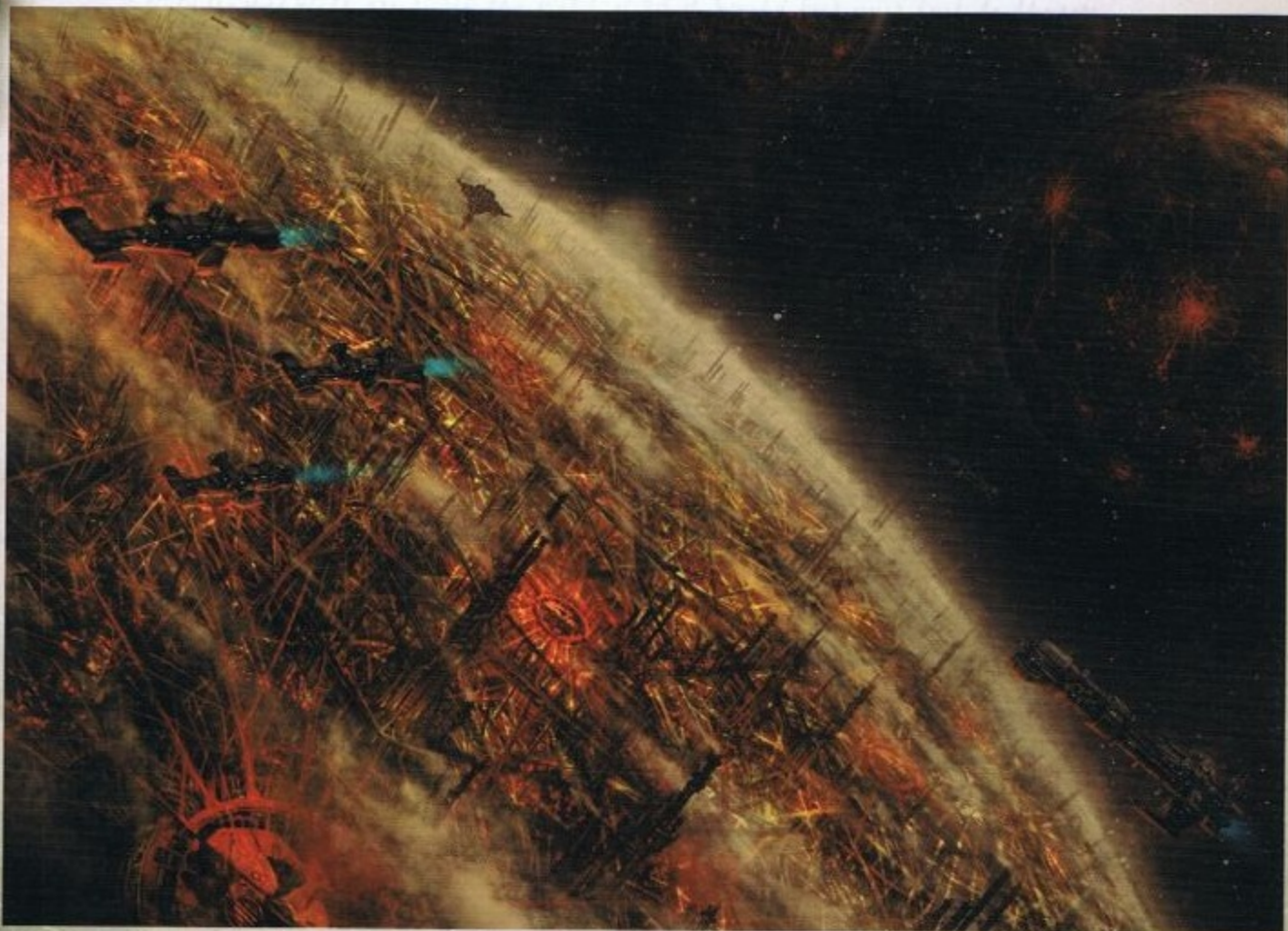
—Imperial Governor Drusus addressing
the first Cynod of the Lathes

Found near the centre of the Sector, along the border of the Golgenna Reach and the Drusus Marches, is an entire system the Adeptus Mechanicus dominate and rule: the Lathes. Its three main planets, ceded to the Adeptus Mechanicus during the final stages of the Angevin Crusade and since transformed into massive forge worlds in their own right, have been vigorous furnaces of production and research at the core of the Sector for over two thousand years.

Since their founding, the Mechanicum of the Lathes have converted nearly every object in the system to the purposes of the Machine God. They have occupied almost every stable

anchor point in the system with research stations, agrodomes, and Skitarii garrison bases. Reaching out from the central system, the Magos of the Lathes have stretched their power and influence across the Sector using all manner of coercion and manipulation. From the Lords Dragon conducting their diligent interrogations on the prison planet of Sheol-17 to the Magos Biologis of the Hippocrasian Agglomeration labouring over the churned devastation of Morwen VI, the Adeptus Mechanicus has spread throughout Calixis, and the Arch-Magos of the Lathe-Covenant drive to maintain firm control over their far-flung holdings. These Lathe Worlds, the common title given to the various stations, planets, and systems the Adeptus Mechanicus of the Lathes claim rule over, represent an enormous power within the Calixis Sector.

Unfortunately for the Arch-Magos of the Covenant, controlling the ambition and thirst for knowledge of countless adepts, scattered widely over the vastness of the Sector, is nearly impossible. Factions and sects vie for control of their own individual fiefdoms, secret research cabals operate with furtive aims, and forbidden experiments occur wherever the endless desire for knowledge overrides control or sanity. Added to this litany of difficulties are the caprices of Astropathic communication and the insurmountable vagaries of Warp travel, as countless stellar phenomena and other, stranger anomalies wreak havoc with all attempts at interstellar command, often rendering even the most careful and diligent leadership efforts completely fruitless. Entire tech-heresies might rise, Explorator ships become lost in their travels and forgotten, and research outposts fall to disuse and decay, and worse, as the Lathes strive in this impossible task.



THE FOUNDING OF THE LATHES

"Like three glowing jewels within the crown of the Mechanicus are the Lathes. Their power is manifest, their importance is paramount, and their logical attraction beyond compare. Without these worlds the Calixis Sector would not exist, and without them it could not continue to exist today."

—Fabricator-General Castellar at the Convocation of the 2431st Conclave of the Lathe-Covenant

As the Angevin Crusade ground on into its fourth standard decade, the Imperial forces pushing towards the planet Orendal through the Adrantis region met with greater and greater resistance, contending with more and more severe Warp storms and incurring staggering losses. Essential to those victories that were achieved were the Explorator fleets of the Adeptus Mechanicus, bravely providing reconnaissance and resupply services across all fronts. As the situation within the Calyx Expanse grew more and more grim, supply and support challenges for the forces of the Imperium were mounting. Mechanicus legends speak of the saviours of the crusade, the sudden appearance of a massive Adeptus Mechanicus fleet, complete with ancient Lathe-class Fabricator vessels and full deca-legions of Skitarii. Supported with no less than a demi-legio of medium and light Titans to bolster the war machines of the Legio Venator already present, these forces proved indispensable for the final push to meet Lord Militant Angevin and his forces at Orendal.

Arch-Magos Mat Aleph Xenon, commanding the enormous might of the reinforced fleets and armies of the Adeptus Mechanicus, requested as reward for his efforts the stewardship of a small system, Pondus Impare, just inside the borders of the Imperial stronghold of the Golgenna Reach. The erratic orbits of its planets and the strange behaviour of gravity within the system rendered it nearly useless to most colonisation or mining plans. However, situated as it was in the borderlands between the pacified Imperial regions and the half-tamed expanse of Adrantis, and given the role of the requester himself, the Lord Militant did not hesitate to grant this request.

Having a massive friendly force garrisoning a system so close to the embattled frontier was ideal for the Imperial generals. The Lord Militant himself, sorely grieved with the terrible losses suffered in the latest push, had withdrawn from all command decisions, leaving his forces in disarray and confusion. General Drusus, rising to command the Crusade, maintained a strong relationship with Xenon, and the forces of the Adeptus Mechanicus continued to serve reliably throughout the remaining phases of the war.

During the remainder of the Crusade three massive Fabricator ships landed on the three primary planets of the Pondus system, and began to churn out infrastructure needed to supply the material needs of the crusade through the final stages. The needs of the forces tasked with the pacification and policing of an entire fledgling Sector were vast, and only fully developed forge worlds would be able to meet the growing and desperate demand.



In less than two decades, the unceasing efforts of the Fabricator ships had laid the foundations for three independent forge worlds: Het, Hesh, and Hadd, named after the ancient ships now permanently residing on each world. With single-minded purpose, their inhabitants bent their every fibre towards the production of weapons, vehicles, and ammunition to feed the ravenous beast that was the Imperial war machine. Enormous autofactories stripped the planet surfaces for raw materials, crawling their slow, implacable way across the planets, leaving nothing but dry, ruined desolation in their wakes. Imperial soldiers and naval personnel, manning the vast cargo ships sent to collect the equipment and ship it to the front lines, could only stare in awe at the incredible changes being wrought upon the planets in such a short time. Upon seeing the vast canyon systems the criss-crossing pattern of the autofactories had knurled into the surface of the planets, many commented that they appeared to have indeed been turned on a lathe.

Arch-Magos Xenon referred to his new domain as "The System where the Lathes Dwell," to honour the venerated machine-spirits bound within the ancient and powerful artefacts, but this proved to be cumbersome for official documentation. Soon the name was shortened to "The System of the Lathes," and then simply "The Lathes System" towards the end of the Angevin Crusade. However, the tendency of Imperial personnel to refer to the planets, rather than the system, caused it to appear as the Lathes on most star charts. Over the course of the intervening centuries, even the Adeptus Mechanicus itself has come to refer to its domains across the entire Calixis Sector as the Lathe Worlds.

EXODUS OF STEEL

Over the next thousand years the Adeptus Mechanicus consolidated its power over the Lathes and their surrounding system. Factories, orbital assets, and research stations spread throughout the system, taking advantage of the opportunities the various anomalies and variances existing within the system offered. The density of forge worlds alone was enough to set the Lathes apart. Controlling a system so rich in strange phenomena and material resources, with the full power of three ancient Fabricator ships at their immediate disposal, was nearly unprecedented in Mechanicus history, and much was made of the opportunity. Entire research groups were transferred from Mars and other outlying facilities to these fresh new holdings in the fledgling Sector.

One of the central aspects of the system that lured Mechanicus researchers were the three major asteroid belts, all situated at curious angles to the ecliptic plane, intersecting at various turbulent points. It was clear from the structure and composition of the three belts that they did not share a common origin, and thus each offered its own potential. In addition, in those regions where two, or even all three, belts converged, an extremely rare array of conditions held sway. Researchers from Mars and beyond were eager to come to the system to pursue lines of inquiry as varied as gravimancy, cryomantic mining, and kinetic discordance.

Most prominent among the system's many fascinating properties, however, were the tearing gravity storms and horrific pressure shears that had rendered the system all but useless to other servants of the Imperium. Vast cities in space were erected solely to observe these phenomena, poring over probable causes and effects, and into possible applications for any powers thus discovered. Arch-Magos expert in transportation, Warp technologies, communications, and weapons theory descended upon the system, swelling the ranks of the Adeptus Mechanicus within the Lathes.

In order to feed the countless millions now labouring throughout the system, enormous food manufactories and agrology platforms were constructed under the auspices of the Rustica Mandate. These vast complexes were established throughout the system to provide sustenance to all those servants of the Omissiah who still required such basic needs. The stations were carefully placed throughout the region, so as to maximise the logistical impact of each station and its production.

Empty and remote regions often existed amidst the research stations, weapons platforms, and agrology domes that sprang up across the system, the very gravitic anomalies that made the system so fascinating often causing these isolations. Many of these regions provided ideal storage locations and study facilities for captured crafts, exotic xenos vessels, space hulks of various provenances, and more, that had been brought to the Lathes for innumerable other reasons. The offices of Lord Inquisitor Caidin and his predecessors have filed many complaints and demands for information and even for the outright surrender of several specimens. There are no records of any such demands being approved, due in large part to the sovereignty of the Adeptus Mechanicus, especially within their own domain.



To ensure the security of the many assets that have since been brought under the protection of the Lathes, many Omni-Vigilens and Indoctrination Bases have been established throughout the system for the Crimson Guard and their Titan allies, the Legio Venator. Although the greatest presence of both the Crimson Guard and the Legio Venator is to be found in Adeptus Mechanicus holdings outside the Lathes System, both entities maintain strong forces within the system, including the Legio Venator fortress world of Lycosidae, and even the Panopticon Orbital Station. The Mechanicus know that should the Lathes fall, their own power within Calixis would soon fall with them.

DESCENDANTS OF THE LATHES

The Lathes System is subject to a unique array of stresses and stellar phenomena that make it fascinating to the full spectrum of Mechanicus adepts. This, combined with the alluring density of planetary bodies suitable for conversion into forge worlds, and the presence of multiple resource-laden asteroid belts, made the system irresistible. The inhabitants of the Lathes are the standard cross-section of any active forge world, but have expanded to occupy nearly every niche possible in the system. After thousands of years of acclimation and adaptation, however, there have been two primary genetic divergences from the standard Imperial norm.

Due in large part to the crushing and indiscriminate gravitic shears that buffet all three of the primary worlds, as well as the rest of the entire system, adepts and menials alike descended from the original colonial stock have generally low, powerful bodies. Most Magos Biologis theorise that these alterations make these deviations, dubbed Lathesmasters, the ideal workers for this harsh, chaotic environment. A second, less well known, genetic offshoot, however, caused a branch of inhabitants that are massive in stature, often more so than Ogryns. These giants, unfortunately, cannot leave the system or their bodies soon collapse. Whether it is the gravitic anomalies, some sort of mineral dependency, or perhaps even a strange symbiosis with the system's sun, these huge creatures die within days of leaving their home system. There are many whispers within the Calixis Sector concerning the daunting size of this secondary branch. Rumours abound concerning their dimensions and strength, and the possible causes of such deviation from the genetic norms. It is when outsiders witness these large specimens that fresh rumours of mutation or genetic experimentation once again arise. A constant struggle is waged between the Lexmechanic Canonicus of the Lathe-Covenant and the Calixian Conclave, who seem determined to categorise the larger genotype of the Lathe World as Abhuman.

Because of this altered but stable genotype, Tech-Priests, Skitarii, and menials alike originating from the Lathes are shorter than average, but stronger and more durable. In fact, most standard humans would require some form of augmetic enhancement or gravitic support to survive for long in the Lathes System. However, there are many out-system humans that call the Lathes home as well, called to the system from all over the Imperium. Because of this diversity, there are even more factions within the structure of the system than would usually be expected, even among the fractious, individualist adepts of the Adeptus Mechanicus.

At the very top of the feudal hierarchy of the Lathes and their vassal territories are those adepts belonging to the Lathe-Covenant. Following the original documents of confederation—called the Pact of Blood and Oil—and these adepts control the web of relationships, obligations, and enmity that define the position of the Adeptus Mechanicus within the enormous power structure of the greater Sector. Power within the Covenant is slow to shift, but when there is an adjustment it often involves varying translations of the responsibilities, duties, and claims contained within the Pact and their relationship to the governors of the Calixis Sector.

The two most obvious factions vying for control of the system and its far-flung holdings are the Disciples of Thule and the Followers of the Divine Light of Sollex. Devoted to the teachings and example of Explorator Arch-Magos Paracelsus Thule, his Disciples are utterly focused on the search for ancient technologies from ages past, often to the exclusion of all else. Those adepts who follow the Divine Light of Sollex, on the other hand, are weaponsmiths without compare, devoting all of their time and energy to the development and production of the most destructive technologies imaginable. These adepts are truly ruthless in their pursuits, and are suspected of several incidents of genocide, as well as the sudden and complete deaths of entire biospheres in more remote corners of the Calixis Sector.

Serving as the native defence force, and the armed wing of the Adeptus Mechanicus within the Sector, is the Crimson Guard. A massive weapon, forged from the ranks of loyal Skitarii, combat servitors such as the famed Spatha-pattern creation, and skilled Secutor warriors, the Crimson Guard is scattered across the Sector. They are deployed in units that range in size from individual squads guarding outlying stations to regimental combat units stationed on major bases and fortress worlds watching over the most sensitive and important assets of the Mechanicus. Under the auspices of the Crimson Guard within the Lathes System itself are units that have not actually been contained within the standard chain of command for centuries, including the Brazen Guard Praetorii. Ostensibly, the Crimson Guard serves the Lathe-Covenant first and foremost, but the reality is much more complex than this, with various commanders and Arch-Magi commanding the fealty of various units and divisions, including the Grandmaster of the Legio Venator and the Forge Masters of the Lathes.

Within the ranks of the adepts are whispered even darker schisms, factions whose existence sits on the shadowy border between hearsay and legend. The implacable Lords Dragon are said to stalk hereteks throughout the Sector, while the fabled mech-assassin cults haunt the darkest fears of the most faithful servants of the Ommissiah. The adepts of the Ordo Reductor, in their blood-red robes, threaten destruction to any who stand against the Covenant, while the adepts of the Hippocrasian Sect are said to study life to the very edge of death and beyond. Many other cabals, more sinister or mysterious, lurk around the edges of rumour and innuendo, shaping the relationships and patterns of fealty within the Lathes System like the violent and incomprehensible shears of local gravity.

The current balance of power within the Lathes System is difficult to decipher, even to those adepts who must daily contend with it. Nominally standing atop the furiously burning forges of the Adeptus Mechanicus in the Calixis Sector is High Fabricator Castellar, ruling from the forge-temples of Lathe-Het and leading the adepts of the Lathe-Covenant as the first among equals, for the greater glory of the Ommissiah. However, tensions abound between the Fabricator General and his deputy, Arch-Magos Ralwure. While the bureaucracy of the Covenant grows and grasps for power in pursuit of the quotas and production levels of their past, Forge Master Janden Samekh Alpha of Lathe-Hesh also burns with indignation at this betrayal of the foundational ethics of the Mechanicus. And over all, lies the eerie stillness of Lathe-Hadd, the Silent Forge, where political conflict has forced nearly every factory and workshop on the planet to fall still, waiting for a revelation that refuses to arrive.



TAMING OF THE LATHES

"We have before us the rawest of diamonds, my brothers. But with the diligence and dedication you have shown in all things, this system will soon be the most glorious jewel in the crown of the Mechanicus Calixis."

—Arch-Magos Mat Aleph Xenon addressing the first Conclave of the Lathe-Covenant

For their assistance in the prosecution of the Angevin Crusade, the Adeptus Mechanicus was gifted with the Pondus Impare system, eventually renamed the Lathe Worlds. It was in this system that three ancient Fabricator ships were sacrificed to the war effort. The massive vessels, constructed in the orbital shipyards around Mars thousands of years before, had never been intended to enter a planet's atmosphere. However, it was decided that they would be incapable of feeding the hunger of the Imperial war machine if they remained in orbit. In a concerted effort involving almost the entire Adeptus Mechanicus fleet, each of the three primary planets received one of the priceless artefact ships, lowered into the gravity well on the glaring plumes of countless retro-jets and ancient gravitic plates. Immediately, the three Fabricator ships began to construct the massive mobile mining/factory crawlers that would harvest the planets' resources for the war effort.

Before the final thrust into what would one day become the Drusus Marches, the Cynod of the Mechanicus and High General Drusus signed the Pact of Blood and Oil, outlining the rights and responsibilities of the forces of Mars within the Calixis Sector in perpetuity. Ultimately, the loyal forces of the High General, wielding weapons the Adeptus Mechanicus of the Pondus System provided for them, were able to defeat the enemies of the Imperium. The three planets, each housing an irreplaceable artefact of the Dark Age of Technology, had churned out enough weapons, machines of war, and ammunition to drown the enemies of Man. The surface of each planet had been scoured clean in the endeavour, the crawling manufactories chewing through the land and transforming it into the materials of war. More and more advanced factories, warehouses, templums, and hab-blocks grew across the planets as the skeletal structures of true forge worlds were laid down in concentric circles around each of the grounded Fabricator ships.

The effort of transforming the Lathe Worlds into their present forge world status was the work of many centuries. Layer by layer, building by building, the planets evolved. The viscera of pipelines, tram-tracks, and transportation tunnels were laid amidst the bones of evolving infrastructure. Higher and higher into the darkening atmosphere rose towering structures, the Cog Mechanicus glaring down from scaffold-enshrouded factories, research facilities, and worshipping centres alike. Carbon poisons saturated atmospheres as the native inhabitants migrated into sealed habitats beneath the surfaces of the planets, or slowly died of stubborn pride. As the Lathe System developed, so too did the Mechanicus holdings throughout the newborn Calixis Sector.

Surveyor maniples conducted an exhaustive survey of the entire system. Each item found within was assayed for its best value to the efforts of the Mechanicus, assigned relevant resources, and the taming of the Lathes begun. Harbinger stations and Scrutinatus platforms were pushed throughout the system. In the earliest days thousands of adepts died studying the system's star and watching over the entangled loops of the intertwining asteroid belts. Many more adepts perished in the efforts to catalogue the system, but centuries of disasters, looting, misfiling, and simple neglect means that only the most cursory reports survive.

Several strange, notable anomalies can still be found in the data remnants kept deep beneath the Nidus Omega on Lathe-Het. Records show several celestial bodies that apparently no longer exist, but are referenced in several different entries, such as an entire cometary fragment, originally of some importance, that was either misidentified or mislabelled and thus lost to the mists of time. A legion of blank-faced servitors bears the responsibility of digging through these partial data scraps in the incense-laced darkness of the Elogium beneath the Nidus. The efforts of these fallen servants is tireless, and yet the High Fabricator and his fellow Forge Masters hold little hope to see more than a single reconstituted datum over the course of a lifetime.

One of the most infamous info-gaps is that there are no early records to show the existence of the planet now designated Cella. Because of the partial nature of the records, it is impossible to know if Cella was, in fact, present all along, or whether those early adepts, who struggled to bring an entire system into the Mechanicus fold, actually constructed it. Several archaeological expeditions have been suggested, but the High Fabricators have denied every request for time or resources throughout the millennia. If the rocky bones of a natural planet are present, however, there is no way to tell now without such an effort. Layer after layer of storage space, warehouses, stasis-vaults, and data-tombs have accumulated over the entire planet's surface and deep into its mantle and core as well. Most adepts merely assume that it is an artificial construct, taking pride in the Mechanicus Calixis and its ability to craft worlds out of nothingness. Those few outsiders who have visited the system, however, often express serious doubt that a planet nearly the size of Terra itself could have been constructed artificially.

One of the most important mandates delivered to the legions of adepts reforming the system was the need for the Adeptus Mechanicus within the Lathes System to be as independent as possible. This was a policy dictated from the high towers of Mars itself, despite the close ties between the Imperium and the Mechanicus. To this end, the adepts instituted a web of life that stretched across the system, connecting those few regions of stable gravity to each other with a pipeline of transportation routes, agrodome stations, and transfer points, that would ensure that all the Omnissiah's servants requiring food would have it, without the need for importation from Imperial worlds. The Rustica Mandate required the largest deployment of independent stations in the system, and is one of the most ambitious engineering feats to be seen throughout the Lathe Worlds.

Working outward from the Lumen Stations, which keep a constant watch over the fluctuating energy waves of their sun, legions of adepts struggled diligently to harness the system and make it their own. It was the work of several decades to anchor the Sagittarius Stations above Desideratum. Myrmidons of the Ordo Reductor, working closely with a host of war sages and Secutors, laboured tirelessly to hang these stations and their lesser cousins around the desert planet. For nearly two thousand years now, every form of weapon known to man has punished the planet's surface, scattering hab-sized shell casings, re-entry shafts miles deep, and other gigantic wreckage across the empty wastes. Rumours occasionally surface of strange artefacts blasted up out of the planet's crust, but the Factors of the High Fabricator quickly dispel them, as all official records declare that there was never any xenos presence within the system.

Even as the rest of the system took shape, a shell of stations was constructed at the margins to present an amicable façade to the rest of the Sector. These Excipio Stations also provided a convenient cover for massive defensive works, a first line of defence should the need ever arise. An army of workers built these dual purpose stations, primarily servitors who were immediately repurposed or destroyed outright once the stations were complete. The Excipio Stations now provide an elaborate mask of unity and friendship while defending the system from unwanted scrutiny or encroachment.

The skeletal structures of the docks, floating in high anchor around the three Lathes, were among the first works to be completed. When the system was young and the Calyx Expanse not yet fully tamed, Explorator fleets were seen as an essential adjunct to the Lathes System's responsibilities. Even after the formation of the Calixis Sector, the support and coordination of these fleets was seen as vital to the directives of the Mechanicus Calixis. Vast Explorator fleets are still regularly sent forth into the Koronus Expanse and beyond after ancient treasures and undiscovered phenomena to further the Quest for Knowledge. The history of the Lathes overflows with celebrated Explorators, among them Secutor Josefus Sendar Ion the Bloody and the tragic figure of Magos Jonwa Kline, lost beyond the Rifts of Hecaton over three centuries ago. The most famous, of course, is Arch-Magos Paracelsus Thule himself.

Often these Explorator fleets carry with them sacred archeotech and other technologies not available to the average run of humanity. The launching of such a fleet is an delicate and momentous event, and the adepts of the Lathes treat it as such. When the flagship *Sacred Wheel of Certainty* was launched in M41.721, over a hundred thousand Lathesmasters attended, singing in binary cant as the enormous ship slid out of its cradle and into orbit around Lathe-Het. Massive atmosphere-scrubbers cleaned a path through the pollution at that moment, so that as a billion arc-torches lit the darkness and flocks of candle-bearing cherubs filled the skies, those on the surface were able to witness the departure of the enormous vessel.

Over hundreds of years the Lathes System transformed itself into one of the most important Mechanicus holdings in the entire quadrant. The shaping and development has never stopped, however, and the system has continued to be crafted, wrought, and changed down through the years to fit the shifting priorities of Forge Masters as they come and go. Currently, the Lathes are enduring a tumultuous period of confusion, conspiracy, and deceit, but undoubtedly they will arise stronger than before; the consequences, if not, are too horrible for even the logic-engines of the Covenant to conceive.

THE RULE OF IRON LAW

The Lathe Worlds comprise every planet the Mechanicus claim rule over within the borders of the Calixis Sector and beyond into the Koronus Expanse (though the latter is without any Imperial recognition, given the nature of that lawless region). The challenges of leading such a diverse and individualistic group as the adepts of the Ommissiah are manifold, ranging from the eternal problems of void communication and transportation, to the more insidious issues of oversight and tech-heresy. Over time, an elaborate structure has evolved within the rigid confines of the Pact of Blood and Oil to assist the Lathe-Covenant in managing its holdings.

The Lathe-Covenant requires a careful balance between three distinctly separate offices: the High Fabricator of the Lathes, the High Council of the Arch-Magos, and the Consilium Magos. The High Council is a small cabal of Arch-Magos drawn from all the Lathe Worlds, responsible for every facet of production in the Mechanicus Calixis. The Consilium Magos, on the other hand, is a much larger body, again made up of adepts from throughout the Lathe Worlds. It is the duty of the Consilium to interface with outside agencies of power such as the Sector Governor's council and the Holy Ordos. The Consilium hears petitions from these bodies, analyses their cases, and then advises the High Council. Ancillary to these assemblies are the Magos Vagus, the remaining magos in the Sector. Any magos may attend Covenant sessions, call for a hearing before the High Council, or request an audience with the High Fabricator, although this will most likely be denied unless they are able to pique his interest.

In theory, the Lathe-Covenant is independent of the High Fabricator, and he, in turn, is only one among equals within the High Council. However, over the past several hundred years, the balance of power has slowly shifted away from the Covenant and into the hands of the High Fabricator, effectively anointing him, unofficially, as the sole ruler of the Lathe Worlds and marking the Covenant as little more than an advisory body.



POWER FACTIONS AND SECTS

"Put three of them in a sealed chamber and you would find no less than five factions and two secret sects. I swear to you, I believe I have met Tech-Priests whose left brain and right brain belonged to two different splinter groups."

—Rogue Trader Choras Donagal,
First Trader of the Golgenna Reach

The Lathe Worlds are, in theory, one seamless, perfect mechanism where all serve in unity of purpose under the rule of the Lathes. On a practical level, however, they are nothing more than a loose conglomeration of factions, each consisting of millions of insular, isolated adepts, most far distant from their masters. Each adept pursues their own Quest for Knowledge with which to enrich the Omnissiah and the greater glory of the Adeptus Mechanicus. Occasionally, they find themselves capable of working in unison towards their disparate goals. However, quiet often, Tech-Priests across the Sector find themselves at odds with their brethren, with those for whom they should maintain the highest esteem. It is in those moments, when loyalty to the Omnissiah, loyalty to one's self, and loyalty to one's faction or chosen sect collide, that the true measure of an adept is often known.

History is replete with examples of adepts who have pursued their own Quests for Knowledge against the better judgement of their peers. The False Fabricator of Cyclopea and his elaborate Servitor army, the dangerous allure of the Pharrian Profanation, and of course, Arch-Magos Malygris himself, all stand as ready examples of the danger that can be posed from abjuring the teachings of the Omnissiah in favour of personal advancement or power.

It is, therefore, extremely important for any adept entering the crucible of the Lathes to exercise a certain amount of awareness towards the various factions and sects that comprise the Lathes System and the diverse feudal holdings of the Lathe Worlds.

THE LATHE-COVENANT

The ruling body of adepts that preside over the Mechanicus Calixis, the Lathe-Covenant is the first and foremost faction throughout the Lathe Worlds. The Magos Vagus, adepts who adhere strictly to Lord Militant Angevin's Pact of Blood and Oil, marking the confederation and independence between Governor Drusus and the representatives of the Adeptus Mechanicus over 2000 years ago, are also included within this powerful bloc. The power of the Lathe-Covenant is derived not only from the documents that established the Mechanicus Calixis, but also from the mere fact of their present possession of authority. This position allows them and their allies to apply a great deal of pressure in the pursuit of material, personnel, and other resources.

Even among the Covenant, however, one cannot find a monolithic coalition. Varying translations of the rights, responsibilities, and duties of the Lathe Worlds to the governors of Calixis and indeed, to each other, strain the



various sub-factions. There are divisions that believe fervently in the Mechanicus Calixis' duty to support and raise up the more benighted sub-sectors of Calixis, while others render unto the Sector Lord only grudgingly, seeing the Adeptus Mechanicus as more of a senior power to the rest of the backward Imperium than an integral, co-equal part.

DISCIPLES OF THULE

One of the most numerous factions within the Mechanicus Calixis, the followers of Arch-Magos Paracelsus Thule believe that the eternal Quest for Knowledge is best pursued in the field. Disciples of the itinerant Arch-Magos are the most fervent supporters of the Explorer fleets. They believe the best way to serve the Omnissiah and utilise the limited resources on hand is to seek out the ancient technologies of the past and to follow the paths of the ancients wherever they may lead. Such concerns as fame, political ramifications, and even personal safety matter nothing to the Disciples of Thule as they pursue their quest into the deep, cold recesses of space in the hopes of pushing the boundaries of knowledge further and further back.

The Disciples of Thule are not a proscribed or radical sect, although they are not entirely welcomed into the Mechanicus body politic due to their singular focus on exploration to the detriment of all else. Others look upon these dedicated adepts with bemused tolerance for the most part, unless one of their expeditions claims the resources or personnel of a rival adept, at which point the conflicts can quickly escalate.

THE MAGOS FIDELIS

Among the many factions of the Mechanicus Calixis are those adepts who believe that the fracturing of the Lathe Worlds has grown out of hand. They look upon the petty bickering, empire building, and general discord sown throughout the Sector as a waste of precious resources that could be better served going to any of a number of more legitimate causes, most often their own. A loose confederation of like-minded adepts rather than a formal faction, the Magos Fidelis nevertheless hold considerable power, as quite often the merest threat of intervention from Mars is enough to cause a wayward adept to back down.

The adepts of the Magos Fidelis are among the most conservative and traditional members of the Mechanicus. Faithful followers of the Omnissiah, often characterised as excessively orthodox within the Cult Mechanicus, most of the tech-adepts and lesser Lathesmasters nevertheless afford them great respect for their dedication and the force of their belief. The most fervent members of the Magos Fidelis believe that a more firm hand, directly from Mars, is needed to set the Lathe Worlds to rights, although at present all petitions for direct intervention have not garnered any response.

THE DIVINE LIGHT OF SOLLEX

A fanatical group of Secutors whose roots were lost to the ravages of time, this cult devotes all of their energy and effort towards the development of more and more devastating weapons and the martial doctrines that best utilise them. Adepts who worship at the altar of Sollex care nothing for the more productive or peaceful applications of technology, and only for the destruction that may be wrought, bending these weapons against those who would misuse the teachings of the Omnissiah.

Within the Lathes System the Cult of Sollex works openly, the devotion of Lathe-Hesh and its charismatic Forge Master a strong support in their various works. Members of the cult operate throughout the system, working on various projects and systems, digging through the archives of Cella, manning the Sagitarium Platforms orbiting Desideratum, and the workshops and storage bays of Lycosidae. Among the most contentious efforts of the followers of the Divine Light are the various gravimancy research stations, where the Cult insists the strange powers ravaging the system could be harnessed to create truly apocalyptic weapon systems. No such system has been perfected, but the research and testing for such a weapon is ongoing across the entire system.

Those who look askance at the followers of the Divine Light most likely do so as a result of various rumours and whispered reports planet-wide eradications in the name of weapons testing. Although the Ordos Calixis have investigated these rumours rigorously, so far no proof of such errant waste of biological resources has been found.

THE CULT ACHANUM

A recent development on Lathe-Hadd, rumours place this loose association of adepts far from the centre of control on the planet, and rather in the more desolate region of Hadd Sur. The brutal removal of production facilities, theoretically to make way for some grand project as the Forge Master decreed, ravaged this area very harshly. But as years pass and still no advancement is made, the populace of the Silent Forge has grown more and more restive, searching farther and farther afield for purpose and guidance. The Cult Achanum, the whispers suggest, offers exactly this.

Preaching from the rust-streaked, hollow shells of now-empty fabrication halls, the leaders of the Cult Achanum speak in strident tones of the Omnissiah. These compelling speakers claim that the Omnissiah holds a special fate for each of His consecrated brethren, from the highest Forge Master to the lowliest menial. Fate is preordained, and the Machine God, knowing all, wishes only that His followers accept these paths and walk them in courage. The Cult interprets desire and ambition as dangerous aberrations, counter to the wishes of the Omnissiah. A loyal follower of the Cult should not strive to break from their path, but rather accept what has been handed down to them. The present state of affairs on Lathe-Hadd is part of the Machine God's plan, they say, and thus should not be fought, but rather accepted in quiet contemplation awaiting his design to unfold. Many wonder if this exists more to ensure the placidity of the natives than to affirm the Cult.

THE ALIUM UNION

Among the most conservative and traditional adepts of the Mechanicus Calixis are those who claim membership in the Alium Union, the Calixian chapter of the Imperio-cognosticians. The members of the Union staunchly believe that those who toil quietly, for the betterment of the Omnissiah, can serve the Quest for Knowledge just as well as the more vainglorious adepts who dash about the stars seeking ancient secrets. Members of the Alium Union see great benefit to the Omnissiah and, indeed, the Imperium itself, in the daily duties every member of the Mechanicum, from the High Fabricator of the Lathes to the lowliest menial, performs.

Ironically, there is a backlash effect occurring on Lathe-Hadd, in direct reaction to the grinding silence the hubris of the planet's magos has brought about. In this environment, the Alium League has gained support and sympathy from many divergent quarters. Seeing the Silent Forge as the price paid for overreaching, these members of the Union seek to re-establish the credibility of their home through small tasks of renovation and production, hoping to bring the planet back into service one small manufactorum at a time. Although only a small number of adepts on Lathe-Hadd are openly members of the Alium Union, there is more and more support within the Halls of Ignavus for this humble approach.

SCIONS OF THE IRON SPHERE

The Scions of the Iron Sphere are a brotherhood of rabidly devoted adepts who look upon the Omnissiah as the pinnacle of human evolution and development, and see all flesh as not only a weakness in the face of time and adversity, but as a prop that keeps Mankind from achieving his full potential. The Scions believe that the Adeptus Mechanicus alone has been vouchsafed the future of humanity, and, in fact, they see all other humans as an inferior sub-species, an evolutionary dead end that has proven itself too weak to deserve the Omnissiah's blessing. This sect is not formally recognised within the halls of the Nidus Omega, but nevertheless wields a surprising amount of power within the inner sanctums of the Mechanicus Calixis.

The devotion of the Scions of the Iron Sphere is such that most ascendant adepts of the order undergo a procedure known as the Rite of Pure Thought, in which the right lobe of their brain is removed, and replaced with a bank of cogitators and micro data-stacks to enhance the adept's ability to process and store information, while removing the distractions of emotion and the false paths of creative thought. Those Scions who have undergone the procedure epitomise the cold, detached persona that many followers of the Omnissiah project, save that the Scions are actually incapable of human warmth or original thought.

The Scions of the Iron Sphere hold to the belief that no agreement with other human agencies need be honoured; after all, there can be no binding agreements between thinking men and unreasoning animals. This aspect of the Scions' belief system is the best-kept secret of their fellowship. If the agents of the Sector Governor or the Holy Ordos should ever become aware of the cult's beliefs and influence, the damage to relationships that are essential to the operation of the Lathe Worlds would be incalculable.

THE HIPPOCRASIAN SECT

Consisting primarily of Magos Biologis and Genetors, the Hippocrasian Sect is a fellowship of like-minded adepts forming organically around the study of life and the transition-state between living and death. The Hippocrassians, unlike the vast majority of the Biologis adepts, have come to focus almost solely on the study of death, the passing of the life essence from corporeal to incorporeal, and the process of decay that immediately begins to encroach upon the dying flesh. The Sect itself has never been clear as to the end use of their research, and has responded to inquiries from the Lathe-Covenant and even the office of the High Fabricator himself with vague statements of prolonged life, improved augmetic implantation, and the like. To date, however, the Hippocrasians have filed no official findings or discoveries regarding these fields, or, in fact, any others.

Although the vast majority of the followers of the Sect can be found in the haphazard collection of space craft and observation stations orbiting the death world of Morwen VI, there are adherents of the Sect spread throughout the Lathe Worlds. Any research station with a Biologis cadre most likely has at least one Magos sympathetic to the fascinations that drive the Hippocrasians. Reports indicate that the Ordo Hereticus

holds certain suspicions of the Sect, and the Lathe-Covenant has received warnings that Chaos taint might fester without proper Inquisitorial oversight. To date, however, absolutely no proof of any heretical influence has been found, and there is no reason to believe the adepts of the Hippocrasian Sect are anything other than what they appear; simple researchers merely studying the frailties of the flesh.

