



# THE DARK ANGELS

**Numeration:** The I<sup>st</sup> Legion

**Primogenitor:** Lion El'Jonson

**Cognomen (Prior):** The Angels of Death,  
The Uncrowned Princes (archaic)

**Observed Strategic Tendencies:** None;  
within the Legion there was at least one  
Host or Order dedicated to each discipline  
of war.

**Noteworthy Domains:** Caliban,  
Gramarye, Terran Enclaves

**Allegiance:** Fedelitas Constantus

*"Empires, monuments and legends are built by  
those who are merely victorious. We were born  
to kill not to build. We are not idle long enough  
to leave monuments and we leave no work of the  
enemy intact to spawn legends. We are the First  
Legion, and he that follows in our wake is death."*

*Attr. Hector Thrane, Keeper of the Black Gate  
and First Master of the First Legion, 828.M30*

Stark and uncompromising, the Dark Angels were the first of the Emperor's Legions and the truest to the mould from which the Legiones Astartes had been struck. They were killers of the purest and most refined kind, for whom there could be no other destiny but a lifetime of war and death in the name of the Imperium and Mankind. They did not build empires, made no attempt to master the ways of peace or the subtle skills of the artist, craftsman or diplomat. They offered no excuses for their nature and made no compromises in the pursuit of their assigned duty, shirking neither the price they paid in blood nor the price paid in infamy and solitude. Their greatest battles are to be found in no catalogue of Compliance or roll of honour, no scholars or poets sing of these glories or remember those fallen in their prosecution, for they were fought against foes so monstrous that it was deemed necessary that all mention of them be erased from history. Such was the nature of their service, not only to be prosecutors of the Great Crusade, but also to serve as the Imperium's most potent bulwark against the unknown terrors that lurked in the dark between the stars.

#### ORIGINS: FORGED OF SECRETS AND DARKNESS

The heraldry of the Dark Angels proclaims their lineage, the first of the Emperor's Legiones Astartes, but other than that simple fact little is known of the origins of the Legion and its initial gene-stock. The genesis of the Legiones Astartes as a whole is a subject shrouded in much secrecy. It is perhaps the greatest and most enduring of the Emperor's many works and a subject scholars have been warned away from in the latter days of His Imperium. What is known with some certainty is that, of all the many breeds of these post-human warriors, the Dark Angels were conceived by the Emperor as a template for those that would follow, distilled from the gene-code of the most stable of all His Primarchs and without any attempt to foster specific traits or curb the eccentricities of the stock from which they sprang. Even so, the process by which these first samples were produced was long and laborious, initiated perhaps a century or more before the end of the wars of Unity and consuming a vast number of test subjects to produce but a handful of stable proto-Astartes. Of these initial creations, referenced in fragmentary records unearthed in the Imperial Archives as the *Primordial Strain*, almost none are known to have survived initial combat trials and surgical testing, but they form the basis for the initial cultures of the First Legion and, by merit of the refined process formulated with their creation, the other Legions as well.

#### The Unbegotten Father

Of all the tens of thousands of subjects that bled and died within the hidden laboratories of the Emperor, the names of all but a handful are unknown. Most were, and remain, anonymous vessels used to nurture the first crude batches of gene-seed distilled from the Primarchs' blood, test subjects for the earliest organs cultured from that seed and all were considered disposable in the cause of the Space Marines' genesis. Some few, however, served as something more: functional prototypes of the new breed of warrior the Emperor had envisaged for His conquest of not just Old Earth but the entire galaxy. They were likely not quite as their modern cousins – unrefined and ill-favoured but potent nonetheless – and served as the bridge between the unique power of the Primarchs and their sons; a formula by which the process could be repeated and perfected. The vast majority of these were born of the strain of gene-seed extracted from the first of the Primarchs, noted as it was for its stability, with a single warrior listed by name in the oldest of records salvaged from the depths of the Imperial Palace Archives: Abrasax, of the fourteenth Ghent intake.

No mention of this figure is to be found again in Imperial records, nor in the order of battle of any of the Legiones Astartes, save in one obscure text. A brief account, written by one of the councillors attending the Emperor during the Siege of the Imperial Palace, notes a warrior by the name of Abraxus Ghent, clad in unadorned power armour, who had served as one of the many guardians of that venerated building's vast halls and who fought as part of the rear guard that held the inner precincts against the Traitor hordes while the Emperor and his Primarchs led the assault on Horus' flagship. His death is not noted in the account, nor does he appear on the lengthy rolls of honour naming the veterans of that climactic battle, either living or dead.

This grand experiment exacted a bloody toll upon those territories controlled by the Emperor, for its most critical components were untainted human subjects, all within a specific range of age and physical fitness. Given the state of Terra in the wake of the wars of Old Night, its surface polluted by the twin scourges of atomic bombardment and genetic phage, such subjects were limited. The initial experiments were conducted with the youth of the Emperor's conquered foes and those purchased from the nomadic clans of slavers that abounded in the wastes of pre-Unity Terra, and later the toll was borne by flesh-tithes exacted on those territories brought, willingly or not, into the fold of the Imperium. As such, the Dark Angels did not bear the stamp of any single gene-stock, unlike some of the other Legions during their earliest years whose character had been moulded by the nature of their initial intake. Their first recruits, selected from the best of the stock available to the Emperor, were diverse in origin and shared no single cultural heritage that would shape the way in which they made war. Indeed, the diversity of their origins brought a wealth of disparate martial traditions into the fledgling Legion. The dour infantry of the Francish plains and islands of Albia brought with them the brutal coda that had conquered half the ruined lands of Europa, the warriors of the far Anatolic steppes a skill at cavalry warfare, the berserkers of frozen Skandia a murderous efficiency, and from a dozen other cultures yet more of the arts of war. The First Legion was

the crucible in which all the savage lore of Old Night, all the bitter knowledge and red-handed wisdom accumulated in millennia of war was to be distilled and fashioned into a weapon of rare potency.

In those first faltering years of the grand experiment that was the Legiones Astartes, the proto-warriors of the First Legion, barely a few hundred strong, were encouraged to eschew the names of their own people and embrace a new unity unmarked by old loyalties, often taking instead the names of heroes from the old tales that had survived the Age of Strife. In the first rolls of honour of the Legion can be found Gilgamesh, Heracles, Tarchon, Hengist and other names imbued by time with the power of legend. Combined with the grim aspect granted them by the gene-seed of the first Primarch, these warriors quickly gained a reputation among the disparate throng that was at that time the army of the Emperor, for they seemed as a band of gods all cast from a singular and potent mould. Fighting at first as small groups within the ranks of the Emperor's host, plying both the skills of their origins and of the drill masters of the Imperial Laboratories, they would come to be known as the *Uncrowned Princes* or simply *Crowns*. This was a homage both to their place in the line of battle and the destiny bestowed upon them by their creator; a title that would inspire both a sense of unity and a certain arrogance in the first Space Marines and spur them to lead the way amongst the growing brotherhood of the Legiones Astartes.

This, in the Legion's earliest moments, was the genesis of the Hosts of the First Legion, which would later be refined by the Primarch, Lion El'Jonson, into the Wings of his Dark Angels; a myriad of informal groups within the early companies of the Legion that worked to adapt the doctrines of battle brought from those disparate origins and create a coda of battle fit for the post-human armies of the Emperor. The Hosts were not bound by company or commander and existed throughout the Legion, at any given battle or engagement at least some small number of a given Host would be present to advise and lead should their expertise be required. In the early years of the First Legion's existence there were many more Hosts than now exist, with as many as 18

such formations noted by their distinct heraldry in the earliest records of the wars of Unity. The third siege of Antioch in 603.M30 saw the participation of nine distinct 'Hosts' across four separate Companies of the Legion, though at this point they numbered less than 30 warriors each and displayed significant tactical overlap in the methods they employed to breach the walls of that ancient enclave.

Time would see the many Hosts of those chaotic years quickly resolved into a smaller number of more focused Hosts, but in those early years, with their brother Legions still but handfuls of warriors newly-cast from a rough mould, the First Legion became the testbed for the various tactics and doctrines that

would later become the *Principia Bellicosa*. As the other Legions grew to a size large enough to engage in small scale combat actions, some of the more specialised Hosts became obsolete, unnecessary in the face of warriors more adept at that style of warfare, while others were made extinct by the inadequacies of their methods and the brutal nature of war in the 30<sup>th</sup> Millennium. Far from harming the Legion, this process of bloody evolution left it strong; a weapon well-honed by the fighting on Terra. It also forged a bond between the disparate warriors who made up that early Legion; a bond based upon the sense of superiority and distinction instilled in them by the servants of the Emperor that trained them and the awe they inspired in those they fought beside.

### The First Legion

As with all the Legiones Astartes, the First Legion was intended as a replacement for the Thunder Warriors brigades, that unstable experiment which by the mid years of the Unification Wars had run its course. The Thunder Warriors regiments had been the tool needed for their time, an unrefined and savage weapon to match the grim tyrants and debauched potentates that had inherited the Ancient Terra. Yet, in comparison to the Legiones Astartes they were a rough breed, powerful to be sure, perhaps even individually more so than their new kin, but unable to quell their fury to work in unison. They were a mob, a storm of fury and blades that rolled over its foes, while the Legiones Astartes were a true army and in their unity could withstand any onslaught.

The First Legion would demonstrate that potential, for they were a true Legion, numbering nearly 10,000 while their kin were but a few hundred each. It was at Samerkend in 668.M30 that the First Legion took to the field en masse for the first time, assembled with the Emperor Himself at their head. Here, the Legiones Astartes faced their first true test, not a test of individual strength or genetic purity, but a test of their worth as an army. 10,000 of the First, flanked by contingents of four other Legions took the field against 200,000 gene-forged Udug Hul, the elite slave-soldiers of the King of Akkad. The Udug Hul, whose blood was poison and whose strength was greater than 10 un-enhanced warriors, were the terror of the Upper Asiatic Basin and a foe that had so far resisted the advance of the Emperor's armies.