THE FERROUS WHISPER

Among the diverse members of the Mechanicus Calixis are many who harken back to the heady days of Martian independence, many thousands of years ago when the red planet was free. Those adepts yearn once again for Mechanicus autonomy, for a galaxy where the adherents of the Omnissiah stand as allies, a body separate from, but equal to, the Imperium. These adepts often refer to themselves, and their philosophy, as the Ferrous Whisper.

The High Fabricator of the Lathes, the Lathe-Covenant, and most Forge Masters working within the Mechanicus Calixis deny the existence of the Ferrous Whisper. Sympathy within the halls of power is high, however. Particularly susceptible to this line of thinking are those lower in the hierarchy of the Mechanicum, who seek ways to raise their own station at the cost of others. Within the Tricorn Palace and the Ordos Calixis, the movement is seen as a dangerous heresy, alarmingly seductive to weaker adepts, and thus something to be watched and controlled at every opportunity. In fact, the rulers of the Calixis Sector are acutely aware of the danger this philosophy poses, as they would sever the close ties between the Mechanicus and the Imperium. More worrisome still, they do not know if this sect is only local to Calixis, or perhaps a tendril reaching across Imperial space. Surely if so, the often fragile relationship between Mars and Terra could one day falter, leaving the Imperium ripe for a new civil war of devastating consequences.

THE LEVELISTS

In direct opposition to the Ferrous Whisper is a Tech-heresy abhorrent to almost all members of the Adeptus Mechanicus, that of the Levelists. These rare progressive adepts believe that the Omnissiah never intended that the Mechanicus be the last repository of all technological knowledge, to be hoarded and parcelled out to the rest of humanity in tiny packets. Levelists believe that the dusty gates of the Machine God should be opened wide, and that all of Mankind should be allowed the full spectrum of the Omnissiah's bounty.

Of course, these populist, egalitarian views horrify the vast majority of the Adeptus Mechanicus. Most adepts, in their own unique ways, are devoutly loyal to their conception of the Omnissiah, and feel that the very eyes of the uninitiated upon the mysteries of the Cult Mechanicus sully those mysteries nearly beyond cleansing. Further, the idea of surrendering power accumulated over the course of millennia strikes the overwhelming majority as utterly unthinkable. While many within the Imperium's ruling castes would welcome such sharing of technology and knowledge, the common man has become accustomed to unknowable mysteries and the even more mysterious adepts to wield them. Most see technology as frightening and strange, and untold generations have winnowed out any desire to know more.

THE TENNINITES

There is, within the psychological foundation of every forge world, a deep-seated fear of Abominable Intelligences. Tales from millennia gone by, of ages now more impossible legend than story, speak of the near-extinction of the human race at the hands of legions of faceless iron golems, crafted sentiences that dared not only to think, but to think they were equal to Man. The Ommissiah and the Fabricator-General have forbidden the study of such fields, and any adepts who delve into this illicit branch of research are branded as Khamrian hereteks and hounded from the society of the Mechanicum, if not immediately rendered to Servitude. There are those adepts, however, who skirt the proscribed disciplines, seeking to better understand the hallowed machine-spirits that serve Mankind without, hopefully, falling into tech-heresy. The Tenninites are one such a group that exists in Calixis, though there are undoubtedly others even more furtive in their research.

Working primarily in small stations scattered throughout the Lathe Worlds, the Tenninites focus primarily on ancient machine-spirits, coaxing them back to active service and seeking ways to enhance their awareness and performance. They have achieved several minor breakthroughs that some might consider tech-heresy, but few outside adepts dare utilise these implementations given their source. Many assume there are also major discoveries that the Tenninites dare not reveal, lest they face the full wrath of the Lords Dragon. The sect assumes they are under constant surveillance, and likely infiltration as well, but so far has not faced outright action against them. This is surely an indication of their skills in keeping their other results all carefully hidden, until the proper time of revelation.

AES OMNISSIAH

Within an abandoned assembly vault, only a few levels above the Baltean Maze on Lathe-Hadd, a small group of disaffected adepts began a project in secret that soon caught the imagination of entire hab blocks of Hadd Nord. Starting with the smallest of components, diligently repaired, cleansed, and purified, a humanoid effigy began to take form on the scarred floor of the vault. The brotherhood accepted only the purest materials, and each piece was meticulously refurbished before joining the statuary. Over the past few years it has grown and expanded. Datanets have been incorporated into the pristine structure, repurposed Servitors plugged into the form, and even as it grows, the possible shape of its completion cannot be guessed. Those performing the construction only say that an invisible hand guides their action, each action taken without fully conscious thought.

Recently these activities have gained wider notice, and individual adepts from across the Lathe Worlds, many hungry for a purpose that has so far eluded them, have sought out the fellowship gathering on the Silent Forge. There are accusations of Ommissiad heresy, but the adepts say that the form being constructed far beneath Lathe-Hadd's surface is only an experiment in purity of form. Such focusing of idle hands to a purely academic task is ideal for honing skills that otherwise may rust from disuse, and nothing more. The quality of the components being incorporated into this academic exercise, however, has raised the suspicions of several different agencies within the Mechanicus Calixis.



THE CARNICULA

Over a decade ago, a schism erupted within the adepts of the Hippocrasian Sect, as several research vessels of the Hippocrasian Agglomeration pulled away from Morwen VI and sought less crowded skies in which to pursue an independent program of research. The Carnicula are not solely fixated on mortality and decay, but rather on multifarious approaches to lengthening the lifespan of various vat-grown constructs. Even their Hippocrasian brethren see the adepts of the Carnicula as unwholesomely fixated on the flesh and, in fact, many of them have augmented their bodies with new biological components. Although not heretical by the strictest of definitions, most of the Mechanicus Calixis find these fleshly augmetics inefficient, terribly distasteful, and even an affront to the Machine God.

The Carnicula has become loosely aligned to the Organicists of wider Mechanicus recognition. Although most of the Lathe Worlds do not look upon them with great favour, whenever an ageing Arch-Magos finds his biological components going into final system shutdown, they waste no time in seeking out the Carnicula and its dedicated Biologis research ships.

THE THREE LATHES

"There are no greater treasures in the Calixis Sector than the Lathes. Without the power and production of the Lathes, the Sector would never have been conquered. Without the wisdom and the guidance of the Lathes, the Sector could never have been held. Only a fool would deny the eminence of the Ommissiah in the Order of the Sector."

—Omniprophet Alea Jhet addressing the Civil Council on Scintilla

The spiritual core of the Lathes System, and, in fact, all the Mechanicus Calixis, are the three forge worlds built upon the bones of ancient Fabricator ships landed thousands of years ago. Now consisting of layer after layer of construction and infrastructure, the original topography of each planet is hopelessly buried to time. Wreathed in the noxious fumes of a thousand thousand factories, unaugmented humans are barely capable of surviving upon their surfaces, but the servants of the Machine God toil ceaselessly for the Glory of the Ommissiah and the Lathes, and anything else is triviality to be ignored.

LATHE-HET

First of Equals, Lathe-Het is the home of the Lathe-Covenant's Nidus Omega, the massive structure that houses the ruling councils of the Mechanicus Calixis. Lathe-Het was the first world in the system to receive its massive Fabricator ship during the Angevin Crusade and thus the first to be fully developed into a forge world, rising to prominence over the first thousand years of consolidation within the System. Most of its manufactories have since been moved off planet, however, into orbital stations and other holdings across the system. Forge Master Samekh on Lathe-Hesh eagerly claimed the last major production facilities to be removed, those assembling the enormous Valdor Tank Hunters and mounting their priceless main weapons. The planet is now almost totally given over to data-vaults, Ludus TechnoMats, and Scriptoriums, as well as the mechanics of governance for the Lathe Worlds. In addition, vast data-vaults store enormous amounts of information, collected over millennia, which the adepts of Lathe-Het hoard as a further source of power and influence. Most Explorator fleets operating under the aegis of the Lathe Worlds are also coordinated, resupplied, and supported through the tireless efforts of the adepts and minions of Lathe-Het.

Lathe-Het is referred to as the First of Equals, home of the Lathe-Covenant's Nidus Omega, from which the adepts who rule over the Adeptus Mechanicus' vast holdings conduct their daily business and management. The Nidus Omega is a huge hall deep within the core of Lathe-Het, constructed far beneath the first ancient Fabricator ship. Countless offices, lecture halls, generatoria, assembly vaults, and data repositories fill this cold warren of steel and stone. At the centre of the Nidus sits the Grand Atrium of the Lathes, a vast assembly hall where the official work of governing the Lathe Worlds is conducted. An enormous bowl of a room, the Grand Atrium contains enough seating, both public and private, to



accommodate every adept of the rank of Magos or higher within the system and all of its far-flung holdings. Only twice has this been attempted: after the death of Sector Lord Drusus for a formal reading of sealed grants and directives, and during the Malygrisian Heresy.

Beneath the Grand Atrium is the Covenant Elogium, a secure storage facility for primary source documents and records from the age of the Angevin Crusade. Although various agencies across the Sector have cast serious doubt on the accuracy of this data, the Lathe Worlds maintain their veracity. Included within the Elogium are the original agreements between the Adeptus Mechanicus and General Drusus that formed the Lathe Worlds and the foundation of the Lathe-Covenant millennia ago.

HIGH FABRICATOR OF THE LATHES ARCH-MAGOS CASTELLAR, FORGE MASTER OF LATHE-HET

The current High Fabricator of the Lathes is Arch-Magos Castellar, Forge Master of Lathe-Het. The High Fabricator of the Lathes holds sway over all the Lathes System and all works and followers of the Ommissiah within that jurisdiction. However, he has allowed some of the power his predecessors had collected to seep back to the Covenant recently with his growing fixation on the Explorator fleets. Rumoured to be at least sympathetic to the Thulian cause, Castellar fundamentally changed the nature of Lathe-Het, moving more and more

Message Source: Agent Obitus-12,
Identity E-3 (Lathesmaster 15)

Initial Signal Source: Omnio-Templum
Orbis, Lathe-Het Orbit

Signal Amplification: Shadowveldt,
In-system station Omicron

Encryption:

Tri-Ocular Corneal Aleph-Edor

All indications suggest that leadership of the Lathe Worlds has fragmented, High Fabricator Castellar an all-but absentee overlord. A great deal of unrest on all three Lathes, as production also diminished on Lathe-Het. Lathe-Hesh seems over-producing at approximately 46%, orbital and remote station production representing approximately 71% of remaining shortfall. Common wisdom of the monolithic Mechanicus body politic is suspect. Lathesmasters are vanishingly rare. Have yet to record a specimen, but their existence is common knowledge. Mission will continue. Several references decrypted to the "Dragon Lords," possibly an internal security organisation similar to the Holy Ordos? Must recheck translations as Binary to Gothic allows many text-drift errors.

Faith in the Emperor is enough.

production off planet to make way for the support and coordination apparatus needed to direct the many Mechanicus Calixis Explorator fleets. Unfortunately, his withdrawal has created a power vacuum, with a chaotic effect on the Covenant. Various influence blocs have scrambled to fill that space and institute their own agendas in his place.

The transfer of manufacture away from the primary world has surprised and alarmed many adepts around the Lathes System who feel that it was only to make way for what they saw as bureaucratic nonsense. No forge world, it was said, should willingly give up its fundamental purpose in the pursuit of temporal power. In direct opposition to the High Fabricator is his nominal lieutenant, Arch-Magos Ralwure the Golden, keeper of the Prime Logis Key and foci for those seeking other governance-patterns. A staunch conservative and stalwart member of the Imperio-Cogniticians faction, Ralwure has attempted to slow this perceived decline, although admittedly whether Castellar has even taken notice of his hostility is debatable.

BRAZEN GUARD PRAETORII

Guarding the hallowed halls of the Nidus Omega and other key regions around Lathe-Het are the Brazen Guard Praetorii. Special units under the overall command of the Crimson Guard, these highly trained soldiers serve the dual purpose of ceremonial guards and a specialised investigatory and policing force for the forge world. Although divided into two primary formations, with the Praetors Excelsus standing guard directly

over the Covenant and the Praetors Ratio the more active policing force, they are all trained and equipped in the same way, and hold the same devout loyalties to the Covenant and the Arch-Magos who command them. The Praetors Excelsus alone wield the ceremonial Glaive Mechanicus, a multi-headed halberd/spear hybrid with power feeds that connect directly into the Brazen Guard's body.

Brazen Guard Praetorii



| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|-----------|-----------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 40 | 40 | (6) 38 | (8) 45 | 40 | 43 | 44 | 48 | 19 |

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 20

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Tech-heretic) (Int), Interrogation (WP), Search (Per) +10, Security (Ag), Tech Use (Int), Tracking (Int) +20.

Talents: Binary Chatter, Combat Master, Independent Targeting, Lightning Reflexes, Logis Implant, Swift Attack, Resistance (Fear, Psychic Powers), The Flesh is Weak (4), Two Weapon Wielder (Melee), Total Recall.

Traits: Dark Sight, Fear (1), Mechanicus Implants, Multiple Arms (4), Natural Weapon (Servo-Fist) (x2), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

Armour: Crimson Armour (6 All, 10 with The Flesh is Weak [4]).

Weapons: Integrated Lathe-Laspistol (40m; S/2/-; 1d10+6E; Pen 2; Integrated, Tearing), Ceremonial Glaive Mechanicus† (Melee; 1d10+14E; Pen 8; Integrated, Power Field), Servo-Fist (Melee; 1d10+6; Pen 0) *or* Integrated Lathe-Lasrifle (100m; S/2/-; 1d10+6E; Pen 2; Integrated, Tearing).

Gear: Red Mechanicus robes (Good-Quality Clothing), Good Quality Bionic Arm, Bionic Locomotion, MIU.

†Requires two hands to use.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- The conflicting atmosphere of the Nidus Omega and the Lathe-Covenant are ripe for political intrigue and espionage as various factions vie for power and representation, from the seediest back alleys to the halls of the Nidus itself.
- Theft or misappropriation of items held within the Covenant Elogium is rare, but it has been known to happen. When important records the Mechanicus covet regarding the ownership of a small planet disappear, it falls to the Acolytes to recover them and discover who has stolen them, and why.
- A plot has been discovered within the disaffected populace of the under-used forge world. A plan to overthrow the High Fabricator and replace him with some unknown agency is in the works. The Acolytes must defend the Conclave, identify the instigating agencies, and stop them before the entire forge world is thrown into anarchy.

LATHE-HESH

The very portrait of a classical forge world, Lathe-Hesh is covered with enormous factories, towering production lines, and vast assembly yards that churn out specialised weaponry and vehicles for the Sector militaries and for the Adeptus Mechanicus itself. Huge plains of marshalling yards and tank parks hold a generation's worth of fighting vehicles and massive artillery waiting to be deployed where needed. Picking up more of the overall production as its sister worlds shift more to management or fall fallow, the adepts of Lathe-Hesh are the most ardent followers of the Omnissiah within the Lathes System and, indeed, possibly all of the Lathe Worlds.

Lathe-Hesh consists mostly of construction facilities for large or specialised combat vehicles, such as battle tanks and larger war machines. The most recent additions to the august roll of manufacture are the enormous Valdor Tank Hunters, whose facilities were moved entirely from Lathe-Het very recently. Home to the most conservative adepts, Lathe-Hesh looks at those of Lathe-Het as manipulative politicians, and Lathe-Hadd's as indolent layabouts.

There are more temples and sites sanctified to the Omnissiah on Lathe-Hesh than on any of the other Lathe Worlds. Of all the holdings of the Adeptus Mechanicus within the Calixis Sector and neighbouring regions, it is upon Lathe-Hesh that the Lords Dragon are most fervently feared, and entire sermon-cants are made to massed congregations in the hopes that an agent of the Lords Dragon are listening.

The most holy construct on the planet, the Curia Mechanicum, is a towering bastion of faith in the Machine God, piercing the foul clouds of noisome pollution that cling to the planet's surface. Built to enclose the planet's sacred Fabricator ship, the entire complex is a maze of black basalt and burnished brass. The Curia is the centre of worship on the forge world, but also houses the offices and manufactories directly under the supervision of the Fabricator of Lathe-Hesh. Also housed within the Curia are the offices of the Officio Vigilis, a unit of the Crimson Guard unique to Lathe-Hesh. Some of the most gifted Artificers working within the Calixis Sector call the Curia home, lavishing years of doting attention on a single weapon system in the name of the Divine Light of Sollex.

Although most adepts consider the heart of the planet to be the Curia Mechanicum, the soul is almost certainly the Ordinatus Yards, a continent-sized array of fabrication sheds, manufactories, assembly halls, and detailing amphitheatra, all dedicated to the refurbishment, rebuilding, and repairing of the enormous Ordinatus Platforms. It is here that these ancient and enormous creations are brought back to life after battle, imbued with the most powerful and responsive machine spirits, and lavished with the utmost care upon every rivet and seam. Adepts from near and far visit the Yards merely to honour the mighty machine-spirits that have been resurrected there over the millennia, even though they are almost always silent, as the call to resurrect an Ordinatus platform only comes perhaps once in a generation.

FABRICATOR OF LATHE-HESH, FORGE MASTER JANDEN SAMEKH ALPHA

Forge Master Samekh is an ardent and open follower of the Divine Light of Sollex, despite the relatively recent actions of Arch-Magos Malygris that cast suspicion upon that fellowship. He dedicates more and more of the manufacturing power of his world to the production and perfection of weaponry each year. Although nominally only responsible for the production of Lathe-Hesh, he has become the figurehead for the followers of the Divine Light throughout the Lathe Worlds. The prestige the presence of the Fabricator ship affords, and the of Ordinatus Yards themselves, cannot be underestimated as sources of Samekh's growing power within the sect.

Forge Master Samekh is a cold, detached man, even for those within the Mechanicus. Exceedingly resentful of any concerns that pull him from the manufacturums and laboratories within the Curia, he nevertheless wastes no time in confronting any possible issues that might disrupt the operation of his forge world or challenge his understanding of the vision of the Omnissiah. Within the halls of the Nidus Omega, Samekh is a constant opponent of Fabricator Castellar and a sometime ally of his second, Ralwure the Golden. His utter contempt, in fact, for both High Fabricator Castellar and Forge Master Wahh of Lathe-Hadd is well-known, and those seeking to undermine or counteract the influence of either Arch-Magos often come to Lathe-Hesh seeking Samekh's guidance and assistance.

AGENTS OF THE OFFICIO VIGILIS

The members of the Crimson Guard assigned to Lathe-Hesh have, over the centuries, come to look upon their Forge Master as their commander in all but name. Although afforded the same training as the more standard units of the Crimson Guard, the agents of the Officio Vigilis are then further trained in the arts of guile, trickery, and information manipulation. Samekh and the current commanders translate the Officio's remit as the spiritual purity and dedication of purpose of the adepts and minions of Lathe-Hesh. However, on many occasions, agents of the Officio have been dispatched across the Lathe Worlds to investigate other leads and suspicions on the Forge Master's personal direction.



LATHE-HADD

In the earliest days of the Lathes, Lathe-Hadd was home to several enormous infotemples that had been set down around the Hadd Fabricator ship. The data stored within these temples was essential to the operation of all three Lathe Worlds at the height of the Angevin Crusade. For production, Lathe-Hadd was responsible primarily for the ammunition and ordnance that the Crusade desperately needed. Although such production was honourable and instrumental, for reasons lost to time, these duties came to be construed as belittling to the Magos of Lathe-Hadd. Unrest and centuries of discord followed as the adepts petulantly went about their appointed tasks, many petitioning to leave the world at their earliest opportunity. A growing movement on the planet agitated for the production of such expendables to be taken off planet to make way for more prestigious works. The dissemination of much of the data held within the infotemples further lessened the prestige of Lathe-Hadd.

In the 6th century of M41, Arch-Magos Villem Warik Wahh was named Forge Master of Lathe-Hadd. Rumours claiming he had manoeuvred himself into that position through manipulating the simmering feelings of resentment and bitterness among the tech-adepts were never proven. These feelings had developed over centuries as Lathe-Het rose to a position of prominence, and the factories of Lathe-Hesh provided waves of vehicles and enormous weapon systems famed throughout the Sector. Wahh declared that he would see Lathe-Hadd rise to a position of equal importance within the Sector.

This position, and the dissatisfaction from which it stemmed, was inconceivable to most of the Calixis Mechanicus. One of the greatest satisfactions within the Adeptus Mechanicus is to see an important job well-done, and without the ammunition and armaments Lathe-Hadd provided, the Crusade would never have succeeded. The vast majority of the Magos on the forge world, however, followed their new Forge Master in his demands that the production of these mundane products be moved to off-world facilities, so that room could be made for greater projects more befitting one of the three original Lathe Worlds. Over the next two hundred years, almost all major manufacturing and assembly plants were moved off planet, causing gaping holes in the planet's surface, and leaving the vast ancient infotemples, now sadly bereft of any but purely symbolic power and importance, crouching alone around Fabricator ship Hadd.

The stage was set for Lathe-Hadd to rise to equal prominence with its sister worlds, and to prove its artisans and manufacturums the superior of any in the Sector. Unfortunately, this did not come to pass.

Forge Master Wahh had pursued his agenda of division and discontent too well, and the adepts of Lathe-Hadd had fractured into countless minor factions, none of which could agree upon the most basic of tenets with any of the others. Proposal after proposal went before the Adunatio of Lathe-Hadd, and the other factions vociferously struck each down. The Fabricator of the Lathes finally granted the request for the relocation of the many manufacturums, to see it removed from his docket; the facilities were soon moved off planet, into orbit, or to several of the stations along the Praeclusio Anchor Points. Soon Lathe-Hadd was stripped of the vast majority of its manufacturing capability and paralysed in its

Officio Vigilis Agent



| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 40 | 40 | 32 | 41 | 36 | 43 | 44 | 41 | 25 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 20

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +20, Disguise (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Tech-Heresy) (Int), Inquiry (Fel) +20, Search (Per) +10, Shadowing (Ag) +10, Tech Use (Int), Tracking (Int) +20.

Talents: Binary Chatter, Independent Targeting, Lightning Reflexes, Logis Implant, Mimic, Resistance (Fear, Psychic Powers), The Flesh is Weak (4), Two Weapon Wielder (Ballistic), Total Recall.

Traits: Dark Sight, Mechanicus Implants, Natural Weapon (Servo-Fist), Sturdy.

Armour: Crimson Armour (6 All, total 10 with The Flesh is Weak [4]).

Weapons: Integrated Lathe-Laspistol x2 (40m; S/2/-; 1d10+6E; Pen 2; Integrated, Tearing), Venator Blade (Melee; 1d5+8R; Pen 2; Razor Sharp), Servo-Fist (Melee; 1d10+6; Pen 0).

Gear: Red Mechanicus robes (Good-Quality Clothing), Good Quality Bionic Arm, MIU.



ADVENTURE SEEDS

- Someone is wreaking havoc with the production schedules of a particularly important war engine, desperately needed for the Spinward Front. The Acolytes must discover who is sabotaging the work and why, and stop them.
- An agent of the Officio Vigilis is returning to the Forge Master with important information concerning a rising heretekal cult on Lathe-Hadd, when he is rendered inactive. The Acolytes must find the killer, obtain the information the agent was carrying, and find proof of the existence of the cult.
- A plot to discredit the Forge Master in the eyes of the Lords of Mars has been uncovered. The Forge Master has been called to the Conclave to answer false charges that agents within the Fabricator of the Lathes' offices have made. The Acolytes must discover how deep the conspiracy goes and uncover the truth, communicating it within the Nidus Omega to prove the Forge Master's righteous intentions.

NPC WEAPON TRAINING AND WEAPON DAMAGE

All NPCs presented are assumed to have the appropriate Weapon Training Talents for their weapons, unless otherwise noted. It is up to the GM to determine what other weapons the NPC might be capable of using if a special situation arises. Similarly, it is assumed these beings are also versed in the knowledge necessary to perform their livelihoods, and the GM may also deem that they have other knowledge or lore depending on the adventure.

NPC PROFILE PRESENTATION

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

search for a new identity. Somehow (many speculate through manipulating the various factions against each other) Wahn was able to avoid blame for the dissolution of his planet's capabilities, and maintain his position as Forge Master.

The Fabricator of Lathe Hadd rules from the Halls of Ignavus, built around the now-defunct Fabricator ship on Hadd Nord. Within the hall, all adepts of the forge world come together in a constant dance of subterfuge and manipulation, hoping to bring their own projects to the fore. Despite the silencing of the major manufacturums, the planet is still home to countless smaller workshops and laboratories housing the experiments and projects of thousands of adepts, all eager to see their work rise to the prominence of global production. Debates and discussions within the Halls can become quite heated, another uncommon trait surfacing among the adepts of Lathe-Hadd. It is not uncommon for visiting adepts to surround themselves with bodyguard servitors or other security measures.

Since the stripping of Lathe-Hadd's manufacturing capability, the world has been in a state of flux, constantly searching for the one project or product that can raise the planet back to a position of prominence. Desperation is endemic, and those Magos who have stubbornly stayed are frantic to find a new path to distinction. Any path, in fact, is seen as better than the current state of unproductive stagnation.

In this reckless search for a new identity, any number of strange beliefs, theories, and cults have taken root among a feckless ruling class despairing of ever recapturing their old status. For decades now, the vast majority of the factories and manufacturing works have lain still, internal squabbling and political machinations paralyzing the planet even at the cost of productivity. Recently, many adepts have taken to referring to Lathe-Hadd as the Silent Forge.

Though it might be silent, it still holds its secrets, such as the ancient and mysterious construct known as the Baltean Maze. What appears to be the surface of the planet, still covered in layers of construction and infrastructure despite centuries of neglect, is in fact a man-made construct, an artificial crust formed of many steel platforms, each attached to the others through a labyrinth of girders, sliding connectors, and gasket-like adamantium mesh. Each platform is suspended above the mantle of Lathe-Hadd upon enormous gravitic generators, the likes of which man has not constructed for thousands upon thousands of years. Between the false surface and the hidden mantle lies the Baltean Maze, a network of supports, power conduits, and energy transfer channels that tie the gravitic platforms and the planet's actual surface together. Many believe that beneath the maze are the legendary deep infotombs, enormous receptacles of faulty or heretical data, relegated to the permanent dark to protect the very Mechanicum itself. Whispers cant of malign data-spirits rising from the deeps, capable of possessing all forms of technology. The Lathesmasters deny that these schimsaticals, as the legends call them, actually exist, and act quickly to suppress any evidence that might suggest their presence.

FABRICATOR OF LATHE-HADD, FORGE MASTER VILLEM WARIK WAHH

Adepts serving elsewhere among the Lathe Worlds see Arch-Magos Villem Warik Wahn as either dangerously incompetent or suspiciously ineffective. Seeming to never cease in his work to bring together the divided adepts of his world, he nevertheless has yet to manage any consensus among them. Suggestions and suspicions abound around Wahn, as many believe that any being capable of rising to rule over a forge world could not possibly be as ineffectual as he appears to be, and thus darker motives are often implied. Perhaps, go the infra-cants, he works for some other, more ruinous master, and perhaps the silencing of an entire forge world is only the beginning.

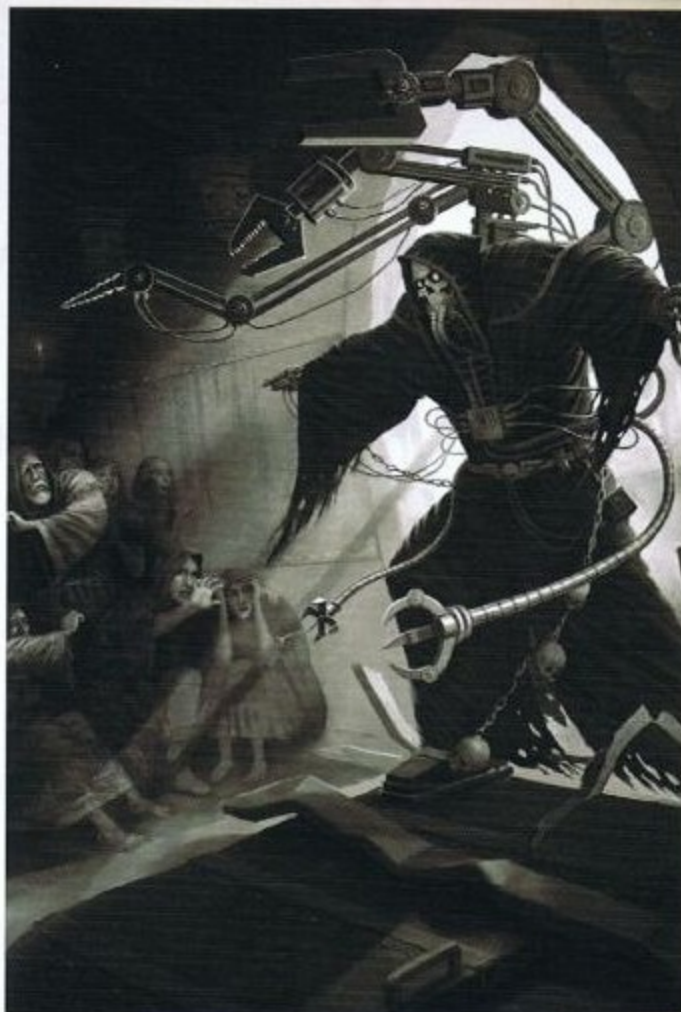
Forge Master Wahn, contrary to the standard image of the cold, aloof Fabricator, is a gregarious and approachable personage. He projects an air of helpful and energetic efficiency that was instrumental in his earning his present position. It has only been time and experience, however, that were able to prove these traits false, and no matter how energetic the Forge Master seems to be in the pursuit of his duties, nothing ever seems to be resolved. As a result, Lathe-Hadd is awash with frustrated ambition and desire, awaiting only the right spark to leap into open rebellion. Watching over this straining energy conduit is the Crimson Guard stationed on Lathe-Hadd, the Magos Hiscere.

Message Source: Agent Obitus-12,
Identity D-1 (Lathesmaster 7)
Initial Signal Source: Transfer
Station 22B-11097, Lathe-Hadd Orbit
Signal Amplification: Tacitum Aleph,
Out-system station Theta

Encryption:
Tri-Ocular Corneal Aleph-Tarl

Once past the façade of the Excipio Stations, movement, even for native assets, within the Lathes System is strictly controlled. Lathe-Hadd appears more tomb than forge. Decrease in Lathes System output possibly related. Signs of deep internal schism and civil unrest are clear. Multiple potential entry points for Project Fulcrum, should that become necessary. Travelling in-system recorded the location and probable output of several agrostations. Assume Lathes System entirely self-sustaining contrary to primary theories.

Paramount is the Emperor, and Perfect are His works.



MAGOS HISCIERE

Much like the agents of the Officio Vigilis, the Magos Hiscere are an elite unit of the Crimson Guard assigned to Lathe-Hadd. Over the centuries the unit has evolved, forming its own doctrine and method of operation, taking much of its identity from the current Forge Master. The current Crimson Guard of the Magos Hiscere are more agents provocateur than Arbitrator or palace guards. These adepts specialise in infiltrating the various cults, sects, and factions at work across the planet, and bringing Forge Master Wahh the information necessary for him to maintain his control of the planet and his position within the Covenant.

Magos Hiscere



| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 40 | 40 | 32 | 41 | 39 | 41 | 47 | 41 | 19 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 20

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +20, Demolition (Int) +20, Disguise (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Tech-Heresy, Cults) (Int), Scholastic Lore (Infiltration, Espionage) (Int) +10, Search (Per) +10, Tech Use (Int).

Talents: Binary Chatter, Lightning Reflexes, Logis Implant, Resistance (Fear, Psychic Powers), The Flesh is Weak (2), Total Recall.

Traits: Dark Sight, Mechanicus Implants, Natural Weapon (Servo-Fist), Sturdy.

Armour: Crimson Armour (6 All, total 8 with The Flesh is Weak [2]).

Weapons: Integrated Lathe-Laspistol (40m; S/2/-; 1d10+6E; Pen 2; Integrated, Tearing), Sicarius Blade (Melee; 1d5+8R; Pen 2; Razor Sharp, Toxic), Servo-Fist (Melee; 1d10+6; Pen 0).

Gear: Red Mechanicus robes (Good-Quality Clothing), Good Quality Bionic Arm, MIU.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- A faction called the Cult Achanum has arisen on Hadd Sur, far from the Halls of Ignavus. There are hints of possible chaos taint, and their leader appears to be a newcomer on Lathe-Hadd. The Acolytes must investigate for possible heresy, but even the few agencies they can trust on this planet may hinder their efforts.
- The Acolytes arrive on planet to investigate the Forge Master's lack of progress and possible Chaos or heretek taint. One of the Magos Hiscere, though, attempts to infiltrate the Acolytes' band to misdirect them away from the Forge Master.
- New concerns about the schismatics within the Baltean Maze have arisen, and the Acolytes must infiltrate Lathe-Hadd, venture deep into the planet's crust, and find what is hidden there.

THE LATHES SYSTEM

"The Lathes would present a solid-seeming veil of common purpose to the Calixis Sector at large, but their fractured reality is far from the monolithic, unified face they project to all outsiders."

—Margrave Francesca Gryval, First Imperial Consul to the Lord Sector Calixis

The Sentanim system is home to much more than the Lathes themselves. Veiled in mystery, the aberrant nature of space and time itself protect secretive adepts as they pursue their manifold projects and agendas, far from the prying eyes of outsiders. Should an agent manage to pierce the security of the outer system, they find gravity itself turned against them, as local spacial anomalies make it almost impossible to navigate without inside aid. Gravitic shears and storms, congested lanes of transport tying each planet or region tightly together, and the countless assorted detritus and debris of two thousand years of expansion clutter the system further, forming a nearly insurmountable maze to any outsider attempting to enter.

SENTANIM

The various bodies of the Lathes System revolve around a star that gives life even as it threatens to rip it away. Sentanim presides over the Lathes System in dangerous splendour while powerful, mysterious forces wrack the stellar orb mercilessly from within. It provides the energy for countless solar generators and agrodomes, but something churns within the



heart of the blue-white star, causing enormous energy founts to launch into the surrounding space, blasting the system with alarming doses of lethal energies. Some suppose that there are swirling micro-singularities strangling the sun's heart, or brutal giga-tides reflected in the gravitic storms that terrorise the rest of the system. Several Lumen research stations stand wary guard over Sentanim, gauging how best to predict and mitigate the violent sprays of particles and radiation. The hungry star has swallowed more than one research station whose adepts drew too close in their search for answers.

DESIDERATUM

A burnt orb hanging suspended over the turbulent sea of its temperamental star, the wastes of Desideratum provide the primary testing range for macro-class weapons within the Lathes System. Several stations and platforms orbit the world, although many are nothing more than frameworks for the support of weapon systems. Others, such as the Sagitarium Platforms, feature fantastical weapons, created from datascraps of days long ancient, that would boggle the minds of historians and war-savants across the galaxy. Mounting enormous, variable-calibre cannons, the ceramite and adamantium plates of their barrels shift position to form weapons able to fire almost any conceivable ammunition. A less pure-minded researcher would find such a weapon irresistible.

Message Source: Agent Obitus-12, Identity N-1 (Adept 32)

Initial Signal Source: Sagitarium Station Calamus, Desideratum Orbit

Signal Amplification: Invidia Rex, In-system station Upsilon

Encryption: Tri-Ocular Corneal Aleph-Tine

Ostensibly a testing facility, the weapon on this station is capable of firing projectiles that could conceivably break the crust of a planet. There are several such weapons orbiting the planet of Desideratum, whose surface shows the abuse of hundreds of years of weapon testing. The specifications for the monster cannon have been recorded and will be transmitted via separate signal. Should these weapons ever be deployed in war, nothing will stand against them. Procured probable location of "Lords Dragon" base within asteroid belts, and am preparing to continue mission. Will advise further.

My mind is closed, my heart is full.



So many shells, warheads, and energy beams have blasted the surface of the planet that its original geology cannot be guessed. The entire surface is now churned beyond recognition, hiding any number of unexploded shells and failed experiments, as the Fabricators of the Lathes have forbidden any servants of the Ommissiah from landing on the planet itself.

CELLA

The earliest cartographic charts of the system do not mention this small planet, but there is no denying its existence today. Cella has, for over 1500 years, provided the adepts of the Lathes with a safe and secure location to store countless artefacts, experiments, or samples that have proven too dangerous or incomprehensible to maintain in regular storage. The surface of the planet, if there is one, is buried beneath warehouses, storage facilities, and enormous data-stacks. Automatic defences that kill without hesitation guard the many warehouses, which are little more than a blind behind which the true treasures of Cella are stored.

Hidden beneath venerated shrouds of undisturbed dust, the core of the planet holds the wealth and horrors of over 2000 years of exploration and discovery. Arcane xenos devices, forbidden weapons of the Arch-Enemy, even artefacts from ages lost in time are stored within. Massive Scriptoria contain all of the information needed to release any of these objects, but only to those inducted into the highest mysteries of the Ommissiah. The greatest treasures of Cella are kept within colossal stasis vaults near the very centre of the planet. Here are suspended the twisted wrecks of starships of half a dozen alien races and countless ships wrested from Renegade forces.

NAVIGATING THE LATHES

Given the many challenges of piloting through the turbulent gravity storms and avoiding the many anomalous hazards of the Lathes System, any Piloting or Navigation Skill Tests taken within the system always begin as **Very Hard (-30)**, and are then modified from there according to the manoeuvres being attempted. Any failed test should result in something quite drastic, with each Degree of Failure indicating a commensurate increase in catastrophe.

LYCOSIDAE

Massive chunks of barren rock now float as silent testimonials to an ancient planet's original location, some unknown cataclysm having destroyed it thousands of years ago. Circling this planetary graveyard is a cold and desolate moon following its lonely path despite the death of its celestial partner. Lycosidae, fortress world, bastion of the Ommissiah, is the stark and unforgiving home of the Legio Venator within the Lathes System, and is the Armoury of the Lathes.

Ceded to the Titan Legion in the first centuries of the Adeptus Mechanicus' ownership of the Lathes System, the best defensive strategists in the Imperium have shaped and formed Lycosidae to serve as a redoubt and citadel of last resort, should the Lathes System come under overwhelming attack. The Titans and Skitarii of the Legio are only the primary lines of defence, however. Secreted away within the halls and storage facilities of Lycosidae are some of the most destructive weapons Mankind has ever wielded. Weapons that have not seen use since the days of the Heresy wait silently for the call to battle, when the fate of the forge worlds of the Calixis Sector may depend upon their devastating power.

THE RUSTICA MANDATE STATIONS

Throughout the system, this network of agrology domes and distribution stations keeps fed those inhabitants of the system dependent upon the crude energy transfer of actual rations. A carefully managed complex of stations and distribution nodes, the stations of the Rustica Mandate assure that the Lathes System is entirely self-sufficient. The stations are located throughout the system, within easy transport of any life-sustaining Adeptus Mechanicus holdings. However, countless Lathesmasters are dependent upon the food these stations provide. Should these supplies be disrupted, millions would starve within weeks, making them a high-security target.

THE PRAECLUSIO ANCHOR POINTS

Regions of semi-stable gravity exist throughout the Lathes System, safe from the treacherous gravity shears and micro-singularities that haunt it. These points allow the adepts to cache fragile large cargoes, important secret research stations, and various derelicts awaiting the attention of reclamation teams throughout the

Message Source: Agent Obitus-12, Identity D-21 (Lathe-pilot 6)

Initial Signal Source: Docking Station Umbra, Cella Orbit


Signal Amplification: Malitia IV, In-system station Lambda

Encryption:
Tri-Ocular Corneal Aleph-Kayl

Security becoming more and more intense. In-system planets are locked down in equivalent of Scintilla Defensive Condition V. Planet designated "Cella" appears to be a storage and holding facility. No sign of natural features on planet. Possible artificial structure?

Military presence is intense, freedom of movement almost nil, fear of the "Lords Dragon" continues to intensify. Current Mandate does not cover deeper penetration but is highly recommended. There must be something here worth all of this effort. What appear to be atmospheric vents on the surface give depth readings far beyond what seems possible.

Clarity of purpose is a gift of the Emperor.



Lathes System. The Praelcusio Anchor Points provide safe and secure locations for the most clandestine projects, and the most dangerous artefacts and test subjects. Treasures being kept at these points include the remnants of an ancient Ork Rok, a nearly intact space hulk once infested with Genestealers, and a mysterious gleaming vessel that has defied entry. The prize of the collection, though, are large fragments of a vast xenos world-ship. Recovered in ancient times, the Mechanicus has shifted this wreckage from stronghold to stronghold for centuries, while generations of adepts attempted to rip its secrets from its smooth, bone-like hull.

THE BELTS OF ETIAM YOHD, LAPIS NOON, AND CRINETA RESH

One of the most intriguing features of the Lathes System are the three interlocking asteroid belts that span the system just outside the orbit of Lathe-Hadd. The three belts follow erratic paths that defy most astro-logicians, spinning and rotating wildly around Sentanim like the rings of a gyroscope. It is supposed that each belt is the scattered remains of a planet that once sailed through the dark and silent void, victims of the gravity shears, singularities, or other phenomena that plague the system and make it so interesting to the Adeptus Mechanicus.

The composition of each belt is unique, supporting the theory that each marks the destruction of a different planet. The massive rocks of the Etiam Yohd Belt are as dark as the void, chunks of oily obsidian that hint at an entire planet of midnight rock. The Lapis Noon Belt consists almost entirely of fine shale soaked in frozen, raw promethium that ignites in fantastic detonations during collisions. Finally, the Crineta Resh Belt includes entire planetoids of multifaceted crystal, that psykers and mystics across the Calixis Sector covet for their practices.

The Tragula Zones are multiple sites where the three belts intersect, creating wandering realms of destruction and violence as countless tonnes of rock and precious minerals collide in eternally sparking, glittering splendour. Although the various navigational challenges and the unstable nature of the zones themselves make observation difficult, many adepts try to place observation platforms precariously along the Tragula Zones, hoping to unlock the mysteries of the Lathes System's past and its strange gravitic anomalies.

THE EXCIPIO STATIONS

The public face of the Lathes, these are the stations most often open to outsiders. Although consisting mostly of cargo transfer points and docking facilities for mass haulers and high liners, they also hold trade hostels, factorum houses, and many other cogs in the machine of commerce and intra-Sector relations. Each Excipio Station is grav-stabilised for ease of navigation and to make non-augmented humans feel more at home. Aside from the various bureaucratic establishments and service industries that have grown up to accommodate visitors and transitory personnel, there are numerous fauxctories placed throughout these regions which churn out a variety of simple, benign products, a show for less-important visitors that would like to see the forges in action. Aside from the bulk cargo haulers, only rarely are outsiders allowed to pass beyond here to delve deeper into the Lathes System.

Message Source: Agent Obitus-12, Identity B-3 (Menial 12)

Initial Signal Source: Excipio Station Texo

Signal Amplification: Tacitum Nox 3, Out-system station Alpha

Encryption:

Tri-Ocular Corneal Aleph-Mitre

Infiltration via Excipio Station Texo successful. Current identity abandoned, proceeding under new cover level. Adepts in all public areas appear excessively friendly and open. However, all visiting civilians are adroitly handled away from several key areas. Surmise source of gravitic control and stabilisation, most likely defence and clandestine activities control. Obedient to mission brief, asset abandoning station to continue deeper into the system. Suggest further analysis and possible direct infiltration. The Texo is not what it appears.

Trust in the Emperor is the only protection the faithful need.

It is here that the enormous shipping vessels that transport the products of the Lathes around the Calixis Sector take on their native Lathe-pilots. Specialist Lathesmasters with limited augmentation designed to assist them in navigating the space of the system, the Lathe-pilots know every mote of dust floating within the system, and share a special connection with the strange phenomena that plague its spaceways. Highly prized for their ability to pilot large craft through crowded lanes of traffic, they all hail from the system, although many have since been emigrated to various Lathe Worlds and other Adeptus Mechanicus holdings.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- Something has gone terribly wrong on Desideratum. One of the ancient weapon components has reactivated, and no one knows what kind it is, or why. The Acolytes' Master has received word of the situation, and sent his Acolytes to offer assistance. They must investigate and neutralise the threat to the entire system, Forge Masters to keep them away from the area.
- The Acolytes are assigned to infiltrate Cella inside an abandoned freighter. Once at the mysterious planet, they are to retrieve a stolen item from another recently captured vessel already hidden inside, and return it to its rightful owners.
- Word has reached the Conclave that hostile agents are planning to infiltrate the Lathe Worlds through the Excipio Stations. To preserve relations with the Lathes, the Acolytes are assigned to aid in security and stop the hostile actions, even if they should turn out to be fellow Inquisitorial Acolytes on a mission of their own.

PANOPTICON STATION

"Once there were places on the ancient charts that said 'Here be dragons,' to warn travellers of treacherous, unknown waters. Well, young pupil, that empty space you seem fixated upon within the readout of your auspex display? There be dragons."

—Senior Adept-Pilot Tabel Rha-sa

There is, floating within the maze of debris, gravitic shears, and rogue singularities that abound within the mid-orbital ranges around the star Sentanim, a mysterious void. This stable grav-point does not appear on any chart or map, it is not in any record or data-remnant, and its location is known only to a select few of the highest-ranking adepts in all of the Mechanicus Calixis. Rumours abound of a secret space station located somewhere within the Lathes System, and the perceived wisdom of the adepts speaks of a dark and mysterious realm where the most powerful creatures of Mechanicus myth and legend walk freely. Many may even have heard a title, mumbled over a cup of joilique or infusions of illegal toxicant scrapcode, over hooded, sidelong glances: Panopticon Orbital Station.

In the 9th century of M38, a mysterious vessel, its red and steel flanks glowing dully in the blue-white light of an unstable sun, entered the Pondus System. The skull-prowed craft began an extensive survey of the region, powerful auspex beams reaching out in all directions, testing, measuring, and cataloguing. Almost immediately, a series of intriguing anomalies presented themselves. Strange gravity shears that defied explanation ripped through the system. The star at its centre beat to a cadence unknown to even the most gifted celestial adepts or decryption cogitators. Extraordinary readings emanated from the looping, intertwined asteroid belts. It soon became clear that the system was a rare and exciting specimen, something that the Adeptus Mechanicus would very much like to claim as its own, once the Pax Imperialis reached into the Calyx Expanse. It was also clear, however, that this single ship lacked the ability to perform an exhaustive study, and so all work ceased, the Explorator vessel moved through the system, and entered the Warp on the other side.

Almost a century later, several slightly smaller ships, similar in design and colour, arrived. Spreading throughout the system, these ships moved with a quiet purpose. The entire area was scanned and charted, and exhaustive reports were filed on every planet, recorded anomaly, and stellar feature. Remnant colonies of humans, cut off from the Emperor's light for millennia, were later found on three planets within the system. It was decided that they would serve as an ideal work force, should the Cult Mechanicus lay claim to the system. On Mars and Terra, quiet efforts to do just that began, while the specialised Explorator fleet retreated from the planets and entered the dangerous region of intertwining asteroid belts looping through the system. The fleet suffered a great deal of damage as it penetrated into the chaotic region, countless adepts and crewmen losing their lives, but they had come prepared. Deep within the unstable violence of the colliding belts, an ancient artefact was activated, creating a bubble of stable gravity and a quiet sanctuary from the grinding impacts. They started construction within this secure zone, and quickly a bastion began to take shape.



Even as the citadel was being constructed, a fleet of smaller vessels spread throughout the system. A legion of auspex clusters, pictographic scanners, and omnipotentia augury arrays seeded every planet and each of the three asteroid belts. Soon the entire system was under surveillance, every action, every word, every transmission observed, analysed, and recorded. The initial deployment of the Praecursor Grid and the obsidian stronghold were completed at nearly the same time, making the Cult Mechanicus masters of the system before either the Imperium or the current inhabitants even knew of their presence.

For several centuries, Explorator fleets pushing into the newly discovered region used the station as a clandestine way-stop. During the Angevin Crusade it served as a secret command-and-control node for advanced Mechanicus scouting forces. After the system came under Mechanicus control the Station remained a tightly held secret, only the highest-ranking Arch-Magos aware of its existence. The Fabricator-General himself proffered it to the Lords Dragon, as they accepted the burden of shepherding the newborn Mechanicus Calixis for the Omnissiah, ever-watchful for the taint of tech-heresy. For millennia now it has served several purposes: as the clandestine headquarters of the Lords Dragon, a top-secret weapons research and development base, and a repository for weapons and artefacts deemed so dangerous that the leaders of the Mechanicus Calixis must deny their very existence.

With bones of iron mined from sacred Mars itself and sheathed in the polished obsidian stone of the Etiam Yohd Belt, the Panopticon Orbital Station is the most heavily armoured redoubt in the Lathes System. Colossal Harbinger Sentinels crouch upon every available surface like ancient gargoyles, their auspex optics and audit-tracking audiometrics plumbing surrounding space for danger. The station serves as the central nexus of the Praecursor Grid, now expanded across the Lathe Worlds and even into several non-Mechanicum holdings. Vast data storage tombs and processing vertices fill enormous chambers within the Station, ghostly wisps of heat rising into the sepulchral air. Machine-spirits toil ceaselessly to follow faces, words, and deeds, watching for the slightest hint of heretical taint. So sophisticated are the linked data-stacks, in fact, that constant vigilance must be maintained, lest elements of the system stray too close to Abominable Intelligence.

EYES OF THE DRAGON

The Lords Dragon, easily the most feared group within the Mechanicus Calixis, have used the Praecursor Grid to keep a careful watch over all those within the Lathe Worlds for centuries now, wary of the siren-song of corruption that has felled so many adepts. It also assists them in maintaining their many secrets and the illusion of omniscience. Within dark chambers lined with sacred iron, the Lords Dragon regularly rededicate themselves to their holy purpose, standing vigil over several precious artefacts from the ancient eras of Mars' ascendancy. Vast, cog-shaped altars hold fields of flickering electro-tapers illuminating the enigmatic visage of the Cog Mechanicus glaring down from every wall. Most adepts of the Lords Dragon are quiet and focused upon their own tasks within the dimly lit halls, habits of secrecy too strong to break even within the Panopticon, their most sacred and secure sanctuary.

Countless myths have been spread about the region of the Panopticon as an integral part of the floating citadel's defences. Since before the Mechanicus officially came to the system, tales were being told, of a dead region in space where ships disappear without warning or trace. Countless vague accounts passed from crew to crew of space craft that ventured into the conjunction of clashing rocks and passed out the other side, their crew vanished, their data-stacks scoured bare. The most frightening element of these tales is that many of them are true. Whenever a ship comes too close to the Panopticon Station, it leaves the Lords Dragon with little choice. Each ship is either destroyed outright or boarded. The crews of those boarded ships can never be released, and the data-stacks of the ships are completely scrubbed of any incriminating information. Some of those crewmen are allowed to remain aboard the Station and live out their lives serving the Lords Dragon. Most, however, either meet their end as menial servitors on the Station or are rendered non-functioning, their remains recycled.



As the Mechanicus Calixis grew and expanded the Lords Dragon occasionally found themselves in need of assistance from other Mechanicus agencies. The Lords Dragon are a small, elite body, and there have been crises over time that were beyond their ability to contain. The most valuable commodity these agents possess has been trust, and so, over time, other factions and units have been brought into the secret fold of the Panopticon Station. Here the massive, armoured forms of the Myrmidons now stalk the halls, caring for the machine-spirits of enormous siege batteries of the Ordo Reductor, waiting with barely restrained power for the next call to battle. Beside these hulking forms stride the legendary mech-assassins. There are even whispered tales that the dreaded Magister Samadhi, enigmatic commander of the Acuitor Set mech-assassins, resides somewhere deep within the Station.

The original blunt shape of the Station has been expanded over time, the Dragon Secutorii and the Ordo Reductor Siege Masters coordinating each addition. Independent research areas, testing facilities, and the hab units for a growing number of adepts and menials constantly increase its impressive size. Enormous blast doors conceal Ordinatus-scale weaponry, and folded skeletal structures of elaborate docking arms and transfer points are kept ready for arriving vessels.

High along the Central Bastion, the Cog Mechanicus glares down upon the Station and all who would dare approach it.

The interior of the Station, kept in a constant dim red glow, has grown more and more labyrinthine with each new addition. Down each crimson hallway drift clouds of holy incense, pumped through the station's atmosphere recyclers at regular intervals. What was once an observation post and staging ground for Lords Dragon forces watching over the Mechanicum is now home to nearly half a dozen different organisations, every one an enigmatic mystery even to each other.

The heart of the station has been given over to the Acuitor Set, who have further fortified it into the stronghold of Tumala, guarding the ancient mechanisms that keep the asteroids at bay. A fortress within a fortress, Tumala is almost entirely self-contained, void-moats dividing it from the rest of the Station, and an independently armoured hull further securing the artefact and installations within. The darkest heart of the station, Tumala is open only to the mech-assassins and their lords, and a select few of the highest-ranking Lords Dragon Magos.

Long ago, the original Magister Samadhi came to the station for reasons now lost to time. Somehow an agreement was reached with the Lords Dragon, to establish Tumala as a primary training base for his disciples. In the later stages of the Magister's life he returned to Tumala to personally train his mech-assassin followers, and to meditate in deep binary-datadreams upon the nature of his purpose and that of his Set. Today, each master of the Acuitor Set reviews these ancient meditations as he puts aside his personal name and assumes the identity of Magister Samadhi, donning a stylised iron mask that is never removed. Legends say though that the original Samadhi never died, and, in fact, still wanders the halls of Tumala to this very day.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- One of the local factions has sent the Acolytes on a clandestine mission to investigate the Lords Dragon, and they have infiltrated the station's weapons experts. Having infiltrated the station, they find that collecting the information and escaping is the true challenge.
- The Acolytes are recruited to investigate the behaviour of a high-level Magos on Lathe-Hadd. Initial research reveals that the Magos in question has been investigating the Myrmidons, and it becomes a question of who to believe, and who has the Lathe Worlds' best interests in mind?
- The High Fabricator has been convinced that the machine-spirits of the Praecursor Grid have evolved an Abominable Intelligence. The Adepts have been vouchsafed with the secrets of the Panopticon and tasked with investigating the machine-spirits and combating the Intelligence, if, in fact, it has arisen.

THE MYRMIDONS

The Myrmidons of the Ordo Reductor hold the outer districts of the Station, where thick, armoured walls encompass vault-like weapon batteries and their control altars, along with the massive energy capacitors needed to power them all. Their huge, augmented forms stand eternal guard over the entrances to the Station, no ship approaching save under their wary eyes. Most Myrmidons communicate through binary chatter link only, having taken a vow of audio-silence upon accepting a position upon the Panopticon. In suits of colossal, ancient armour, these silent warriors are easily the most intimidating denizens of this most daunting place, each of their multiple arms capable of rending trespassers to component flesh. Bearing weapons out of Mechanicus myth and legend, even away from their dreadful batteries the Myrmidons are terrible to behold.



Myrmidon

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|-------------------|-------------------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 47 | 48 | ⁽⁹⁾ 68 | ⁽⁸⁾ 45 | 40 | 43 | 44 | 48 | 19 |

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 22

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel) +20, Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech) (Int), Forbidden Lore (Tech-Heresy) (Int), Intimidate (S) +10, Parry (WS) +10, Scholastic Lore (Construction, Siege Craft) (Int) +20, Security (Ag), Tech Use (Int) +20.

Talents: Binary Chatter, Combat Master, Counter Attack, Drive (Surface), Independent Targeting, Lightning Reflexes, Logis Implant, Navigate (Surface), Swift Attack, Resistance (Fear, Psychic Powers), The Flesh is Weak (4), Two Weapon Wielder (Melee or Ballistic), Total Recall.

Traits: Dark Sight, Fear (2), Multiple Arms (4), Mechanicus Implants, Size (Hulking), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

Armour: Cataphract Armour† (12 All, total 16 with The Flesh is Weak [4]).

Weapons: Integrated Phased Plasma Rifle (100m; S/2/4; 2d10 E; Pen 6; Integrated) or Nuada Pattern Aurora Cannon (Heavy; 450m; S/-/-; 8d10+10 E; Pen 12; Clip 4; Reload 2 Full; Accurate, Integrated, Reliable) or Taranis Siege Battery (Heavy; 250m; S/3/-; 5d10+8 X; Pen 8; Clip 12; Reload 2 Full; Blast (2), Integrated, Reliable), Disruption Maul (Melee; 1d10+16 E; Pen 8; Integrated, Power Field, Haywire (Contact)) or Siege Hammer (Melee; 2d10+19 I; Pen 10; Proven (3), Unbalanced, Unwieldy), and two Servo-Fists (Melee; 1d10+12 R; Pen 2).

Gear: Red Mechanicus robes (Good-Quality Clothing), Good Quality Bionic Arm, Bionic Locomotion, MIU.

Masters of Ordnance: Myrmidons have mastered the use of the most powerful weapons in the arsenal of the Omnissiah. They receive a +20 bonus to both their Ballistic Skill and their Intelligence when taking any Test dealing with the operation or maintenance of any weapon of Heavy Class or higher.

Shield Breakers: The Myrmidons are experts in the reduction of established defences. Any Myrmidon receives a +20 bonus to any Skill Test involving the analysis or destruction of enemy defences.

†Cataphract Armour adds +30 to the wearer's Strength Characteristic and lowers Movement by 1, which is added to the profile above.



Message Source: Agent Obitus-12, Identity N-23 (Adept 7)

Initial Signal Source: Transport Fortis Machina, Inbound, Etiam Yohd Belt

Signal Amplification: Occult Ocularis, In-system station Chi

Encryption: Tri-Ocular Corneal Aleph-Parl

The name of the hidden facility is the Panopticon Orbital Station. If half of accepted intelligence is correct, this must be target Alpha should Project Fulcrum prove necessary. Coming into visual range now. The station is immense. How does it not register? Visual scans indicate terrible XXXX-

-XXXX Your menial will not be returned. Your interference will not be permitted.

Your warning will not be repeated.

The Omnissiah is the root of all Truth.



THE LATHE WORLDS

"With each new planet we claim, with each new forge we light, we move closer to our unstoppable Grand Design for the Lathes."

—Fragmented data-scrap found amidst the ruins of Kyber III

The Lathes System is the undisputed centre of the Cult Mechanicus within the Calixis Sector, the font of all blessed technology in this region. The rule of the Adeptus Mechanicus reaches far beyond this one system, though, to hundreds of planets, thousands of orbitals and research stations, and unknown numbers of Explorator vessels across the region and beyond. They are all still collectively known as the Lathe Worlds, those places where the Mechanicum holds sway or owns outright. Most are huge industrial forge worlds, generating gigatonnes of material to drive the Calixis Sector from one day to the next, and fuelling the colossal war effort of the Spinward Front and its other battles across the region. Others range from isolated research facilities, orbital void stations, and far-flung Explorator fleets, to data-crypt worlds, failed experimental colonies, and other unique emplacements. Outsiders assume each is under the firm control of the Lathes, all part of a sector-wide, singular machine of unified thought dedicated to the Glory of the Omnissiah. Like many other such beliefs concerning the Adeptus Mechanicus within the Sector, they are woefully ignorant of the actual truth.

The various sub-factions underneath the Lathe-Covenant councils oversee the administration of the various Mechanicum holdings across the Sector. Areas that entire manufactorums once occupied on Lathe-Het are now devoted to such bureaucratic functions, something that has become a strongly fractious point within the higher ranking Magos-sects. Here the obsessive zeal for gathering and recording data most lower Tech-Adepts display has gone unchecked, creating endless information tombs for the reports, directives, proclamations, regulations, and other records each world generates, as well as those heavily edited Praecursor Grid monitor-streams that filter down to this level. So much data is gathered and kept that it has become impossible to perform any meaningful analysis or even organisation, as the Lexmechanics

struggle just to sort and file the incoming waves of information that unceasingly crash over them. Bands of servitors mindlessly ferry data-stacks across the planet, weaving patterns of information like ant-trails, the goal of preserving ancient knowledge more important than actually utilising it.



Adepts watching over their worlds furiously construct new datum-vaults to contain it all, each quarrelling with each other over the relative importance of their charges and the data they generate. Massive shrine-vaults score the surface, devoted to the premier forge worlds or research facilities, some so layered in consecrations that few, if any, are able to gain access. Many other vaults fall into disrepair as rival Adepts re-route their maintenance servitors to other repositories, or are even razed to make room for more privileged or powerful monitor-sects. Other crypts are destroyed in deliberate data-purges after regime changes in the ruling councils, or razed as their worlds are condemned for harbouring tech-heresies. More still simply fall to the predations of time and are forgotten, eventually collapsing into dusty ruin and destroying centuries of history.

This is but a fraction of the difficulties the Lathes face. Just as Holy Terra and the Administratum nominally oversee the Imperium, a surely impossible task considering the difficulties of reliable Astropathic communication and Warp travel, so the Lathes also strive but fail to control their own empire within the Sector. Even with perfect monitoring, understanding, and compliance, the Lathe Worlds would be ungovernable.

Often, change happens faster than the Lathes can react or plan. Planets revolt to overthrow their Tech-Priest masters, to be crushed into subservience or reborn as hostile regimes. Records of entire systems are lost in data-quakes, their existence erased and their oaths of knowledge-tithes forgotten. Tech-heresies fester across the Sector only to burst like rotten fruit, despoiling the minds of once-loyal Mechanicum servants against the Omnissiah's proper worship. Explorator fleets vanish from Imperial space, never to be seen again or worse to return with unholy technologies and heretical xenos wisdom. Commonly punitive fleets arrive to correct wayward Lathe Worlds, only to find their target long since destroyed, absorbed into a rival Calixian sect, reformed in their ways, or simply no longer where the outdated records indicated it should be. Astropathic communications between the Lathes and their dominions go unheeded, misinterpreted, or simply ignored. This is exacerbated as the Lathe-Covenants and the Astropathic Choirs of Lathe-Het hold each other in barely restrained contempt for the dogmatic, outdated, and inefficient belief-patterns the other holds. Even with the mysterious Praecursor Grid aiding their efforts, and frequent loyalty programming engram-branded into their servants, the Arch-Magos of the Lathes are often only able to give the illusion of oversight and control over their worlds.

So it is that the Lathes turn, striving in their impossible goal of perfect control over their dominions within the Calixis Sector. The great cogwheel of the Opus Machina is raised upon all of the worlds, yet it is in actuality a mere symbol of unity for the Cult Mechanicus. The Magos of the Lathes issue decrees and orders to their charges, designed to enforce the tenets of the Machine God the prosperity of the Mechanicum, with enough power behind their binary directives to encourage compliance. These orders are followed, ignored, lost in Astropathic translation, misunderstood, or transformed into myth, depending on the recipients. The sheer inertia of these processes maintains much of this Empire of the Machine in the Calixis Sector through the millennia, its massive geared teeth grinding endlessly, but with each year wearing away more and more.

DIOGENES IV

"Of course it is dangerous here, but what we seek to prove is beyond such petty concerns. Even if we die, we will be immortal!"

—Magos Kellix Altar Oll, veteran researcher

For the Tech-Priests of the Adeptus Mechanicus, there are few, if any, missions more worthy than the pursuit of knowledge. Within the Calixis Sector, this goal has launched endless Explorator fleets and Quaestor Expeditions in search of ancient technologies, remnants of STC systems, lost forge worlds, and other relics of days when science ruled Mankind. Though the Lathes treasure such vestiges as reminders of when Mars was truly ascendant, they also realise that there is still more knowledge to be found, some discoveries made long ago but since forgotten, others perhaps even new to humanity. Only through investigation and experimentation can such information be gleaned and understood, and thus from the Lathes sprout thousands of thousands of stations into the Sector. Some remain in the Lathes, the better to understand and monitor the peculiarities of their own system. Many went to inhabited planets and forge worlds, others attached themselves to long-duration voidships, but a majority were independent stations, isolated orbitals or detached laboratoria designed to operate on their own in the void. Into the dark they went, often not to be heard from for centuries—if ever—again. Diogenes IV is one such station, a tiny mote amidst a dazzling but deadly arrangement of pulsars.

As the name suggests, Diogenes is the fourth of this station pattern to be established in the Calixis Sector. Hundreds more also exist, as the structure is simple to manufacture and designed to support a wide variety of experimental research. Each is an angular affair, covered with docking ports, sensoria spikes, and other devices as needed for their research. This particular station was launched only a few hundred years after the establishment of the Lathes, and is located in a barely stable area of space near the rimward border. Surrounding it are several pulsars, each on its own worthy of study, but when grouped in such an improbable cluster they make for an irresistible attraction for closer examination.

A PRECARIOUS PERCH

Diogenes IV's position is relatively safe, one of the few areas within the boundaries of the cluster where no one body overpowers the rest. While it makes for a somewhat stable anchor, it is a gravity hill, where even the slightest of disturbances might send it spiralling towards one of the powerful nearby stars. This also means that travel to and from the station is extremely challenging, rivalling some of the fell passages through the Lathes System. Often ships hover on the outskirts of the area for long periods after emerging from the Warp, carefully plotting their path across the gravity-confluences and Materium eddies before progressing inwards. It is not uncommon for vessels to limp into the station leaving trails of torn components in their wake, evidence of too close encounters to gravity shearing points. Some of the Tech-Priests aboard the station are convinced there are other bodies orbiting the area that exacerbate the cluster's difficulty, undetected either through the overpowering energies of the pulsars or somehow otherwise illusive to the many arrays and sensoria aboard. Such speculation might explain some of the more destructive passages ships have faced.



At times, the confluences become so intense that no travel is possible, and any on the station must remain until the gravity tides subside. Those with docked ships sometimes wait out such storms aboard their own cabins, but few vessels have the shielding to protect against such devastating phenomena, and most are forced to berth inside the facility. The station itself is not conducive to waiting out the events, with many areas barely lit and covered with pitfalls or fallen wiring. There are few accommodations within Diogenes IV, and those are almost all designed for the comforts of Tech-Priests. For these reasons and more, there are few visitors to the station, few inquiries as to its progress, and few notices of even its existence. For those engaged in their own privative research within, this is an ideal state of affairs.

CENTURIES OF DARKNESS

Diogenes IV has remained in isolation for many centuries, weathering the gravity storms and other dangers of the cluster. Ancient Tech-Priests scuttle about the station, guiding their data-gathering devices and conducting esoteric experiments unfathomable even to others of the Mechanicum. Thousands of servitors exist in vast linkages to cogitator banks, their brains permanently wired into the mechanisms to aid in the processing and digestion of the constant data bombardment from hundreds of sensoria vanes lining the exterior. Hundreds

RESEARCH STATIONS OF CALIXIS

Diogenes IV is by no means the only void-based research station that the Adeptus Mechanicus operates in the Calixis Sector. None of the archivist-adepts know for certain, though, how many were established, or even how many still exist, as their data-scrolls long since turned to dust through age or mistreatment over the long centuries. Below are just a fraction of those still remembered, for good or ill, in great info-tombs of the Lathes.

- **Calyx Omnis III:** One of the first stations, established even as the Expanse became a Sector. It is still operational to this day, swinging in a wide path about the Golgotha Reach itself as it charts stellar patterns and gravity wave propagations. The original Tech-Priests have long since lost their flesh and have merged with the facility, which is now covered with the still-pulsing mechanisms that were once humanoid. With each passing century, more and more join the Harmonium Machina, guiding the station across the void and aiding new Tech-Priests as they begin their endless assignment.
- **Dalthodge's Pax:** Named for its founding Tech-Priest, this orbital worked to expand the boundaries of plasma containment. The resulting crater left on its (now dead) host planet of Hadine can be seen from the other side of the system.
- **Galomn II:** The second of two stations in high anchor above Dusk, there to perform isolated experiments on engrammic branding techniques. It fell with all hands after a mysterious servitor rebellion, a feat thought impossible. Pic-captures of the carvings on the station walls, twisted versions of the electro-runes used in the new trial protocols, led to many in the Lathes to suspect it was an undercover Ordo Malleus mission that resulted in the station's later outright theft.
- **Iridium Eta Rho:** Renowned throughout the Lathes, this orbital high above Heed is held as a shining example of proper research. It transmits information back in regular reports, and its Tech-Priests are devoutly respectful to visiting dignitaries. The station itself has nearly doubled in size and population, mostly to support the throngs of Magos from across the Sector eager to view such a success. Bitter detractors on other stations attempt to denigrate the station for its lack of actual discoveries or new data, but few allow such petty jealousies to alter their view of this true beacon to the Omnisiah.
- **Lumin-Exol IX:** This station is one of the fabled series of stellar lab-torpedoes, and operates in close orbit around Canopus's star. Each adamantium-hulled station is layered with powerful void shields, the better to protect themselves from intense radiations as they dive down to touch the burning outer photosphere before rising back up to relative safety. Lumin-Exol IX has endured many such drops, but as their Tech-Priests have grown ever more eager for data, their descents have grown ever longer.
- **Opal Lexit:** Established near the Threnos Zone, this station monitored the poorly worded litanies to the Omnisiah, and probed into the thirteen planets within. A resupply vessel found it destroyed some decades after its last transmission, though no determination as to the cause has been entered into its records. This could be due to the inconclusive nature of the debris field examination, which contains evidence of both Imperial and xenos weaponry.
- **Regola Sensorium:** Purposefully set in an empty region of interstellar space, Regola's Tech-Priests quested to measure the very dimensional fabric of the void. Within the facility, grav-plated to prevent its presence from disturbing the surrounding Materium, factions argued to prove their own theorems concerning the nature of realspace. An unknown contagion swept through the station, however, violently destroying higher functions, and then the rest of each body, as each insensate host ripped their own blessed technologies from their bodies. Only the oscillating tonal data was left preserved, which was subsequently impounded and buried in the High Fabricator's own vault, never to be revealed.
- **Terimiv I:** This station was the creation of Magos Genille Karl, a loyal disciple of the Malatek Sain Charnos and an intense student of the Empyrean. Her goal was to measure fluctuations in Warp tension, especially regarding violent emotional outbursts. Her experiments turned darker, though, as data suggested direct ties between strong emotions and Warp disturbances. As time passed, the station became an abattoir of torture and depravity in order to create greater and greater realspace fissures, all in the name of gathering Knowledge. The entire facility finally disappeared in a Warp burst that psykers detected for scores of light-years away, and damaged several voidships already in the Sea of Souls. Terimiv was never replicated, but disputed sightings of a ghastly object resembling its original form have been reported across the Sector, and even beyond in the Koronus Expanse.

more roam the hallways on mysterious errands for their masters. Much of the station is as dark as its surroundings, and passageways are littered with detritus and broken glow-globes from years of neglect. Entire compartments have fallen into disrepair, with little effort at restoration as attention towards research is more paramount.

It is in the darkest areas, though, that the most dangerous experiments are undertaken. Uncounted decades of solitude has led to a disregard for safety protocols or other niceties, and only results are of consequence. Minds already focused to an inhuman degree are warped further still in this reclusion, and the Tech-Priests attain a state beyond mere madness. One sect is certain that the pulsars are causing extreme stress-lines in the local Empyrean boundaries, and are determined to find

a way to force the stars to synchronise their pulsations so as to create a vast entryway into the Warp such that vessels could enter without the need for actual Warp drives. That it might allow hordes of Daemons to enter realspace is of little concern, but so far their stellar oscillator arrays have proved fruitless. Another is certain that they can redirect the magnetic fields of the pulsars to gain entrance to another spatial region, and thus mimic the methods certain xenos races use to travel. The Lost Talon faction are devoted to studying a relic dating from before the Sector was founded, which seems to resonate in time with the pulsars and perhaps even guides their vibrational rates. Groups of unmonitored Magos Ætheric constantly tempt the Warp with their fell experiments. A small sect has even come to worship the

pulsars as manifestations of the Ommissiah, and seek to re-ignite them through invert-matter explosions. Diogenes IV hosts many such as these in its holds, the darkness of isolation breeding darkness of thought and deed, all in the name of the Ommissiah. As more years pass, it is certain that one will erupt beyond the cluster to threaten the rest of the Sector.

MAGOS ÆTHERIC

Given the nature of the Lathes, it is little surprise that the Mechanicum of Calixis has developed several unique sects devoted to the study of gravity and its effects upon the Materium, all falling under the College Cult Graviticus. The Magos Ætheric are one such faction, aiming their research more towards how such forces interact with the delicate membrane that exists between the Immaterium and realspace. The hazardous nature of their work usually demands their bodies be toughened with rippling layers of vat-grown lattice tissue, so that they can withstand nearby gravimantic fluctuations without being torn apart, and years of experience allow them to maintain their stance while being pulled into the intense fields. Their experiments usually involve controlled collapsed matter implosions to learn what, if any, Warp fluctuations then occur.

While most Magos Ætheric rely on passive augury arrays to gather their data, some of the more reckless on Diogenes IV dare to utilise mass implosion spikes and Gellar bubbles to puncture the boundary, and venture into the Sea of Souls for short periods, tethered in place with graviton beams. While in the nightmare realm, they conduct arcane experiments on the effects of even shielded exposures to flesh and metal, all the while viewing images that no mortal can view for long and stay sane. Servitors are also used for such dives, though no protective shielding is used, and often what emerges must be hurriedly destroyed. Some of the Magos have conducted their experiments for so long that reality has lost meaning; their engrammic pathways eroded smooth, they drift through the station without purpose, sometimes ending their journey at a far voidlock. Others face even more dread fates should their protective devices flicker even the slightest, their souls quickly consumed as fell denizen-beings from within the Warp take control of their bodies. Given the unnatural behaviour most of the ancient Tech-Priests on Diogenes IV already exhibit, however, visitors might have grave difficulties in discerning the unnatural from the merely mechanical.



Magos Ætheric



| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|-------------------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 22 | 24 | 38 | 42 ⁽⁸⁾ | 32 | 45 | 38 | 4I | 22 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 13

Skills: Awareness (Per), Chem-Use (Int), Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech) (Int) +10, Logic (Int) +10, Forbidden Lore (Warp) (Int) +20, Scholastic Lore (Astromancy) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic, High Gothic) (Int), Secret Tongue (Tech) (Int) +10, Tech-Use (Int) +20.

Talents: Binary Chatter, Chem Geld, Electrical Succour, Electro Graft Use, Energy Cache, Fearless, Luminen Blast, Luminen Charge, Maglev Grace, Meditation, Mechadendrite Use.

Traits: Mechanicus Implants, Sturdy, Unnatural Toughness (x2).

Armour: Flak cloak and cybernetic body (All 4).

Weapons: Hand Flamer (Pistol; 10m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 E; Pen 2; Clip 2; Rld 2 Full; Flame) or Laspistol (Pistol; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+2 E; Pen 0; Clip 30; Reload Full; Reliable), Chainblade (Melee; 1d10+5 R; Pen 1; Balanced, Tearing).

Gear: Basic MIU interface and 1d5+1 other implants, Utility Mechadendrite, Lathes Mechadendrite Stabiliser, tools, respirator, data-slate, personal cogitator, 2 pistol clips.

Hidden Rider: Magos Ætheric who have spent too long within the Immaterium often attract unwanted attention from those within. Any of these Tech-Priests have a 30% chance of Possession (see page 331 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook), though of a subtle nature. Acolytes must pass a **Very Hard (-30) Scrutiny Test** or a **Hard (-20) Psyniscience Test** to detect that another will now controls that body.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- The Acolytes are racing after a rogue psyker, who for reasons unknown sought to hide within Diogenes IV. The Tech-Priests resent any intrusion or disturbance, and actively hinder the Acolytes should their search take them into sensitive areas on the station. The psyker himself seems to be growing more powerful each time the Acolytes encounter him, and might threaten the station itself should they not be able to capture him soon.
- The Conclave has requested the Acolytes' master conduct a covert investigation of this station, worried at the lack of current information as to its function. The Acolytes might enter using other guises, or seek a stealthy approach and try to stay hidden. Once aboard, they must assess any threats that the research there might pose while keeping their true identities secure, but leaving Diogenes IV is always more difficult than arriving.
- The Acolytes are returning after an arduous but successful mission, when their vessel is dragged out of the Warp and deposited near Diogenes IV, almost falling into one of the nearby pulsars. The vessel's Navigator says that a realspace fissure was the cause of the abrupt exit, possibly a natural occurrence, but what might the station and their experiments have to do with it?

ENCRYPTION CODE LPXT29372I.I (LACUNA)

"It shall be as if you never existed, and only the darkness shall mourn your passing."

—Reassembled from the data-files of Inquisitor Voyitz following his unexplained death

Members of the Adeptus Mechanicus within the Calixis Sector maintain whispered accounts of a hidden planet amid the domains of the Lathe Worlds. This planet has no official designation, and any record of its discovery or founding—if the planet ever existed at all—is absent from every known record and star chart. Those who know of it do not freely articulate what they have learned, for fear of becoming the target of powerful and unseen forces. Only within the most clandestine and influential cabals and circles of the Lathes does the planet have a name: Lacuna.

Lacuna is a small, airless world whose exact location remains a carefully guarded secret. A layer of fine, jet-black sediment known as Lacuna Dust covers the planet's entire surface. This dust is inert to the electromagnetic waves of the visible light spectrum, among others, meaning that the planet is perpetually covered in unnatural darkness. The planet's remarkable surface composition and lack of atmosphere also make the planet impossible to detect against the blackness of space, especially by the feeble light of its pale sun. Rumours and conjectures about the planet are rife, and the Lathe-Covenant is quick to refute that any world matching Lacuna's description exists within their domain. However, small handfuls of Lacuna Dust occasionally appear in the many black markets of the Calixis Sector from time to time, further fuelling the rumours and suppositions concerning this mysterious planet.