Ten hours after battle was joined Samerkend was in ruins, the Udug Hul scattered and broken and the Great King of Akkad's head a trophy on the belt of the newly-appointed Grandmaster of the First Legion. This warrior, Hector Thrane, was lauded by the princes of Terra for his victory and granted the title Sinestra of the Emperor, the left hand of the Warlord of Terra, His most fearsome instrument of conquest. By order of the Emperor, the First Legion left no stone upon stone, and almost every record of the terrors encountered in that battle was destroyed. In the wake of the victory the rate of recruitment and processing of the new Legions was accelerated, their potential proven in triumph, and the First Legion gained a dark renown among the ranks of the armies of Unity. They had walked into the mouth of hell, and not only had they returned, but they had left hell shattered in their passage. This first victory was to set the pattern of the First Legion's battles during the battle for Old Earth and the Sol System, pitting them against the most horrific of foes with only one objective – to eradicate them completely.

From Fortress Thirty-one in the Thulean wastes of Ancient Terra, to the Battle of Karnakon amid the cryo-volcanic mountains of Sedna, the First Legion would meet the worst threats that faced the armies of Unity and lay them low. So horrific were many of the threats they faced – xenos terrors beyond the pale of sanity and psychic phenomena that threatened to tear reality asunder – that little more than the battle honours remain, the details erased even from the data-stacks of the Emperor's library. To prosecute these impossible battles the Emperor would grant them access to the armoury vaults of the Imperial Palace, to every forbidden weapon entombed within, and they would be the only Legion trusted to wield the worst of Mankind's creations freely. The orders of Grandmaster Hector Thrane would see the obliteration of the warped cities of Khadun and Molay in the eastern reaches of Ancient Terra and the deployment of gene-phage munitions to purge Enceladus clean of Khrave infestation. These were victories that left an indelible stain on both the course of the war and the identity of the warriors who prosecuted them, forging Thrane's reputation as a ruthless and prideful warlord.

Among the armies of Unification, the First Legion had become synonymous with death, for where they walked it seemed as though that pale rider followed after them with an

### Branded All As One

Tales and theories beyond count surround the Thunder Warriors and their sudden disappearance from the Imperium's history, most being fabrications and sophistry of the worst kind, though a few warrant further regard. One such tale in particular is of note, a tale told among the nomadic tribes that inhabit the wastelands around Mount Ararat, and speaks not only of the Thunder Warriors but also of an army '*clad all in grey, dark as the clouds of a storm, and branded all as one*'.

These warriors, so say the hill nomads, awaited the return of the few surviving Thunder Warriors, exhausted by their victory, and rather than giving salute to their valour cut them down in a thunderous volley of bolt and plasma. This tale is far different from the heroic tale told by remembrancers to mark the end of the wars of Unity, but in keeping with the brutal necessities of the Emperor's far reaching plans. It is possible that the warriors '*branded all as one*' could be the First Legion, who all bore the sigil of their numeration bold upon their plate, for battles of that Legion were oft removed from Imperial record, the details expunged and forgotten.

Actual proof, however, does not exist, not even in the archives of the Imperial Palace. Yet, several anecdotes from the latter years of the Great Crusade do seem to support the theory, all related to a near-obsessive preoccupation with the hunting down and destruction of those few renegade Thunder Warriors that survived and fled Terra, over and above the standing orders of the Imperial Court to suppress all such renegades. On at least three occasions, fleets of the First Legion have altered course in order to engage and destroy Thunder Warrior survivors, often making wide detours based on simple rumours of such activity. Such an obsession is notable for an otherwise stoic Legion, and would seem to hint at a more personal interest in the resolution of any encounter with surviving Thunder Warriors, perhaps even a sense of shame in having allowed any to escape some previous engagement. Given the renowned secrecy of the First Legion and the frequency with which their campaigns and deeds are obfuscated by Imperial decree, it is unlikely that the truth of this matter will ever be known.

inevitability that spawned many long-held superstitions regarding the reclusive warriors of the First. They were treated with an awe that sat somewhere between respect and terror by those who served alongside them, for it was said that to offend them was to bring the scrutiny of their patron, Death himself, upon the offender. Among the host gathered by the Emperor they were not heroes, but rather a breed of monster made loyal by the will of their master. They were not to be lauded for their bravery but rather placated to assuage their wrath. Despite the dictates of the Imperial Truth, the common soldiery of the Imperial armies often set small wards and charms at the edges of their camps when the First Legion arrived to avert the ill-luck that many felt followed the Emperor's firstborn Legion. Such superstition was not without cause, for of those Imperial formations attached to support the First Legion in combat most came to bloody ends. Some were savaged by the monsters that the newly-dubbed Angels of Death had come to slay, and others would simply vanish, purported to have been silenced by the First Legion themselves, lest word of some dread enemy return to the camps with the survivors.

The warriors of the First Legion, ever of pragmatic mind, soon began to assume the guise in which they had been cast, adopting the skeletal icon of Death as their own and adorning their armour with funerary symbols. This self-imposed exile from the camaraderie of the Emperor's lesser servants was a point of pride among the First Legion. It was a sacrifice made to protect the mortal army from the terrors only the First Legion were fit to bear, though to some of those they fought beside, most especially the other Legiones Astartes, it seemed more vainglory and arrogance than humble sacrifice. The Masters of the First showed no interest in such slights, content to remain wreathed in malign rumour as they fought the battles that could never be lauded lest they break the minds of those who bore witness to the battle honours. For while the younger Legions were granted the lesser honour of standing triumphant at the mundane victories of conquest, the First Legion would be awarded the greater honour of acting as the Emperor's left hand, a brutally efficient weapon of grim aspect hidden behind the bright pageantry of the Imperial Army.

### THE EMPEROR'S OWN ANGELS OF DEATH

This was an honour they would bear throughout the war to unify Sol and beyond, a duty that kept them separate from the other Legions created in their image. As the younger Legions slowly began to reach the nominal strength required for the beginning of the Emperor's Great Crusade, the First Legion conducted a lonely vigil far from the light of Sol, scouring clean the Oort Cloud and keeping watch along the heliopause border for those terrors that sought to slip unnoticed into the Emperor's newly-claimed domain. This duty they accepted without complaint, taking pride in the role selected for them by the Emperor, for they were His Angels of Death – a name which, at that time, belonged to them alone. For nearly a decade they would dwell in the lightless depths of the system, burning clean the frozen moons of the outer system and freeing the few lost outposts of Mankind that still survived at the very outermost edges of the Sol System.

Here, the informal network of specialists within the Legion became the first of the Orders, dedicated to a singular focus of war beyond the wider scope of the Hosts; their craft honed in the battles at the dark edge of Sol, and the complex ciphers and rituals by which they recorded it entrenched over the long years of isolation. It was by the hard-won knowledge of these warriors that the Legion would prevail again and again in the most gruelling and hazardous battles faced by the warriors of the Emperor, the weaknesses of each foe exposed by sacrifice and encoded in the traditions of the Orders and the secrets of war in any environment catalogued in their archives. The Legion would return to the inner worlds purged of weakness and hardened by adversity, their armour no longer the flat grey of the other Legions, but a deep and impassive black. There would be no fanfare on their return to the Emperor's side, no parades of victory, merely the silent approval of the Emperor of Mankind and a place at the vanguard of the host that mustered ready to make war upon a hostile galaxy. Despite the hardships that would await them and the mighty foes they would face, none could doubt victory having witnessed the grim resolve and stoic pride in the faces of the black-clad warriors as they took their place at the head of the host.

There, amid the vast muster that took place around the shipyards of Saturn, the fleet granted to the First Legion stood out among the newly-built Saturnine pattern vessels and the ancient ships re-awakened from the macro-vaults of Mars, for the First Legion were granted the honour of a tithe of those few remaining Terran vessels. These ancient craft almost all dated back to the years before Old Night, relics of forgotten technologies and lost aspirations of grandeur. Among them were to be found massive Gloriana class battleships, Promethean class cruisers clad in dense layers of void shields and weapon-studded Tiamat class destroyers, all far surpassing more modern designs in potency and made available to few other than the Emperor's own guards. To each of His other Legions He bequeathed but a handful of such ships, while to the First Legion He granted a fleet.

This gift was not a simple reward for the heroics they had displayed in the fighting on Old Earth and beyond, but rather a necessary tool for those actions yet to come. For as the armies of the Emperor set forth on the Great Crusade and pushed beyond the edges of those few star charts that had survived Old Night, they encountered such terrors that the battles on Terra were made to seem inconsequential by comparison. In these dark places among the stars, the First Legion would find the reason for their reward, for in order to fight the monsters the Emperor had foreseen in His path, they would need monstrous weapons. Alone among the Legiones Astartes, they would make common use of the forbidden weaponry of Old Night, of gene-phage and rad wave, employed to wipe clean the nests of those enemies deemed too terrible to be faced in open battle. The First Legion were the fulcrum of the Emperor's wrath, the agency of His hate, for they brought not simple destruction but the all-encompassing oblivion of utter annihilation. They were the Angels of Death, a title that would one day encompass all of the Emperor's Space Marines but, in those brutal days of conquest and blood, it was theirs alone.