The Obsidian Forge is the only foundry on Lacuna. Here the ruling Fabricator, a Magos who has assumed the title Obscurus, performs the necessary litanies and observances to maintain his technological charges. Inside this secluded complex are dimly lit workshops and laboratories, teeming with logi-sealed and hypnoath-bound Tech-Priests, each one endlessly tinkering with and dissecting devices that would tantalise any Explorer. So thorough are the encryptions placed within these servants' synaptic cogitators, many are unable to ever fully comprehend the extent of their work at any given time.

At the centre of the facility, automated gun-turrets, armed Skitarii, and a host of other, more subtle security measures safeguard a pair of great bronze doors. Each door is reinforced with layers of adamantium, and etched with intricate copper devotions and inlaid circuits dedicated to the Omnissiah. Beyond this formidable entranceway, a labyrinth of vaults and chambers encompasses the many artefacts and relics of Lacuna. Every sector of this convoluted maze contains a deadly security apparatus, each a unique and devious contraption capable of eliminating anyone lacking the Fabricator's authorisation. Tales of the priceless treasures within these guarded tombs vary from ancient archeotech, to STC printouts, and even technology stretching back to the earliest days of Man's conquest of the stars.



The Obsidian Forge is where the Skitarii and other military forces of Lacuna stand silent vigil against any who would try to breach the darkness surrounding the foundry. The most specialised of these are the deadly Vigilies Servitors. These warriors wield potent and rare weapons, proficient at destroying adversaries of a mechanical nature, and are Lacuna's first and finest guardians. However, some say that the Fabricator Obscurus has another weapon under his control; one powerful enough to devastate entire legions and even strike Imperial warships from orbit. Whether or not these rumours have any validity, the mere possibility of one of the legendary Ordinatus Platforms on Lacuna makes it an alluring target for any who desire power and the ability to crush their enemies.

SHADOWS AND DUST

The Obsidian Forge is not the only structure on this world of almost perpetual darkness. The secluded nature of Lacuna, combined with the dim days and pitch black nights, attracts many Magos who believe their work too risky or important to draw attention. As a result, additional autonomous research stations and hidden complexes dot the planet's gloomy exterior. The exact number of these facilities and their official occupants are mysteries, save to the Fabricator Obscurus, and each exists in almost absolute secrecy.

A DISCOVERY IN THE BLACKNESS

Inquisitor Byrun Voyitz of the Ordos Hereticus first brought Lacuna, or LPXT293721.1 as he designated it, to members of the Calixian Conclave. Shortly before his unexpected death, he had discovered a consistent pattern of alterations amongst the data files of Heretek Apostate Gelfalom Vornsik, that Voyitz believed to represent a planet or ship. The recovered fragments of the Inquisitor's last transmissions tell of his discovery of a dark world, feebly lit and almost indistinguishable from the inky black void. His ship's sudden destruction prevented the transcription of the remainder of the communication. The two attending Astropaths who attempted to receive the transmission were subsequently found dead at their stations, impaled upon their autoquills.

Only those within the Lathe Worlds who wield considerable influence and authority are typically able to learn of Lacuna's existence, let alone obtain the authorisation to set foot upon its surface. This clearance is surreptitiously presented in the form of a writ of *Celatus e Arcanus*. The writ states that, as long as there is no evidence of heretical activity or planetary peril, the bearer is allowed to pursue his research on Lacuna in absolute seclusion. Those who obtain such writs are wise to hide their existence, lest they become objects of contention and conflict.

On Lacuna, the holders of these writs are known only to the Fabricator himself. Additionally, a record of each writ is transcribed onto memory parchment and bound within a great tome. This book remains with a designated servitor, whose sole function is to carry and maintain his sacred charge. The volume's comprehensive bio-genetic locks are precisely calibrated to recognise only the Fabricator's unique structural dimensions. Any unauthorised attempts to access the work automatically trigger a self-immolation protocol within the manuscript's sub-dermal systems.

Yet the Fabricator Obscurus carries another work, and ritually encoded mag-locks and thrice-oiled cyclilic-autolinks seal the black tome from any who dare look inside. Said to hold physical copies of all the STCs and data regarding the many secrets of Lacuna, this collection is a sacred work, and its safekeeping is one of the Fabricator's highest duties.

Due to this general lack of direct supervision, it is unknown how many of Lacuna's facilities are still active, what manner of research is taking place, or even whether or not the occupants are still alive. Some holdings have silently changed hands multiple times over the years, and it is not uncommon for entire shadow wars of espionage and covert raids to ensue between rival Magos over secret experiments and relics. The Fabricator Obscurus frowns upon such overt acts, as he continuously monitors his realm via a network of orbiting satellites and ultraviolet pic casters.

Any evidence of potential hostility or questionable activity provokes brutal, callous, and efficient reprisals from Lacuna's military forces. However, very few Magos are willing to directly accuse their rivals of anything, for doing so may compromise their own secrecy. This has led to a tactic known as Acts of Illumination, which refers to the strategic use of

NEW TRAIT:

IMPROVED NATURAL WEAPONS

Some creatures have teeth as sharp as the finest hunting dagger, or claws able to crack apart carapace armour like a cheap Amasec bottle. Their Natural Weapons no longer count as Primitive.

lighting against opponents, in order to draw attention down upon the intended target at a crucial moment. The Fabricator Obscurus sees this stratagem as a useful way of culling the less-deserving inhabitants and maintaining his own authority.

Those able to navigate the many rivalries and conspiracies of Lacuna's occupants are allowed to reap the rewards of a planet with almost unlimited access to resources from across the Lathe Worlds. The Fabricator Obscurus relays every requisition communiqué, having verified its source-code, to the Lathe System, which processes it with all the haste due to labours vital to the Adeptus Mechanicus. Unlimited test subjects, use of restricted items or xenos specimens, rare power sources of untold complexity and purity, and the raw materials to build an entire frigate are all available with but a brief binaric cant and the authorisation codes of a writ bearer.

Oftentimes, the true dangers on Lacuna result not from petty rivalries, but instead from the hidden depths of the facilities themselves. Many members of the Adeptus Mechanicus, whom most would consider dangerously radical, have deceived, bribed, and occasionally murdered their way onto the planet's surface, with the intent of gaining access to these secluded chambers and the abundant resources within for their own depraved works. These cunning individuals pose a constant danger to the domain of the Fabricator Obscurus, whose forces remain constantly vigilant for signs of their works.

THE TATTERED MAGOS

There are many whispered half-truths and rumours among the scattered dwellers of Lacuna. One such tale is that of the Tattered Magos, a ghostly apparition and supposed denizen of the Warp that stalks the planet's fabled darkness. Legends say that he was once a renowned Tech-Priest who disappeared during a catastrophic meltdown that obliterated his lab, as well as any knowledge of his rumoured experiments involving Warp energy. Whatever his purpose, something must have gone terribly wrong—or incredibly right—as, when next he was seen, the Magos was quite changed.

The Tattered Magos is known to manifest as a spectral apparition, shrouded in charred and tattered robes, with mechadendrites and cybernetics that show signs of damage and scorching. Caught between the physical and immaterial realms, the Magos is able to pass between the two at will, but appears unable to remain in one or the other indefinitely. He can only fully manifest within the physical realm for a brief time, and his appearance often alters by decades or even centuries from one manifestation to the next. Whether or not this ghostly figure has any reasons for remaining on Lacuna is unknown.



The Tattered Magos

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 38 | 45 | 42 | 46 | 36 | 47 | 42 | 48 | 28 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 14

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech) (Int) +10, Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus, Psykers) (Int) +10, Forbidden Lore (Warp) (Int) +20, Intimidate (S) +10, Literacy (Int), Logic (Int) +10, Psyniscience (Per) +10, Scholastic Lore (Archaic, Legend, Occult) (Int), Search (Per), Secret Tongue (Tech) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Tech-Use (Int) +10.

Talents: Autosanguine, Binary Chatter, Chem Geld, Disturbing Voice, Mechadendrite Use, Resistance (Psychic Powers), Strong Minded, Swift Attack, Technical Knock.

Traits: Fear (2), From Beyond, Mechanicus Implants, Phase.

Armour: Faded Flack Robes (3 All).

Weapons: Warp-Infused Panoptic Automata Pistol (35m; S/2/-; 1d10+3 I; Pen -; Clip -; Reload -; Reliable, Warp Weapon), Tainted Omissionian Axe (Melee; 2d10+9 E; Pen -; Power Field, Unwieldy, Warp Weapon).

Gear: Cerebral Plugs, Data-Slate, Glow-Globe, MIU, Personal Auspex, Tattered Mechanicus Robes, Utility Mechadendrite, Optical Mechadendrite.

VIGILIES SERVITOR

Among the various servitors of the Lathe Worlds are combat patterns capable of facing and overcoming specific enemies and situations. One such pattern, the Vigilies Servitor, is uniquely equipped to destroy foes who would twist the sacred complexity of the machine towards their own corrupt purpose. Each is a fast and deadly adversary, with vat grown muscular enhancements, servo-muscular fibres, mechanical augmentations, and advanced combat protocols for a variety of threats. Highly proficient in both ranged and melee combat, these elite guardians are the physical embodiment of the Machine Cult's wrath.



Vigilies Servitor

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|-----------|-----------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 45 | 42 | (8) 45 | (8) 45 | 40 | 20 | 35 | 44 | — |

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 16

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Search (Per) +10, Tracking (Int) +20.

Talents: Counter-Attack, Crushing Blow, Fearless, Independent Targeting, Lightning Reflexes, Swift Attack, Resistance (Fear, Psychic Powers), Two Weapon Wielder (Ballistic), True Grit, Wall of Steel.

Traits: Armour Plated (x2), Automated Threat Protocols, Dark Sight, Fear (1), Improved Natural Weapons, Machine (4), Mechanicus Implants, Multiple Arms (4), Size (Hulking), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

Armour: Machine (8 All).

Weapons: Power Lance (Melee/Thrown; 10m; 1d10+14 E; Pen 6; Power field) or Servo-Fist (x2) (Melee, 1d10+10 I; Pen 0), Sunder Shield (Adamantine) (Melee; 1d5+14 I; Pen 2; Defensive, Power Field), Integrated Catalytic Mass Driver (Basic; 120m; S/-/5; 1d10 R; Pen 12; Reliable), Integrated Grenade Launcher with Fire Selector for Haywire Grenades (Basic; 45m; S/-/-; N/A; Pen -; Clip 8; Reload Full; Haywire (3), Storm, Reliable) or Krak Grenades (Basic; 45m; S/-/-; 2d10+4 X; Pen 6; Clip 8; Reload Full; Storm, Reliable).

Gear: 2 Drums of Haywire and Krak Grenades, Auger Arrays, Cerebral Plugs, Micro-Bead, Photo-Visor.

Automated Threat Protocols: All Vigilies Servitors utilise detailed combat and tactical analysis, and response protocols for a variety of situations. The downside is that, while highly efficient and very effective, the programming is specific to a fault, often placing the warrior at a disadvantage when dealing simultaneously with varied opponents. As a reaction, the Vigilies Servitor can nominate a single target in combat. The Vigilies Servitor then gains +10 to all WS and BS Tests against that target until the end of his next turn. However, the Vigilies Servitor also takes a -10 penalty to all WS and BS Tests against any other opponents until the end of his next turn.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- While tracking a known Heretek across the Calixis Sector, the trail has led the Acolytes to the darkness-shrouded world of Lacuna. However the Fabricator Obscurus believes that no such individual could have evaded his forces and infiltrated his domain. Preferring to trust his instincts, the Inquisitor has instead provided his Acolytes with a secret way onto the planet. Once on the surface, they must uncover where their quarry is hiding and foil whatever intentions he has, all without attracting the notice of the ever-vigilant Fabricator.

- A rumour of a dangerous and powerful artefact located on a hidden Lathe World has attracted the attention of two rival cells within the Adeptus Mechanicus. Both sides wish to obtain this relic and use it for their own furtive objectives; however, the Inquisition wants the item for its own vital obligations. The Acolytes must stop both sides from obtaining control of the item without alerting the Adeptus Mechanicus to Inquisitorial involvement. First, however, they must locate the planet.

- A Magos working on Lacuna has created a device to help combat a new and dangerous threat to the stability of the Calixis Sector. However, the Fabricator Obscurus is duty bound not to reveal the identities of the Magos currently inhabiting the planet. What's more, a rash of raids across the surface has left many facilities as little more than burned out ruins. The Acolytes must determine what is causing these attacks, and stop them in order to save the device they so desperately need.

HETERODYNE STATION

"And lo, did the Opus Machina appear before our Fathers, and reveal the Ommissiah to us, that we might know the Truth."

—Excerpt from the *Vox Rotuli Uziel*

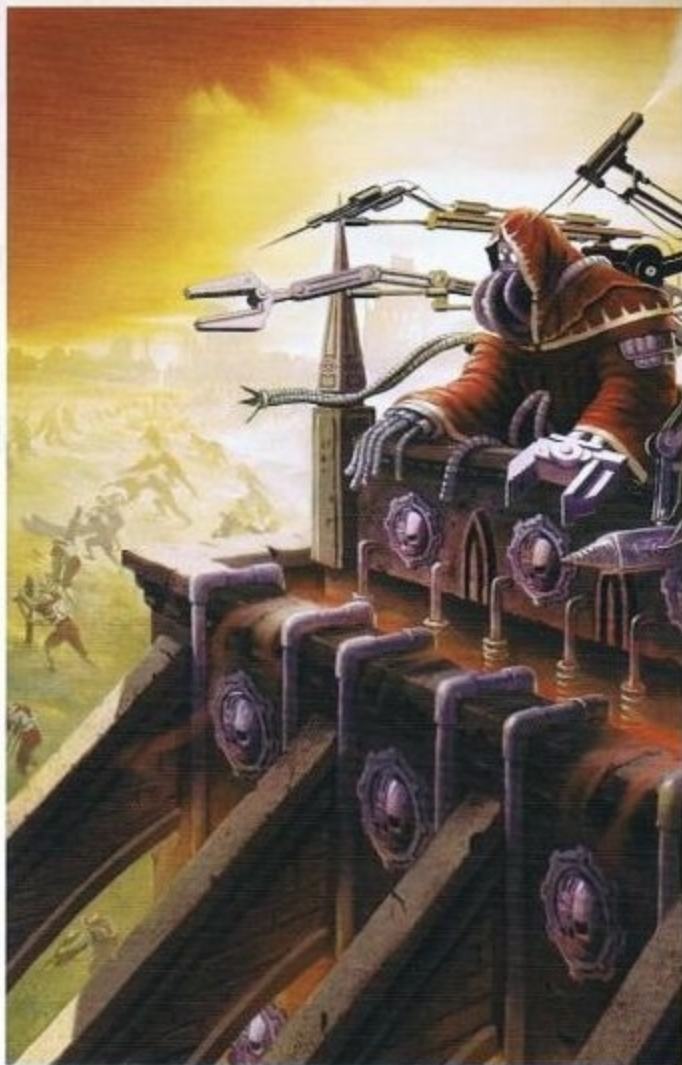
For most within the Calixis Sector who would think of such things, the image of one of the planets that the Adeptus Mechanicus controls brings forth the highly industrialised, heavily polluted scene of a typical forge world. The majority of the Lathe Worlds indeed fit this pattern, each almost identical when viewed from orbit. Thick layers of smoke and waste gases nearly obscure surfaces covered with technological development, even as huge refinery platforms churn from one ore-spike to another. Pyramidal cathedrals of metal and plasteel tower into the skies, lost in the noxious clouds. Endless vessels move across the planet, carrying the products of the forges across the Sector: munitions, vehicles, weapons, voidship components, even pre-fabricated foodstuffs. New worlds in the Sector that the Adeptus Mechanicus comes to occupy almost invariably become forge worlds, living symbols of the Opus Machina on a planetary scale. Few worlds escape such a fate. Uziel is one such planet, barely touched after the Cult Mechanicus claimed control. On it resides Heterodyne Station, where Tech-Priests oversee a planet's population slowly transforming from inconsequential labourers to valuable resources for the Lathes.

A WORLD LEFT BEHIND

There are few authoritative reports as to when Uziel was originally settled; most believe it was long ago in the heady days after the Angevin Crusade completed its holy work and birthed the Calixis Sector. Early reports spoke of a sparse world with few resources of note. Its location, on the edges of the Hazeroth Abyss, gave it no strong military value. It did, however, have acceptable environmental standards to easily support humans and continue the rightful and ordained occupation of the Sector. As such, colonist-transports were dispatched to claim the world, filled with pilgrims ready to take an empty world and turn it into a beacon to the God-Emperor, another light in this formerly dark region of space.

That light soon went out. There were untold other hundreds of worlds in the Sector of more importance, so little effort was spent to investigate. Warp storms in the area also limited any proposals to reclaim the planet. Years passed into centuries, and Uziel became just one of many failed colonies whose sparse records cluttered the many dusty data-crypts buried on Scintilla. It was only through accident that, little over a hundred years ago, Rogue Trader Jad Osperoux rediscovered the world through an ill-timed exit from the Immaterium, leaving his vessel near its system.

The long years of isolation had devolved the surviving colonists to little more than relative primitives, banded together for protection against the packs of feral beasts that roamed the land. There was little or no functioning technology remaining, and those devices that still operated were kept more as venerated relic than useful mechanism. Most served as base labourers through feudal oaths to those above them, tied together in protective networks. Only oral



histories could relate the tales passed down through the generations, of how the colony split along religious schisms and attacked one another, destroying what civilisation they had established. Those areas that still retained defensive works thrived, and those that controlled them became leaders and then barons, rulers over the lands they protected. The largest fortification, dubbed Heterodyne, was now the de facto centre of civilisation.

Osperoux found no profit on Uziel, but news of it fetched him enough Thrones to refurbish his ship. The Ministorum made ready to revisit the world, only to find that others had been working quietly to claim ownership before their mission could begin. A senior Factor of the Lathes presented the final proclamation, arrived at through a series of adroit political schemes and trades, the details of which have never been revealed. The Lathes took ownership over the world, a most unusual action given the lack of any clear use to the Mechanicum.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE MACHINE CULT

Outside observers could not fathom the Lathes' interest in this world, there being none of the ores, minerals, or even archeotech deposits that normally called their attention. Even more puzzling still, the Mechanicus landed with little of their normal, overwhelming presence, normally designed to efficiently, if brutally, transform a world into a factory. Instead, the arrival of the planet's new owners was something rarely seen in the Sector: peaceful and subtle.

Huge ships did land, but far from the castle-like fortresses that dotted the populated areas. Scores of Factors, chosen for their still-human looking appearance, used their wondrous technologies and camouflaged augmetics to dazzle the populace and install themselves as counsellors and advisors. The barons and other leaders grew to appreciate such assistance in maintaining their power, and came to rely on such aid. Slowly, seeds were planted. A society already conditioned for obedience was swayed towards adoration of the mechanical, while still retaining its primitive trappings. Over the years, the Factors worked to prepare for the introduction of the Tech-Priests and even more remarkable devices, all of which were part of the great Machine God's bounty.

More wonders appeared. The great beasts of the hills were hunted and captured, then broken into placid domestic animals, their ferocity destroyed with chem-implants and their bodies improved with mechanical limbs. New tools of light and mirrored metal allowed stonework of perfect design. Fields that once barely sustained a family could now feed multitudes. Archers found their bows could shoot farther, and their arrows able to even move in flight to better hit their targets. Through it all, the Tech-Priests grew in number and now walked the streets openly, replacing the departed Factors as their role was no longer required. No longer were they thought of as grotesque abominations, but instead exalted avatars of a god who manifested his divinity with each new technological miracle.

And yet through all of these changes over the last hundred years, little has changed from the basics of before. The fields are still tilled and sown, though the beasts that draw the ploughs might have cybernetic wheels for legs, and the hands that scatter the grain are often mechanical. Knights practice their skills to defend their domains, but with inertial-lances and riding steeds laced with ropes of synthetic muscle. The castle walls still stand, firmly made of stone and mortar, now adorned with huge Opus Machina icons. Guards walk the battlements and man cannons, though now they are servitors and their cannons fire plasma. The tech-barons now watch over their subjects with eyes augmented with metal and circuitry, their hold over their peoples now increased through engrammic engravings and loyalty implants. Life continues on Uziel, but now it is life underpinned with the Vitæ Mechanica.

The planet now thrives under the guidance and care of the Mechanicum without losing its prior essence, a most unusual occurrence for a Lathe World. Its population grows, and it has even become a foodstuff exporter to nearby forge worlds. It is a shining example of the glories the Mechanicum can bring to a world. This new era for the planet is all guided from one location which the first Factors on the planet immediately claimed for themselves: Heterodyne Station.

THE SECRETS OF HETERODYNE

Though it outwardly resembles the other castles of Uziel, Heterodyne has a false façade. While only cursory scrutiny of the planet's feudal society reveals the new technological modifications and support, the station maintains its primitive appearance even under close examination. The walls are stout stone, but underneath are layers of plasteel and ceramite. Sleek panels can slide away for macrobatteries and lascannons capable of destroying airborne threats. The wide courtyard

covers recessed pads for launching speeders and orbital cutters. Throngs of Tech-Priests scuttle about within; few, if any, tech-barons are allowed inside, and only after careful cranial screening for loyalty to the Cult Mechanicus. Only true servitor drones, manufactured in the bowels below, man the battlements and defences. The castle itself descends many kilometres underground, where vast cathedral-laboratories host the true nature of the Mechanicum's designs for Uziel.

Here only the Tech-Priests are permitted, creating new technological offerings for the people, always ensuring their new devices are easily adopted. They train and augment the preachers who speak the word of the Ommissiah to their flocks with devices to aid their message. Huge pens house captured beasts, ready for cybernetic-surgeries and their transformation into more productive biological assets. Those who sin against the Machine God are altered to become Serfitors, and those who might discover the hidden truths are transformed into much worse.

Why the Lathes decided to undertake this possibly singular operation on this world remains unclear, though perhaps it was always their plan given the name of the station they now occupy. Certainly, it takes much longer and requires more energy than other forge-implementations require. For over a hundred years, though, it has guided the populace from a primitive existence, useful only perhaps as servitor-base, into a fervent people, united in their faith in the Ommissiah and ready to fight and die in his name. Other worlds may have been transformed though similar means, but none either have survived the process or had their presence revealed.

On Uziel, the Mechanicum have moulded a people into the proper worship of technology, something that some within the Lathes hierarchy calculate is more valuable than drone servitude. With little actual machinery in their previous lives, the peoples of Uziel now embrace its benefits, and know how to properly acknowledge the Ommissiah from whom all such blessings flow. Other, rival Tech-Priests insist the world is instead a new tech-heresy, for without proper understanding there can be no proper worship. This has not dissuaded those within Heterodyne from progressing, slowly melding in newer technologies. On other worlds, the Lathes contemplate similar procedures, perhaps involving planetary mind-wiping or vat-growing populations, all the better to start with peoples untouched with misconceptions of the Machine God or bound with other beliefs. Uziel sustains, though, feeding its people and those on other Lathe Worlds, pledging its warriors to battles against the foes of the Mechanicum across the Sector, and offering new knowledge in growing the Cult Mechanicus. It may take many more generations until they are fully satisfied with their work, but the Tech-Priests of Heterodyne are patient.

FIEDELUS KNIGHT

Like all else on this world, the Mechanicum has taken an existing structure and altered it for their own needs. The Fiedelus Knights had long protected their liege-barons against the great killing beasts as well as rival lords, and it only took subtle modifications to transform them into warriors fit to serve the Cult Mechanicus. Their weapons resembled their ones of old, but were now more powerful and reliable. Their steeds, bolstered with behavioural implants and mechanical upgrades, could carry much more and for longer distances.

The Knights themselves needed little, their faith absolute in their Machine God without any need for engrammic implants. Each now carries the cogwork Opus Machina as their shield, displaying their faith and the glory of the Ommissiah as they ride to battle. Many have even left the planet to join regular Skitarii formations in other parts of the Sector, there to spread the glory of Heterodyne to rival Tech-Priests.



Fiedelus Knight

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 34 | 28 | 37 | 35 | 32 | 32 | 30 | 36 | 28 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 10

Skills: Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Machine Cult) (Int) +10, Climb (S), Dodge (Ag), Secret Tongue (Uziel Cant) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Tracking (Int), Wrangling (Int).

Talents: Chem Geld, Double Team.

Traits: None.

Armour: Heavy Flak Cloak and Beast Leathers (3 All).

Weapons: Inertial Hammer (Melee; 1d10+8 I; Pen 2; Proven, Unbalanced) or Inertial Lance (Melee, 1d10+8 I, Pen 4; Proven, Unwieldy), Impact Shield (Melee; 1d5+3 I; Pen 0; Defensive, Power Field), Shortsword (Melee; 1d5+5 R; Pen 1; Balanced) or Laspistol (Ranged; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+2 E; Pen 0, Clip 30; Rld Full; Reliable).

Gear: Cyber-Steed†, Frag Grenades, Krak Grenades, any one Bionic Replacement or Cybernetic Sense.

†Cyber-Steads use the rules for a Beast of Burden (see page 349 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook) with the removal of the Bestial Trait and adding the Machine (2) Trait. The steed and rider are treated as one being when ridden, giving +2 Armour to the Legs and Body of the rider.

SERFITOR

Servitors are a common sight on any Lathe World, where their tireless efforts aid in everything from basic factory work to combat operations. There are many working inside Heterodyne Station, though another variant unique to Uziel is more predominant across the rest of the planet. On this planet, those who transgress against the will of the Cult Mechanicus are not permanently transformed into mindless drones, but instead sentenced to the harshest of labour: the role of augmented Serfitor.

Like all products from Heterodyne Station, Serfitors are another experiment in improving the manner that the Cult Mechanicus controls its subjects. They might be taken for the more mundane servitors on other worlds, for much of their difference is not readily apparent. Their minds are not destroyed, only inhibited from independent thought through a series of cranial implants. Each is linked to central command devices that the tech-barons keep under careful control, so that vast groups of what was once shambling flesh can operate in perfect harmony. Mem-chips were also implanted, granting them skills that would take many seasons to learn. Their bodies are braced with vat-grown tissue, so they can work with little rest. The sentence is not without consequence, for their bodies are altered through other, more obvious, mechanical

intrusions to make them better workers. Arms are replaced with automated grain-tillers, legs with churning pistons to crush raw ores for smelting, eyes with thermal scanners for watching livestock; these and more are common Serfitor augmentations. Now freed from contrary thought, they work for the betterment of their lord and the Ommissiah they all serve.

After their sentence is over, their personalities are restored to active awareness. Their lives, however, are permanently disfigured, and few can pay to have their augmentations properly removed. Most are forced to continue labouring in exchange for implants they cannot excise, or live out the rest of their lives disfigured and crippled, a visible reminder to all not to displease the Machine God.



Serfitor

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 13 | 14 | 45 | 41 | 18 | 12 | 23 | 33 | 08 |

Movement: 1/2/3/6

Wounds: 10

Skills: Trade (any one) +20.

Talents: Iron Jaw, Resistance (Heat, Cold).

Traits: Machine (3).

Armour: Cybernetic Augmentations (3 All).

Weapons: Fieldwork Armatures (Melee; 1d5+8 R; Pen 1; Tearing).

Gear: Control Implants, Good Quality Cybernetic Senses (Eyes), Micro bead (to receive/relay instructions only), peasant robes.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- A grain shipment is found poisoned, nearly wiping out an entire forge world with gene-taint shifting. The origin is traced back to Uziel, but why would one Lathe World seek to harm another? The clues may lead to rival organisations within and without the Mechanicus, many eager to see this heretical world fail.
- During a mission, a nearby servitor suddenly seems to go berserk, screaming in pain and ripping away at its own bionics until it ceases to function. A study of the corpse indicates extensive internal cybernetic modifications for remote data transmissions, as if the servitor was more a controlled spy than mere menial. Who was controlling it, and why are other servitors in the area suddenly attacking the Acolytes as they get the closer in their investigations?
- The Acolytes are sent to investigate a tech-baron from Uziel who has fallen in with what could be a cult devoted to the Ruinous Powers. He appears more interested in learning their patterns of worship than participating in their foul deeds, as if to study their methods of indoctrination and subservience. Further investigation reveals that the possible heretic is highly augmented, far more than any mere tech-baron, and displays skills above anything possible outside of the elite Mechanicum. Is this an agent of Heterodyne Station, and, if so, what is their true interest in the cult?

THE HIPPOCRASIAN AGGLOMERATION

"Death is but the beginning. To capture what happens afterwards is our goal."

—Magos Adeb Xam of the Caste Necrosis

Flesh is weaker than pure machine, yet flesh has unique attractions of its own, mysteries that cannot be resolved if the biological material is simply discarded. Flesh changes, flesh begets new flesh, flesh comes to life, and flesh dies. It is this latter quality that especially fascinates sects within the Magos Biologis of the Lathes. The Magos Biologis commonly study biological systems; those of the xenos in order to defeat them, those of the human in order to improve them. Their work has led to great victories against several alien species and improved augmetic systems, but often to no avail to their standing. They are somewhat shunned within the Lathes, due to their association (oftimes unjustified) with some of the more notorious failed experiments and atrocities that have occurred in the Sector and within the Lathes System itself. Traditional Tech-Priests find their interest in organic tissues distasteful, and some even view it as tech-heresy no matter the justification. This has driven many of the Biologis to the remote areas of the Sector, there to conduct their researches.

One such location is on the Adrantine Fringes, in the Morwen System. Orbiting the sixth planet is a void station devoted to studying the impermanence of the flesh, where Tech-Priests can seek to unravel the mysteries of death itself in relative seclusion. The planet below is devoid of native life, making it a fitting place for such investigations. The Hippocrasian Sect operates here, ostensibly an outpost of the Magos Biologis and devoted to corporeal research for the betterment of the Calixis Sector. Like many of the Mechanicum stations in the Sector, however, it contains hidden secrets within. Tech-heresies of the basest sort fester deep under the brightly lit main laboratories, where forbidden sects conduct unholy experiments far beyond the station's mandate.

A WORLD OF DEATH

Though records from before the Angevin Crusade are incomplete at best, they indicate the Morwen System was once verdant and lush. Some evidence indicates that it even supported a xenos civilisation, which may be the reason it was attacked so thoroughly during the initial stages of the Crusade. An entire battlefleet attended to the world, obliterating any existing life in a cataclysmic bombardment of lance and torpedo that lasted a full six days. The fleet then rested a day, searching for any evidence that anything living survived, before completing the annihilation with a firestorm cannonade that burned any remaining oxygen from the atmosphere. Satisfied with their utter eradication, the fleet departed for other combat operations. Such total devastation is normally done on the order of the Inquisition, but the lack of a more simple cyclonic torpedo attack to accomplish the task indicates otherwise. Other planetary attacks during the Crusade were often as destructive, though seeking only to kill off any xenos or rebellious armies, and



not to remove all life no matter the type. Whatever their enemy might have been, the Crusade required its complete extermination and was willing to take valuable time during the war to ensure this goal to the best of their ability.

It took years for the gigatonnes of ash and dust to settle onto the surface, so great as to fill many of the immense craters covering the planet. The world remained silent for scores of decades, with only cyclopean monolithic structures still standing to indicate life once existed there. An Explorator vessel performed a cursory examination of these huge formations, but was unable to even pierce their heavy plate surfaces. Records from this landing are inconclusive as to if the Tech-Priests detected any data of interest, though they did report certain anomalous readings. The ship soon departed, but its report did lead to the arrival of a more dedicated presence of the Machine Cult in the system.

THE AGGLOMERATION COALESCES

The Magos Biologis came to the system with a Hippocrasian-pattern orbital, a tall torus of interlocking modular tubes commonly used as void-based laboratory installations. Their Oath of Data before the High Fabricator called for investigations into the cessation of the flesh and methods to prevent or delay such biological failures, and soon Tech-Priests from across the Sector were drawn to the station as word spread across the Lathe Worlds of innovative discoveries coming from its mortuaria slabs. Their presence brought new

alchemical elixirs, tissue-welding devices, organ regeneratives, and other techniques to aid in research. Now dubbed the Hippocrasian Sect, those on the station continued to push the weak flesh to new strengths. Experiments were conducted on hundreds each day, culled from cells and slave pens though few of the Hippocrasians were too curious as to their origin.

The research outgrew the station within a few short centuries, and additional facilities soon sprouted in nearby orbit along with ships set in high anchor. Support orbitals, dedicated docks for mass loading, plasma depots, and more began crowding the space around the original station in a chaotic spread. Such an assemblage became a useful waystation for Explorer vessels making their way outwards to the Nebula. Those on the Lathes who still viewed the sect with suspicion deemed this yet another example of how the study of the flesh can lead to unorganised results, and decried the undisciplined flotilla as the Hippocrasian Agglomeration.

THE END OF DEATH

The work of the Hippocrasian Sect has always trod a fine line between authorised standard Magos Biologis work and tech-heresy. Many of their researches delves into genetic sculpting and vat-flesh grafting, fields were somewhat common within the Adeptus Mechanicus (especially in servitor creation). Some of the Tech-Priests dared to continue even farther along these lines, creating their own flesh gholams, and then using these as experimental subjects into decay and regenerative protocols. Some even attempted to use deviant engrammatic brands to rework nervous systems, convinced that flesh could be forced to reject necrotic decay. These shambling mockeries resist death itself with their stringent protoplasm, and the Caste Necrosis is certain that these represent an important step into the perfection and extension of the flesh.

The Ethereals have instead aimed their study into the transformation from life to death, and the nature of this process. As the body leaves one state for the other, these Tech-Priests bring all their auguries and sensoria into play, seeking to observe what many before them insist cannot be measured. Their true target is the soul, hoping to detect and even capture this elusive item as it departs a dying body. Few of the Mechanicum hold such beliefs as worthy of consideration, but years of examinations have led these researchers to believe that such things do exist, and also that such essence can be ensnared just as it escapes. For what purposes they might use such ethereal membranes, none can imagine. Some have begun using heretical xenos devices to aid them in their quest, surely damning their own souls in the practice.

Many other cadres work their dark research in other manners. The Preservationists act to forestall the ending of breath though any means necessary, no matter what effects their nightmarish actions might have on the body or mind. As long as death is held at bay, they claim success. The Leagues of Ice use techniques involving cryogenic states to stave off tissue failure, employing alternating intensities of temperatures, especially those where the flesh itself turns solid and brittle, to reinvigorate the body. Their few successes remain disputed. The Mechanicals refuse to believe that death actually occurs, and instead use technological aids to continue to motivate the corpse, and foul unguents to maintain the flesh. The bodies refuse to respond to such attentions, but this has not dissuaded this group from further experimentation.

These are but a few of the dangerous groups operating within the Agglomeration, each a splinter from the original founding, but now so divergent in their goals and methods as to be nearly unrecognisable. Others, like the Carnicula, have quit the Sect to pursue their research elsewhere in divergent patterns. Their obsession with death still unites them all however, and, for many, their experiments soon result in their unity with this state.



CASTE NECROSIS TECH-PRIEST

The Caste Necrosis exists as a hidden chancre within the Hippocrasian Sect, their experimentation having taken them far into areas the Lathes-Covenant has ruled heretical. Those who know of the heretical cult believe it is either the direct work of Magos Vathek, or at the least, inspired through his dark experimentations into the re-animation of dead tissues. Some even believe that the arch-mutant Archimedes Noxt created the Caste, secretly funding and guiding their efforts in order for him to better control his own unstable flesh.

The clique of Tech-Priests who began the Caste know that their work would sentence them to Servitude or worse, but are confident that their experiments and the knowledge they gain are worth any penalty. They mask their work using secured mortuaria halls stricken from the station's records, or even on other nearby orbitals. In these lairs, flesh is grown, treated, destroyed, and rebuilt, all to better fathom its limits, and then venture beyond them. They originally built scores of flesh gholams merely as a ready supply of living beings which could be studied as they perished under controlled conditions, but soon the gholams themselves became their main line of study.

Developing new flesh for their constructs led to experiments in flesh modification using forbidden extracts and heretical techniques, creating new gholams for further new experimental avenues. As their creations grew more resilient, the Tech-Priests began implanting flesh harvested from particularly successful gholams into their own forms, even replacing their own cybernetic upgrades with these horrid tissues. Some within the Caste have taken their intense study of decay into the darkest of areas, and surely have attracted the attention of the Ruinous Powers, in particular Father Nurgle.



Caste Necrosis Tech-Priest

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 22 | 24 | 38 | 42 | 32 | 45 | 38 | 41 | 22 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 13

Skills: Awareness (Per), Chem-Use (Int) +10, Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech) (Int) +10, Logic (Int) +10, Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus, Mutants) (Int) +20, Scholastic Lore (Chymistry, Occult) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic, High Gothic) (Int), Secret Tongue (Tech) (Int) +10, Tech-Use (Int) +20.

Talents: Binary Chatter, Chem Geld, Disturbing Voice, Electrical Succour, Electro Graft Use, Luminen Charge, Mechadendrite Use, Rite of Fear.

Traits: Mechanicus Implants.

Armour: Cybernetic body (All 3).

Weapons: Ripper Pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/2/-; 1d10+3 I; Pen 7; Clip 8; Reload Full; Tearing, Toxic), Power Knife (Melee; 1d10+5 E; Pen 5; Balanced, Power Field), 3 Blind Grenades, 3 Photon Flash Grenades.

Gear: Ichor-befouled Mechanicum cloak, MIU interface and 1d5 other implants, Medicae Mechadendrite, surgical tools, data-slate, personal cogitator, 2 pistol clips.

The New Flesh: Members of the Caste Necrosis often augment their bodies with their latest experiments, surely a blasphemy to the Ommissiah in all eyes but their own. Such tissue is beyond normal biological processes, and grants the Tech-Priest the Regeneration Trait. After it has successfully removed any Damage, it then also gains the Fear (1) Trait, but once the Tech-Priest is slain, the corpse becomes even more hideously deformed, and gains Fear (2).

Necrotic Gholams: A Caste Necrosis Tech-Priest may be accompanied with 1d5 necrotic gholams. These use the rules for a servitor drone (see page 344 of the **DARK HERESY CORE Rulebook**), with their restored but necrotic flesh doubling for a servitor's normal mechanical implants, and engram branding as their control mechanism. Necrotic gholams gain the Fear (1), Regeneration, and Toxic Traits to reflect their foul creation.



ADVENTURE SEEDS

- The Acolytes are sent to investigate a horrific outbreak of servitor attacks, but despite the hindrance of Lathes agents, they determine that these are actually a deadly form of flesh gholams. Their efforts attract the attention of a group of decrepit Tech-Priests, eager to see the Acolytes reduced to test subjects back at Morwen.
- The Acolytes are sent to Morwen VI, there to investigate mysterious deaths of a training mission of Brontian Longknives on the surface. There are few clues to be found on the dead world, though many of the Guardsmen report disturbing visions; some are found undergoing self-mutilations beyond the ritual scarring the regiment is known for. Is the planet truly dead, or could something buried under the still-standing structures be influencing those who would stay too long on the planet and its unnatural emanations?
- The Acolytes are on the trail of Archimedes Noxt when they find a trail of other heretics with similar mutations. When captured, one of them claims he purchased his new abilities in the Adrantine region, and even the threat of excruciation does not persuade him to reveal anything else. Their path leads them to the Hippocrasian Sect, but gaining access to the station itself or any of the other orbitals requires more than simply showing the Rosetta.

MORIO

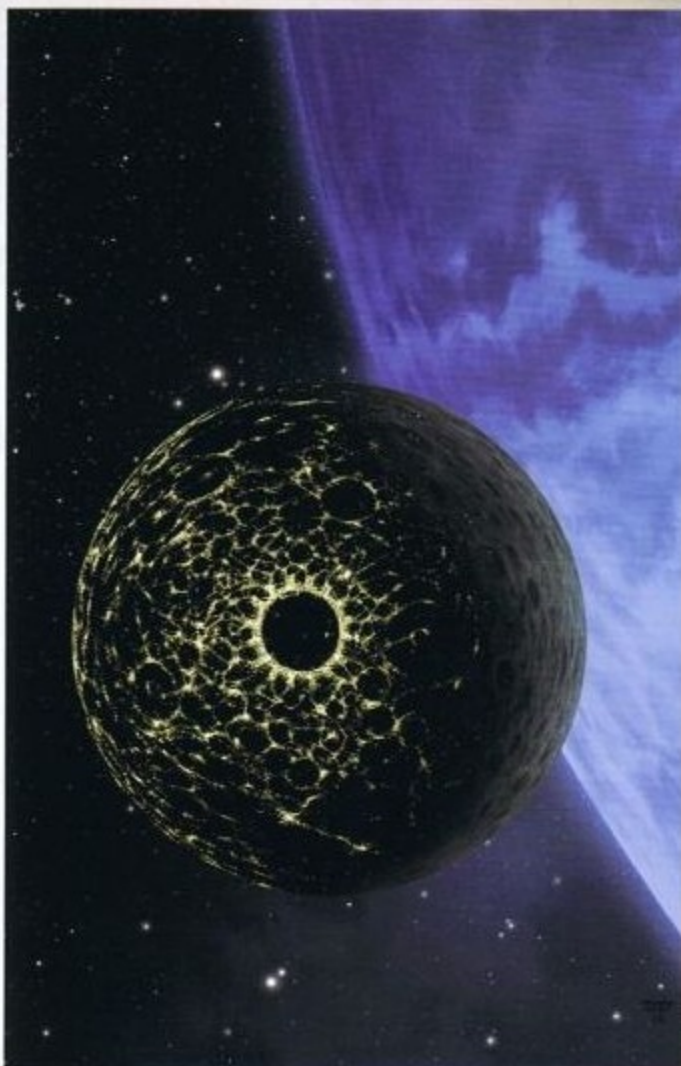
"Old Arazi used to claim he saw the secret docking bay, where they loaded the bodies of dead coglovers for transport out of the system. He could never find out why."

—Terian Oltsweet, dockyard rating

Far away from the Lathe Worlds, hidden in the flickering light of the Halo Stars, sits a tiny system. It consists of a simple, pale red dwarf star, barely able to keep itself alight in the void. Around it a single planet orbits, a ball of rock and cold mud whose name is listed only on a few ancient star charts, as Capulus. The planet itself is unassuming and of little interest for mining or colonisation. No more than a collection of dirt with little atmosphere or water, it has nothing that would attract any looking for wealth or power. Even its single moon seems, at first glance, to not be worthy of any effort. The moon is in an unnatural orbit, such that it is always on the dark side of Capulus, so no light from the feeble star ever shines directly upon the moon's icy terrain. As it glides alongside Capulus, it seems to be hiding itself, afraid to come into the light and allow its secrets to be known, and that is exactly how the Masters of the Lathes want it. For on the little moon, known in stories and rumours as Morio, the Mechanicus hides one of its most unsettling secrets.

The dusty plains of Morio have no real atmosphere to speak of, its entire surface mostly exposed to the vacuum and cold of the void. The side of the moon that faces away from Capulus is scarred from ancient collisions with asteroids and space debris. There are no signs of past or present life on this side, either alien or human. On the side facing the planet, Morio is covered with the lights and spires of a staggering hive city, larger than almost any other in the entire sub-sector. Here, the towers and cathedral-factories of the Machine God climb majestically beyond the surface of Morio, as well as burrow deep within it, nearly to its long silent, cold core. This is the Sepulchre of the Adeptus Mechanicus for all of the Calixis Sector.

When any of the Omnissiah's followers fall in the Calixis Sector, all possible care is given in trying to get the remains of the fallen to Morio. Ancient, sarcophagal crypt ships make passage through the treacherous Warp routes between the Dominions of the Lathes and Morio, carrying their precious cargo. Once they have arrived, the bodies of the deceased are brought down to the moon in waves of short range cargo craft. While basic servitors do most of the actual labour, there are those of the Adeptus Mechanicus whose duty it is to prepare their fallen brethren and to administer the final rites of the Machine God. Known as the Mortifers, these humble brethren have several duties to perform before allowing their charges to rest. This is not only the cemetery world for the followers of the Machine God in the Calixis Sector, it is also where the Mechanicus take back and refurbish the cybernetics of those who have fallen, so that they may be offered to upcoming generations of Tech-Priests.



The Sepulchre is the next step not only for the remains of the followers of the Omnissiah. Here the fleshy remains of the fallen are processed into corpse wafers, to be used in religious observances of the Adeptus Mechanicus. It is also the main reclamation point for the detached bionics and cybernetics, so that they can be used once again by others in the Adeptus. Building and maintaining cybernetics is a time and resource consuming task that also becomes more and more difficult every year, as those with the knowledge to create or maintain such wonders die without passing on that information to the next generation of Tech-Priests. Reclaiming these cybernetics and using them for training purposes, or to augment others who seek the perfection of the Omnissiah, allows the Mortifers to reduce the need for current resources. It also serves a more holy purpose, allowing a line of ascension within the Adeptus Mechanicus to continue far beyond the span of even the eldest of Magos. Worthy Tech-Priests might gain the mehadendrites of a famous Logos from within the system, or receive the same bionic eye that once spied the pacification of Calixis.

But there are other reasons why the Mechanicus hide the Sepulchre. Knowledge is power, and here is where knowledge is preserved and used to grow the power of the Cult Mechanicus throughout the Sector. For Morio is also where the memories of the fallen are stored, so that they may be kept from oblivion. In the farthest recesses of the Sepulchre, the Mortifiers and their servitors stubbornly work on their great task. They administer and maintain ancient cogitator systems and arrays, far more complex and delicate than anything known currently within the Calixis Sector. Here the Mortifiers connect the cortex implants and cybernetic synapse overlays of the fallen to this gigantic system, known as the Cenotaph Calixia. The accumulated knowledge and experiences of the now-dead Tech-Priests are retrieved, so that they can be accessed later.

Currently, the ability to retrieve and utilise such information is rudimentary at best, but near-heretical experimentation with the holy machinery has allowed for greater efficiency in recent years. Dark whispers of what the Mechanicus might do with such concentrated knowledge scatter across the cognoscenti of the Sector. Stories among the Mortifiers tell of outsiders who were caught investigating the Cenotaph being placed into the ancient oubliettes of the moon, never to be seen or heard from again. Nothing can be allowed to halt the great work from continuing, and one day the Sector will see its grand results, and know the glory that every true Tech-Priest already believes.

CARETAKER GANASH

No one knows how old Ganash truly is, or even if this is his real name. He has toiled on Morio longer than records exist, and some say in half-jest he was already on the moon when the Cult Mechanicus arrived to establish a new cemetery hive. As time passed, he rose in rank as the hive transmogrified into the Cenotaph, the moon became the central repository for the accumulated knowledge of the Mechanicus in Calixis. He slowly began the implementation of his programs to recycle the cybernetics of the dead, turning it from more local procedures and into a sanctified rite under the direction of his Mortifiers. He is now and ever shall be the Caretaker Eternal, seemingly as endless as the moon itself.

Ganash is a gaunt and pale thing. What little flesh remains between the voluminous, ancient black robes and the long-dulled surgical metals of his cybernetics is tight and waxen from age and neglect. Most suppose that his frame and demeanour have become shaken with age and the burden of his duties, but none can recall him any other way. Despite the little care Ganash may have for his own fragile shell, his care for those who have come to Morio and the Sepulchre on their final trip is obvious. He handles his charges as if cradling the most precious of treasures. The creation and care of the Cenotaph Calixia, and his fevered desire to use it to save the knowledge of his fallen brethren from oblivion, is commendable. A worried few within the Holy Ordos wonder what the Adeptus Mechanicus will do with such a vault of knowledge once they are able to successfully and safely retrieve information from it, and what Ganash will do with the kind of power that comes from such a feat.

Caretaker Ganash



| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 25 | 27 | 30 | 32 | 39 | 48 | 47 | 52 | 19 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 15

Skills: Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech) (Int) +20, Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus, Cults) (Int) +10, Literacy (Int), Logic (Int) +10, Medicae (Int) +20, Scholastic Lore (Chymistry) (Int), Search (Per), Secret Tongue (Tech) (Int), Tech Use (Int) +20.

Talents: Binary Chatter, Chem Geld, Electrical Succor, Feedback Screech, Jaded, Logis Implant, Master Chiurgeon, Mechadendrite Use (Medicae, Utility), Nerves of Steel, Resistance (Fear), Rite of Awe, Rite of Fear, Total Recall.

Armour: Carapace Armour (6 All).

Weapons: None

Gear: Ancient black robes (Good-Quality Clothing), Good Quality Bionic Arms and Legs, Common Bionic Respiratory System, Auger Arrays, Medicae Mechadendrite (x2), Utility Mechadendrite.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- The Acolytes are sent to a factory world to investigate the unusual deaths of several visiting Engineers. Unfortunately, persons unknown took the bodies before they arrived, and the local Mechanicus do not want to talk about it. Rumours indicate that the Engineers may have stumbled upon a dark programme to reanimate the dead. The Acolytes must find where the bodies of the fallen have been taken, keep the Adeptus Mechanicus from creating some heretical abomination, and follow the trail to the crypt world of Morio.
- Shortly after receiving new cybernetic implants, the Acolyte who has the procedure begins to have vivid dreams of his own murder, to the point where the dreams come upon the Acolyte even when awake. As the dreams progress, the Acolyte can now see that the implant was once in a different person—the murder victim. Investigation leads the Acolytes to Morio, where they discover that some of the reclaimed cybernetics have not been properly purged before reassignment, perhaps deliberately, in order to experiment on data assessment methods. Those on the crypt moon will not welcome such inquisitiveness into their affairs.
- A valued Tech-Priest agent of the Acolytes' Master has fallen, and they are assigned to accompany his remains to Morio. Their real assignment is to recover a hidden auspex secreted within his augmetics, which was too cleverly melded for normal removal. Their goal is to allow the Mortifiers to do their work, then steal away the auspex before the device is wiped (or worse yet, the information extracted), and return it to their Master.

OPUS MACHARIUS

"Courage like Steel, Completion in Death!"

– Legio Venator Battle Cry

Within the Drusus Marches lies the forbidding forge world of Opus Macharius. Named in honour of Lord Solar Macharius, this planet became part of the Lathes near the end of the Angevin Crusade, and is the home of the revered Legio Venator. From here, as well as their permanent posting within the Lathes on Lycosidae, the Titan Legion stands vigil against any who threaten Imperial sovereignty in the region, and plays a critical role in maintaining order and stability throughout the Calixis Sector.

THOSE WHO WALK AS GODS

Of all the wonders of the Machine Cult, none can compare to the awesome might of a Titan. A relic of humanity's forgotten glory, the term can refer to any of the massive bipedal combat walkers the Titan Legions wield to serve the Cult Mechanicus. They are magnificent engines of destruction, each brandishing weapons capable of levelling entire hab-blocks, and employing dense armoured carapaces and powerful void shields. Within every Titan's core resides a uniquely aggressive and powerful machine-spirit patterned after the terrible predatory beasts of ancient Terra, each requiring immense willpower to wield and control. The servants of the Adeptus Mechanicus reverently maintain and worship these colossal engines of war; for in their eyes, every Titan is no less than the walking embodiment of the Machine God's power.

The process of constructing a Titan is a close secret within the Adeptus Mechanicus, and each is an immense undertaking, requiring centuries of experience and countless blessings and rituals throughout the process. These colossal machines are held in such high standing that every Titan is granted a High Gothic name upon completion. In the same vein, the death of a Titan is a true tragedy for those who aided in its construction, with entire Foundries mourning the loss of one of their sacred creations.

When not serving on some distant warzone or guarding one of the Legio's many fortresses, the Titans of Legio Venator rest in the Titan Pens on Opus Macharius. Here they undergo any necessary critical repairs, upgrades, or refittings. The planet's massive manufactorums contain these pens within their sprawling bulk, and continuously produce parts and armaments for their sacred charges. A single pen often houses multiple Titans at a time, while some of the more illustrious or massive machines warrant an entire forge to themselves. All who maintain the Legio's machines view their labour as a great honour, and duels and conflicts frequently occur over the right to house Titans of particular reverence.

The Titan Pens also contain facilities to see to the medical and physical needs of the legion's members, including hospitaller complexes, hab quarters, and training bays. Many veteran members of Legio Venator live and train here beside the Legio's aspirants, and serve as an example to those who have yet to face the enemy in righteous battle. Unfortunately, these facilities sometimes serve as the final abode to any Princes that succumbs to the extreme physical and mental



toll of controlling the destructive spirit within a Titan. These tortured individuals are sights inspiring both reverence and pity. Some are carefully managed in their declining days as inspirational heroes of the Mechanicum, but most live out their remaining days as pitiful, broken shells of the walking gods they once embodied.

A GLORIOUS LEGACY

Legio Venator was a relatively young legion when it accompanied Imperial forces at the commencement of the Angevin Crusade. The Legio was glorious to behold, its immaculate red and polished brass carapaces flashing with each burst of fire, as they relentlessly delivered utter annihilation to all who refused Imperial rule. Winning much glory and honour during the opening phases of the campaign, the legion gained a fearsome reputation for completely decimating their opponents.

During the Bleak Years, the legion fought with particular distinction against a massive Ork Waaagh! that fell upon the crusaders with barbaric fury. A critical victory in the struggle came with the destruction of a massive Mega-Gargant, identified in the Ork's bestial tongue as *Spine Smasha*. Following a coordinated orbital lance strike, Princes Senioris Angevelo Vsevolod of the Warlord Titan *Valorus Ira*, with support from a Warhound Pack Centurion, engaged the damaged greenskin engine. The battle was close and ferocious, and it was only after

GLORIOUS REMNANTS

One of the more obscure types of war machines the Legio Venator employs on the battlefield are the ancient Knight Engines. Individual Princes pilot these small, one-man Titans, each hailing from the nobility of the distant Knight Worlds. The history of the Knight Engines is extensive, and stretches back into the depths of the Imperium's murky past, during the turbulent era known as the Age of Strife.

Though now generally serving as support and reserve forces, the Knight Engines of Legio Venator continue to fight with distinction, utilising their increased mobility to the best possible advantage. No less than eighteen Knights from four separate worlds serve across the Calixis Sector, and they continue to wreak particular havoc against the marauding Orks on Kulth. Here, elite formations of Burst-pattern Lancer Engines dart across the battlefields, expertly striking the flanks of their opponents with torrential fire. Meanwhile, the Paladin Engines of the Adamantine Order stand defiant against the barbaric xenos in superb displays of martial combat, time and again striking down their crude warmachines with righteous fury. These honourable warriors are all dedicated servants of the Omnissiah, and each expects nothing less than a glorious death in the service of their Martian lords.

Warhound *Celerus Moria* sacrificed itself through drawing the Mega-Gargant's fire that the *Valorus Ira* was able to target the enemy's internal core with its volcano cannon. The resulting meltdown decimated the Ork hordes, and the sight of their idol's destruction robbed them of their will to fight.

After pushing into areas thought secure, the foul Yu'vath brought their insane Warp-science and techno-sorcery to bear on the beleaguered crusaders. The Legio Venator encountered a particularly massive and atrocious Yu'vath Warp construct leading the opening attack of one such offensive. Dripping with ethereal energy, the monstrous creation propelled itself forward on five twisted legs, and wielded inexplicable weapons that drew on the power of the Warp itself in three misshapen arms. Four Titans fell to the abomination before the *Desidius Rae*, heavily damaged and venting plasma from its ruptured core, challenged the beast in close combat. The embattled Princes diverted all available power to his Titan's power fist, which caused his first strike to overload the already weakened core containment field. The Titan's ensuing fiery death ensured the complete and utter destruction of its Warp-spawned foe.

Following the arrival of Arch-Magos Mat Aleph Xenon and the conclusion of the Angevin Crusade, Legio Venator attained the right to requisition one of the newly created Lathe Worlds as its own. However, before the process of selecting a world could begin, Legio Venator joined other Titan Legions in the glorious and historic Macharian Crusade. The remaining Legio forces within the newly formed Calixis Sector instead set to work establishing fortresses within the Lathes themselves, including one on Lycosidae.



Upon the completion of the Macharian Conquests, the Titan battle groups returned with fresh tales of heroism as well as regret at the loss of Macharius himself. In recognition of his glory and the legion's participation in the great crusade, the Lathe Covenant designated a forge world within the Drusus Marches "Opus Macharius," and ceded it to the Titan Legion as its new home world.

Over a thousand years later, the Legio Venator was one of the forces to heed the call to arms against the self-proclaimed Emperor of Brass. The Titan Engines were invaluable in breaking the rebellions bordering the Gelmiro Cluster, ruthlessly cleansing any worlds that rebelled against their Imperial masters. During the final assault on the remaining hive clusters within the system, the Legio Venator came face to face with a new and terrible enemy: Chaos Engines. What followed was a four day conflict in which Engines on both sides relentlessly stalked their foes through ruined spires and destroyed hab blocks. Several of Legio Venator's damaged Titans even volunteered to act as bait to lure the Chaos Titans into ambushes, occasionally sacrificing themselves to destroy their targets.

The eventual arrival of two Emperor Titans signalled the end of the fighting, as the remaining Chaos forces were unable to stand up to the might of these awe-inspiring machines. Entire swathes of ruined cityscape vanished beneath the power of their mighty armaments, as the Chaos Engines that did not escape off-world fell to the overwhelming onslaught. The battle groups then

turned their efforts towards supporting the remaining loyalist forces, and the entire cluster was eventually left a smoking ruin, though the cost in lives had been high. However, the escaped Chaos forces would return to face the Legio again, under the banner of the Forsaken Reavers Chaos Warband.

When the Meritech Wars erupted across Imperial space almost five hundred years later, the Legio Venator dispatched forces to help quell the massive uprising. These included the *Ignis Inferorum*, an ancient Emperor Titan dating back to the Dark Age of Technology, which strode the battlefield like an avatar of wrath, its twin Plasma Annihilators belching fiery retribution. The defenders found themselves hopelessly outmatched and, in the end, not a single living creature survived.

Following the conclusion of the Meritech Wars, the Legio Venator focused on rebuilding and strengthening its holdings, occasionally dispatching battle groups to honour treaties and obligations from the distant past. The Legion currently has forces operating in both the costly Margin Crusade and the on-going Achillus Crusade. Here they have encountered the deadly bio-titans of the Tyranid Hive Fleets, and many valuable Engines have fallen to these ferocious monstrosities. As a result, Principis Majoris Maxilohv has decreed that no additional battle groups are to leave the Sector, except to fulfil the Legio's current treaties, until the destroyed Titans are replaced. Such an undertaking is expected to require centuries.

AS ONE BEING

One of the most critical roles of the facilities on Opus Macharius is the training of aspirants and crews to function as a single, cohesive unit. The Principis, as the leader of the crew, and his Moderatii, who implement his directives, must learn their Engine's unique quirks, tolerances, and individual temperament so that each can instinctively anticipate and interpret the Titan's intentions during combat. Without this mutual link, the Titan is slow to react and unruly, the rebellious machine spirit struggling against its crew instead of directing its boundless rage against the enemy. In contrast, a Titan and crew who have bonded are a true wonder to behold: man and machine communicating and reacting without a moment's hesitation to deliver the wrath of the Ommissiah down upon their foes. To truly walk as one with their Titan's machine-spirit is akin to a holy experience for all within, the Principis in perfect communion with his Engine, and his Moderatii in seamless anticipation of his commands.

To better achieve this end, the Legio Venator conducts endless training drills, and has authorised the creation of an area known as Perditiion. This large section of the planet's surface is now a vast expanse of artificial warzone. Within this purposeful desolation, the Legio train to deal with almost any threat and combat situation. Here countless captured enemies and prisoners from across the Sector are penned in place, surrounded with enormous ferro-crete walls that house automated sentry guns and targeting servitors, and used in live weapons training. The lowly wretches within live out their dangerous, and often very short, lives perpetually rebuilding the remnants of buildings and battlefields, only to have them destroyed anew each session.

DEFIANT TO THE LAST

Principis Senioris Lenodius von Maxilohv is the Principis Majoris of Legio Venator and is over 250 standard years old. His body is permanently confined to his command throne, an ornate brass device that contains the necessary life-support systems and tox-scrubbers to keep him alive and allow him to interface with his Titan's machine spirit. He retains only his head, right arm, and half of his torso, following a stand-off with Titans of the Forsaken Reavers Chaos Warband.

During a clash against these foul raiders, Maxilohv intercepted orbital surveillance that five of the Fallen Engines were attempting to flank the Imperial assault through a canyon south of the battle. As the rest of his command could not abandon this critical phase of the attack, Maxilohv disengaged his Engine *Imperialis Potestas* from the battle and challenged the enemy Titans alone.

The canyon's rock walls reportedly echoed with the twisted scrapcode of the lead Chaos Warlord Titan when the lone Imperial Engine encountered them, while the meaning of Maxilohv's brief reply burst is lost to history. While the servants of Chaos could not all bring their weapons to bear on him at once, neither could they miss. Maxilohv's Titan sustained massive damage from the withering enemy fire, including a direct hit to his command bridge. Maintaining control of his Titan through sheer force of will, Maxilohv continued to engage the enemy despite his terrible injuries. Upon seeing the final Chaos Titan fall, Maxilohv finally lost consciousness, and his Titan ground to a halt. Following the battle, he was placed within the command throne he currently occupies. After repairing his Titan, tech-rites added the new honour to its glorious annals.

Food and other essential supplies arrive at designated zones within the complex, with little care given to rationing or the maintenance of order among the confined. This process has resulted in the rise of ruthless individuals, who are able to organise and intimidate prisoners into massive work gangs to curry favour from their mechanical overseers. The Tech-Priests responsible for this labour force frequently encourage such behaviour, often dropping additional supplies, such as slightly higher quality protein-pastes and starch packs, as motivation for exceptional productivity. Fighting amongst these groups is quite common, and is believed to add to the authenticity of the Legio's training.



DIVISO PERDITUS PRINCEPS

A Diviso Perditus Princeps embodies the Legio Venator's penchant for ensuring that every trace of the enemy has been annihilated by fire and death, regardless of the cost. Veterans of many conflicts, these individuals elect to remove the parts of their brain that house their slowly crumbling mental state, and replace them with implants that maintain and enhance their cognitive processes. This procedure obliterates the Princeps's own fracturing personality, instead allowing him to direct his Engine's spirit with cold and calculating logic.

However, with time, the continued melding with their Engine's predatory temperament gradually alters this emotional void, creating individuals who believe that methodical and overwhelming application of force is the only logical way to fight an enemy. Occasionally, the machine-spirit's nature also intrudes upon the Princeps's mental consciousness, and influence the Princeps to continue fighting even when logic would dictate withdrawing from a conflict. They are supremely confident opponents, undaunted in the face of danger after decades of wielding the power of a walking god.



Diviso Perditus Princeps

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 46 | 40 | 36 | 38 | 35 | 40 | 32 | 50 | 40 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 14

Skills: Awareness (Per), Command (Fel) +10, Common Lore (Machine Cult, War) (Int) +10, Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Drive (Walker) (Ag) +20, Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus) (Int), Literacy (Int), Navigation (Int) +10, Scholastic Lore (Legend) (Int), Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis) +20, Tech-Use (Int).

Talents: Air of Authority, Ambidextrous, Autosanguine, Blademaster, Combat Master, Deadeye Shot, Fearless, Iron Discipline, Marksman, Meditation, Peer (Adeptus Mechanicus), Sure Strike, Talented (Drive) (Walker), Two Weapon Wielder (Ballistic), Wall of Steel.

Traits: Inner Strength†.

Armour: Best Quality Flak Vest (Body 4), Ceremonial Flak Gauntlets (Arms 2).

Weapons: Best Quality Power Sword (Melee; 1d10+9 E; Pen 6; Balanced, Power Field), Best Quality Mark IV Laspistol (Pistol; 70m; S/2/-; 1d10+3 E; Pen 0; Clip 15; Reload Full; Accurate, Reliable), Ceremonial Sword (Melee; 1d10+4; Pen 0; Balanced, Mono).

Gear: 2 Charge Packs for Laspistol, Formal Dress Uniform, MIU Cybernetic, Flask of Amasec, Dataslate, Micro-Bead, Legio Encryption Crystal.

†**Inner Strength:** A Titan Legion Princeps is possessed of a mental strength rarely seen in human form. Legio Venator's history is full of accounts of these noble warriors fighting on through brute determination and stubbornness, when a lesser man would have already perished from his injuries.

During his turn, a Princeps may make a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** to ignore the non-fatal effects of any critical injuries until the end of his next turn. This trait can be used multiple times, with each subsequent application increasing the difficulty of the Willpower Test by one step.

LEGIO VENATOR REDACTUS MODERATUS

Moderatus is the term for the various crew members within the command bridge, who maintain and monitor a Titan's vital and secondary systems during deployment. Their labours supplement and facilitate the Princeps' control of the Titan, and allow him to focus on the battle itself. Within the Legio Venator, the task of interacting with the Princeps falls primarily to the Redactus Moderatus, who sits below the command throne within every Titan command bridge. These experienced individuals filter all the data and reports of the other Moderatii, and relay any vital information into the command throne's cogitators via synaptic link. They are essential members of every crew and often serve as advisor and second-in-command to the Princeps. Redactus Moderatii also ensure the survival of their commanding officer, and each is willing to sacrifice himself for his Legion and his Princeps.



Legio Venator Redactus Moderatus

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 36 | 40 | 34 | 36 | 32 | 40 | 38 | 40 | 36 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 13

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Common Lore (Machine Cult, War) (Int) +10, Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Drive (Walker) (Ag) +10, Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus) (Int), Literacy (Int), Navigation (Int) +10, Scholastic Lore (Legend) (Int), Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis) +10, Scrutiny (Per) +10, Tech-Use (Int) +10.

Talents: Die Hard, Foresight, Heightened Senses (Sight), Nerves of Steel, Technical Knock, Unshakeable Faith.

Traits: As One†, Dark Sight, Loyalty Above All††.

Armour: Best Quality Light Flak Coat (Body, Arms, Legs 3).

Weapons: Legio Pattern Compact Laspistol (Basic; 70m; S/4/-; 1d10+2 E; Pen 0; Clip 30; Reload Full; Accurate, Compact, Reliable), Civitas Laspistol (Pistol; 25m; S/2/-; 1d10+1 E; Pen 0; Clip 25; Reload Full; Reliable), Ceremonial Sword (Melee; 1d10+4; Pen 0; Balanced, Mono.)

Gear: 2 Charge Packs for each weapon, Formal Dress Uniform, MIU Cybernetic, Photo-Visor, Re-Breather, Injector, Stimm (Two Doses), Auspex, Combi-Tool, Data-Slate, Micro-Bead.

†**As One:** A Princeps and his Moderatii train extensively, until each can anticipate the other's moves and intentions in almost any situation. This means that a Titan crew can achieve a level of coordination rarely seen in unmodified humans. A Moderatus may assist a member of his crew by either automatically allowing him to lower the Difficulty of a Skill Test by one step, or, rolling as normal to lower the Difficulty by two steps. The normal limits on assisting another individual still apply. This ability may be used a number of times equal to the character's Intelligence Bonus.

††**Loyalty Above All:** The Redactus Moderatii of Legio Venator have a sworn duty to protect and serve their Princes, up to and including sacrificing their own life for his safety. As a reaction, a Moderatus may move a distance equal to his Half Move Action in order to place himself between the Princes and a successful attack. The Moderatus automatically takes any Damage that would have applied to the Princes as a consequence of this action, and the Princes reduces his own incoming Damage to zero.

SHIELD WARDEN

Shield Wardens are the elite guardians of Legio Venator, whose sole responsibility is the defence of their assigned Titan Engine from those who would do it harm from within. During combat, each warden neurally links himself to the Titan's hull sensoria and integrity actuators. Here he remains, actively monitoring the hull's integrity and ready to quickly converge upon any enemy incursion like the auto-immune cells of some great beast. All wield deadly equipment specifically suited to the confined spaces of a Titan's interior, and are physically augmented using vat grown and synthetic muscle fibres. Their great shield's rigid design makes use of the same material as a Titan's outer hull, and each is equipped with magnetic punch-seals and pistons to create makeshift barricades and temporary hull repairs. However, their most notable feature is the Internal Injector Mass, a specialised implant within the Shield Warden that uses stimulants and other chemicals to turn this skilled soldier into an enraged bomb when close to death, yet leave the Titan's precious interior undamaged.



ADVENTURE SEEDS

- The Acolytes' Inquisitor has learned of a plot to take the life of three influential members of Legio Venator, which could prove a devastating blow to the Titan Legion, and seriously compromise its morale and combat capabilities. The Acolytes are tasked with discovering who or what is behind this plot and stopping it from occurring. However, there is suspicion that the murderers have enlisted the aid of a traitor within the Legio's venerable ranks, and the Acolytes must tread carefully lest they arouse the Legion's ire.
- Within the walls of Perdition, a vessel of the Ruinous Powers seeks to undermine the strength of the Legio from within. The Principis Majoris fears that such an attempt, if realised, could result in the destruction or corruption of one or more of his valuable Titans and their crews. However, the cost of purging their massive training ground would be immeasurable. The Acolytes must navigate the twisted and shattered wasteland of Perdition, and discover the source of the unseen threat.
- A foul Chaos warband has emerged from the Warp and fallen upon Opus Macharius with sudden and insane fury, bringing with it hordes of Chaos troops and even members of the feared Chaos Titan Legions. Caught off-guard, the Legio is desperately scrambling to recall its forces from across the Sector, and has called upon anyone willing and able to aid them in this time of need. The Acolytes must make their way to the embattled forge world and tip the balance of this bitter conflict in the Imperium's favour. However, the Acolytes soon discover that the master of this warband has a secret agenda beyond simple destruction.

Shield Warden

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|-----------|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 42 | 45 | (8) 40 | 55 | 32 | 36 | 32 | 40 | 22 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 18

Skills: Awareness (Per), Ciphers (War Cant) (Int), Climb (S) +10, Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech) (Int) +10, Demolition (Int), Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus) (Int), Literacy (Int), Scrutiny (Per), Tech-Use (Int).

Talents: Bulging Biceps, Crushing Blow, Die Hard, Double Team, Fearless, Frenzy, Hardy, Jaded, Mighty Shot, True Grit.

Traits: A Good Death†, Dark Sight, Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (x2).

Armour: Custom Legio Flak Armour (All 5).

Weapons: Expulsus Flamer (Basic; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+5 E; Pen 3; Clip 20; Reload 2 Full; Flame) *or* Rend-Pattern Shotgun (Basic; 40m; -/2/4; 1d10+5 I; Pen 0; Clip 30; Reload 1 Full; Scatter, Tearing) with Mono-Blade Attachment (Melee; 1d5+10 R, Pen 0; Mono), Flechette Charges (Grenade; SBx3m; S/-/-; 1d10+6 X; Pen 0; Blast [3], Tearing), Shield (Melee; 1d5+10 I; Pen 0; Defensive, Primitive).

Gear: 2 Fuel Tanks (Worn on Back) *or* 3 Drum Magazines, Cerebral Plugs, Custom Fitting Legio Uniform, Photo-Visor, Recoil Gloves, Respirator Unit (Implant), Internal Injector Mass and Charge, Micro-Bead.

RYBOTH

"Amazing. On any other world, you couldn't get within a standard kilom of that thing. Here, no one's around to stop us."

—Last words of Gurborz the Junker
(corpse segments still being recovered)

In the Markayn Marches lies the ravaged planet of Ryboth. Once a vital forge world dedicated to the veneration of the Ommissiah, the planet is now a desolate, irradiated wasteland. Its doom came in the form of a deadly and destructive gamma ray burst, originating from the death of a nearby star. Ryboth's Fabricator, Legarius Hershtolt, was aware of the possibility of this event via the observations of his Lexmechanics and Logis Prophesiers. However, they calculated that the planet would suffer no noticeable effects from this spectacular event, and Hershtolt even decreed a grand logi-cant to supplicate the Ommissiah for his guidance in the matter.

Instead of missing Ryboth, as the analyses projected, the burst struck the planet with tremendous amounts of energy. Any individuals on the surface were instantly killed as the force of the burst peeled away layers of Ryboth's protective atmosphere, and the vulnerable planet below experienced planet-wide increases in radiation levels. The manufacturums, though offering limited protection due to their sheer size and structural composition, were insufficient to shield most of their populations. Casualties were extremely high, and in many places, total, as the survivors desperately sought shelter and protection from the calamity engulfing their planet. Ultimately, it was the heavy amount of airborne pollutants, resulting from the industries of the Adeptus Mechanicus, that saved the planet from complete devastation.

Following a cessation in communications with the thriving forge world, the Lathe-Covenant swiftly dispatched an expedition to assess the fate of Ryboth. When the Explorators arrived, they discovered dangerously high levels of radiation emanating from the planet's surface, as well as a dense field of orbital debris resulting from the destruction of Ryboth's orbital facilities. The leader of the expedition, Magos Explorer Toborias, eventually decided that the most efficient course of action was to wait and observe until conditions stabilised before beginning any reclamation efforts.

OUT OF THE ASHES

After over two centuries of isolation, the planet's surface radiation began to at last decrease, and members of the expedition finally descended upon the planet's surface. Once there, they found a world littered with the mummified corpses of those who had failed to reach the protection of the forges' now crumbling inner sanctums. Initially, it was thought that none survived the radioactive purge of the planet's inhabitants; however, the people of Ryboth proved more resilient than anyone anticipated.

Whether through luck or adaptation, a number of the planet's natives managed to survive the catastrophe, and even to rebuild parts of their shattered culture beneath the ravaged surface. The surveyors from the Explorer fleet simply designated them Rusteks. These hardy survivors continue to venerate the Ommissiah, and eagerly await the day he once again reclaims their world and moulds it anew



in his wisdom. Most have also continued the Mechanicus practice of eschewing their biological bodies in favour of mechanical upgrades, meaning that almost every individual has at least minor augmentations.

The surviving refugees were forced to scavenge what they needed to survive during Ryboth's centuries-long isolation. Luckily the planet's surface, though dangerous, was often accessible at night, while the intricate networks of maglev lines, warrens, and passageways beneath the planet's exterior provided shelter and passage during the deadly daylight hours. These tunnels are murky and perilous regions, where other, unknown denizens and creatures escaped the radioactive fires to gradually evolve and adapt to prey on the unwary. Many channels throughout Ryboth are large enough to accommodate massive transports and gigantic maglev engines, meaning that untold horrors of unnatural size frequently roam the darkness with impunity. Some subterranean areas have even developed entire ecosystems and individual climates, due to the unique nature of the forges above and the events following the calamity.

Many of the Priesthood of Mars managed to weather the apocalypse, and continue to wield power and influence amongst the remnants of the population. Some of these Tech-Priests seek to regain Ryboth's former splendour through reconstruction or strength of arms. Others have forsaken the planet's reclamation, seeing it as a waste of their time and an inescapable eventuality. These individuals turn their efforts towards more idiosyncratic pursuits, spending much of their time scouring the waste for whatever relics and lost pieces of Archeotech they can find.

THE RYBOTH SYSTEM

The Ryboth system is small, containing only three planets orbiting a dim yellow sun. These planets include the small barren rock of Ryboth and the gas giant MKZH-12, where the mining station Tranthos Gamma hangs suspended in low orbit. Though Ryboth is no longer the economic juggernaut it once was, the system still boasts many intriguing features.

When the Great Storm hit, Ryboth's many orbital docks and geosynchronous defence platforms were caught completely unprepared. After the failure of their void shields, cataclysmic system failure quickly followed and extinguished all known life in orbit. The result is an expanse of orbital debris that poses a grave hazard to anyone trying to land on the planet's surface. Worse still, the innumerable hulks and floating wreckage provide an ideal haven for piratical raiders and exiles, who frequently prey on any ship foolish enough to venture into the region without heavily armed escort.

A small picket force of the Adeptus Mechanicus fleet once routinely patrolled Ryboth's system and other nearby Lathe holdings. While engaging their Warp drives for a brief jump, the energy of the gamma ray burst swept through the void and struck the fleet. The ships immediately disappeared into the Warp, and all contact with the ship's crews was lost. However, rumours of sightings and strange occurrences lead many to believe that, though lost to the Warp, the crew did not all perish.

After the cataclysm of Ryboth, all contact with mining station Tranthos Gamma ceased until the arrival of the Explorator expedition. Though the station appeared to have suffered no significant damage from the event, the crew was nowhere to be found. Mining operations eventually resumed, though the current inhabitants must often endure long periods of isolation as gases are shipped to nearby forge worlds for refinement and processing. Tales of misfortune, crews going mad, disappearances, recurrent freak accidents, and other, more sinister occurrences are rife and keep the overseers busy within the facility. However, despite these reports, the station remains operational, and a vital holding for the Lathes.

The use of servitors also survived the forge world's destruction. Following the cataclysm, the inhabitants managed to salvage and repair many constructs, as well as acquire a few new ones from off-world sources. Others are the product of semi-operational servitor maintenance and construction bays that continue to function due to the efforts of surviving Artisans. These creations are crude when compared to those of other Mechanicus holdings, their robust designs combining salvaged and refurbished implants and simple neurological modifications. Regardless of their origin, these unthinking workers can be found in every settlement, and are as vital to Ryboth's inhabitants as those of other forge worlds.