Even as other Legions fought to bring those human colonies discovered by the Expeditionary fleets to Compliance, the First Legion fought to hold back the hate of a galaxy filled with terrors. They took

war to the dens of monsters and legends without fear or hesitation, shattering the hold of nightmares on the future of Mankind; though only in the most secure vaults of the Imperial Archives do any records of these battles remain. They speak of Behtelgen IV, where the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter, formed mainly of warriors from the Hosts of Stone and Iron, assaulted a world whose mountains and crust had been hollowed out to form a fortress for a swarm-creature of protoplasmic and hyper-acidic slime, the nucleus of an infection that had spread through the void to infest a dozen worlds and seen millions rendered into little more than a nutrient slurry for the beasts. Scattered pictographs show the shattered husks of the once verdant worlds of the Osiryne Cluster where the First Legion's 19<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Fleet engaged a vast, sentient planet-killer – a technological abomination spawned by some long-forgotten empire and left to wreak havoc upon an uncaring universe – the records of the battle itself sealed by Grandmaster Thrane. These horrors, and a thousand more, were exterminated by the warriors of the First Legion, and all trace of the campaigns erased from records to protect the sanity of those unprepared for the raw mindless hate of the universe laid bare.

To those outside the ranks of the First, their record in the early years of the Great Crusade seems at best lacking in comparison to their brother Legions and at worst a fabrication. With many of their greatest triumphs shrouded in secrecy, they had less conventional triumphs to their name: merely a handful of worlds brought to Compliance where hundreds had burned in silence. What few knew was that it was in the sacrifice and valour of the First Legion that many of the Legiones Astartes' key doctrines were forged, with such tomes as the *Principia Bellicosa* formed, in part, from the strategies and tactics perfected by them as each Host strove to refine their own brand of warfare upon the most vile battlefields of the Great Crusade. Those that thrived on the field of battle would grow and pass their knowledge on, not only to their battle brothers within the Legion but to those without through the doctrines created in their wake. While those that struggled would fade from the roster of the Legion, ground to extinction by the inexorable hunger of war.

## THE HOSTS OF THE FIRST LEGION

In the days before the coming of their Primarch, the Hosts of the First Legion were named and organised differently to the Wings that were the later creation of Lion El'Jonson. The foundation of the doctrine that would lead to the formation of the Hosts is often credited to the Emperor Himself in the histories of the Legion, a strand of the great plan that He had formed for the first of His Legions. The list that follows is reconstructed from the records from 753.M30, a median point in the early history of the First Legion, and shows the main Hosts still known to history, which would later be reconfigured into the six Wings of the Hexagrammaton:



**The Host of Crowns:** Among the oldest of those Hosts still known in the records of the First Legion, being the original core of the First Legion's warriors who had served as champions among the vast hosts of the pre-Unity armies on Terra. The Host of Crowns specialised as linebreakers and vanguard warriors, experts in the honour-duels that had once been a key feature of Mankind's wars and icons of victory as much as they were fighters.



**The Host of Blades:** The core of the Legion as its numbers grew and it took to the field as a true army. The Host of Blades were the infantry cohorts that formed the ranks and held against the assault of the foe, the gun line that threw back their warriors and the bold columns that shattered their lines. They were masters of the close order infantry tactics that were the crux of the early Legiones Astartes order of battle, formed around the primacy of the Legion Tactical squad and the principal agent in the development of the first volumes of the *Principia Bellicosa*.



**The Host of Pentacles:** Now little more than a forgotten legend to most, the Host of Pentacles was the earliest attempt to incorporate the war-witches of Old Earth into the line of battle, to bring the might of the psyker to bear upon the foes of Mankind. It was a Host oft-maligned by those its adepts fought alongside, for in its early days there were as many calamities as triumphs for the battle psykers of the First Legion, and in time it would be an experiment that was brought to a close by the Grandmaster of the Legion.



**The Host of Iron:** Drawn at first from the hardy nomads of the Thulic tribes on Old Terra, adapting their ancient traditions to the modern battlefield, the Host of Iron was expert in the employment of armoured vehicles on the field of battle. From the lumbering gun-crawlers of Old Earth's pre-Unity armies, to the war engines designed and built for use by the Emperor's Legiones Astartes, the Host of Iron would pioneer many of the strategies that underpinned their use on the battlefield.



**The Host of Fire:** Among the most secretive of the early Hosts, the ranks of the Host of Fire were filled with spies, assassins and all the subtle tools of war. In war it was the eyes and bloody left hand of the Legion, the first to take to the field in the form of infiltrators and lone invigilators and the last to draw blood, and its interrogator consuls were widely feared for their talent.



**The Host of Bone:** Sometimes known as the Skandic Host, both for the wild and bloodthirsty tactics that were its preference as well as the primary recruiting ground of its warriors. The Host of Bone fought not to break the lines of a single army, but to crush the spirit of the foe entirely, seeking to find the weakness that almost all enemies hid and then cut it apart. Reavers without equal, they gave little credence to the noble ideals of civilised warfare and brought the most terrible weapons and tactics to the field of battle.



**The Host of Stone:** Experts in the static arts of war, of siege and the destruction of fortifications. The grim demeanour of these warriors is a key feature of many of the most bitter defences and bloody assaults in the early years of the Great Crusade, for to the adepts of the Host of Stone all war was a simple matter of determination. Those that did not yield to the foe, who stood impassive in the face of utter destruction, would find victory and those who gave way would be crushed underfoot.



**The Host of Wind:** Skirmishers and cavalry warriors, the Host of Wind excelled where warfare moved at the speed of the storm that was their namesake. Experts in the use of light armour and jetbikes, as well as swift assault troops, the Host of the Wind enjoyed a reputation as one of the most glorious in the First Legion, though it also bore one of the highest tallies of the dead for its reckless valour.



**The Host of the Void:** One of the last Hosts to emerge as a major force within the First Legion, the adepts of the Void were masters in the use of teleport assaults from low orbit as well as war amongst the heavens themselves. Shock assault infantry equipped with teleport displacement beacons, shipboard assault cadres and aircraft pilots were all to be found within the Host once the First Legion reached the stars in the wake of the wars on Old Earth.

### A Fortress of Pride

These trials would shape the Legion into a fearsome weapon, the largest and most heavily armed of all of the Legiones Astartes during the early years of the Great Crusade. They fielded more warriors under arms, maintained a larger fleet and had access to weaponry more powerful than any of their brother Legions at that time, even those such as the Luna Wolves and Space Wolves which had already been reunited with their Primarchs. The Grandmaster of the First Legion stood at the left hand of the Emperor, one of the most influential personages in the early Imperial Court whose counsel was second only to that of Malcador and Horus Lupercal. Despite the hidden nature of many of their triumphs, they were acknowledged by all as pre-eminent among their post-human kin; the most powerful force-at-arms in the serried ranks of the Imperial armies. In those heady years of conquest and victory the First Legion stood true to their name at the apex of Imperial might, feared by those who stood against the Emperor and his dream of unity and respected by all those who fought at their side.

Yet, as with all things, the glory of the First Legion would be a fragile thing and one that could endure only for a short time before becoming something less than it once was. For the First Legion, in those days before the return of their Primarch, the great foe that would topple them from their place of honour would not be any terror from the outer dark, but rather their own hubris. For, though the black cruisers of the Legion were ever to be found at the edges of the map, hunting for monsters in the dark between the stars, they now took a perverse pride in pitting themselves against only the most powerful of foes, those that wielded a power equal to that of their own, those in whom they saw the possibility of defeat. Other threats – deemed too insignificant for the First Legion, too weak to pose a real challenge, foes that would not test their strategies or mettle – would often be bypassed and left to the Imperial Army regiments and other Legion fleets that followed in their wake. Yet with each encounter they grew only stronger; no enemy, no matter how powerful or destructive, could stop them and each triumph only added to the shield of arrogance they had built about themselves.

The stubborn pride that had sustained them through hardships unnumbered now became a double-edged blade. The Hexagrammaton, once an ever-shifting body of knowledge that changed to match each challenge, had become fixed in place; the warriors of the First assuming that they had reached the apex of skill and could

learn no more. Recruitment from outside their ancient enclaves on Terra and a few other worlds slowed to but a trickle, with those from outside the traditional recruiting grounds considered less valuable. Each battle led them further down the path of wilful arrogance, each victory hailed as a triumph of their skill and each defeat dismissed as the folly of lesser breeds of warrior and leaders rightfully culled from the Legion by their failure. Tradition and ritual became more valued than innovation, with each Order and Host jealously guarding their own small fragments of the Legion's battle-lore, certain that it was this scrap of knowledge that was the true heart of the Legion's success.

The Legion began to turn in upon itself, the openness and inquisitive nature of their early years slowly being replaced by a secretive and tradition-bound approach. They had begun the Great Crusade as mentors and guides for the other Legions, seeking out the stratagems and tactics through which the potential of the Legiones Astartes might be fully realised, but now came more and more to resent those they had once guided. The other Legions claimed world after world for the Emperor, easy victories in the eyes of the First Legion, trivial conquests against unworthy foes, yet ones for which they received laurels and praise equal to that of the First Legion's hard-won battles. Some also came to rival the power of the First: the Ultramarines, now re-united with their Primarch, could claim more warriors under arms, and the Imperial Fists, under Dorn, boasted the firepower of immense relics such as the *Phalanx* in their fleets. To a Legion that had built its pride upon a sense of authority, some might say superiority, to find itself now merely one among many would shake its foundations.

Perhaps the final blow to their fragile pride was to come at Canis-Balor, where simple conquest and stubborn complacency became ignominy and disaster. Here, in an otherwise insignificant system home to a xenos breed as yet uncatalogued by the sage-brothers of the Orders of Extinction and Annihilation, the First Legion and its Grandmaster committed a small force to the assault, confident in their ability to prevail and secure in the tested strategies of the Hosts and Orders. Yet the xenos of Canis-Balor, their identity long since purged from records, proved a threat unlike any faced before, fighting without regard for sane tactics and with a technology that defied rational explanation. The First Legion's initial attack was repulsed with heavy losses, an indignity that the First Legion had not known for decades. Defeat was a foe they thought they had conquered and pride began to cloud their wisdom. A second assault followed and then a third, each repulsed in turn with mounting losses.