Unfortunately, there are those inhabitants who feel that cooperation holds little value on a world such as Ryboth. Such individuals readily kill and raid other survivors in order to obtain valuable resources or unearthen treasures. Many lone members of the Adeptus Mechanicus have also begun to descend on the planet and ruthlessly scavenge any useful technologies they can from its ruins. Though the risks of these endeavours are often great, the rewards can be greater still.

EMPIRES OF RUIN

Two of the most well-known surviving Magos on Ryboth are Magos Vesperimus, former Master of Foundry MFS1249 and keeper of six of the Twenty Seven Rites of Initialisation, and Magos Gresix, the Lord of a Thousand Voices. These Magos have managed to acquire and maintain power bases within the ruins of the forge world, and both wield great influence over the devastated planet.

Magos Vesperimus has bent all his efforts towards uniting the scattered survivors of Ryboth beneath the proper rule of Mars. He is a staunch Magos Fidelis, and views the destruction of Ryboth as vindication of his beliefs that the Lathe Worlds have strayed from the true path. He attracts many followers and his augmented forces are a crucial factor in the reclamation of the lost world. Vesperimus has even managed to restore a fraction of his foundry, and subjects once again toil to forge weapons of war beneath his cold and calculating guidance.

Magos Gresix's pursuits and ambitions are far less explicit than those of Vesperimus, and he seems to care little for the ultimate fate of Ryboth. His domain, deep beneath the bowels of the massive Manufactorums of Forge Secundus, is unique in functioning almost exclusively with servitor labour. Those rare Rusteks encountered beneath this hive are unusually reluctant to speak to outsiders, and are careful to avoid being seen conversing in public.

Magos Gresix himself is never seen, choosing instead to speak through his servitors, which have a curious manner of echoing each other when conducting business transactions for additional parts or subjects. No one is quite sure what Magos Gresix does deep in his dark lair, though it is clear that he trusts none save those slaved to his will. Whatever his plans, all who dwell near Magos Gresix live in perpetual fear of becoming unwitting participants in his designs.

Of Hershtolt himself, there are few details following the calamity. Before the burst hit, Forge Primoris automatically locked down, while every defence system immediately activated and brutally massacred the trapped menials and Tech-Priests alike. Since then, no one has been able to penetrate the defences of the forge to ascertain the fate of the Fabricator. The Lathe-Covenant cannot name a new Fabricator, as to do so for any reason other than death or heresy requires considerable many years of debate and decision-tree analysis. Explorator Toborias remains obsessed with gaining access to Forge Primoris, and is rumoured to trade handsomely for information regarding its design and security protocols.

EXPUNGED

When the Great Storm struck the planet, many of the existing Ryboth-pattern servitors escaped direct exposure, and only suffered radiation damage to the task programming in their circuit-engrams. These mindless menials often had their programming partially erased or corrupted, leaving them with many incomplete sub-routines and protocols, but also reconfiguring many of their neurologic-patterns into heuristic directives their creators never envisioned. This fractured cognitive state left many unable to cope with the hostile environment they now inhabit. Those who did not perish now wander the wastes. Some mindlessly continue their task, but others roam the landscape seeking basic guidelines for existence, something they can neither identify nor recognise, and that would surely horrify the Mechanicum.

Expunged

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 35 | — | 60 | 40 | 28 | 10 | 20 | 40 | — |

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 15

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10.

Talents: Berserk Charge, Crushing Blow, Fearless, Heightened Senses (Vision).

Traits: Dark Sight, Fragmented Programming†, Machine (4), Mechanicus Implants, Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (x2).

Armour: Machine (4 All).

Weapons: Integrated Servo Fist (Melee; 1d10+6 I; Pen 6), Integrated Chain Blade (Melee; 1d5+9 R; Pen 2; Tearing), or Breacher (Melee; 1d10+11 R; Pen 4; Tearing).

Gear: Internal micro-bead (Damaged).

†**Fragmented Programming:** Whenever an Expunged is encountered, the GM may either roll a d10 and consult the list below, or select an appropriate cognitive state for the servitor.

- **01–02 Preoccupied:** The Expunged is fixated on performing a routine task and stops at nothing to accomplish it. This task may include such things as: stacking boxes, walking forward, endlessly banging on a door, or any other simple and/or nonsensical task. If the servitor is obstructed from performing his task, he gains the Frenzy Talent until either the impediment is removed or he is destroyed.
- **03–04 Helpful:** The Expunged has a damaged authority parameter and task-codes, making it automatically attempt to aid the first living thing it comes across, in accordance with the capabilities of its specific pattern. The servitor binds itself to the first Acolyte who interacts with it, obeying only his commands and acting against anyone who would harm that character.
- **05–06 Confused:** The servitor has lost its self-identification subroutines, meaning it no longer knows its own original load out or capabilities. Instead, the servitor's damaged cogitators have attempted to reconstruct its subroutines, and so while it acts as if it was competent to perform assigned duties, it actually is not. This deficiency might not be noticed for some time, depending on the nature of its assignment.

- **07–09 Murderous:** The directives are so twisted that the servitor sees all non-servitors as threats to his nonexistent masters, relentlessly attacking his victims on sight. The Expunged gains the Frenzy Talent and Charges any living creature without the Machine Trait he sees, and continues to attack until he loses sight of his opponent(s).
- **10 Questing:** The servitor's programming has been deleted or was never fully implanted, and its mind is a "Blank Slate" that it is attempting to fill. This servitor disturbingly behaves in a child-like manner, and aids the Acolytes if they help it (such as mending its wounds or repairing faulty augmetics), but defends itself if attacked in any way (including attempts at reprogramming).

RUSTEKS

Rusteks are the descendants of Ryboth's menials who managed to survive the "Reforging" and the cruel barren wasteland that resulted. Scavenging crude or recycled bionic implants from across the wastes, these hardy remnants maintain their faith in the Omnissiah as they eke out a squalid existence amidst the ruins of the once great foundries. They hold cortex implants in especially high regard as connections to the knowledge of the distant past, and many are passed down from generation to generation within family groups. This practice often has unintended side-effects, however, as some implants have rather undesirable legacies.

Rustek

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 20 | 20 | 40 | 40 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 25 | 20 |

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 10

Skills: Awareness (Per), Carouse (T), Common Lore (Machine Cult) (Int), Common Lore (Tech) (Int), Search (Per), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int).

Talents: Hardy, Resistance (Radiation).

Armour: None.

Weapons: Manipulator Claw (Melee; 1d5+5 I; Pen 0), Poor Quality Stub Revolver (Pistol; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip 6; Reload 2 Full).

Gear: 12 Stub bullets, Ragged Robes, Salvaged Parts.

Hand-Me-Downs: Many of the salvaged cerebral implants frequently endure mistreatment, traumatic deaths, and other damaging events. Whenever Testing to improve a Rustek's Disposition, there is a 25% chance that his Cerebral Implant instead malfunctions or projects a dormant personality. When this happens, the GM should randomly determine a new Base Disposition and adjust it accordingly, using the rules on page 230 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook.





THE TARNISHED

The Tarnished are raiders and murderers who use their skills and knowledge of technology to further their own personal gain. Though they still worship the Omnissiah, these individuals beseech him for wealth and destruction instead of knowledge. They view the Omnissiah as a granter of power and fortune, whose divine will manifests in the destructive power of their weapons and the performance of their equipment. These ruthless degenerates frequently undergo rudimentary and unorthodox augmentations, using salvaged cybernetics and jury-rigged components in order to enhance their combat effectiveness. They believe such acts allow them to directly channel the Machine God's favour. These barbaric marauders respect only strength and violence, with only the greatest warriors among them attaining positions of power.

Tarnished Raider



| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 22 | 24 | 38 | 42 | 32 | 45 | 38 | 4I | 22 |

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 13

Skills: Awareness (Per), Carouse (T), Common Lore (Tech) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Drive (Ground Vehicle) (Ag) +10, Gamble (Int), Intimidate (S), Search (Per), Survival (Int) +10, Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Tech-use (Int) +10.

Talents: Hardy, Resistance (Radiation), Sprint, Unshakeable Faith.

Traits: Mechanicus Implants.

Armour: Composite Armour (Arms 2, Body 3, Legs 3).

Weapons: Manipulator Claw (Melee; 1d10+5 I; Pen 0), Servo-Claw (Melee; 1d10+10 I; Pen 4; Tearing, Unwieldy), or Integrated Arc-Welder (Melee; 1d10 +5 E; Pen 10; Unwieldy), Poor Quality Stub Automatic (Pistol; 30m; S/3/-; 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip 9; Reload Full; Unreliable), Laslock (Basic; 70m; S/-/- 1d10+4 E; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload Full; Unreliable) or Poor Quality Autogun (Basic; 90m; S/3/10 I; 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip 30; Reload Full; Unreliable).

Gear: 12 Stub Bullets, 10 Charge Packs, or 2 Autogun Clips; Salvaged Parts.

Omnissiah's Favour: The Tarnished believe that they are the Omnissiah's true servants on Ryboth, often hurling themselves into battle with reckless abandon and trusting in the will of the Machine God to grant them victory. During Combat, a Tarnished may make an **Ordinary (+10) Willpower Test** which, if successful, grants the character +10 to his next Attack roll. This ability may be used a number of times equal to the character's Willpower Bonus.



ADVENTURE SEEDS

- Somewhere, buried deep beneath the planet's surface, lies a powerful machine-spirit that appears to have gone insane, possibly due to mutated scrapcode-replications the Great Storm created. It has even begun to transmit its madness to other machines, and infect their spirits as well. Explorator Toborias has learned of this wayward spirit, and requested that the Acolytes silence it before it becomes one of the feared Abominable Intelligences.
- Before its destruction, the manufacturums of Forge Primoris were close to beginning production on an advanced prototype weapon. Unfortunately, the template for its construction was lost in the cataclysm that consumed Ryboth centuries ago. However, a rumour is circulating that the template has resurfaced in the wastes, and the Acolytes must recover this sacred artefact before it falls into the wrong hands.
- Mining station Tranthos Gamma is an unhallowed and unlucky post amongst the many holdings of the Lathe Worlds. While overseers are quick to quash any insubordinate thoughts, the high number of accidents and strange occurrences amongst the station's dark corridors and endless mazes of maintenance ducts has become noticeable. The Acolytes are to make their way to Tranthos Gamma to investigate the matter, not knowing the mutated horrors that they will find lurking in the cold darkness.

SHEOL 17

"Me? I hope to never set foot upon that accursed rock again. It's all that damned scuttling. Every day, every minute, and deep down you just know they are watching you."

—Derjek Varn, Rating aboard the *Drusine Wanderer*

In a far-flung asteroid belt, orbiting a lonely star with no name, resides the infamous prison complex known as Sheol 17. A ferrous mass encompasses this foreboding, black spire, which uses a network of massive support struts and enormous fasteners to anchor its great bulk. A tangled maze of pipes and cables swathes the entire structure, and evokes images of a great spider nest in the boughs of a gnarled, black tree. Within this ominous web, hanging like bulbous egg sacs in the void, are clusters of Confinement Units, any of which houses up to a thousand recidivists and malefactors. From across the Sector and beyond they come, each a special prisoner of the Lathes, condemned for crimes against the Machine God, each with secrets that the Lathes demand be revealed. For them, there is no simple execution or Servitude—they must face Sheol 17 instead.

THE RITES OF INFORMATION EXTRACTION

Upon arrival, the Tech-Priests of Sheol 17 strip prisoners of any nonessential cybernetic implants and inter them in arcane life-support chambers known as Expurgation Bays. Here they remain in a chemically induced coma, while canted supplications to the Omnissiah and condemnations of those who violate his doctrines bombard their minds and cogitators.

The Expurgation Bays routinely interrupt this fitful slumber in order to probe the accused for any damning or useful information. To this end, in addition to life-support systems, each chamber contains an Explication Array. This device inflicts tortuous pain, discomfort, and despair on the helpless subject within, while the chamber's automated life support systems ensure that the prisoner is spared the mercy of death. The Archivids, spindly constructs that resemble the arachnids of ancient Terra, eagerly oversee the routine ministrations of these sinister implements. These servitors record all utterances, biological or cybernetic responses, and synaptic fluctuations in exhaustive detail on data scrolls that feed perpetually from their distended torsos.

The Explication Arrays are also capable of interfacing with any implanted cogitator systems and memory coils, ruthlessly stripping every bit of cognitive data from the subject's augmented cortex. Data-factorisers, code scrubbers, and other harvesting protocols thoroughly examine all inloaded data for virulent scrap code, corrupt memory files, and other detrimental information. If any security protocols and sub-routines within the Heretek's mind try to resist, logic-cants, cipher-shunts, and cognitive-fractors relentlessly disassemble them until no pre-programmed resistance remains. This process of forcefully retrieving data from an augmented brain is absolutely excruciating to the condemned, but the Archivids are unable to respond to such factors, only to record the data acquired.

Subjects who prove particularly resistant to the blessed mechanisms within the Expurgation Bays disappear into the spire itself, where they fall beneath the ministrations of the Magos Interrogus and his Excruciator Servitors. These macabre Tech-Priests excel at peeling away lies and extracting the truth



from the most unwilling of subjects. Meanwhile, the Excruciator Servitors continuously monitor the vital biological and synaptic functions of the unfortunate specimen, while applying even more agonising tools, chemicals, and inducements to his unyielding flesh. Together, these servants of the Omnissiah exploit every nerve, synapse, circuit, and servo within their victim's body to the greatest possible effect, bringing the accused to the very limits of sanity and sentience.

When the Archivids obtain a pre-set amount of data, they convey it to the Vault of Censure, at the deepest point beneath the spire, for partitioning, analysis, and archiving. This agonising process continues until every last byte of incriminating data from the condemned resides in the vault. Once certainty is achieved, the Cleansing Pits receive the prisoners and grant them their absolution: final death, or life as a servitor.

Sheol 17 hosts diligent coterie of Tech-Priests who continuously toil to create servitors for a myriad of functions. Endlessly they prod and cut, graft and splice, commonly using the condemned as unwilling test subjects for novel or more efficient servitor patterns. Such things constitute the final experiences of the Hereteks on Sheol 17, before their brain ceases to register such trivialities as conscious thought, and Sheol's rune of a cog within a cog is branded into their flesh. While the ranks of arachnoid Archivids and specialised Excruciator Servitors claim many recidivists on Sheol 17, a select few serve their penance as one of the infamous Murder-Servitors, who seek nothing more than to rend the flesh of their victims, and drag the shredded corpses back to their masters.

CAPTIVE SOULS

There are whispers of Expurgation Bays hidden within the deepest crevices of Sheol 17 that contain Heretekes who display blasphemous and unsanctioned psychic abilities. These cells supposedly harness technology of a forgotten age, and are said to resonate with the moans and cries of the souls within. Scattered accounts of these devices tell of unexplained power fluctuations, invisible forces hurling objects about, and sudden visions of death, destruction, and madness. Perhaps most disturbing of all are the descriptions, of the sickly glow surrounding the bays themselves and of fleeting impressions of tortured, screaming faces upon their metal shells.

ARCH-HERETEK

The Adeptus Mechanicus considers many paths of knowledge and discovery to be heretical in the eyes of the Omnissiah. To pursue such paths risks inviting the wrath of the Priesthood of Mars, and many worlds and systems have burned for the transgressions of a misguided few. However, there are those amongst the Lathe Worlds who have chosen to eschew these restrictions. These fallen members of the Mechanicum are known as Heretekes, and they pursue technology and knowledge without restraint, delving deep into studies of xenos technology, the Warp, and other forbidden topics. They are incredibly dangerous individuals whose heretical beliefs undermine the very foundations of the Adeptus Mechanicus. Many spend their final days imprisoned on Sheol 17, but some manage to escape, or even set up their own secluded lairs within the nearby asteroids where they plot to free more of their tech-brethren.



Arch-Heretek

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 42 | 45 | 48 | 45 | 30 | 50 | 35 | 40 | 32 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 15

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Charm (Fel), Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech) (Int) +10, Common Lore (Underworld) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Disguise (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Heresy, Adeptus Mechanicus, Any One) (Int), Intimidation (S), Literacy (Int), Scholastic Lore (Occult) (Int) +10, Scrutiny (Per), Secret Tongue (Tech) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic), Tech-Use (Int) +10.

Talents: Binary Chatter, Die Hard, Feedback Screech, Mighty Shot, Nerves of Steel, Paranoia, Resistance (Fear, Psychic Powers), Strong Minded, Technical Knock, Warped Logic†.

Traits: Mechanicus Implants.

Armour: Flak Robes (3 All).

Weapons: Hellpistol (Pistol; 35m; S/2/-; 1d10+3 I; Pen 3; Clip 20; Reload 2 Full), Mono-Blade (Melee; 1d5+4 R; Pen 0; Mono).

Gear: 3 Charge Packs, Cerebral Plugs, Data-Slate, MIU, Personal Auspex, Utility Mechadendrite with Mono-Blade Attachment plus any other suitable Implants.

† **Warped Logic:** Those who study the forbidden secrets of the universe often find their minds opened to new perspectives that inspire irrational and twisted logical threads and theories. A gifted few are even able to convey their ideas to others, sowing seeds of doubt and corruption in new and fertile ground. An Arch-Heretek may substitute his Intelligence Bonus in place of his Fellowship Bonus when using either Charm or Deceive to compel an individual to do something they would not otherwise be inclined to do. If the Test is successful, the target acquires 1d5 Corruption Points. This ability may be used a number of times equal to the Arch-Heretek's Intelligence Bonus.

SHEOL-PATTERN MURDER SERVITOR

Sheol 17 is just one of many facilities where those who have committed offences against the Omnissiah find absolution as one of the skull-masked killing machines known as Murder Servitors. The Sheol-Pattern, adapted for use within the confines of the remote prison complex, is unique in that it utilises a powerful solvent weapon, capable of stripping away organic matter without harming the station's many vital systems. Though some of these twisted fiends prowl other Mechanicus holdings, most remain on Sheol 17 to form a deadly line of defence against potential prison breaks and trespassers within the facility. Brandishing gleaming mono-talons and deadly Viscerator-limbs, they ceaselessly stalk their designated domains, relentlessly searching for any signs of life. After locating prey, they attack in a savage orgy of rending and slashing, sadistically reducing their quarry to bloody tatters.



Sheol-Pattern Murder Servitor

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|-----------|------------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 55 | 36 | (8) 42 | (10) 50 | 44 | 20 | 40 | 40 | — |

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Wounds: 14

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Climb (S) +20, Concealment (Ag) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Search (Per) +10, Silent Move (Ag) +20, Tracking (Int) +20.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Berserk Charge, Crippling Strike, Crushing Blow, Frenzy, Lightning Reflexes, Step Aside, Swift Attack, Two Weapon Wielder (Melee).

Traits: Brutal Charge, Dark Sight, Improved Natural Weapons, Machine (3), Multiple Arms, Unnatural Speed, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

Armour: Armour Plates and Machine Body (All 3).

Weapons: Mono-talons (Melee; 1d10+10 R; Pen 2; Razor Sharp), Viscerator-limb (Melee; 1d10+14 R; Pen 2; Tearing, Unbalanced), Bio-solvent Jet (Basic; 15m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 E; Pen 2; Clip 8; Reload 2 Full; Flame†, Toxic).

Gear: Micro-bead, Photo-visor.

† The weapon uses this Trait only for attack effect purposes, but does not set targets on Fire.

WEBS OF INTRIGUE

The Overseer of Sheol 17, Arch-Magos Aracdis Hasrix, is a shadowy figure within the Lathe Worlds hierarchy. For centuries, the reclusive keeper of this prison has dwelt within his spire, jealously guarding his position and the secrets of his inner sanctum. The Archivids throughout the facility are said to mirror his own unique modifications, the most prominent of which are the mechadendrites which sprout from his back and torso. These powerful cybernetics resemble the legs of some great insect, and are easily capable of conveying the Arch-Magos throughout his domain.

Hasrix is a very influential figure in Lathe World politics, with strong contacts in both the Lathe-Covenant and the Lords Dragon. Some suspect that his reach may even extend into the ranks of the Calixian Conclave itself, and rumours of the dreaded Black Ships hanging suspended in geostationary orbit near the spire are common. Whether or not Arch-Magos Hasrix stands to gain from these clandestine transactions remains to be seen. The Overseer of Sheol 17 continues his position and status, and any allegations that he takes too personal an interest in his mysterious vault or inquiries concerning his other questionable pursuits, have remained unproved.

ARCHIVID

Archivids are one of Hasrix's proudest designs. Each spindly creation is roughly one metre long, with a fleshy body, three pairs of articulated cybernetic legs, and trailing scrolls of data relating to their numerous charges. Archivids freely roam the station, quickly scaling the winding walls and ceilings of the station's irregular interior with ease. They seem to take a distinct pleasure in administering to their captive wards, tittering with excitement as they cluster around any active bays to record the results of their labours.

Archivid

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 25 | 32 | 40 | 40 | 30 | 10 | 36 | 30 | — |

Movement: 6/12/18/36

Wounds: 10

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Climb (S) +20, Dodge (Ag) +20, Lip Reading (Per) +10, Silent Move (Ag).

Talents: Electrical Succour, Hard Target, Swift Attack.

Traits: Dark Sight, Improved Natural Weapons, Machine (3), Quadruped (6 legs), Size (Scrawny).

Armour: Machine (3 All).

Weapons: Torso-Mounted Compact Webber (Exotic; 25m; S/-/-; Dam 0; Pen 0; Clip 10; Reload 2 Full; Blast [5], Snare), Servo-Fist (Melee; 1d10+4 I, Pen 2).

Gear: Cerebral Plugs, Auger Arrays, Internal Micro-Bead (to receive/relay instructions only), MIU, Ammo Hopper Equivalent to 10 clips of Webber Ammo, Scrolls, Implanted Auto-quills.

EXCRUCIATOR SERVITOR

These specialised constructs serve as aides to the dreaded Magos Interrogus of Sheol 17. Each Excruciator Servitor is able to monitor prisoner vital signs, as well as assist in any necessary triage. These automatons also wield fiendish modifications called Excruciator Arrays, ghastly devices capable of inflicting all manner of pain and torture on their victims. Tirelessly, they serve the Magos Interrogus in their grisly work, heedless to cries of pain and pleas for mercy.



Excruciator Servitor

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 25 | — | 40 | 50 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 30 | — |

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 10

Skills: Interrogation (S) +20, Medicae (Int) +20.

Talents: Master Chirurgeon.

Traits: Improved Natural Weapons, Machine (4).

Armour: Machine (4 All).

Weapons: Excruciatu Array† (Melee; 1d5+8 R; Pen 2; Special, Tearing, Toxic).

Gear: Internal Micro-Bead (to receive/relay instructions only).

†**Excruciatu Array:** This specialised implant includes a host of horrific interrogation tools, all grafted directly onto the servitor's arms. Normally applied with surgical precision to a victim's unwilling flesh, these tools can also be used as debilitating weapons should the need arise. When using an Excruciatu Array in combat, any Wound that deals at least one point of Damage, after taking into account Armour and Toughness Bonuses, causes the target to suffer Blood Loss.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- The Conclave has learned of a possible attempt to rescue a known heretek from the prison of Sheol 17. There is also reason to believe that recidivist agents hidden within the facility are responsible, and this dangerous radical will undoubtedly aid them in their diabolical ends. The Acolytes must infiltrate the prison without alerting the unknown traitors, and bring the conspirators to justice.
- A new prisoner has just arrived on Sheol 17 for processing. However, the Calixian Conclave wants the prisoner as part of their own investigation, and it is up to the Acolytes to retrieve him. Perhaps he is actually a double agent, or he has information that the Inquisition doesn't want to disappear into the vault. Unfortunately for the Acolytes, the Lords Dragon look unfavourably on any outside interference in their affairs.
- The Inquisitor has intercepted a secret transmission from Sheol 17, indicating a mass escape. All attempts to raise the Arch-Magos have failed, and no Lathe World forces are close enough to assist. The Inquisitor has ordered the Acolytes to make for Sheol 17 and prevent the dangerous radicals within from escaping. However, the Acolytes soon discover that the events on Sheol 17 have farther reaching consequences than they could possibly imagine.

THE VOCA CONSENSIO

"We had been on the front lines for nearly sixty days, and I just wanted to sleep. If you are caught missing a morale concert it is ten lashes and days in the hole, though. By the end of it, I was ready to head back to the line and take the fight to those heretical scum. None of us can wait for the next one. The songs still ring in my mind..."

—Guardsman Gilbert Vires, along the Kuluth battlefronts

Any good leader knows that when handling a crisis, morale can make or break a group. Whether trying to make manufactorum goals so the planet can pay its Imperial tithe, or waging a pitched battle against the forces of Chaos itself, even the Tech-Priests of the Adeptus Mechanicus realise that for those still weak with flesh, morale is often just as important as their equipment or battle stratagems. The toils of such undertakings can be psychologically draining for those not blessed with True Knowledge, and even the best of these men can find themselves failing in their duty. During these times, a good leader looks to improve morale so that their goals can be reached, even though such weakness might appear anathema to proper Mechanicus behaviour. Sometimes this can mean time for recuperate, other times it can be offering more rewards to those who survive, or even simple, crude punishment until spirits achieve proper levels of enthusiasm. Much thought went into this process amongst the Tech-Priests of Calixis, in order to improve the efficiency of those without proper emotional control augmentation. Whilst others in the Sector might rely on unreliable Adeptus Ministorum sermons, the impassioned speeches of planetary Governors, or the threats of Commissars, the Tech-Priests turned to more pure methods.

While other methods rely on faith to improve morale, the Cult Mechanicus instead rely on technology and new melodious hymns to the Ommissiah. Many within the Mechanicus are not yet completely unfeeling and even the most enhanced Fabricator may appreciate the mathematical precision of instrument and voice combined in song. So the Adeptus Mechanicus, in order to raise morale in the Sector, have created a travelling choir to visit worlds across the Sector.

The *Voca Consensio* is both the vessel and the huge but portable musical device, a choir and orchestra that consists of one hundred and fifty servitors, one hundred who have been modified to be instruments, and fifty who have been altered to have perfect singing voices. These servants of the Ommissiah have been overhauled and calibrated to make the best possible performers in the Sector. Vocal servitors have had their larynx and vocal cords replaced with the best cybernetics available, while their lips, tongues, and palates have been augmented with enhanced and refined vat grown musculature. Their gilded skins shimmer with metallic oils, reflecting on cranial masses of artificial follicles that sway in time with the songs. Over one hundred thousand different pieces of music, Imperial Marches, hymns, cants, and odes have been laid into the servitors' minds via cortex implants. Instrumentalists have had their reconstructed instruments implanted and their bodies redesigned, with Manipulator Mechadendrites and cybernetic respiratory systems added to allow them to play with mathematical precision. Flocks of vat-cherubs also dance in the air, their acoustically refractive bodies and wings moving to maximise each harmony. The encompassing walls are layered with endless rows of statuary and ornamentation, from mythic



gargoyles to icons of the Angevin Crusade, all echoing with sub-sonic themes. The arc-candelabras and floating lumens pulse and flicker their electric flames with each verse, strengthening song with light. When silent, this cathedral to song still makes for a wondrous panorama that most would believe not possible for the Cult Mechanicus to conceive, let alone produce. Even those opposed to the lack of unaugmented humans within the process to allow for "true depth of feeling" must admit that he result is perfection in all measurable aspects.

The *Voca Consensio* was once part of a large Explorator fleet used to find new forge worlds. Now the Mechanicus uses this ancient vessel in a most profound but unusual way. To keep these amazing gifts to the Machine God in top shape, a host of Enginseers and logisticians are kept on board, not only to maintain the ship but also to keep its glorious melodium performing at maximum efficiency. Few realise that this programme is measured in more than mere morale improvement.

The process of altering servitors to perform such tasks is, of itself, a tremendous endeavour, but there are stories heard long after the planets have been visited that seem to indicate the *Voca Consensio* is something more. The idea of using subliminal conditioning is nothing new, and these are readily detectable in the glorious songs it produces. These stories, though, speak of using the *Voca Consensio* not to add glory to the Emperor, but to turn Mankind to the whims and desires of the Cult Mechanicus. There are rumours of deeply hidden sub-harmonic datastreams embedded within choral beatitudes, algorithmic engravings tied to certain repetitive melodies, and even hypno-gestures

DETECTING AND RESISTING THE CHOIR'S CALL

To attempt to detect the hidden programming within a choir broadcast, an Acolyte must first pass a **Hard (-20) Perception Test**, adding +10 to their roll if they have the Paranoia Talent. If successful (and the GM determines that there is indeed a subliminal message), then the character can make a **Very Hard (-30) Willpower Test** to resist the message, adding +10 for each Degree of Success on their Perception Test. Should the GM have created multiple instructions within the choir's song, each Degree of Success from the Willpower Test gives the character the ability to resist one such instruction (minimum of one).

attached to the swaying of the performing servitors, that turn the choir and orchestra into an enslavement tool for the Machine God. No firm proof has come to light, though many still investigate both the ship and its captain, a Tech-Priest once disgraced, but now ascendant, named Lexel Cantus.

FABRICATOR MAGOS LEXEL CANTUS, CAPTAIN OF THE VOCA CONSENSIO

Magos Cantus hails from Lathe-Het, and, from early on, his career focused on research in cybernetic augmentation and programming. His rise through the ranks was suddenly stalled, and rumours began to circulate that he was using forbidden xenos technologies in his work. These rumours, whether true or not, quickly led to Cantus being ostracised and exiled from the Lathes. Supposedly, Cantus came close to being branded as a heretek, but suspicious ties to those within the Covenants spared him from such a fate. He barely managed to obtain passage on an outgoing vessel, limping from the system in a sad, near derelict craft, barely able to break orbit, let alone go into Warp.

Cantus was nothing if not driven, though, and within five years the Magos had not only rebuilt the *Voca Consensio* back to its original specifications, he had also upgraded it with enhanced auspex arrays, more efficient plasma conduits for its engines, and other experimental modifications that bordered on blasphemy. It is said that while Cantus was improving its Astropathic Imaginarium, the Fabricator of the Lathes had his great moment of awakening, and saw the potential for a group of voices to bring the true light of the Ommissiah to the Sector, as well as more practical pursuits. And so the fallen Tech-Priest was recalled to duty.

Now Cantus leads an entire battalion of Tech-Priests in the operation and upkeep of the *Voca Consensio*, both the craft and the choir. Their hidden work ensures that wherever it goes, the glory of the Ommissiah rises to new heights, and throngs flock to join the Machine Cult. Those who work with Cantus find him to be singularly obsessed, working only to bring his choir to as many souls as possible within the Sector. There are some who think this may be the way that Cantus can find his way back to his former status within the Lathes. There are others, however, that whisper something much darker. They believe that Cantus is not just working to come back to the fold of the Lathes, he is attempting to become High Fabricator. His rise in prominence has not gone unnoticed, and those still remembering his earlier

heresies claim that he is using the *Voca Consensio* to bring the masses under his sway, and have them march on Castellar and his Brazen Guard. Their minds held under even deeper layers of hypno-programming, these weak sheep stay enthralled to Cantus' song until the time is right for rebellion. Whispers are gathering across the Lathes that to listen to the *Voca Consensio* is to lose one's very mind and soul, not to the Ommissiah, but to Cantus. The target of these accusations disputes it all, blaming it on envious lesser beings, and, so far, no real evidence has come out to dissuade the rulers of the Lathes from continuing this highly successful programme.



Fabricator Magos Lexel Cantus

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|-------------------|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 35 | 30 | ⁽⁸⁾ 28 | 45 | 32 | 48 | 44 | 52 | 29 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 15

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel), Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Archeotech, Adeptus Mechanicus, Heresy, Xenos) (Int) +10, Literacy (Int), Logic (Int) +10, Medicae (Int), Search (Per), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic), Tech Use (Int) +10.

Talents: Autosanguine, Binary Chatter, Chem Geld, Concealed Cavity, Die Hard, Electrical Succor, Electro Graft Use, Energy Cache, Foresight, Independent Targeting, Logis Implant, Mechadendrite Use, Prosanguine, Resistance (Fear, Psychic Powers), Rite of Fear, Sound Constitution, Total Recall.

Armour: Carapace Armour (5 All).

Weapons: Laspistol (30m; S/-/-; 1d10+2E; Pen 0; Reliable), Mechanicus Power Axe (Melee; 1d10+5E; Pen 6; Power Field).

Gear: Mechanicus robes (Good Quality Clothing), bionic arm, auger arrays, Good Quality cybernetic eyes, Optical and Utility Mechadendrites.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- The planet of Kuluth has been cloaked in war for over five years, but someone or something is wreaking havoc with the operational schedules of a particularly important war engine. Whilst investigating, they discover the *Voca Consensio* in orbit, performing concerts across safe areas of the front. Will they find that it is there to aid in motivating the troops and workers, or is it part of some more sinister purpose in the war?
- Investigations on a forge world indicate multiple servitor failures, many leading to riotous and deadly failures in their behavioural programming. The only common denominator seems to be that their systems were upgraded using possibly illegal and unsanctified engram-patterns, copied from a visiting Mechanicus vessel that offloaded several failed servitors for new, fresh units.
- The *Voca Consensio* itself can provide transport for the Acolytes to a variety of worlds across the Sector, its possibly darker and hidden purposes perhaps a mere hint until much later, after the Acolytes have become accustomed to travelling with Cantus and his choir for many voyages.



THE LIGHT OF REASON

GM'S BRIEF

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COMETARY
FRAGMENT Ø-777

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INTO THE DARK

•

MACHINA INFERNUS

•

WHAT LIES BEYOND

•

NPCs AND
ANTAGONISTS

CHAPTER IV: THE LIGHT OF REASON

"The Aquila, inverted. The Navigator, bound by the Machine. The Acolyte ascendant, his path marked by shadow and death. The tarot is clear on all these things, but there is more... yes, I see it... and it sees me! The black light shall shine in the outer void, lest the seal can be closed 'ere it is breached..."

—Reading of the Emperor's Tarot, three days ago

Those who serve the Omnissiah are dedicated to uncovering and utilising the wisdom of the ancients through pursuing the Quest for Knowledge. A vast body of law and precedent imposes all manner of dire restraints upon those who seek to expand the frontiers of Mankind's knowledge, however, lest they repeat the doom that befell the humanity during the all but forgotten Age of Strife.

There are ever those for whom the lure of forbidden knowledge is too strong to resist. In stripping themselves of mind, body, and soul of the biological, some Tech-Priests remove themselves from the lure of the Warp in order to prevent such disasters, or so they hope. In truth, even the machine can be polluted with the essence of Chaos. There are countless factions and sects within the Adeptus Mechanicus that have not strayed so far into heresy as to openly proclaim the worship of the Ruinous Powers, yet to an outsider might appear just a step away from doing so. Many are fuelled by the raw thirst for knowledge that animates all true servants of the Omnissiah, while others have allowed hubris or greed to be their master. For a few, the excision of biological matter does nothing to lessen the taint of Chaos and instead hastens its corruption, for as the mortal self is cut away, there remains no immortal soul to rail against the insidious intrusion of the Warp.

Deep within the cometary cloud of the Lathes System, one such group labours to bring its heretical pursuits to fruition. An extreme sub-sect of the Brotherhood of Steel has, for decades, sought one thing—the ability to breach the Warp and to draw upon its limitless depths without the use of psychic powers wielded by a weak, biological mind. To the Brotherhood, such a thing would make all flesh obsolete, and allow the machine to ascend to its true place as master of humanity. Vessels could cross the Warp without the steersmen of the Navis Nobilitate. Thoughts could be transmitted across the trackless void without recourse to the Astropathic Choirs of the Adeptus Astra Telepathica. Perhaps the very thoughts of the teeming multitudes of humanity could be controlled, the mental capacity of trillions turned to a single cause. What awesome war machines might be constructed by those able to breach the wall between reality and the Warp, and wield the impossible powers dammed beyond?

With each scrap of their biological inheritance they cut away, the Brotherhood loses another chance to realise the horrible error they are making. In those whose bodies are all but metal and

silicon, almost nothing of the soul they were born with remains. Where any other mortal creature would either flee in terror or surrender itself entirely to the power of the Warp, the Brotherhood continues blithely on, unaware of the storm of Chaos that rages all about them. While Chaos might find little to anchor itself to in the soulless Brotherhood, the pursuits of the Brotherhood endanger Mankind far more than they can possibly imagine.

A hollowed-out comet in the outer reaches of the Lathes System hosts an empty heart bearing a device utterly inimical to nature—the Paradox Reactor. In ages past, Explorators discovered a machine remnant of an extinct xenos species encased in the rock and ice. Some claim the species that made the relic were the long-lost Yu'Vath, others that it was some other race entirely. For long centuries it was studied, before the Brotherhood claimed it. They have been slowly piecing it together, reconstructing something that, in all likelihood, was deliberately hidden, and are now approaching the final stages of their work.

The Brotherhood hopes that, when activated, this device will punch a hole right through the thin skein separating reality from the Warp, and allow them to channel its power as previously only a psyker could. The Brotherhood know that their device is likely to unleash such power that every scrap of biological matter in the entire system, if not the sub-sector, will be scoured to ash or dragged into the Warp when the Paradox Reactor device goes online, but that only confirms their belief that the flesh is weak and must be purged.

The countdown to the activation of the Paradox Reactor has begun, and doom stalks the Lathes. Should the Lathes fall, surely Calixis would not be long to follow.



GM'S BRIEF

The *Light of Reason* is a **DARK HERESY** adventure that pits the Acolytes against a powerful and extreme faction within the Adeptus Mechanicus. The Brotherhood of Steel has unearthed tainted technology, with which they hope to harness the raw potential of the Warp using only the power of the machine. Such things have been forbidden to Mankind since time immemorial, and undreamed of destruction lurks within the cometary cloud of the Lathes System.

The adventure explores many of the themes presented throughout this book. It throws into stark relief the teachings of the Cult Mechanicus and illustrates the perils that await Mankind should they be transgressed. The Acolytes find themselves confronted with the very worst kind of tech-heresy, and ultimately discover, as so many have before them, that all forms of blasphemy lead humanity to damnation, as Chaos consumes all.

Should they prove equal to the task, the Acolytes are presented with the opportunity to end the heresies of the Brotherhood of Steel. In so doing, they must face all manner of foes, from the dreadful servants of the Brotherhood itself to the fell denizens of the Warp unleashed as the Paradox Reactor is activated. Should they fail to stifle the Brotherhood's foul works, then the fate of the Lathes and the surrounding sub-sector may hang in the balance.

INTRODUCING THE ADVENTURE

The *Light of Reason* can be played as a one-off adventure, in which case the Player Characters need only know that they have been dispatched to investigate reports of unidentified energy spikes emanating from a point in space somewhere in the cometary cloud of the Lathes System. However, as most adventures are part of the ongoing narrative of a campaign, it pays to give the matter of how the Acolytes become involved in these events more thought. Below are a few possible ways of getting the Acolytes involved in the adventure.

INTRODUCTION 1: SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The Acolytes have been ordered by their Inquisitor to investigate suspicious psychic effects emanating from the outer reaches of the Lathes. The Adeptus Mechanicus are deeply unhappy with such Inquisitorial scrutiny, especially because no such readings are showing up on their own augurs.

INTRODUCTION 2: FRIEND OF A FRIEND

The Acolytes could become involved in the events of the adventure as part of a more complex chain of events. If the Game Master intends to use the Lathes and the Lathe Worlds as the setting for a number of adventures, then this adventure could serve as an introduction to their characters and themes. If they have made allies within the Adeptus Mechanicus, these individuals might approach the Acolytes and ask them to investigate suspicious goings-on in the system, perhaps hoping to distance themselves from what they calculate to be a catastrophic failure.

INTRODUCTION 3: HIDDEN HANDS

If one or more of the Acolytes are servants of the Adeptus Mechanicus, a great way to introduce the adventure would be for them to be contacted by a group of their brethren, asking their aide in what they know is likely to be a difficult affair involving a renegade faction within their order. How much the powers that be in the Lathes System actually know of what is going on in the outskirts of their realm should remain an open question, and one that can be followed up in any future adventures set there.



SYNOPSIS

The *Light of Reason* is divided into three main sections. Broadly speaking, these cover the Acolytes locating and infiltrating Cometary Fragment Ø-777, exploring it and discovering the Paradox Reactor, and finally halting (or at least surviving!) the culmination of the Brotherhood of Steel's heretical endeavour.

PART 1: INTO THE DARK

The Acolytes arrive by gun cutter in the outer fringes of the cometary cloud that surrounds the Lathes System, and must locate the Brotherhood of Steel's hidden facility. Having done so, they must attempt to gain entry however they decide it is best to do so. Canny Acolytes might choose to infiltrate the comet using stealth and guile, while those of a more duplicitous nature might attempt to deceive its Tech-Priests openly. Some might even attempt to force their way onto the comet, though such a course of action is beyond the skills of most Acolytes and more a task for the mighty Space Marines. Having found a way inside, Part 1 is concluded.

PART 2: MACHINA INFERNUS

Throughout Part 2, the Acolytes explore the comet's perilous depths and confront as many of its occupants as the Game Master deems necessary to keep the pressure on. There are plenty of locations to explore and numerous sights to witness. Part 2 comes to a conclusion when the Acolytes discover what the Brotherhood of Steel is attempting to achieve and determine to do something about it. Events, however, take a drastic turn as the countdown to the activation of the reactor reaches zero.

PART 3: WHAT LIES BEYOND

In Part 3, the Brotherhood of Steel activate the Paradox Reactor. The Acolytes might attempt to stop them, but soon the horrific truth is revealed, as the power of the Warp is unleashed and daemonic servants of Chaos invade the facility. Simply surviving this calamitous event is a challenge in itself, but can the Acolytes close the breach and avert a still-more awful disaster?

COMETARY FRAGMENT Ø-777

The location within which the Brotherhood of Steel is pursuing their blasphemous endeavour was once categorised in the annals of the Lathes System's astrographics registry as Cometary Fragment Ø-777. Soon after the first Explorator arrived though, it vanished from the registry, purged by a deep-core datakiller protocol. It was what the explorers discovered at the heart of the fragment that led to this extreme reaction, the consequences of which are even now becoming manifest.

Upon setting foot on the surface of the fragment, the explorers quickly determined that it was no natural object—it had been created deliberately. Following the winding honeycomb of tunnels that bore into the comet, the explorers eventually came upon a vast central chamber, with a massive shaft skewering the heart. Suspended in a null-gravity state at the very centre of the chamber was an arcane fragment of xenos technology. Though obviously ruined, the object pulsed with black light, and writhed with a hideous vitality that stretched their sanity to the breaking point. In an instant, the explorers turned upon one another. Despite having excised much of their emotional dependencies, some were consumed with the desire to own the thing for themselves, others with soul-wrenching terror at its sheer unnatural presence. The truth of what occurred in that dark-lit central chamber was never fully understood, but when a recovery mission was launched to investigate what had befallen the first group of explorers, only a handful of survivors were brought back to the Explorator vessel.

Subsequent investigations, carried out under the strictest of contact protocols, determined that the object in the comet must have been placed there deliberately as some form of quarantine. All knowledge of the discovery was purged from the Lathes' data-mills, and further investigation entrusted only to those of the highest authority. Further study indicated that the remnant had been placed there not to protect it, but to protect everything else from it. Debate escalated as to whether or not the object itself be investigated further, and if so, to what end?

Ordinarily, the matter might have been resolved through rational discourse, but this was not to be. One of the senior magos harboured sympathies for the Brotherhood of Steel. Seeing the xenos remnant as a means of furthering the sect's aims, the magos enacted a brutal coup. In a single night of remorseless fratricide, all those with knowledge of the comet were slain. By morn, Cometary Fragment Ø-777 was in the hands of the Brotherhood, and a new phase in its history had begun.

Throughout the centuries that followed, the sect undertook to determine exactly what the object represented. Exposure to the remnant drove many utterly insane, until it was found that the less biological matter a Tech-Priest had remaining in him, the lesser the effect. In time, those with little more than a scrap of grey matter remaining to betray their heritage came to dominate the research, only serving to confirm the Brotherhood's utter belief in the weakness of the flesh and the ascendancy of the machine.

THE YU'VATH THREAT

ROGUE TRADER players will recognise the Yu'Vath, an incredibly ancient and powerful xenos race now long dead only through long and devastating wars during the Angevin Crusade. Their relics and slave races still live on though, especially in the lawless Koronus Expanse, where they exist to tempt and destroy Explorers. GMs can find more about this deadly race in *THE KORONUS BESTIARY*, either to add more flavour to their possible presence in this adventure, or to use their constructs in other adventures.

Three centuries after the initial discovery of the comet, the Brotherhood of Steel made a breakthrough of sorts, and identified what they believed to be the species that had created the remnant. The realisation that the technology might have been created by the dreadful Warp-worshipping Yu'Vath, the vile xenos that the Angevin Crusade almost bled itself dry to defeat, was terrible indeed. Armed with this fearful knowledge, the Brotherhood ploughed onwards into realms of thought and theory long forbidden to the human race.

In time, the sect found that the remnant somehow interacted with the Warp itself. The Brotherhood's hidden masters saw in the fragment a means of realising their vision of a future wherein Mankind is shorn of all flesh. The consequences were truly shattering. If the Warp itself could be tapped, and psykers made obsolete, then the last obstacle to the ascendancy of the machine would be smashed asunder. If the Brotherhood of Steel could breach the Warp and tap its power at will, then literally anything was in their power.



DANGER!

The environment in which **The Light of Reason** is set is one of extreme and continuous danger. The interior of the comet has been hollowed out and had multitudes of untested machine-systems grafted into it. At its heart lies a blasphemous hybrid of human and xenos machinery, built to defy the laws of nature itself. Deep within the guts of the comet, creatures of mere flesh and bone must be constantly alert, for it was built to accommodate beings so digressed from the standard human template that they care nothing for the hazards represented by grinding gears, venting gas, searing radiation, and even shifting gravity.

The net result of all this is that the Acolytes should feel constantly on edge, as if at any moment a vast piston could engage and the walls of the tunnel they are walking through slam together to crush their bodies to a paste. The Game Master should remind the players of this lurking sense of very real threat at every opportunity, and from time to time bring it to the fore using one of the following hazards.

A good way to use these hazards is to have them triggered by other events. Should the Acolytes ever fail an Awareness Test, for example, a number of hazards equal to the number of the Degrees of Failure could be triggered. This represents the Player Characters becoming distracted by other events and not noticing one of the many dangers of the environment until it is (potentially) too late.

HAZARD 1: MECHANICAL PERILS

This is a general category covering a wide range of perils, including access hatches slamming shut as the Acolytes pass, floor and ceiling shifting, pistons slamming shut, and gears engaging. Each Player Character must pass a **Challenging (+0) Agility Test** to avoid the danger, but the Game Master should feel free to adjust this difficulty as desired for the area. Failure results in the character taking a 1d10 I Pen 0 hit. The GM should also consider the nature of the mechanical peril and whether its triggering closes off the path the Acolytes have taken, or cuts off some of the group from the rest.

HAZARD 2: AIR PRESSURE CHANGES

A sudden drop in air pressure deprives the Acolytes of breathable atmosphere. Perhaps the Acolytes open a portal, only to find a vacuum beyond it, and must seal the unintentional breach as quickly as possible before their own air supply vanishes. Agility or Perception Tests can both be used to avoid or provide warning of the danger; Suffocation Damage is described on page 210 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook.

HAZARD 3: GRAVITY FLUCTUATIONS

With the number and type of arcane machine systems inside the facility, it is little wonder its passageways and chambers are subject to all manner of esoteric fluctuations. One such fluctuation is in the gravity field, which can switch from normal to high, low, or even zero-gee without warning. These treacherous environments are presented on page 213 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook. Having been triggered, there is a 50% chance each minute or so of the gravity reverting to its original state. Should the Acolytes be floating at the time, this may incur Falling Damage as detailed on page 210 of the Core Rulebook.

HAZARD 4: RADIATION HAZARDS

The majority of the Brotherhood of Steel and their servants care little for the effects of radiation, their bodies all but stripped of flesh, and their essential machine components shielded from the harm it might otherwise wreak. Should such an effect be triggered by the Acolytes, they must pass a **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test** each Round they spend within the field, or have their Toughness permanently reduced by -1 for each Degree of Failure. Those affected in this manner may be treated for radiation poisoning after the adventure (at the Game Master's discretion), but must suffer the consequences for now.

HAZARD 5: LOOSE ELECTRICITY

Many walls and hallways host numerous mechanical components, from plasma conduits to vapour gushing ventilation grilles, which might be dangerously electrified. When triggered, the effect could range from a mild shock to a leaping arc of searing power. There are several ways of determining which Acolytes fall victim to the electrical charge. One way is to have it confined to a single object, such as a hatch or floor plate, and the first Acolyte to touch this suffers the effects. Another is to randomly determine how many and which Acolytes are electrocuted. Because the potential damage is so variable, each Player Character hit suffers a 2d10 E Pen 0 hit each Round they are in contact with the object, as does any character in physical contact with the affected Acolyte.

HAZARD 6: EXTREME TEMPERATURES

Whenever the Acolytes enter a new area, the GM should provide a brief indication of the temperature. When moving into an area where the temperature is especially high or low (or becomes even more extreme), the characters must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test**, or become Fatigued. This effect passes within ten minutes of moving into an area with normal conditions, but resting, taking appropriate drugs, and donning (or removing) heavy gear and clothing should allow the character to take the test again. Should all of the Player Characters lose consciousness in such circumstances, the GM can determine their fate; perhaps each waking up in a cell in the holding battery, the Excoriation Servitor moving in to begin its grizzly work.

THE PARADOX REACTOR

It would be many more centuries before the Brotherhood found a way to utilise the remnant of Yu'Vath technology, but when they finally did, their creation was awesome indeed. With the remnant at its core, the Brotherhood of Steel turned the entire cometary fragment into a massive breaching charge, with which they intended to punch through the thin barrier separating reality from the Warp. The remnant defied all natural laws in the canon of the Cult Mechanicus, and would power what the Brotherhood labelled the "Paradox Reactor." So anathemic to the laws of the universe was the remnant that its power could split reality itself asunder. That which should not be would come into being, and in so doing blast apart the fabric of the universe itself. The unbridled power of the Warp would create a font of undreamed of potentiality, and the Brotherhood of Steel would be its master.

As the Brotherhood's Tech-Priests worked tirelessly to construct the Paradox Reactor, the masters of the Brotherhood bent their energies to cold visions of conquest and domination. The first use to which they would put their font of dark power would be to usurp the Astronomican. Knowing that the energies unleashed by the Paradox Reactor would owe nothing to the laws of classical reality, they formulated a means of equipping their own servants to be able to discern its black beacon from anywhere in the galaxy. No longer would the Adeptus Mechanicus rely upon the Navis Nobilitate to guide its Warp vessels, and the Brotherhood's ascension to power over all of the entire Adeptus Mechanicus would be assured.

WITHIN THE COMET

Ø-777 is a honeycomb of winding tunnels, hollowed out by whoever, or whatever, had sought to hide the fragment of Yu'Vath technology from the galaxy. Over the centuries since it took ownership, the Brotherhood has massively augmented the interior, so that its tunnels are lined with all manner of machine devices from pulsing conduits to shrieking pistons. The Tech-Priests and their servitors have little difficulty traversing this machine hell, but those unused to such a hostile environment are likely to find it dangerous in the extreme. One thing that mortal Acolytes almost immediately perceive, and which is hidden from the Brotherhood of Steel because they have so little in the way of soul to sense it, is the all-pervading sense of dread that permeates the very stone. The closer one gets to the heart of the comet the more overpowering this impression becomes, until an intruder is forced to flee or prostrate himself before the Yu'Vath remnant.



PART I: INTO THE DARK

The **Light of Reason** begins with the Acolytes entering the Lathes System's cometary cloud aboard the *Lysithea*, a small but highly capable gun cutter that their master has made available to them. The vessel has only a small crew and is outfitted for speed and stealth rather than offensive action. The task of locating Cometary Fragment Ø-777 must fall primarily to the Acolytes.

There are several ways of opening the adventure, but a suitably engaging one is to have the Acolytes called to the vessel's bridge, as its captain announces that they have entered the region of space in which the comet is believed to be lurking. The pitch of the engines changes to a low hum as the vessel's systems are switched over to silent running, the captain looking up from his command terminal as the Acolytes step on to the cramped, dark bridge.

OBJECTIVES

Whichever means of introducing the adventure the Game Master uses, the Acolytes are likely to have more or less the same set of objectives. These have been communicated to the team before the mission began, and can be presented as a missive from the team's master. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

To my most trusted servants I bequeath the following orders, that they might serve our lord the God-Emperor and hold back the darkness but one more day.

Item the first. They shouldst locate the source of certain anomalous ætheric signals emanating from the cloud of comets that surround the Mechanicum's Lathes System.

Item the second. That should the source prove man-made, as it is my suspicion that it should, then they infiltrate it and discover who is responsible and what they mean to achieve.

Item the third. That if what the perpetrators mean to achieve is potentially dangerous, as it is all but certain to be, they shouldst stop it happening, regardless of risk.

LOCATING COMETARY FRAGMENT Ø-777

The Acolytes have been transported to the Lathes System by way of a Warp-capable vessel in service or allied to their master. Having boarded a smaller and far more stealthy gun cutter called the *Lysithea*, they have been inserted into the Lathes outer ranges, in order to locate the source of the anomalous signals detected on the edge of the system. The cutter has a small crew and is lightly armed; its strengths are its speed and its ability to go undetected. The ship is ordinarily used to pursue outcasts and enemies of the Holy Ordos, and its crew are all veterans in bringing such heretics to justice. When faced with determined defence, however, the cutter must withdraw and call in reinforcements. Once the Acolytes cross to Cometary Fragment Ø-777, the cutter moves off the location to await the outcome.

THE LYSITHEA

Hull: Highly modified, rapid patrol ship/gun cutter

Class: Zephyr

Dimensions: 498 metres long, 86 metres abeam.

Mass: 36,000 tonnes approx.

Accel: 46 gravities max sustainable acceleration

Crew Complement: 25 crew, 470 servitors.

The *Lysithea* is all but unrecognisable from her original form, having been subjected to an almost total rebuild. Her greatest asset is her unparalleled stealth capability, which has been utilised by her masters on numerous occasions, much to the detriment of the enemies of Mankind. Easily transported in larger vessels across the system, once dropped off on the outskirts of a system she excels at approaching nearby planets undetected.

While there is no reason the crew of the Acolyte's gun cutter could not be entrusted with the task of locating the comet, a far more satisfying course of action would be to allow the Player Characters a chance to do so. The captain has every reason to assume that the Acolytes know what they are looking for, so he defers to them in this matter unless they specifically order otherwise.

There are several ways the Acolytes might go about locating the source, and the Game Master should be open to any suggestions the players themselves might propose. The most obvious solution is to use the vessel's own augury arrays, but this should only be attempted by a Tech-Priest Player Character as botching it could lead to the Brotherhood of Steel becoming instantly aware of the approaching vessel. A Sanctioned Psyker could attempt to use his powers to locate the source, though this too has its risks (such as a psychic incursion caused through a failed attempt to manipulate the Warp). A variety of skills can be used, from Tech-Use in the case of the Tech-Priest, to Psyniscience in the case of any character with the appropriate psychic ability. It should take several attempts to complete the search, and there is a price to pay should an attempt go badly awry. The GM must determine the Difficulty, depending on the Test, who is taking it, and how it is to be used, but each should be at least **Difficult (-10)**. Whichever skill is used for each test, five such attempts must be passed before the location is narrowed down sufficiently that the vessel's captain may initiate a final approach. Each time a Test is failed, note the Degree of Failure and reference **Table 4-1: Failed Detection** to determine what, if any, consequences such a failure might entail. Of course, the players should not be made aware that they need to pass a test five times before they successfully locate their target. Game Masters should use the aforementioned table without the players knowing what they are up to and should use the opportunity to make the players sweat a little!



TABLE 4-1: FAILED DETECTION

| Degree of Failure | Consequence |
|-------------------|--|
| 1 | A faint trace is detected, but not one likely to yield any results. |
| 2 | The character detects something tangible, but upon investigation it does not coalesce into proof. Add one level of Difficulty to the next Test. |
| 3 | The Acolyte's botched attempts just make things worse. Add one level of Difficulty to all future attempts to use it. |
| 4 | The character inadvertently compromises the cutter's stealth. The Brotherhood of Steel's Vigilance Level (see Part 2 on page 136) is increased by one level as a result. |
| 5 or more | The character gives the cutter's presence away so badly that the Brotherhood of Steel becomes highly suspicious that an attack is about to be launched against them. The Vigilance Level is increased by two levels. |

APPROACHING THE TARGET

Having located the source and identified it as a cometary fragment, the Acolytes must decide how they intend to approach it. They might wish to do so stealthily with an unseen infiltration, or they might decide to launch some sort of diversion to divert attention from their approach. They might even attempt to approach openly, in which case they had better be ready with a plausible false identity, for the inhabitants are likely to shoot first and ask questions later. Lastly, they might attempt an all-out assault, though doing so would spell an early end to the adventure, and probably the Acolyte's careers.

Should the PCs decide (sensibly) to order the *Lysithea's* captain to approach the comet stealthily, then this can be handled without their direct involvement. The captain is a veteran of such operations, and this is the course of action he recommends, should the Acolytes ask him for the benefit of his experience. Running his vessel at minimum power and engaging stealth systems the like of which the Acolytes have probably never seen before, the vessel swings about into the comet's long tail, so as to approach in the dead zone of any augurs on the fragment. Matching trajectory with the comet, the cutter is able to approach to within a kilometre of it, the view ahead all but obscured by the dense vapour streaming off of it. At this point, the Acolytes can attempt to cross the gulf of space as described in the next section.

Should the Acolytes order the captain to engage in a method of approach less subtle than this, he strongly objects, but he is bound to the Inquisition, and the Acolytes are his seniors in this matter. Unless the PCs have a very convincing plan, the captain is unlikely to agree to an all-out assault, and if forced to, he refuses to commit to a course of action that would result in the destruction of his vessel. In short, the man is loyal and brave, but he is not stupid.

SPACE COMBAT

The issue of combat between the *Lysithea* and the defenders of Ø-777 is beyond the scope of both this adventure and the usual game of **DARK HERESY**. That being the case, the Game Master might have to improvise, should the players seek to use what few weapons the gun cutter has against the comet. The best course of action is to simply describe the damage caused by a few near hits, which cause shields to collapse and showers of sparks to erupt from command terminals. Faced with the prospect of losing the his ship, the captain withdraws, and the Acolytes must formulate another means of infiltrating the comet. Keep in mind, of course, that the defenders are now aware that an enemy is attempting to interfere with their plans, and while they do not delay the activation of the Paradox Reactor, they are more prepared for enemy action.

BOARDING

There are numerous ways a group of Acolytes might attempt to board the comet, the three most obvious of which are discussed here. In the event that the players come up with some other method, the Game Master should consider how plausible it sounds, and what effect it might have on the narrative as presented throughout the rest of the adventure. Anything too drastic is likely to make it difficult to conclude the adventure as presented, so Game Masters should consider what might ensue if the players are allowed to put their plan into action, and feel free to overrule it if needed. However, any such veto should be enacted "in character," using the vessel's captain or other NPCs to point out what might go wrong, or even act to block it if necessary. Below, three of the most obvious means of boarding Cometary Fragment Ø-777 are presented.

STEALTH

The most obvious means of getting on board is by doing so unseen. To achieve this, the Acolytes must don an armoured vacuum suit and make a guided space walk from their vessel to the comet, using the tail streaming from its lee side to approach in its augurs' blind spot. This approach masks the Acolytes' presence, for, in addition to the dust and vapour pouring from the fragment, a vast plume of gas given off by the numerous machine systems within the reactor is also present. In all likelihood the Acolytes have never attempted such a stunt before, and doing so should be a memorable event, if a dangerous one. Having "touched down" on the comet, the Acolytes can gain entry using one of the numerous access points scattered across its surface, and play can proceed to Part 2.

In order for a character to cross from the silent gun cutter to the distant comet, they must make a void walk. The accuracy of the walk is determined entirely by how well the character pushes off from the cutter, and because they cannot risk drawing attention to themselves, they may not make use of personal jets or the likes. Each character making the void walk must take a **Hard (-20) Strength Test** plus a **Very Hard (-30) Agility Test**. Success on both means that the character crosses the void safely and lands at the intended point. If either Test is failed, the

SPECIAL ISSUE VOID SUIT

The *Lysithea's* stores contain sufficient void suits for all of the Acolytes. These special issue items can sustain life for a little more than an hour before the compact power cells fade and must be recharged. The suit includes an internal vox-link, self-sealing repair nodes, a grapnel/clasp system with thirty metres of ultra strong line, plus a photo-visor. The suit provides 4 points of Armour to all locations, and thanks to its high quality manufacturing does not impose any penalties on the wearer's Skill Tests. It also includes a light impellor, which provides a Movement of 6 in zero gravity conditions. The suit's weight is 25 kg, should characters choose to keep it on once inside the comet, where normal gravity resumes.

character deviates, how badly determined by the total Degrees of Failure x50 metres, though they still land on the comet. Each void suit has only an hour's worth of oxygen in its tank, so the Acolytes do not have time to get waylaid locating one another should they each land in different places, and they may have to enter the comet individually and find one another once inside.

For each separate entry the characters make into the comet, there is a risk of the Vigilance Level being increased by one point (see page 136). Each entry used requires a **Hard (-20) Security Test**. If the Test is failed, entry is still gained, but the Vigilance Level is increased by one point.

DUPLICITY

Especially wily players might decide that the best way of gaining access to the station is to claim they have every right to be there and requesting (or demanding) permission to board. This approach can be very entertaining, and make for a fair bit of on-the-fly roleplaying. Unless the Acolytes have some highly dubious connections they are unlikely to convince the Brotherhood of Steel, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't try. Initial attempts should be made by vox as the ship approaches, and require three consecutive Opposed Skill Tests. There are a number of Skills the Acolytes might use, including Deceive, Blather, Charm and the like; and the Brotherhood character using his Willpower to oppose unless the GM determines otherwise. The Brotherhood is bereft of human emotions, and certain skills are less likely to succeed. Skills such as Charm and Blather require some degree of emotion or empathy for best effect, but Skills like Deceive, or, if used inventively, Logic do not and thus gains a +30 bonus when used. Success does not result in the Acolytes being accepted for who they claim to be, but should at least convince the sect not to blast them to atoms (yet).

If these three Opposed Tests are made, the Acolytes are allowed to board, but only via a shuttle sent to pick them up. From that point onwards, GMs should follow the Countdown to Calamity presented later.

Each time one of these Opposed Skill Test is failed, the Vigilance Level (see page 136) is increased by one point.



FORCE

The least desirable course of action is for the Acolytes to attempt to force their way on board. If the players insist on pursuing this approach, they are likely to meet far more opposition than they can possibly deal with, as the inhabitants mobilise their considerable resources to repel the invaders. Landing might not present too many difficulties, though multiple Sentry-Guns (see below) immediately fire at the Acolytes upon their arrival, likely forcing them to take cover. Gun Servitors (see page 340 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook) also emerge to deal with the intruders. Depending on how such a boarding attempt pans out, the Acolytes might be able to gain a foothold before the opposition can fully muster against them, but they are soon forced to flee into the labyrinthine tunnels that honeycomb the comet. From that point, on the GM can run the adventure as presented, but increase the chances of the Acolytes meeting serious and determined enemies; the Brotherhood is now actively hunting them down, and doubling the number of guards and patrols as they are presented later on. It should be noted, however, that even with enemies on board the Brotherhood is committed to activating the Paradox Reactor and does so regardless of any other concerns.

In this instance the Vigilance Level rule presented on page 136 is not used, as the Brotherhood of Steel go to full alert and stay that way. Any encounter with even the lowliest of the menials leads to violence, and even the normally placid mono-tasked servitors act against the Acolytes with violence.

OPTIONAL COMPLICATIONS

Whatever means of infiltrating the comet the Acolytes use, a number of complications can be introduced to make things more entertaining. Any number of these can be introduced at the appropriate moment to keep the Acolytes suitably tense, especially if the Player Characters are having things too easy.

COMPLICATION 1: SENTRY-GUNS

The pitted surface of the fragment is laced with access points, unidentifiable machine components, and numerous gas-belching vents. In amongst all of this, the Brotherhood of Steel has secreted a number of point defence Sentry-Guns to guard against intrusion. This complication can be introduced if and when the Acolytes attempt to move about on the surface of the comet, either during the initial infiltration, or should they end up doing so at any point later in the adventure. The comet's surface is littered with Ice Cover (AP 8; see page 199 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook).

Each Sentry-Gun is a Hadd-Pattern Tarantula armed with multi-lasers, and slaved to a rudimentary war spirit that automatically opens fire on the first moving object within 100 metres that enters an arc 90 degrees to its front facing, unless that target is transmitting the correct warding ciphers (faking these requires a **Difficult (-30) Tech-Use** or **Deceive Test**). The weapon fires with a Ballistic Skill of 20, and continues to fire until the detected target ceases movement for five seconds, at which case it switches to the next nearest target or powers down to standby state. Other rules for this weapon system can be found on pages 62 and 63.

COMPLICATION 2: ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

Much of the machinery covering the surface serves a vital purpose, and as such it must be properly maintained so as not to jeopardise the Paradox Reactor's imminent activation. While many of these external systems can be accessed from within the comet, some of them can only be properly serviced using a small, one-man tender equipped with a variety of servo-claws and other articulated systems. The service tender is crewed by a single Technomat, and while not equipped with any actual weapons, its numerous plasma welders, saws, cutters, and claws are likely to prove fatal to any victim it runs into during the course of its duties.

The tender's profile is given on page 142. Because its operator is not expecting trouble the Acolytes automatically gain the benefit of Surprise should they choose to ambush it. Once the tender becomes aware of the Acolytes' presence, it sounds the alarm (taking a Full Action to accomplish). The Vigilance Level is increased by one point (see page 136) for each Acolyte the tender's operator sees.



COMPLICATION 3: BUGS IN SPACE

Many planetbound make the mistake of assuming that the void is empty and lifeless, while the Voidborn know full well that space is, in actual fact, host to all manner of strange and often disturbing life forms. One such creature, known as the void-fluke within the Malfian Sub-sector, attaches itself to objects rich in iron ore and slowly breaks them down by way of its highly specialised digestive tract. These metre-long creatures infest asteroids and orbitals across the sub-sector, and while usually harmless, can be dangerous if encountered in large numbers, or when they are seeking a new food source. Right now, Ø-777 is infested with large numbers of void-flukes eager for meals.

This complication can be played on the Acolytes whenever they are on or near the surface, where the creatures might sense and seek out new sources of nutrition. Once attracted they latch onto the source; in a matter of minutes the creatures' lamprey-like mouths can bore quickly through most substances, their unique saliva breaking down the minerals. Anyone unfortunate enough to have a void-fluke attach itself to his space suit had better find an airlock very quickly indeed, for his life must surely be measured in minutes if he cannot.

The profile for the void-flukes is presented on page 142. Initially, the Acolytes face only a single specimen, but each Round they fail to slay the first, another quickly arrives. The main danger the vile creatures present lies in the risk of explosive decompression should their teeth penetrate a Player Character's void suit. Should an Acolyte suffer Damage from a void fluke, use the special rules for Vacuum Damage found on page 210 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**.



PART II: MACHINA INFERNUS

In Part 2 of the adventure, the Acolytes infiltrate the Brotherhood of Steel's hellish realm in order to determine exactly what heresies are being conducted within. Unaware of the intrusion, the renegade Tech-Priests continue the countdown towards activating the Paradox Reactor, with disaster drawing nearer with every passing second. It concludes as the countdown reaches zero, by which point the Player Characters should have discovered something of the awful truth of what is about to transpire.

LOCATIONS WITHIN THE COMET

The comet housing the Yu'Vath remnant is vast, and its interior is a warren of winding tunnels and chambers. The Brotherhood of Steel has built numerous additional tunnels and chambers (see page 144 for interior map), the most pertinent of which are described below. There are also numerous other tunnels and areas not shown, and should they consider it (and if the Game Master agrees) the Player Characters can use them to get from one location to another. This is extremely dangerous, however, as the likelihood of becoming horribly lost is great. If attempting to reach a specific location using the hidden corridors, a **Hard (-20) Navigation (Surface) Test** is required. If the Test is failed, the player ends up in a location chosen by the Game Master, with the Degrees of Failure determining how much distance or effort now separates them from their intended destination. The GM is also encouraged to portray these unused passages with sporadic lumen failures, crumbling ceilings, disquieting creaking sounds, and other things to show how unsafe these areas are.

Each location includes a brief description, plus details of what hazards or enemies the Acolytes might face whilst exploring it. In some cases the Acolytes are presented with an opportunity to discern something of the facility's true purpose, or even to influence the events of Part 3 in some manner.

MAIN HANGAR

The facility contains a small hangar bay able to accommodate three or four service vessels at a time. It currently houses one Arvus Lighter in a stand-by state, and a second that is undergoing routine maintenance.

Should the Acolytes need them, the first can be made ready within about a minute by passing a **Challenging (+0) Pilot (Military Craft) Test**, but only once its two crew have been silenced. The crew use the Heretek profile (see page 340 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**). The other Arvus is unattended, but its main command terminal has been partially disassembled. A suitably skilled character would need to spend around fifteen minutes inside to restore the Lighter to an operational state, requiring a successful **Difficult (-10) Tech-use Test**.

LATHES-PATTERN ARVUS LIGHTER

Hull: Utility shuttle

Class: Lathes sub-type XK-1112

Dimensions: 8.5 metres long, 8.2 metres wide

Crew: 1 pilot, 1 co-pilot/loadmaster.

Passenger Capacity: 12

The Arvus Lighter is a utility shuttle designed to transport personnel and goods from a planet to a ship in orbit, or between vessels in void-lock. It is slow, unwieldy, and unarmed, but very useful for transporting cargo.

STRATEGIUM

The Strategium is the Brotherhood's main command facility. It consists of a large auditorium-style space, the tiered main level lined with almost fifty servitors and low-level Tech-Priests attending hundreds of terminals. Pict-slates of varying sizes cover the walls, each displaying dizzying streams of machine code, graph, and pict-thief captures from all around the comet. Though only those suitably equipped can see it, the air itself is ablaze with yet more data, numerous interlocked tiers that are accessible only to those with the requisite clearance. Grating machine code blurts from overhead vox-horns, the atonal chatter conveying much more data than the spoken word is capable of with each burst.

Acolytes used to the domains of the Cult Mechanicus are likely to discern several things slightly amiss in the strategium, however. The air, normally heavy with cloying incense, smells stale and acidic, while a low, atonal buzz is just audible at the edges of hearing. The cyber-cherubs that haunt the vaulted ceilings appear more than a little feral, as if malnourished or diseased. Especially alert Tech-Priest PCs cannot help but note the stream of anomalous code intertwined with the regular machine language blurts. None of this information should require any Test to discern, and all should indicate to the Acolytes that things are not as they should be in a proper Mechanicus facility.

As the countdown to the activation of the Paradox Reactor draws closer, the staff increases, until by the height of the adventure every Tech-Priest not assigned specific duties elsewhere is present to witness the culmination of the Brotherhood's centuries-long endeavour, amounting to around two hundred individuals.

The Strategium also has roughly a dozen Arch-Hereteks (see page 119) as senior commanders. The main entrance is guarded on the outside by two Murder Servitors (see page 119), and more can be deployed at a single word from those within.

HAB ZONES

While they require little in the way of human comfort, most Tech-Priests still need a place to study, conduct routine maintenance, and occasionally to rest. This is true even of the Brotherhood of Steel, although their hab cells are spartan and utilitarian even by the standards of the Adeptus Mechanicus. The hab zones contain little of interest or comfort to the average Acolyte. Tech-Priest Player Characters might be able to locate all manner of useful supplies, however, and the complex warren of cells would certainly be a good place to eavesdrop on the occupants of Ø-777.

THE TAIN OF CHAOS

What the soul-shrived Brotherhood is blind to, the Acolytes might very well find overwhelmingly obvious. The simple fact is that the renegade Tech-Priests have been led astray by the machinations of the Ruinous Powers—instead of the Brotherhood masterminding the creation of a new font of power, the truth is that denizens of the Warp are using the deluded Tech-Priests to break through to the material universe. It is likely that the players will determine this as the adventure progresses, but should they not, the Game Master might wish to allow appropriate Acolytes to make Psyniscience Tests as they enter new locations, or after triggering the various environmental hazards presented on page 127. Success should provide varying hints that the Ruinous Powers are at work, and that the Brotherhood of Steel is unaware of the fact. Phase 4 of the Countdown to Calamity (see page 138) makes explicit allowance for this if it does not come up earlier.

As with many of the areas within the comet, the hab zones are rarely all they first appear to be. The air is thick with the reek of disturbing machine unguents, though those Acolytes with some prior experience with primitive shamans or wyrds might find them familiar. The hab zones also contain a range of Mechanicum paraphernalia, including long streams of votive script bedecking the walls, a number of the Cult Mechanicus' cog wheel icons, and hundreds of small, personal shrines set into the walls, the wax of centuries of burned candles pooled beneath.

Should the Acolytes decide to make a detailed search of one or more of the hab zones, they may also find evidence offering some hint of the nature of the heresy surrounding them. A successful **Hard (-20) Search Test** reveals several damning items, including parchments containing forbidden Dismal Texts, data crystals entirely filled with scrap code ciphers, and even tokens and fetishes imbued with the taint of the Warp. It appears that the items are not being used in the way a conventional cult might use them—they appear not to be specifically hidden, and there are no signs of any altars, shrines, or reliquaries. Clearly, the Brotherhood is not even aware that Chaos is active in their midst.

HOLDING BATTERY

The Brotherhood of Steel has relied for centuries upon secrecy to keep its activities hidden, but its masters have taken precautions against intrusion. The holding cells take the form of ceramite-lined chambers, accessed through an armoured hatch that is locked and guarded at all times. There are twenty cells in the battery, each only just large enough to accommodate a single prisoner. So long as the Acolytes have not caused a comet-wide, full scale alert, when they first arrive only a single Excruciator Servitor (see page 120) attends the Holding Battery.

Breaking into a cell requires a **Hard (-30) Security** or **Strength Skill Test**, which takes around a minute to perform. Breaking out of one requires the same tests, but each attempt takes up to one hour of time. This is assuming that no Brotherhood personnel are about, of course, and the tests are much harder or longer to perform if they are.

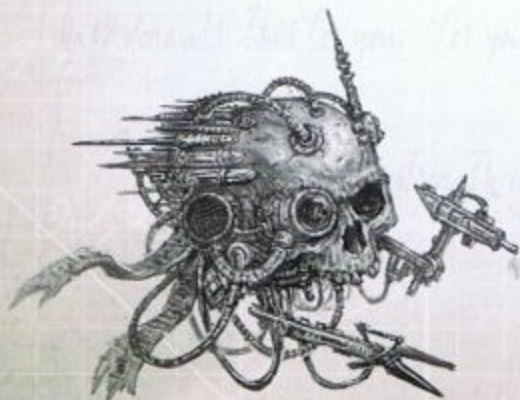
All but one of the cells are empty, though even these contain stains and scraps of unidentifiable biological matter that could put the Acolytes off their next meal. Several contain desiccated corpses, faces frozen in hideous rictus grins and fell runes carved into their dry flesh. The single occupied cell contains a very special prisoner, who the Brotherhood have been attempting to interrogate and study as part of their plan to create what they call an "Ætheric Navigational Beacon." This prisoner is Ballis Aleene, a Navigator whose family believed slain in a Warp accident several decades ago. Aleene is unconscious when discovered, and it takes a **Very Hard (-30) Medicine Test** to revive him. The Navigator's head is covered in scars from where the Brotherhood have enacted all manner of vile experiments upon him in an effort to better understand his abilities, and thus aid in creating the false Astronomican. Once he regains consciousness, Aleene promises to enact vengeance upon the Brotherhood of Steel, and immediately joins the Acolytes to do so. Having been subjected to the Brotherhood's evil for many years, the Navigator is quite mad (and should be roleplayed as such), but he is also fairly certain what the apostates are endeavouring towards. Whether or not the Acolytes believe the mad Navigator is up to them, though. See page 143 for Aleene's profile.

ARMOURY

Hundreds of guardians and sentries of all types are tasked with protecting Ø-777, equipped with the most fearsome weaponry the Brotherhood of Steel has access to. The armoury takes the form of a central hub, with ten individual armoured chambers connected via short companionways. Each chamber is used to store a different class of weapon or system such, as bolter ammunitions or photonic fuel flasks.

Tech-Priest master artisan Onaka Ghul mans the central hub, jealously guarding what he considers his personal domain. Master Ghul uses the Heretek profile on page 340 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**. He is hard-wired into his position by way of articulated attachments that limit his movements to within three metres of his station; if these are destroyed (this happens if any Critical Damage is inflicted on his "legs") he is immediately immobilised and suffers -20 to all subsequent Skill Tests.

Only those that present the correct requisition codes are allowed to take the requested ammunition, and with only with great reluctance. A dozen utility servitors attend to Master Ghul, and he has access to a further five Industrial Servitors (see page 341 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**) for tasks that require a large amount of heavy lifting.