With his faultless record now tainted and his pride sorely wounded, Grandmaster Thrane led one final assault, refusing to accept that any might equal his own warriors in skill and tenacity. This assault, even weakened by the losses already sustained, cut a swathe through the xenos forces defending the planet, but could not overcome the sheer numerical superiority of the foe. Overwhelmed, it teetered on the brink of annihilation.

Grandmaster Thrane, realising the folly of pride that had driven him into battle, chose to remain behind with his lifeguard, sacrificing himself to allow the retrieval of valuable combat assets. Canis-Balor was reduced to ashes from orbit, all trace of life on its surface incinerated in nucleonic fire, a measure that many argued should have been taken earlier had pride not forced their hand. All records of the foe they had fought were sealed away, though they would later be recovered by the Order of Broken Claws before being sealed once again for reasons equally lost to history.

The loss, both of the battle and of Grandmaster Thrane, proved a catalyst for turmoil among the ranks of the Legion. Each of the Masters of the Hosts and the Preceptors of the Orders were sure that had their doctrines been given primacy, they could have turned the tide of battle. A subtle struggle for power erupted among the complex tiers of authority within the Legion, a struggle that slowed the pace of their conquests and threatened to unseat the Legion from its pre-eminent position of honour once and for all.

### The Ill-made Knight

This struggle was fought most fiercely upon the floor of the First Legion's great Hall of Council at Gramarye, at the heart of the Legion. There, where once the Masters and Preceptors of the Legion had created much of the wisdom that now guided the Legiones Astartes as a whole, a storm of vitriol and admonition had erupted. Each of the Masters of the Legion, unable or unwilling to see fault in their own wisdom, sought to attach it to that of their fellows so that it might be excised from the First Legion. Most contentious of all was the selection of a new Grandmaster, for few would countenance the selection of a warrior from a Host other than their own. As the pace of the First Legion's conquests slowed and the deliberations of the Council of Masters stagnated, it would be the intercession of Malcador, first among the Emperor's confidants, to break the deadlock. Rather than present some censure on behalf of the Emperor, he chose instead to sponsor a candidate of his own, seeking to stir the Legion from its doldrums and return them wholeheartedly to war. His words to the Council of Masters were carved upon the lintel of the chamber, such was their impact:

*"A fortress can be held upright by many pillars, alone they are nothing but together they are mighty. Yet, a fortress must have a master or else all its strength is for nothing".*

The warrior nominated by the Sigillite was elected by unanimous vote of the Council; he was neither Master of Hosts nor Preceptor of the Orders, but a war-worn captain from among the vast ranks of the First Legion. Malcador's logic was impeccable, for such a candidate stood for no one branch of the Legion's arts alone, but rather for all as one. Where any of the venerable masters would find nothing but opposition from their peers, a simple warrior found acceptance from all. The warrior chosen was Urian Vendraig, once captain of the 14<sup>th</sup> Company of the 8<sup>th</sup> Chapter, a Terran taken into the Legion after the Emperor had united that war-torn world, and with a grand record of victory as his banner and as yet uninitiated into the inner mysteries of any one Host or Order. His was a legacy of bloodshed in battle, of rousing speeches and glorious last stands. He had stood shoulder-to-shoulder with his battle-brothers through all his service and spent but little time in ritual or doctrinal debate.

His new task was to unify a divided Legion and return them to the Great Crusade and the purpose laid out for them by the Emperor unburdened by doubt and division. As a warrior first and foremost, Vendraig saw the value of bringing the Legion fully into the Emperor's Great Crusade, taking its rightful place at the head of their brothers rather than only serving at the fringes of history. For the first time in the Great Crusade, a small contingent of carefully-selected remembrancers was allowed to join the Grandmaster's entourage, attached to his personal guard and given strictly limited access to the Legion's records, so that they might bear witness to the First Legion's ascension. All that remained was to find a challenge worthy of the Legion, some terrible foe to bind them once again in hatred of the enemy and, as though gifted to them by the Emperor, word arrived of a new terror encountered on the far rim of the Great Crusade: a race known to history as the Rangda.

Encountered by the 105<sup>th</sup> Pioneer Company of the V<sup>th</sup> Legion on an isolated world along the northern rim of the galaxy, the Rangda were considered a grave threat to the expanding Imperium. Though at that time their territory was thought to encompass only a single system, they possessed a vile technology and fearsome aspect that warranted the most extreme of responses. Mustering a fleet numbering hundreds of capital class warships the new Grandmaster descended upon the isolated system of Advex-mors, where the Rangda had created a vast artificial war-moon, an immense engine of war that had cost millions of slave labourers from a hundred worlds their lives. This monstrous weapon was defended by a fleet of lumpen and ugly Rangdan war-barques, each bristling with weapons and crewed by slaves whose neural collars enforced their unflinching obedience. The battle that ensued would leave the system of Advex-mors as little more than ashes and rubble, all six worlds claimed by the Rangda were rendered uninhabitable, their fleets reduced to drifting fields of wreckage and their vast slave armies utterly annihilated. The campaign lasted for four months and cost the lives of some 5,000 of the First Legion, but as the banner of the Imperium was raised over those broken fragments of the Rangdan war-moon that had rained down upon the burned husk of Advex-mors beneath, the Imperium was reminded of the sheer power of the First Legion.

## THE RANGDAN CAMPAIGNS

The Imperium is a fragile sliver of sanity in the void, besieged upon all sides by forces of monstrous dread that are held at bay only by the blood and sacrifice of millions of forgotten heroes. For every crusade trumpeted to the masses as a safe legacy of triumph and glory, like the much lauded victory at Ullanor, there are a hundred dire tales of desperate stalemate with forces malignant beyond mortal ken. Were the populous of the Imperium to realise the dire peril in which they existed in the tenuous days of the Great Crusade then it is likely that the terror would have kept them prisoner on Old Earth, never to reach out for the stars. Of all these hidden threats and dire wars against the unknown, the most infamous among scholars of the forbidden is that of the Rangdan Campaigns.

These campaigns have long been relegated to the footnotes of history, little understood by the common historian save as an obscure reference to a forgotten evil. In reality the wars against the Rangda threatened the utter destruction of all the realms of Mankind, the destruction of His dominion and the butchery of its subjects. More than 80,000 of the Legiones Astartes and uncounted millions of the Imperial Army gave their lives to hold back the hordes of the Rangda and their cohorts, over wars fought across some two decades of the Great Crusade. The Dark Angels stand prominent in the telling of this tale, and it is by their hand that so few details are known, for it was deemed by the First Legion that all knowledge of the Rangda and the wars fought against them should be purged for the good of the Imperium.

Much of the fact surrounding those battles has long since been obscured by rumour and invention, with even the true form of the Rangda forgotten. All that remains are a few blurred and indistinct pict of fallen Rangdan warriors and ancient horror stories speaking of towering xenos of monstrous appearance and terrifying intellect. They were conquerors and destroyers whose seat of power lay along the very edges of the galaxy, a race whose foul technology and cruel ambition were a match for that of the Imperium and whose determination to rule over all others threatened to drown the Emperor's dream of empire in blood.

It is beyond the scope of this volume to address the full impact and devastation wrought during the campaigns that would see the eventual extinction of the Rangda, though perhaps future works may address this omission. However, considering the integral role of the First Legion in the events of all three Rangdan Campaigns, it seems appropriate that the base facts of the fighting be presented here, at least in brief.

The wars fought against the Rangda number three in total. The first of these campaigns, the assault and destruction of Advex-mors in 839.M30, is most probably the first encounter between the forces of the Emperor and the Rangda, and has been covered elsewhere in this treatise in some detail. Advex-mors would later be discovered to be little more than a small outpost of the Rangdan empire, a minor station at the edge of their domains. In the aftermath of the Imperium's assault, the Rangda paused in their conquests elsewhere to turn their eye back upon Advex-mors and the surrounding systems, now swarming with the Imperium's colonies and fleets. The victory at Advex-mors, despite the steep price paid to secure it, would prove to be little more than the prelude to the true assault.

In 862.M30 the Rangda returned to Imperium space, marking the start of the second Rangdan war. They came not with a single small fleet, but with a vast armada comprising thousands of vessels as well as over a dozen war-moons, a force of might far exceeding that of the small garrisons and Expeditionary fleets in the area. They struck the northern fringe of the Imperium like a thunderbolt, annihilating the fleets set in defence over the fledgling colonies and forcing their colonists into neural shackles. It was only by the efforts of Expeditionary fleets under the banner of the V<sup>th</sup> and XIX<sup>th</sup> Legions that the tide was delayed long enough for Imperial forces to rally, and the price they would pay to buy this respite was staggering. Making a stand

at the isolated Forge World of Xana, the combined forces of the V<sup>th</sup> and XIX<sup>th</sup> Legions fought a bitter holding action for eight months at a cost of 3,000 of the Legiones Astartes and many hundreds of thousands of Mechanicum thralls. The siege of Xana would be broken by the furious onslaught of the Dark Angels and Death Guard, shattering the Rangdan blockade and cutting a path through the slave cohorts on the surface to once again open up the forge as a beachhead for the Imperium's counter-attacks.

What would follow was more than two decades of war, millions upon millions of deaths, 19 inhabited systems laid waste and a ban on further expeditions past the exclusion posts on Endyris and Morox. Before the crisis was declared ended, contingents from nine separate Legions would become embroiled in the fighting, with more than 300,000 Space Marines being deployed at the height of the conflict during the climactic assault on Taxal. Due to the widespread nature of the campaign, the battle honour goes to no single warlord, though three of the Primarchs were known to have led their troops into battle against the Rangda. Despite this, the Primarch of the Dark Angels is widely held to be the foremost commander of the war.