QUESTIONING THE MAD NAVIGATOR

Ballis Aleene provides the Game Master with a useful means of making the players aware of any information they may have missed or misinterpreted. Too much exposition can make the players feel as if their efforts are secondary to the plot, so GMs are encouraged to roleplay any conversations and to resolve them with an Interaction Test (see page 230 of the **DARK HERESY Core rulebook**) to ascertain how much information is gleaned. Appropriate tests include Charm, Deceive, Command, and Interrogation. The Navigator begins the conversation at Disdainful/Resentful/Suspicious/Brave, meaning the test is **Difficult (-10)**. Each time a Test is failed, he gets one level harder to interact with. Each time one is passed, reference **Table 4-2 Navigator Interaction** and the Degrees of Success to determine the information gleaned.

TABLE 4-2: NAVIGATOR INTERACTION

| Degree of Success | Consequence |
|-------------------|--|
| 1 | The Navigator gets one level easier to Interact with. Test again. |
| 2 | Aleene rants and raves about the Hereteks delving into things Mankind should leave well alone, but is no more specific than that. |
| 3 | The Navigator fixes the Acolytes with a wild stare, and warns them that the Warp is soon to be torn wide open. |
| 4 | Overcome with insane clarity, the Navigator explains in great depths that the Hereteks are attempting to create their own version of the Light of the Emperor. |
| 5 or more | Aleene sees with utter certainty that the Brotherhood of Steel is being manipulated by the Ruinous Powers, and must be stopped lest their actions endanger countless millions of souls across the Lathes System. |

SERVICE ZONES

A general category that covers the vast majority of areas within the comet, service zones are areas where machine systems of all types can be accessed, operated, and maintained. To the uninitiated they appear to serve no specific purpose, and even a servant of the Omnissiah might have trouble identifying many of the processes the machinery serves. Many of the machine components serve systems that should not exist, and to perceive but a fraction of their function is to court insanity and damnation.

While no specific events need be keyed to the general service zones, they are dangerous places to pass through, and so the hazards described on page 127 are especially appropriate for use here. In addition, the GM can spring unexpected patrols and similar encounters on the Acolytes as they pass through these areas, altering their composition and number based on the Vigilance Level (as described on page 136).

Passage through the seemingly innocuous service zones is also a good time for unnatural encounters. These should hint at the malefic truth of what is happening here, and play up the notion that the very fabric of the comet is now steeped in the rancid taint of Chaos, even if its masters are unaware of the fact. Here are a few encounters the GM might like to use:

An Astral Spectre (see page 350 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook) manifests before the Acolytes as they traverse an especially dark stretch of passageway.

A pack (1d10+5) of giant rats bursts from a dank conduit and attacks the Acolytes without warning. These count as Walking Creatures, as presented on page 349 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook, but with the Toxic Trait to their bites, and have been driven to a mad frenzy through Warp exposure.

A single Mutant Abomination (see page 342 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook), the escaped and feral subject of some vile Brotherhood experiment, resents the Acolytes' intrusion into its secret haven and attacks from its hidden lair.

A flock (2d5) of feral Cyber Cherubs descend from the darkness overhead, screeching their atavistic rage at the Acolytes. If these foul creatures are not wiped out within ten Rounds, the noise causes the Vigilance Level (see page 136) to raise by one. See page 143 for their profile.

STORAGE BAYS

There are numerous general storage bays scattered across the interior of the comet, filled with all manner of supplies and components. Most of the storage bays are unattended, though the Acolytes might encounter a servitor fetching supplies for its master, or even a Tech-Priest searching the vast chambers for some obscure item of technology.

As with the other regions inside the comet, even the storage bays are not entirely what they appear to be. Attentive PCs can easily find clues of unusual materials, and many chambers are tainted with a range of noxious and entirely unnatural smells. Some walls are engraved with sigils designed to ward off the creatures of the Warp, hinting at the forbidden nature of the things that have been stored there in the past.

Should the players declare they are looking for something specific, the GM can assign a scarcity value to the item and use this as the Difficulty Level for a subsequent search. Very basic supplies and tools should require an **Easy (+30) Search Test**, while specific components for esoteric machinery should require a **Very Hard (-30) Test**, and most other items likely to be somewhere in between.

PARADOX REACTOR COMPONENTS

The Paradox Reactor at the core of the fragment is served through numerous bizarre subsidiary systems. Most have been developed over the centuries to support some other function of the reactor, while others are extrapolations of the technology found in the Yu'Vath remnant. They have such titles as the Graviton Renormaliser, Warp Feedback Antifuse Chambers, Shunt Manifold Cells, Implosion Compressor Valves, Inverted Stellerators, Perturbation Inhibitors, and Heliotronic Transmission Coils. None of these terms should make any sense to the Acolytes, even those initiated into the deepest mysteries of the Ommissiah.

Clues that the reactor is utilising or manipulating a form of unnatural energy are evident all about. Tech-Priests at their terminals sit frozen in time, or whispering continuous streams of profane blasphemy without realising it. Servitors stumble about with grey cerebral matter bubbling from every orifice. Random messages flash on pict-slates as a PC passes by—sometimes directed at the Acolyte himself. Often, the ever-present machine noises appear to shape themselves into words, insinuating themselves into the Acolytes' subconsciouses and implanting all manner of unnatural and disturbing notions.

In addition to the conventional dangers presented on page 127, the GM should consider introducing threats of a more metaphysical nature when near the reactor components. Many of these systems are interacting with unnatural powers, and the xenos technology some use can project a veritable aura of wrongness. The Acolytes should, at the very least, get spooked for no apparent reason, while occasionally palpable waves of terror should pass through the tunnels as blasphemous processes are engaged. The best way to represent this effect is to call for **Disturbing (-0) Fear Tests** at seemingly random points, contributing to the overall feeling of dread and keeping the players on their toes.

PARADOX REACTOR CONTROL CHAMBER

The Paradox Reactor is operated from a control chamber near the heart of Ø-777, and only the very highest ranked of the Brotherhood Tech-Priests are allowed access to it. The control chamber bears more than a passing resemblance to a high temple of the Machine God, and each terminal, screen, port, and conduit has affixed to it long streamers of script-covered parchment. The sense of wrongness and blasphemy that pervades so much of the facility is at a fever pitch in the control chamber, and none who enter it can fail to notice that the parchments are covered with fell sigils. The air is smoky with pungent, noxious oils, and guttering lumens cast flickering shadows across the rune-encrusted walls.

It is highly unlikely that the Acolytes will get anywhere near to the Reactor Control Chamber in Part 2 of the adventure, unless they somehow gained access to the facility through tricking the Brotherhood into believing they are one of their number. Should the Acolytes gain entry to the Reactor Control Chamber, whether by force or guile, the GM should consider moving the time line forward in order to bring about the dramatic conclusion of the adventure.

A staff of two dozen Tech-Priests and their menials and servitors crew the control chamber and, unlike the main Strategium, this complement remains more or less stable as the activation of the Paradox Reactor approaches. Two Murder Servitors (see page 119) stand guard, and another is nearby at the ready should the Tech-Priests call for aid.





PARADOX REACTOR CORE

At the very heart of the comet, fed via kilometres of pulsing conduits and surrounded with unfathomable machine systems, lies the Brotherhood of Steel's ultimate blasphemy. The core takes the form of a spherical space, a wide shaft linking it to the comet's surface at either pole. At the very centre of this space, suspended in a quantum neutral zone where none of the fundamental interactions are possible, is the Yu'Vath remnant. The open core of the reactor is consumed by a writhing mass of shadow tens of metres in diameter that obscures the metre-wide object within. The inner surfaces of the core and those of the shafts that link it to the comet's poles are covered with all manner of esoteric and blasphemous machinery, and numerous gantries and walkways allow the Brotherhood's servants to approach almost to an arm's length of the hideously pulsating shadow-mass at its heart.

Roughly a hundred servitor Drones (see page 344 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**) attend the Paradox Reactor Core, each fitted with a wide array of highly unusual and specialised equipment. Five to eight-strong patrols of Gun Servitors (see page 340 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**) conduct regular sweeps along the numerous gantries and walkways, and several high-ranking Brotherhood magos tend to the most sensitive and esoteric of the many heretical machine systems serving the core.

The Reactor Core is the setting of the adventure's pivotal scene, and so just like the Reactor Control Chamber, GMs should consider how the Acolytes gaining access to it too early might affect the flow of events. Should the Acolytes gain access to the core before the Countdown to Calamity (see below) has reached zero, then the GM may want to move events forward in order to get the most dramatic effect from the event and the location.

VIGILANCE LEVEL

The Vigilance Level is a means of representing the general level of readiness and security amongst the Brotherhood of Steel. It begins at 0, and each time a particular event occurs, it goes up one level. Some of these events are described previously in the adventure, while others occur during the timeline to be presented. In addition to the listed events, the Game Master should feel free to increase (or perhaps even decrease) the level, as befits the Player Characters' actions.

| Vigilance Level | Response from the Brotherhood of Steel |
|-----------------|---|
| 0 | The Brotherhood is not expecting trouble, and only those guards specifically mentioned in the setting information are present. At this level, any Interaction Tests (see page 230 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook) performed are likely to be at the Indifferent level (+0), unless the Acolytes are attempting something the Game Master deems harder (or easier) to achieve. |
| 1 | Patrols ordered in all major locations, consisting of 4-8 Gun Servitors. These are carried out at roughly one hour intervals. |
| 2 | All Interactions at Difficult (-10) . Guards are doubled at locations noted as guarded. |
| 3 | Patrols stepped up to 30 minute intervals. |
| 4 | All Interactions at Hard (-20) . Guards are posted to all major locations (typically 1-4 Murder Servitors). Patrols increased to 15 minute intervals. |
| 5 | All Interactions at Very Hard (-30) . Patrols increased to every five minutes. All locations guarded. |
| 6 | All patrol strengths doubled. |
| 7 | All guard posts reinforced to three times original strength. |

COUNTDOWN TO CALAMITY

Even as the Acolytes explore the facility, the renegade Tech-Priests continue with their preparations to activate the Paradox Reactor. Throughout Part 2, the brotherhood's servants are enacting each of a series of long-prepared-for steps. These follow a precise timeline, at the end of which the reactor is brought online and the Warp explosively breached. The events that follow proceed in the order presented, and while the Player Characters might become involved in some, others can be assumed to play out without their knowledge. The only event the Acolytes have no real choice about getting wrapped up in is the final one, when the reactor goes fully online.

How much time passes between each event in the countdown is left largely up to the GM to determine, based on how the action is flowing. Otherwise, about an hour should be left between each event.

Each time one of the following events in the timeline occurs, it should be accompanied by a vox-horn announcement audible throughout the entire facility, to be read aloud to the players. Game Masters who enjoy using props to enhance their gaming sessions might like to obtain a voice-changing device to make these announcements more dramatic!

DELAYING THE INEVITABLE

At each phase in the timeline, the Acolytes have an opportunity to stymie the Brotherhood of Steel's plans. While they cannot stop the activation of the Paradox Reactor, they might be able to buy themselves extra time to escape, or some other benefit. If none of the stated opportunities present themselves to the players, then the Game Master might like to allow them to make a **Difficult (-10) Logic Test** in order for the idea to present itself, but equally, the GM should be open to any plans the players themselves might come up with that lead to a similar outcome.

Each time one of the following events occurs, the Vigilance Level is increased by 1.

PHASE I

"Hail the Ommissiah. Securitas Protocol Alpha Zero One engaged in eight minutes. All Tier Three personnel report to station. All Tier Two personnel to ready state. All Tier One personnel stand by..."

In the aftermath of this announcement, the tunnels fill with hundreds of low-ranked servants of the Brotherhood of Steel as well as countless servitors of all types. The servitors are almost all mono-tasked and therefore unaware of most factors outside of their direct duties. The menials and lower-ranked Tech-Priests are concentrating on getting to their stations, and unless the Acolytes openly draw attention, they are unlikely to pose a threat.

Should they wish to disrupt Phase I, the Acolytes can seal key hatches with a successful **Hard (-20) Security Test**, thus closing off sections of the station. This would cause low-level menials to be absent in later stages, increasing the duration between Phase 3 and 4 by an amount of time the GM considers appropriate (around an hour should be sufficient and allow the Acolytes to attempt any extra mischief they might have planned).

In addition, all external access points, including the main hangar bay, are sealed in Phase 1, making escape almost impossible until events have run their course. Anyone wishing to open any external access point must pass a **Very Hard (-30) Security Test**, or find some other means of doing so.

PHASE 2

"The Machine God Watches. Aetheric Quench Arrestor operational. Securitas Escalation Zero One engaged. All Tier Two personnel report to station. All Tier One personnel to ready state. Standby for heliostatic shunt. Plasma containment coils engage in eight minutes."

A deep, bass thrum passes through the comet, and the hairs on the back of the Acolytes' necks stand on end as esoteric machine systems are powered up. Middle-ranked Tech-Priests and the more senior of their menials rush to attend their stations. These individuals are far more likely to notice anything anomalous in their surroundings, so if the Acolytes have attempted any obvious trickery, it should be one level of Difficulty harder to achieve than would normally be the case.

Interfering with the ability of these personnel to reach their stations should significantly prolong the interval between Phase 4 and 5, buying the Acolytes time to find out more of what is going on or to sabotage other systems. It carries the risk of alerting the facility's defenders to the presence of intruders however—see the **Vigilance** sidebar for details.

PHASE 3

"Our Great Task moves to completion. Quark Shield active. All Tier One Personnel to station. Pseudo-Astronomican parameter prognostication underway."

As this announcement echoes away down the corridors, the Acolytes hear a series of subsonic booms as yet more arcane systems are brought online. With the Quark Shield active, no communication is possible with anyone outside of the comet. Should the Acolytes wish to communicate with the gun cutter, they must attempt to disrupt the operation of the systems engaged in Phase 3, and may do so from any of the Service Zones, all of which have data-ports that can be accessed by a suitably equipped Tech-Priest Acolyte. Disrupting the Quark Shield enough to get a message out to the cutter requires a **Hard (-20) Tech-Use Test**, but the Acolyte might decide to attempt additional damage whilst accessing the terminal. A **Hard (-20) Scrutiny** or **Tech-Use Test** reveals that even a slight manipulation of the plasma coils feeding the Quark Shield system is sufficient to cause an explosive destabilisation in another zone. If the Player Character can pass a **Hard (-20) Demolitions Test**, then he can set off a large explosion in one location of his choice. Though doing so does not alter the timeline, it is likely to cause significant fatalities and draw the Brotherhood's attentions to that area for some time.

PHASE 4

"We begin the first step of the Grand Transformation, and will no longer rely on weak flesh to walk the stars. Warp breach phase conductors operational. Predicted pseudo-astronomical aetheric beacon effect within established parameters."

The air all about the Acolytes seems to reverse its charge, and any of their number blessed with the psyker's gift feel instantly that something incredibly *wrong* is occurring. Any such Player Characters may make a **Challenging (+0) Psyniscience Test**, the Degrees of Success determining how much they perceive of the processes being unleashed about them.

- One Degree of Success reveals that the Brotherhood of Steel is manipulating the stuff of reality using a machine of kind.
- Two Degrees of Success also determines that the machine is of xenos origin (a further **Very Hard (-30) Forbidden Lore (Xenos) Test** reveals that it is likely the xenos in question are the Yu'Vath).
- Three Degrees of Success also reveals that the Brotherhood of Steel is attempting to breach the Warp.
- Four or more Degrees of Success indicates that, should the Brotherhood succeed, they will create a font of Warp power so powerful it is likely to outshine the Astronomicon itself, but likely destroy much of the Lathes System in the process.

PHASE 5

"Warp containment field activation in sixteen minutes. All Tier One personnel report to operational duty stations immediately. Stand by for Warp breach. Repeat. Stand by for Warp breach."

As the last of the facility's staff make for their duty stations, the companionways resound to the sound of internal hatches slamming shut and interlocks being engaged. Only those tunnels connecting directly to the Paradox Reactor Core and its immediate surroundings remain accessible. From now on, the Player Characters encounter armoured hatches every hundred metres or so along any corridor they pass along, and each specific location is sealed off. A successful **Hard (-20) Security** or a **Difficult (-10) Tech-Use Test** must be made to pass through each of these hatches.

Should the Acolytes have reached any of the named Paradox Reactor Components by Phase 5, they are in a position to cause serious disruption to the final activation. The machine systems in these locations are alight with fell energies and whining with barely contained power; it should be obvious to the players that something quite drastic is soon to occur. Interfering with the machine systems is an unpredictable business, and while doing so does not halt the activation of the reactor, it is likely to cause other effects. The Game Master should allow the players to state what sort of trouble they want to cause, and allow them to make whatever Tests seem appropriate. Suitable effects might include routing plasma flow through particular areas in order to slaughter dozens of enemies at a time, locking down individual regions by flooding them with radiation, causing some components to vanish into the Warp or be shunted to another reality entirely, and any other inventive effects the players can imagine.

Unless the Acolytes have taken steps earlier in the timeline to delay the last phase, the action should move on towards Phase 6 fairly quickly. As it does so, the use of the environmental hazards described on page 127 can be increased, and the Game Master can call for frequent Fear Tests in order to convey the sense of horror that only mortals can feel as the Paradox Reactor is edged ever closer towards activation. As the countdown nears Phase 6, the Acolytes should find their sanity being tested in ways the Brotherhood of Steel's servants, so bereft of the souls that once made them human, cannot perceive.

PHASE 6

"...eight, Ommissiah preserve our engrams, purging aetheric sluice chamber, six, perturbation field disengaged, four, paradox scale approaching absolute... two, standby for breach! One..." Reality itself freezes, the silence not witnessed since the moment before creation itself. Aeons pass in the blink of an eye, and the fabric of the universe expands outward before snapping back into place with a soundless detonation so ominous the soul itself quails in terror. "Zero plus eight and counting... aetheric beacon effect negative. Repeat. Pseudo-astronomical beacon effect negative. Reading... reading... anomalous aetheric bow wave on sub delta scale... stand by... stand..."

A high pitched shriek echoes weirdly through the very fabric of Cometary Fragment O-777, followed closely by a sound as of a vast mass of flesh and bone ripped asunder by the claws of a god. The shriek grows louder and is immediately followed by what can only be described as cackling laughter.

"Intrusion protocol Extremis! Repeat, intrusion protocol Extremis! The Experiment cannot fail! All available securitas personnel to..." The voice transforms into a mix of fleshy howls and mechanical wailing. Then, the screaming begins...

At this point, the Brotherhood of Steel activates the Paradox Reactor, and the Yu'Vath remnant folds sub-atomic space in upon itself, creating a paradoxical exchange of fundamental interactions so opposed to the laws of nature that reality itself cracks asunder and the Warp is breached. The Brotherhood of Steel is about to discover the price of meddling in powers they have no means of controlling, when they find out what truly lies beyond.



PART III: WHAT LIES BEYOND

The Paradox Reactor has been activated and the Brotherhood of Steel has unleashed the fell power of the Warp, but now they are to discover how far down the path to damnation they have travelled without even perceiving their souls' demise. Instead of a Warp beacon to rival the Astronomican, the Brotherhood of Steel has opened a Warp gate, through which a full-scale daemonic incursion is about to be unleashed.

Depending on exactly where they are when the reactor is activated, the Acolytes experience the breaching of the Warp in a slightly different manner. Because of the sealing off of the various areas within the comet as the countdown towards activation progressed, the Acolytes are likely to be somewhere fairly close to the core when the reactor is activated, but if they are not, the climax can be altered easily enough to accommodate this.

THE BREACHING OF THE WARP

At the moment the countdown reached zero, the Yu'Vath remnant released a blast of ætheric energy that punched a hole straight through the very stuff of reality and brought a Warp gate into being. This event was not unlike a Warp ship entering the Sea of Souls, except that it is not self limiting, and the gate is likely to expand until it becomes a vast lesion to rival the greatest of Warp storms. Given time, the gate will expand to engulf the entire Lathes System, a fate that will doom billions of souls to eternal damnation, as well as deprive the Adeptus Mechanicus of its greatest asset in the region. Without the industrial output of the Lathes and the worlds they control, the infrastructure of the Calixis Sector might be brought crashing to ruins, while the ongoing war efforts across and beyond the Sector must surely be compromised. As if all of this were not bad enough, the Acolytes are faced with a more immediate peril. The breach has created a portal into the Empyrean, and even now the nameless things of the Warp are crawling through it. Within minutes, countless numbers of slavering daemons are pouring through the newly created Warp gate, and so the Acolytes are presented with a stark choice indeed. Will they attempt to somehow close the gate while they still have time, or will they flee for their lives before they are overwhelmed by the gibbering tide of insanity?

By this stage in the adventure, the interior of Ø-777 has changed drastically. No longer is it a realm of lingering dread—Chaos has broken through, and the denizens of the Warp now have free reign. Game Masters should populate the facility with creatures from beyond, drawing on the Adversaries section of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook (see page 350). Charnel Daemons and Lesser Incarnate Daemons are particularly appropriate, and Game Masters should tailor their numbers to the levels of the Player Characters. Especially powerful Acolytes might face more suitable foes such as Bloodletters or Horrors,

or even Greater Daemons if the GM desires. Realistically, there is no chance of the Acolytes fighting the creatures off, and if they stick around too long they are certain to be slain or driven mad with fear. Far better they attempt to close the gate or flee, both of which options are discussed below.

CLOSING THE GATE

Should the Acolytes attempt to close the gate, they should be rewarded for their heroism with a fair shot at doing so. This does not always equate to guaranteed success, however, and in such cases a dramatic death is sometimes just as engaging an ending!

There are several possible ways of closing the gate, and players should be encouraged to invent more, but however they proceed, they must do so quickly. The GM is advised to keep this part of the adventure moving as fast as possible in order to maintain the tension and drama. The players should not be given too much time to think over their actions—they should simply throw themselves into their role as befits their status as agents of the Inquisition. If possible, the manner in which the gate is closed should be "keyed" to the types of character leading the effort to do so, and several might pool their efforts to achieve the impossible. A Tech-Priest, for example, would look for a technological solution, while an Imperial Psyker would seek to use his own special abilities to achieve the same ends. Below are some possibilities based on the most common Player Character classes found in **DARK HERESY**:

An **Adept** Player Character is unlikely to have any specific abilities that would help close the gate, but he should be in a good position to lead the efforts of others, or help keep them aware of other threats around them. In this case, the brave Adept should be allowed to re-roll failed Fear Tests until the end of the adventure.

Arbitrators are both tough and incorruptible, and as such have more of a chance of standing defiant before the denizens of the Warp than lesser men. Recounting key passages from the books of Imperial Law emboldens the heart of the Arbitrator and his companions, and by doing so he might hold the foe at bay for a brief time. The Arbitrator gains the Armour of Contempt Talent for the remainder of the adventure. The Arbitrator may, as a Half Action, recite the words of the Imperial Law for the benefit of his companions, in which case all within earshot gain the same Talent each Round that he does so.

Assassins should be allowed to strike at a key being of the Warp as it emerges through the gate. This is a Charnel Daemon (see page 350 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook), and it is surrounded by a swarm of Incarnate Lesser Daemons (as described on page 351 of the same source). This creature is clearly the greatest of the vile things to have breached the gate, and the lesser denizens are quite obviously afraid of it, and are doing its bidding. To attack the Charnel Daemon, the Assassin must first avoid or engage at least a dozen of the Incarnate Lesser Daemons, and if he can do so without getting bogged down in combat with any at all, the Charnel Daemon is automatically Surprised in the ensuing combat. If the Charnel Daemon is slain the entire horde breaks apart, an anarchic tide of flailing daemonic limbs filling the reactor core and buying the Player Characters an extra ten minutes or so with which to make an escape.

Clerics (and Adepta Sororitas) are raised to abhor the unclean, and there is nothing more so than denizens of the Warp. By the strength of his faith alone, a Cleric can hold hordes of daemons at bay. So long as he is the closest of the Acolytes to the daemons spilling through the gate, any of the creatures of the Warp that attempt to charge them must first pass a **Horrorific (-30) Fear Test**.

Guardsmen can be entrusted with holding the hordes at bay while their companions seek to close the gate in some way. Failing that, they can make a bold last stand as their friends flee in terror before the attacking daemons. Needless to say, some of the more trigger-happy Guardsmen might be tempted to open fire on the portal in the hope of destroying it with brute force. Sadly, such a tactic fails utterly, merely serving to draw the attentions of the creatures swarming through it onto the foolish mortal creature.

Imperial Psykers are well disposed to shutting the Warp portal, but there is enormous risk in doing so. To close the gate, the psyker must pass five **Very Hard (-30) Willpower Tests**, and each time he fails one he must take a Fear Test. The first Fear Test he must take is **Disturbing (-0)**, the second **Frightening (-10)**, and so forth, getting harder each time, until the gate is forced closed long enough for the group to flee, or the character's mind snaps and he is reduced to a gibbering wreck by the sheer horror before him.

When it comes to **Scum**, there may not seem a huge amount such characters can do beyond using their existing Skills and Talents to aid their companions. However, it is said that the Emperor smiles upon even the lowest of sinners in his hour of need. Should the character act in such a selfless manner that he puts his companions before himself, he should be granted an immediate Fate Point, usable until the end of the adventure.

Of all the character types, **Tech-Priests** should be the best placed to set right this terrible blasphemy. To do so, such a character must beseech what remains of the facility's machine spirit core to shut down the reactor in such a way that it closes the portal. This can be done from a command terminal on a gantry in the reactor core itself, or from the reactor core control chamber. The former is of course crawling with daemons, while the latter is filled with brotherhood Tech-Priests struggling to understand what has happened, and (unsuccessfully) trying to reverse it themselves. In order to force what remains of the reactor's machine systems to turn upon themselves and seal the portal, a Tech-Priest must pass five **Very Hard (-30) Tech-Use Tests**. Each time a test is failed the character suffers malignant feedback from the Yu'Vath remnant, and gains 1d5 Corruption Points. If and when he succeeds (bearing in mind the efforts of either hordes of daemons or renegade Tech-Priests to stop him), the reactor core systems come alive one last time, and the gate is forced shut for all eternity. The Acolytes must still flee, however, as searing radiation floods the entire comet.

There are numerous other character classes that might have a special way of closing the portal, or of aiding their companions as they attempt to do so, but these are beyond the scope of this adventure to describe in any detail. Instead, Game Masters are encouraged to consider the character types the players are using, and, most importantly, to be open to any dramatic ideas the players themselves might come up with in the heat of battle.

ESCAPE

As a less glorious option, but a perfectly sensible one given the circumstances, the Player Characters might well decide to flee in the face of the full scale Warp breach and daemonic incursion that the Brotherhood of Steel has unleashed. Even if they manage to shut down the reactor, they still need to vacate the facility, as the Brotherhood quickly concludes that the Acolytes must have been the reason their experiment failed.

To escape, the Acolytes must fight their way through crowds of Tech-Priests and menials in total disarray, and keep from taking too long, as, should the reactor still be active, the daemonic hordes are sure to catch up and overwhelm them. The GM should use the map to determine the route the Acolytes take, and call for an encounter with a group of the comet's defenders in each location. These encounters should range from combat with Murder Servitors, to attempts to intimidate groups of panicked menials, or even controlling large numbers of Gun Servitors bereft of sane instructions. At the end of the flight, the Acolytes should reach the hangar bay and be forced to take one of the two Arvus Lighters (bearing in mind that one needs repairing). Before they can board either shuttle, however, the Acolytes must face a group of roughly a dozen Arch-Hereteks (see page 119 for their profiles) with the same idea, providing a suitably bloody climax to the adventure. Though they do not know it, one of these individuals is a very senior master of the Brotherhood currently using the name Acturan Dineth; his profile can be found on the following page.



CALLING IN THE CAVALRY

However the Acolytes react to the opening of the Warp portal, the Lathes, alongside other agents of their own patron, are soon on scene. The Arvus can rendezvous with the *Lysithea*, and as they step onto the bridge they witness a squadron of Lathes battleships pounding Ø-777 to dust. At last, the reactor core explodes, and a wave of terror passes through each Acolyte as writhing things shriek impossibly through the void. In an instant, the overwhelming sense of dread the Acolytes have felt since setting foot on the comet is gone, only to be replaced with a lurking sense that surely, the Mechanicum of the Lathes must have known what was going on right on their very doorstep.

EPILOGUE

What ensues in the aftermath of the adventure should be largely up to the GM to determine, based on the needs of the ongoing campaign, but there are several factors that should be addressed no matter what.

- The Acolytes have witnessed the initial stages of a daemonic incursion, which, had it not been contained, might have taken a deployment of Grey Knights to eliminate. Most mortals who do so are executed for their own good and for the safety of Mankind, and so the Acolytes are subjected to a brutal and painful series of purity tests to ensure they are not tainted. Whatever the result of these tests, the Acolytes should feel lucky not to be mind-wiped, but may come out of the affair stronger for their spiritual ordeal.
- The characters are likely to have made a deadly foe in the form of the Brotherhood of Steel, especially if Acturan Dineth escaped. Tech-Priests they might meet from now on could belong to the sect, and a Mech-Assassin could be lurking in any shadow, ready to wreak the Brotherhood's cold revenge.
- Should the Acolytes have rescued Ballis Aleene, they have made a powerful ally. House Aleene, a powerful and active Great Navigator House in the Calixis Sector, will surely be ready to come to their aid in future adventures.
- The role the Lathes' hierarchy may have played in this blasphemous experiment is still undetermined. Perhaps it was all the work of a rogue sect, or perhaps many similar experiments of heretical science are happening across the Sector under the direction of the Lathes. Only the increased investigation of diligent Acolytes can possibly reveal the truth...

REWARDS

In addition to the standard xp rewards as described in the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook, the Game Master should consider rewarding players for their conduct leading up to and during the activation of the Paradox Reactor. If the players worked out that the Powers of Chaos were manipulating the Brotherhood then they should gain an additional 50 xp, and if they took steps to combat it in any way, a further 50 xp is appropriate. The key event of the adventure is the breaching of the Warp, and the players should receive additional rewards depending how they acted at this moment. Any characters that used the additional special rules relating to their own character class in order to close the portal or assist another character in doing so should receive at least an additional 100 xp.

APPENDIX: NPCS AND ANTAGONISTS

The majority of character types referenced throughout **The Light of Reason** are to be found in this book. In addition to these, several others are to be found in the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook Adversaries chapter, and two unique ones are presented here.

MAGUS ACTURAN DINETH

Acturan Dineth is one of the hidden masters of the Brotherhood of Steel; he was present on Cometary Fragment Ø-777 to witness the activation of the Paradox Reactor, and to report back to his peers on its success (or otherwise). The Acolytes are most likely to encounter Magus Dineth in the aftermath of the opening of the Warp portal, as he and his compatriots attempt to escape the comet via one of the two Arvus Lighters in the main bay. Though intent upon escape, the magus is well able to put up a fight, and does so if the Player Characters get in his way.



Magus Acturan Dineth

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 35 | 38 | 45 | 48 | 30 | 46 | 40 | 46 | 38 |

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 14

Skills: Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Int) (Machine Cult, Tech) +10, Common Lore (Int) (Imperium), Deceive (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Int) (Adeptus Mechanicus, Archeotech) +10, Forbidden Lore (Int) (Inquisition), Literacy (Int), Logic (Int) +10, Scholastic Lore (Archaic, Cryptology, Legend), Search (Per) +10, Secret Tongue (Int) (Tech), Speak Language (Int) (High Gothic, Low Gothic), Tech-Use (Int) +10.

Traits: Mechanicus Implants.

Talents: Autosanguine, Binary Chatter, Foresight, Logis Implant, Paranoia, Peer (Adeptus Mechanicus, Underworld).

Armour: Augmetic Implant Armour (All 5)

Weapons: Ommissionian Axe (Melee, 2d10+9 E; Pen 6; Power Field, Unwieldy); Archeotech Plasma Pistol (Pistol; 50m; S/3/-; 1d10+8E; 8; Clip 12; Rld 1 Full; Maximal).

Gear: Auger Array, Optical Mechadendrite.

ARCH-HERETEK

There are several dozen senior members of the Brotherhood of Steel present on the comet to witness the culmination of what amounts to centuries of blasphemous endeavour. Profiles and further details can be found for Arch-Hereteks on page 119.



EXCRUCIATOR SERVITOR

The Holding Battery is attended by a single Excruciator Servitor, which the Acolytes must defeat before they can free the captive Navigator. Should any Player Characters be careless enough to be captured, they are likely to experience its specialist abilities close up. The profile can be found on page 120.

GUN SERVITOR

Gun Servitors are commonly used to mount patrols of the comet's extensive network of tunnels. Their profile can be found on page 340 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook.

MURDER SERVITOR

The Brotherhood of Steel makes extensive use of Murder Servitors to guard key locations throughout its facility. Their profile can be found on page 119.

RENEGADE TECH-PRIEST

The majority of the Brotherhood's Tech-Priests fall under this general category. They use the Heretek profile on page 340 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook or can be adopted using the Calixian Malatek rules on page 36. GMs are encouraged to introduce any variation they feel appropriate (such as additional skills such as Forbidden Lore (Xenos) and the like).

SERVICE TENDER

The Service Tender is in essence a large exo-suit, piloted by a servant of the Brotherhood of Steel permanently grafted into it.



Service Tender

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 22 | 22 | 64 | 62 | 21 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 05 |

Movement: 2/4/8/16

Wounds: 25

Skills: Awareness (Per), Pilot (Service Tender) +10, Tech-Use (Int).

Talents: Chem Geld, Fearless.

Traits: Dark-Sight, Fearless, Flyer (10), Size (Hulking).

Weapons: Augmented Fists (1d10+3 I, Pen 0)

Gear: 2 x Manipulator Mechadendrites, Utility Mechadendrite, Augur Arrays.

VOID-FLUKE

These small, lamprey-like creatures infest the exterior of the cometary fragment, and eagerly attack any source of nutritious metal or mineral, especially unwary Acolytes.



Void-Fluke

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 27 | — | 14 | 22 | 31 | 08 | 31 | 10 | 05 |

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 6

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Dodge (Ag), Stealth (Ag) +10.

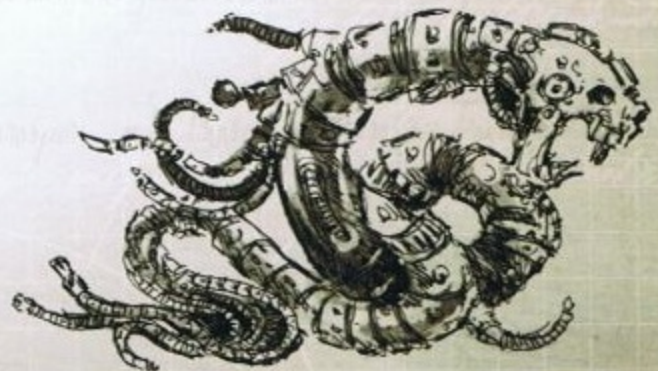
Talents: Resistance (Vacuum, Cold).

Traits: Bestial, Burrower (3), Dark Sight, Improved Natural Weapons, Flyer (5), Size (Scrawny), Strange Physiology.

Weapons: Leach Teeth (2d5+1 R; Pen 1; Tearing)

Armour: Voidproof Hide (All 2).

Leach Attack: If the void-fluke's Attack is successful, it adheres to the enemy and for every two Degrees of Success it eats through 1 Armour Point in the location struck. If any location falls to zero, the suit cannot provide void protection and the wearer may suffer Vacuum Damage (see page 210 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook). Removing a void-fluke requires a Full Action and a **Difficult (-10) Strength Test**.



NAVIGATOR BALLIS ALEENE

Navigator Ballis Aleene is in a bad way when the Acolytes find him, but so long as they can get him back in the action he can serve a useful role in the adventure, especially if the Acolytes do not have (or have lost) a psyker of their own. While Navigators are not psykers in the true sense, they nonetheless know much of the ebb and flow of the Warp, and Aleene is able to perform the role of a psyker PC when it comes to closing the portal. Game Masters might like to turn control of Aleene over to one of the players, especially if a PC has died or the group has no psyker. Bear in mind that Aleene is quite mad, and can take no further part in the campaign even should he survive the adventure. See page 134 for further details on Navigator Aleene.



Navigator Ballis Aleene

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 29 | 42 | 58 | 50 | 29 |

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 7

Skills: Awareness (Int) +10, Common Knowledge (Imperium) (Int) +10, Forbidden Knowledge (Warp) (Int) +20, Forbidden Lore (Mutants, Psykers) (Int), Logic (Int) +10, Navigation (Stellar, Warp) (Int) +20, Pilot (Spacecraft) (Ag), Psyniscience (Per) +20, Scholastic Knowledge (Astromancy, Interstellar Cartography) (Int) +20, Speak Language (Low Gothic, High Gothic) (Int) +10, Secret Language (Navis Nobilitate) (Int) +10.

Gear: Ragged prisoner's jump suit.

The Final Gaze: Having been ruthlessly tortured and experimented upon over the course of several years, the Navigator's ability to see into the Warp and to draw out its power is severely curtailed. Though he does not admit it, Aleene knows that to open his bruised and scarred Warp Eye and gaze into the Warp would certainly kill him. Nonetheless, he is willing to do so, should it bring about revenge upon the Brotherhood of Steel. There are two instances when Aleene may use his power, though in both cases he perishes immediately after doing so. The first is in closing the portal (as detailed in the adventure, where he counts as a Sanctioned Psyker character), and the second is during the escape, when the group runs into the Arch Heretek's in the main hangar bay. In this latter case, he opens his Warp Eye one last time, deliberately drawing forth such power as to decimate the soul of any caught in his gaze.

Every mortal being within Aleene's line of sight and 30m when he opens his Warp Eye for the last time takes 2d10+5 Energy damage, ignoring armour and Toughness Bonuses, unless they are forewarned, in which case they may must pass a **Hard (-20) Willpower Test** in order to tear their eyes away in time and avoid the damage. Daemons and those with the Untouchable Trait are unaffected. Immediately after Aleene opens his Warp Eye, he collapses to the ground, and dies within d10 Rounds, during which he may do nothing more than soliloquise in a suitably dramatic fashion.



FERAL CYBER CHERUBS

These filthy and raucous creatures are a mockery of the vat-grown constructs that bless more holy places with their presence, and the Emperor alone knows what blasphemous cross-breeding led to their creation.



Feral Cyber Cherub

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | Per | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 25 | 05 | 12 | 20 | 30 | 03 | 24 | 11 | 07 |

Movement: 6/12/18/36

Wounds: 5

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Dodge (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +20.

Talents: Lightning Reflexes.

Traits: Improved Natural Weapons, Flyer (6), Machine (1), Size (Puny).

Weapons: Claws and tiny needle fangs (2d5+2 R; Pen 0)

Armour: Cybernetic Body (All 1).

Swarm Attack: These creations find strength in numbers, swarming over their opponents in massed attacks. They fight in groups of 3-4 cherubs, each group attacking one enemy (chosen at random) rather than spreading their attacks across all their enemies.

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