The last known battle of the second Rangdan campaign is thought to have occurred in 882.M30, a chance encounter with a battered Rangdan fleet, a broken remnant of the vast armada that had challenged the Imperium and lost. At the time the truth of the Rangdan campaign, of the slaughter endured and how the Imperium had teetered on the brink of ruin, was concealed. Those worlds tainted beyond recovery were abandoned and the surviving veterans sworn to silence or eliminated, for it was deemed necessary that the Rangda must vanish if the Imperium was to rebuild. Much of its legend would come later, the invention of Remembrancers and ideologues eager to promote the glory of the Great Crusade, and was composed of as much fiction as fact. For most this marked the end of the wars with the Rangda, an end to one threat among thousands. A simple, if bloody, way marker in the Great Crusade's inexorable path.

The third and final Rangdan war, more commonly known as The Rangdan Xenocide, is little known and in many histories completely absent. It was conducted under the orders of the Divisio Militaris by the combined forces of the Dark Angels and Space Wolves, the final and irrevocable solution to the threat of the Rangda. That great and terrible race had been sorely wounded by their losses in the second war with the Imperium, but not vanquished. They had returned to their ancient home worlds, and there, nourished by hate and a dark hunger, they had grown strong once again. By chance those nests were discovered by a roving Company of White Scars after the lifting of the edict of exclusion in 887.M30, news the sons of Jaghatai brought to the courts of the Lion and the Wolf. Those two, often antagonistic, warlords were united by the same bleak purpose, for if the Rangda still lived, they must be swiftly and utterly destroyed lest they rise again and ignite another great war. Together they and their Legions visited hell upon the remaining Rangda, scouring their last worlds clean from orbit and then descending to verify the termination of every hive and fortress with blade and flame.

This last campaign was no war, but a brutal and one-sided extermination. Neither Russ nor the Lion held any illusions of tawdry chivalry to stay their hands, and they took a savage and final satisfaction in the utter annihilation of every last warrior and worker of the Rangdan breed. In the space of a year the galaxy was wiped clean of the Rangda, their last fastnesses torn down and all traces of their works brought to ruin. The world of Rangda, once a vast and hideous city, was left as little more than plains of fractured glass formed from atomic fire, and became the site of a chantry house of the First Legion, home of the Order of Broken Claws, the keepers of

the last set of codices that detail the Rangda and their weaknesses. This was the end of both the Rangda and the campaigns against them, a quiet and undignified slaughter undertaken with the stoic determination that was the hallmark of the two rival Primarchs of Caliban and Fenris. If any of the xenos breed known to the Imperium as the Rangda survive, in some far flung outpost beyond the edge of the galaxy then they have not returned to seek their vengeance, but the sentinels placed by the First Legion still watch and wait, and should they falter in some distant future where the Legions have ceased to be, I fear for the Imperium.



The epic poems and depictions of the Advex-mors campaign were spread across the Imperium by the Remembrancers that had accompanied the fleet. The First Legion had taken one of the direst threats to emerge from beyond the borders of the Imperium head-on in their place of power and crushed them utterly and without mercy, leaving no stone upon stone. Yet, it was but one great victory among a thousand others, with each of the Legions able to boast of achievements just as impressive, their returned Primarchs forging legends that would resound across the galaxy for thousands of years. Far from ending the strife within the Legion, it seemed only to deepen the malaise that gripped its heart, a sickness that sought to corrupt that once unparalleled force. Pride had taken hold of the warriors and masters of the Legion, and only blood would assuage its hunger.

In the wake of the campaign at Advex-mors, the newly-anointed Grandmaster sought other badges of glory for his Legion. A dozen victories were claimed for the First, each more reckless than the last, and yet it was still considered nothing more than what was expected by the Divisio Militaris on distant Terra. Driven on by a hunger for glory that grew with each and every campaign honour, the Grandmaster and his warriors arrived at the non-Compliant stronghold of Karkasarn, a fortress-world that had resisted Guilliman and the storied ranks of his elite for almost a month. The patient warlord of the Ultramarines had set his strategies, intending to besiege the fortress in detail and save his Legion the unwarranted casualties a foolhardy frontal assault would bring. The arrival of Grandmaster Vendraig and his warriors did not change this strategy, and the Lord of Ultramar expected them to heed his

counsel and join his camp. The warriors of the First, seeing before them a chance to humble the great Primarch, formed ranks before the great kilometres-high gates of the world-fortress of Karkasarn and charged.

A wedge of black armoured warriors and engines of war, 10,000 strong and preceded by the same great banners that had once gone to war at the side of the Emperor Himself, descended upon the city-sized gatehouse. Hundreds fell in the initial assault, blasted apart by rampart cannon and immolated by plasma-gouts issued forth from hidden murder holes in the fortifications. They forced a breach at the cost of their own lives, opening a path for the heavy guns to burn a hole in the vast gates and into the maze of fortified boulevards beyond. His hand forced by the actions of the First, Guilliman and his own troops advanced, but slowly, cautiously, taking each objective methodically and with minimal losses. The vanguard of the First Legion soon outpaced them, making for the central plaza and the citadel at its heart. Though they would reach it long before the Ultramarines, a final act of treachery by the desperate overlords of Karkasarn would undermine the First Legion's victory: a hidden atomic mine detonating under the keep's tower and killing the second Grandmaster of the First Legion as he stood upon the threshold of triumph, burying both Vendraig and his lifeguard cadre from the Host of Death.

### Of Pentacles and Whispers

Not all of the lost Hosts of the early First Legion would simply vanish, leaving no legacy for the blood shed in their name. Of those doctrines that would fall to the vicissitudes of battle, being found impractical for general deployment among the Legions, there were some whose merit would remain to be explored in other forms and adapted to serve the Emperor even in death. Foremost among these 'failed' Hosts was the Host of Pentacles, a gathering of those among the First Legion who showed aptitude for, or noted resistance to, the fickle and perverse powers of the occult; a discipline held in favour by a number of the most profane warlords defeated by the Emperor on Ancient Terra. Utilising the knowledge taken from the fallen sanctums of those tyrants of Old Earth, the First Legion had attempted to create their own sorcerous cabal, warrior-adepts spread among the Legion to enhance the psychic template granted them by the Emperor with the esoteric arts and to advise its commanders when they must fight a foe armed with such knowledge and abilities.

The zenith and nadir of the Host's brief existence would come at the Sealing of the Black Gate in 810.M30, a battle which has long been kept secret, known only to those with access to the deepest vaults of the Imperial Archive. There, in that dark realm which Mankind had trespassed upon unannounced and uninvited, would the adepts of the Host – known then as Quaesitors – serve both as the Legion's greatest weapon and most dangerous weakness. The weakest of will, lacking any formal training in defensive techniques, would succumb to the control of entities beyond the ken of mortal man and wreak havoc among the battle lines of their own brothers before being put down. The battle was only won by the strength of mind and blood of the Master of the Host of Pentacles and the finest Quaesitors of the Host, who sealed the breach and barred the gates into this realm of reality by means of their psychic powers.

In the wake of this cataclysmic struggle the Host of Pentacles was disbanded, its Quaesitors returned to the ranks of the Legion and given over to other Hosts, their potent but unrefined skills deemed too dangerous and unpredictable to be of use. Of the once Master of the Host of Pentacles, Idrik Kybalos, all reference disappears in the records of the Dark Angels and he does not return to another position within the Legion. He reappears almost a century later, listed on the founding charter of the Librarius alongside such luminaries as Magnus the Red and Jaghatai Khan, his work no doubt preserved by order of the Emperor until it would be needed once again. Indeed, much of the early training program of the Librarius incorporates the techniques pioneered by the adepts of the Host of Pentacles mixed with the traditions of Prospero and Chogoris, a tribute to the sacrifice and skills of those warriors that history has forgotten.

Though their losses had been grievous, both in number and in significance, victory had been seized in the Legion's bloodied grasp, its savour all the more sweet for the price paid to earn it. Yet the Lord of Ultramar, his blue-clad warriors last to the battle and last to the victory, offered them no words of congratulations. He did not acknowledge the skills or the fortitude of the First Legion, gave no salute to their bravery or their fallen. Instead, he offered only these words to the battered ranks of the victorious First as they stood about the bodies of their fallen champions: *"Vainglory is a poor strategist, for he renders triumph a bitter trophy and an empty prize. Today you have proven the strength of your Legion, but not its wisdom".*

### Along a Knife's Edge

It would be in death that Grandmaster Vendraig would finally achieve his aim, for it was the first stirrings of hate that would unite his Legion, an animosity that was born with his death and festered in the ignominious victory of Karkasarn. That world was abandoned by the First Legion and left to the warriors of Ultramar, its battle honour



**NAME:** CALIBAN  
**CLASSIFICATION:** LEGIONES ASTARTES  
**HOME WORLD:** [FEUDAL/DEATH WORLD]  
**SYSTEM DATA:** [CLASSIFIED AGEISINE/BLACK]  
**STELLAR GRID:** 04-DE-7751/THETA  
**SEGMENTUM:** OBSCURUS/PROXIME  
**NOTATION:** HAZARDOUS [FAUNA]/FEUDAL,  
TEMPERATE/HEAVILY FORESTED, [CLASSIFIED  
AGEISINE/BLACK]

++[FLEET OF THE DARK ANGELS LEGION]++  
++[DISPENSATION IN THE PURVIEW OF  
THE 1<sup>ST</sup> LEGION]++  
++[CURRENT STATUS/LOCATION [016.M31]  
CLASSIFIED AGEISINE/BLACK]++

excised from Legion records and marked on banners only by an empty laurel. The only thing that the Angels of Death would take with them from Karkasarn was a subtle taint, a lingering sense of ignominy that soured their conquests and achievements and drove them to even greater feats to prove their valour. For despite the deeds of their past and the victory at Karkasarn, the Ultramarines saw them simply as equals – brothers rather than mentors. To the First Legion, whom the Emperor had created first and kept close at His side, this seemed more of an insult than the harsh words of Guilliman.

Once more the Council of Masters took the reins of the First Legion, that most potent weapon of war, and split it across the stars to seek vindication in the most deadly contests of arms they could find, each eager to prove the worth of their Legion and their Host. They gave battle without remorse and grasped at triumphs without regard for the cost attached to their trophies. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Chapters took the coral citadels of Melnoch from the Fra'al in a single night of brutal close quarters slaughter, at a cost of a tenth of their own strength, in order to outpace the onslaught of the Luna Wolves elsewhere in the cluster. Upon the rust deserts of Vorsingun a force of 1,000 initiates of the Host of Iron, gathered from 11 companies and crewing over 400 engines of war, took the field against a throng of brutish orkoid hulks over three times their number, running ahead of the main assault

force to claim victory for themselves at a fearful price. Yet for each victory, each battle honour claimed by the blood of its warriors, the First Legion came no closer to regaining the glory of its inception.

All across the galaxy the Legiones Astartes had each become a unique weapon of war, having taken the doctrines of the *Principia Bellicosa* developed from the trials of the First Legion's campaigns and surpassed them, adapting them to their own needs. In Ultramar, the grand kingdom of the Ultramarines forged by the hand of Guilliman, the Primarch of the XIII<sup>th</sup> Legion had gone so far as to pen a new treatise of war to improve upon the scheme by which the Legions had organised themselves since they had left Terra. The golden age of the First Legion, those halcyon days when it had stood as sole guardian of the fledgling Imperium, had all but ended. The nature of those hidden battles meant that they would live on only in the memories of the oldest warriors of the Legion and in the secret histories of the Imperial Archives, a bitter price to pay for the first of all the Emperor's Legions that their own honour would ever hold their greatest achievements captive. Pride, which had sustained the Legion through all of the horrors of its past, all of its solitary crusades and valiant last stands, would not allow them to accept a lesser place in the Imperium's order of battle. Pride would see the Legion ground to dust before it would let the younger Legions eclipse them.

As the Great Crusade drew to its mid-point, the turning of the tide in the Emperor's war to conquer the galaxy, the First Legion stood at a precipice of their own. The years since the death of Grandmaster Vendraig had seen them reduced in number, but not in spirit. Where the other Legions had prospered and grown stronger, the Angels of Death had seen their power squandered in suicidal assaults and campaigns gruelling beyond the ken of mortal soldiers. Those wars had cost them warriors and war engines, more perhaps than was wise, but had honed the fighting skills of its warriors to a keen, but brittle edge. To their allies they were grim death-seekers, ever searching for the mightiest foes against which to match their skills and never retreating from battle, even in the face of annihilation. Its leadership divided among the Council of Masters and its warriors taken by a fever of battle-lust, the Legion was spread across the galaxy and engaged in wars beyond count, each Chapter, Host and Order seeking to regain what had been lost. Had it continued down that path it is likely that the First Legion would have fallen, slowly and inevitably cut to pieces on the double-edged blade of its pride. Yet this was not to be, for a small fleet of Jaghatai's roving hunters, the White Scars, would discover a world known as Caliban and the Emperor would bring forth from its dark forests the First Legion's salvation.

## THE SON OF THE FOREST

As with much knowledge regarding the First Legion and its master, there was a vast body of rumour and little fact regarding the earliest years of the Primarch Lion El'Jonson. It is known that he, along with the other Primarchs, vanished from the Emperor's laboratories on Terra before the beginning of the Great Crusade, removed from the hidden facilities at the heart of His secret fortress by means unknown. Over 150 years later, the young Lion would be discovered by a hunting party of the Knights of the Order in the depths of Caliban's forests. Within these forests dwelt a breed of creature now unknown in the galaxy, monstrous chimaeric weapons left over from the Age of Strife, driven by a hunger that could not be slaked and fully capable of rendering an armoured warrior into a ruin of blood and flesh in seconds. How long the young Primarch had survived alone in the green deeps cannot be known for certain, for the Lion himself has seldom spoken of those times. The knights that found him assumed from his stature and bearing that he could not have spent more than a decade alone, but the growth and development of the Primarchs does not follow the pattern of mortal man, they do not age as do those untouched by the Emperor's genius. The span of years in which the Lion prowled the sea of trees may well have been far longer than can be easily comprehended. Indeed, the legends of those fortified towns that bordered the stretch of forest where the Primarch was discovered spoke of a forest spirit that haunted the depths, a spirit of small stature but whose form was that of a man who was known only by the mysterious marks he left in his wake and had existed for nearly a century before the discovery of El'Jonson.

Regardless of whether the Lion had stalked the forest of Caliban for a decade or a century, that time had left its mark upon him. The lightless depths beneath the canopy teemed with horrors, rapacious killers that often emerged from the deeps to hunt among the towns and villages of Caliban's dwindling human population. There, amongst the most foul monstrosities imaginable, the Lion spent his childhood. He learned to keep silent, lest he grant advantage to those that stalked him, he learned to fight only when he could win, lest he be wounded too gravely to survive, and he learned that once battle was joined it could end only in death, that the strong would survive and the weak would fall. He fought for his life with nothing but his bare hands and a determination so inhumanly strong that it served him better than any iron-forged blade. No feral berserker, but rather a calculating hunter ruled by logic and not simple rage. When he was discovered at last by men, he was judged so dangerous that it might be best to have him slain, treated as one of the beasts of the forest, so akin to them was he. It was the judgement of one man that would see him brought into the realm of Mankind and away from that of beasts, that man was named Luther.

As a champion among the warriors that had defended Caliban through the long years of Old Night, Luther named his new charge Lion El'Jonson, the Son of the Forest, and raised him as a knight of one of the many Orders of Caliban. He taught him the laws and strictures of the Order, to mete justice as a man rather than as a beast, and gave him something that the young Primarch had never before had – a reason to fight beyond simple survival. Caliban was a dying world, its people besieged by the beasts that thronged in the hidden depths of the forest and slowly driven to extinction. The Order, which built and manned the great fortresses at the borders of the wild, had vainly tried to stem the tide but had succeeded only at slowing the pace of their destruction, for they were too few to do more than defend their fastnesses from the constant assaults. Growing and learning faster than any normal man, El'Jonson would quickly prove not only

a superlative warrior and strategist, but also a leader whose quiet confidence and iron will drew recruits to the Order in numbers never before seen. With each victory against the beasts of the forest, each fell head planted upon the walls of the Order's fortresses, more warriors took up arms with hope in more than simple survival. Lion El'Jonson stood at the forefront of this new movement, not by choice, for he had ever been taciturn and prone to seek solitude, but by action, always to be found at the fore of any battle and unafraid to speak his mind or act when others might hesitate. By his order the old traditions that allowed only the nobility to fight were dropped, swelling the Order's ranks further at the cost of some dissent within the ranks of the more traditional knights.

Within the space of a decade, the Order's ranks had grown to the point that they were able to take the war for their survival into the forest itself. With Lion El'Jonson and Luther at their head, they began a crusade to rid their world of its curse, bringing flame and steel to the lair of the monsters that had hunted them for generations beyond count. The war was long and bloody, with hundreds slain for each monstrous nest put to the torch, and many grew weary of the slaughter – all save the grim knight, El'Jonson. The Lion knew that mercy had no place in war, to leave with their task unfinished and with any of the foe yet alive would be to waste all of the lives spent in its pursuit. There could be only one end and that was the total annihilation of the enemy by whatever means was needed. He set the knights to ambush the beasts as they came to feed, poisoned the pools at which the creatures drank and set ablaze vast tracts of the forest to set them to flight. He gave the foe no respite and hunted them till no more could be found, and when his warriors spoke of his prowess and victories, it was fear that coloured their words as much as awe. Some feared his new methods and determination enough to declare open rebellion, some fearing the changes he had wrought upon the tradition-bound people of Caliban and others simply seeking to claim the power Lion El'Jonson had come to wield. These traitors to the cause of Caliban's salvation were put down without mercy, the ranks of their soldiers culled in their entirety and their fastnesses torn down as a warning to others.

At the end of the crusade, with both the Lion and Luther exhausted by the terrible cost the fighting had exacted, it was El'Jonson that received the battle honours and the title of Grand Master of the Order. He accepted the accolade without fanfare, for such human eccentricities still seemed less worthwhile to the youth that had grown to manhood among monsters. He understood little the value some men placed upon titles and rewards, for his grim and solitary habits had always kept him distant from others, and he saw not the change his rise had wrought in Luther. For where they had once competed as equals for honour and victory, the Primarch had now eclipsed his mentor and brother, leaving him behind as he grudgingly accepted the people's adulation. It was a wound dealt in ignorance, for El'Jonson did not see the spark of pride that burned within his brother ignite to jealousy in the face of his triumphs, a wound that would fester in the years to follow.

Had the Emperor not arrived shortly after this victory, descending from the heavens to claim His lost son, then perhaps this wound might have healed in Caliban's new peace, but this was not to be. The Emperor came to heap new glories upon the Lion, granting him command of the First Legion, whom He renamed the Dark Angels for an ancient Calibanite myth that spoke to their grim mien, and making him a general within the vast army that sought to conquer

the galaxy. Lion El'Jonson would soon leave for distant Terra and his new destiny, bringing his uncompromising and remorseless style of war to the ranks of the Emperor's forces. To him would fall the role of watchman at the edge of the Emperor's domain, the bane of monsters and beasts and the bearer of weapons too terrible to entrust to any other. He would be the cold and inevitable destroyer, the doom that

once unleashed could not be recalled, subverted or delayed; taught by the black depths of the forest the value of cold, ruthless tenacity. He was the first of all the Primarchs, war distilled into its rawest and most fundamental essence, death that walked like a man, and the galaxy would be forever changed by his return.



### A BLADE REFORGED

Only a small honour guard of the First Legion would accompany the Emperor to Caliban, for the Legion was still scattered to war zones across the front lines of the Great Crusade. A mere 500, mostly veterans of the Host of Death, would precede the Lord of Mankind as He journeyed to greet His lost son, the Knight of Caliban known as 'The Lion'. Arrayed in the jet black armour and mortuary symbols that had come to be their mark, it seemed as if the old tales of Calibanite legend had come to life, a host of Dark Angels mustering before the stronghold of the Order and kneeling before the Lion. In that initial, fateful encounter the Legion would earn a new title from the first of the Primarchs, for he saw fit to test the mettle of his new followers by personally duelling the captain of the Company. He stood against the Cataphractii-armoured warrior and matched his Calibanite steel to the power field-wreathed blade of his opponent and left him wounded in the dust; he took their measure and they his and both learned a respect for the other. From that day forth the Primarch would call them his Dark Angels, a title that soon spread throughout the Legion. Within a short span of time, the Emperor arrived to reclaim His lost son and induct Caliban formally into the Imperium of Mankind, its vast forests cleared for industry and the first tithes of recruits claimed from among its population to replenish the depleted ranks of the First Legion.

The Council of Masters on distant Gramarye would soon hear of Lion El'Jonson, the man who was their Primarch, and once more they were riven by dissension. Though none would doubt the word of the Emperor that this knight of Caliban was their lord, they were split by shame and pride. Some were stricken by remorse at the state of the Legion he would inherit, while others wished to set forth and bring a suitable victory as a trophy to set at the feet of their new master. All across the galaxy, the First Legion reacted much the same, some detachments redoubling their efforts and throwing themselves into combat with renewed zeal to bring honour to the Legion, while others sought to extricate themselves from their campaigns so they might travel to Caliban and ask forgiveness of their returned Primarch. The Lion himself was brought to Terra by the Emperor, that he might learn of the war He wished him to prosecute and of the role he would play in the years yet to come.

His brother Primarchs would come to call him dour and morose, given to dark moods and heedless of the counsel of others, but he saw things simply and starkly. He learned on Terra that the war he had fought in Caliban's

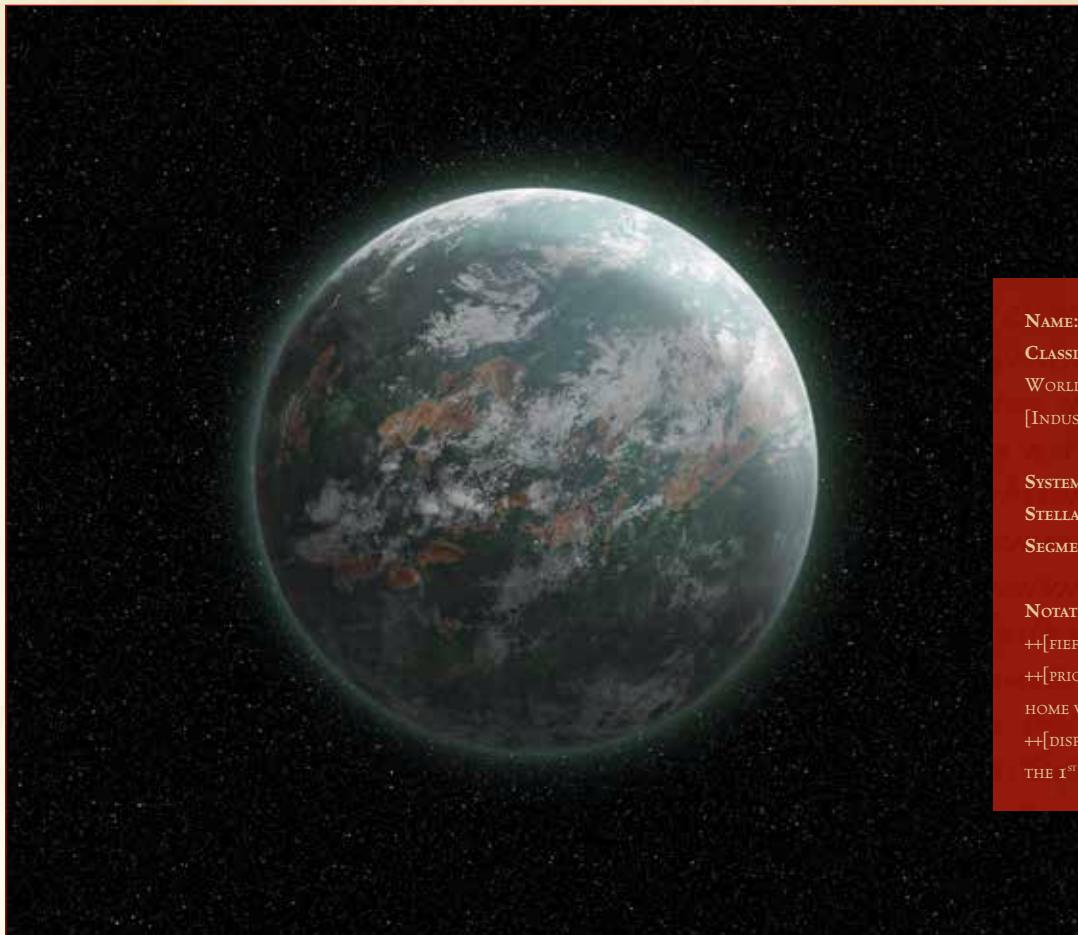
monster-haunted forests had not been ended, but only begun – for the galaxy teemed with monsters to be slain. He dedicated himself to one task: killing. He had no time for Sanguinius' chivalric ideals, for Mortarion's arbitrary hatred or Fulgrim's obsession with beauty, such passion only obfuscated the true goal: that the enemies of Mankind should be destroyed. As the first of all the Primarchs created by the Emperor, he was both more and less than his brothers: a primal force of destruction whose single-minded focus wrought him more inhuman than Magnus. He could stand against any of his kin, match blades with Fulgrim and stalemate the strategies of Guilliman and, though some might exceed him in the details of some tasks there were none that were his equal in the grander scope of battle, none whose will could match the bloody-minded determination of the Lion. His talents and resolute confidence, which some might have called arrogance, won him few friends but saw him placed at the head of his Legion faster than any of the Primarchs to be rediscovered before him.

The Legion he inherited was in sore need of its Primarch and in need of a new beginning. Scattered and fractured, the First Legion remained a powerful fighting force but one whose purpose had become lost in the long years of the Great Crusade. Before the coming of the Primarch they had been mentors and guides for the younger Legions, but their students had long since found their own wisdom. Now Lion El'Jonson would grant them a new purpose, one in keeping with the Primarch's own methods and the vision he had for the Emperor's Great Crusade. His first acts were to merge many of the teachings of Caliban's techno-feudal aristocracy with those of the First Legion's Hexagrammaton, taking the best of Terra and Caliban to create something new and more refined, and to gather the scattered fragments of his Legion together. With the first generations of recruits taken from the ranks of the worthy among the knights of Caliban still undergoing implantation of gene-seed, hypnagogic indoctrination and live-fire training, the Lion prepared to embark on a crusade of his own. With him were to be found the original 500 warriors that had first arrived at Caliban as well as those Chapters and battle groups that had sought him out to pledge their allegiance, as well as auxilia companies raised from the stock of Caliban to serve the Imperial Army, and a small retinue of tech-magi from the Forge of Xana, eager to court favour with the new Primarch. In full they numbered 20,000 warriors, perhaps a third of the Legion, each marked by the new beginning they were

pledged to, adorned with the winged sword of Lion El'Jonson's Dark Angels instead of the grim marks of an age now ended.

Lion El'Jonson led his host forth, seeking out those Companies of his sons that had not yet found their way to his side. To find those scattered warriors amid the chaos of the Great Crusade, a war waged across a galaxy by ten billion warriors under arms, was no small feat and made possible only by the genius of the Lion himself and the arts of the adepts of Xana, who quickly parsed the data banks of the Divisio Militaris to discern in which campaigns the First Legion bled and died. For any other Legion the arrival of their newly-discovered Primarch might have been the cause for raucous celebration or ostentatious parades, but not so for the grim First. News of Lion El'Jonson's approach most often spurred the warriors of the First to redouble their efforts in battle, throwing themselves upon the foe without care for their survival so that when they stood before their father they might offer him the blood-soaked laurels of victory. Each battle-worn Company received their new lord with the same stoic reserve, with silent courtesy and brief but solemn vows of allegiance, and each was tested in battle by the Primarch himself before they joined the ranks of his growing entourage. As was the way of the Lion, he demonstrated his worth by his actions and skill rather than with words and vague promises, allowing those who might doubt him to match their blades against his in honest combat. None among the Legion could question his right to lead after such a trial, though some few within the Legion harboured misgivings at the sudden changes the Primarch brought to the centuries-old doctrines of the Legion and the shift in authority he represented.

Within a few short years, the Lion had gathered the vast majority of his Legion together, near 100,000 warriors, and led them to the ancient stronghold of the First Legion on Gramarye. There the gathered Council of Masters and Preceptor's Conclave awaited him amid the many glories of the First Legion's long and glorious history and the amassed wisdom distilled from its battles. Here, surrounded by the dusty trophies of the past, Lion El'Jonson made his Legion whole once again; he faced the ceremonial champion of the Council in the ring of honour, battling Pyrus Calagat, the Master of the Host of Fire, in an hour-long duel that has since become legend. This final trial ended, the Primarch accepted the titles of Grandmaster of the First Legion, the six Wings of the Hexagrammaton and High Preceptor of the Orders Militant of the First Legion,



NAME: GRAMARYE

CLASSIFICATION: LEGIONES ASTARTES FORTRESS

WORLD

[INDUSTRIAL/PRIMITIVE WORLD]

SYSTEM DATA: [CLASSIFIED AGEISINE/BLACK]

STELLAR GRID: 11-GU-4903/SIGMA

SEGMENTUM: SOLAR/SINESTRE

NOTATION: [CLASSIFIED AGEISINE/BLACK]

++[FIEFDOM OF THE DARK ANGELS LEGION]++

++[PRIOR 846.M30 SERVED AS LEGION

HOME WORLD]++

++[DISPENSATION IN THE PURVIEW OF

THE 1<sup>ST</sup> LEGION]++

the first warrior to consolidate the leadership of the entire Legion under one banner. To the gathered warriors of the Dark Angels, whose oaths had now been sworn in blood and sacrifice, the new Primarch swore an oath of his own, an oath to seal the pact between them. This oath is recorded in the books of the Council of Masters: "We are the Angels of Darkness, for us there is no peace, no end but war and death. We shall not walk in the golden halls of Mankind's future, but stand resolute in the shadows beyond. While we yet draw breath, this Imperium will not fall, and we will not know defeat, for I pledge every warrior, every drop of blood in the Legion in the name of victory, no matter the cost".

#### A Duty of Sacrifice and Shadows

His oath sworn, Lion El'Jonson saw the rise of his Dark Angels, placing new Masters over each of the Wings he had created from the bones of the old Hosts and formalising the various informal Orders in the style of Caliban's knightly Orders. With the first influx of new recruits from Caliban now ready to join the Legion, comprising those older warriors that had opted to undergo the painful and unreliable augmetic enhancement process that allowed them to reach levels of ability comparable to true Space Marines, Lion El'Jonson swiftly incorporated them within this new structure, taking care to assign posts and commands

based only on merit and not due to origin or the simple virtue of time in service. A number of his old companions found positions within his inner circle, and despite the stringent trials the Lion insisted upon, some of the oldest veterans were less than pleased to yield their authority to these comparative newcomers. The old grand chantry on Gramarye was torn down, replaced with a more modest fortress to secure the industrial sprawl of that world, for though the Legion would maintain a great fortress on Caliban, its true heart and seat of power would be the sanctum of the Primarch aboard his flagship, the ancient Glorianna class battleship, *Invincible Reason*. For many, this reinvigoration of the Legion served to dispel the malaise that had lain over the First, discarding the vainglory that had sapped the worth from victory and embracing the purity of the Primarch's vision; though for a silent minority of veterans the sudden and jarring dissolution of old traditions and the introduction of new Calibanite blood left a lingering sense of doubt.

The Lion chose to confront any intransigence with the stoic indifference that was his hallmark, choosing to immerse the Legion in war and trust that his example would dispel any doubt. Dispersed under the Masters and knight-commanders of the Legion he set the Dark Angels to their task, while the Primarch

led his own fleet to answer a call for aid received only recently by the newly-installed astropathic choir at Caliban. His destination was the distant world of Karkasarn, where the Ultramarines garrison there had resisted siege for over eight months after a sudden uprising among the population living within the ruined halls of the shattered world-fortress. The desperate rebels had opened hidden vaults deep beneath the surface of the planet and set loose a biogenic phage that had reshaped the broken people of their world into twisted, blood-hungry ghouls whose minds were burned clean of all thought except the need to hunt and kill. These monstrous creations then fell upon the unsuspecting warriors of the XIII<sup>th</sup> Legion with a ferocity that gave pause to even the warriors of the Legiones Astartes. With much of the Great Crusade's strength concentrated to the galactic east, there were few forces available to relieve the beleaguered Ultramarines and, given the history of Karkasarn, few expected the Dark Angels to return. So, when the *Invincible Reason* broke through the immaterium and entered realspace, its drop bays already open and primed for launch, Praetor Artaeon of the XIII<sup>th</sup>, the commander of the all but overrun garrison, lost for a moment the famous stoic reserve of the Ultramarines and cried out for joy at the sight.

The Lion himself was at the forefront of the relief force, cutting a path through the teeming hordes of flesh-ghola that threatened to overrun the Ultramarines. At the head of 1,000 ebon-armoured veterans of the Dreadwing, the new lord of the First made swift work of the foe, a curtain of superheated plasma scouring clean the walls and bunkers of the fortress. At his heels came the full force of the fleet, 10,000 warriors of the Dark Angels, and by their blades was the enemy put to rout and then annihilated as they cowered in their boltholes. When the Ultramarines sallied forth from their fortifications to meet them among the sea of corpses and ash they did so with some trepidation, perhaps expecting some measure of retribution for the last meeting between their Legions at Karkasarn or a demand to cede the world to the First Legion in return for their aid. Yet the Lion had no interest in old grudges or the tawdry business of accolades and honours, and with the killing complete he left without fanfare, leaving behind only an empty banner to mark the

debt paid. That this was among his first battles was no accident, but a statement of his intent. His was not to play at politics, not to build empires nor monuments, he was pledged to war and death – to kill the enemies of the Emperor and nothing else.

As though in answer to his call, war was to descend on the Imperium. The Rangda, that terror long thought extinguished, fell upon the northern reaches of the Imperium in numbers that defied belief. For almost a decade the veterans of the First Legion, now the Dark Angels, fought to hold at bay an enemy that threatened to consume all the worlds of Mankind. The Lion wrought his own legend in those dark times, a grim figure of death and vengeance that descended upon the Rangda in a cold fury. In the first dire years of the conflict, when the Imperium seemed lost in a tide of xenos fiends and their slaves, the Lion stood tall amid the carnage. He was no golden hero like his brother Sanguinius, nor a black-humoured figurehead like Horus Lupercal, but rather a silent rock, unyielding in

the storm. He did not inspire loyalty, nor any other virtue. Rather, he went forth where the foe was strongest, armoured by his pride and confidence and drew others along with him for the simple honour of standing by his side.

For near a decade the battles would rage, some nine Legions taking part in the fighting, and ravaging colonies across the northern sectors of the Imperium. Of those Legions caught up in the fighting many would suffer serious losses, the Space Wolves marking the loss of some 5,000 breaking the siege of Xana alone and the Dark Angels, gathered once again in almost their full number, bore a toll of their own. The breaking of the great citadel of Vorksag, the vast clash of void ships over Morcar and the seven-week battle of Morro, where three Companies of the Dark Angels held against more than a million Rangdan neuro-shackled servitors, victory was bought at the cost of their lives, and with the blood of the old Legion, for when victory was at last proclaimed and the Rangdan menace vanquished, the Dark Angels were but a tenth of their old number. Some say the old Legion fought to prove themselves worthy of their new lord, others that they bled to make right their failure to destroy the Rangda when first they met, and a few whispered that the Lion sent them into slaughter so he might replace them with more tractable, Calibanite warriors.

Whether true or not, it was to Caliban that the Lion turned to replenish the ranks of his Legion. With the Rangdan plague driven back, the first new influx of true Calibanite Space Marines entered the ranks of the Legion, where once they had been but the few older companions of the Primarch, now they were dispersed across all the Wings and Orders of the Legion. They were a new breed of warrior for the First Legion, guided more by tradition and ritual than their forebears and unburdened by the weight of pride that had been the lodestone of the Terran veterans. In the wake of the second Rangdan war, it was this changed Legion that went forth to continue its works and to bring war to the most fell of foes. From Caliban they spread out across the stars, for unlike many of their brethren they took few strongholds, save for the lonely chantry-holds that held the knowledge of the Legion. Each of their fleets was bound to a different corner of the Imperium, to patrol the dark places where monsters were still to be found. The Lion took command of one such fleet, no larger or more grand than any other for he expected each to be an engine of death capable of defeating any foe, and set course for the world known to Imperial cartographers as Sarosh.

### An Inevitable Treachery

Of all the sons of Caliban the fate of the warrior known to history as Luther remains a mystery. A knight whose only wish had been to free his world and sit alongside the man he once considered brother, he is acknowledged as key to the early successes of Lion El'Jonson's sons. Yet how could a mere mortal, even be he a knight of the finest calibre, sit alongside a god of war and commander of legions? Luther, who had plucked the Lion from the black depths of Caliban's forests and raised him up as a knight and a brother, was destined to be abandoned by history and fate, to be left behind by the man he had called friend and ally. His name would not be spoken in the same breath as that of Lion El'Jonson, save as a footnote in his rise to glory, and none among the ranks of the First Legion now speak of his deeds. That this decorated warrior would suddenly disappear from the Legion's order of battle after the Battle of Sarosh, subjected to a subtle exile within the walls of Caliban's fortresses, is but the least of the mysteries that surround him.

Given the events that would follow the Horus Heresy's climactic battles on Terra, the sudden withdrawal of the Dark Angels and subsequent demise of so many of their number, as well as the quarantine of the Legion's home system, it would seem that some cataclysm befell the Dark Angels. That this event somehow connected to the mystery of Luther seems most likely, for in its aftermath the Dark Angels flatly refuse to speak of his fate. Indeed, following the trail of Luther's prior actions we can see a number of connections to the wider Horus Heresy and the plots begun by Horus to fuel it. From the spread of the Order of the Black Key, an Order Militant founded by Luther ostensibly to further cooperation with other Legions, most specifically the Sons of Horus, to the odd disposition of certain elements of the First Legion in the final years of Horus' rebellion, leaving Caliban isolated and known favourites of the Primarch sent far from its halls.

These separate facts all point towards a betrayal that befell Caliban in the final days of the Horus Heresy and has been carefully obscured from the eyes of history. Some long arranged plot, matured and yet brought only to a failure that would see the Legion close ranks and turn in upon itself. What exact role Luther played in such events and to what degree the influence of the Warmaster lay upon this tragedy, we cannot know for certain. Only rumours and half-truths abound in the face of the Dark Angel's intransigence, and so such a question must wait for its proper time, and for a treatise more appropriate than this.



## DARK ANGELS LEVIATHAN DREADNOUGHT

VENERABLE-PRAEFECTUS CORIOLANUS, ARCHON OF STONE

Venerable Coriolanus once served as the Marshal of the Host of Stone, a warrior whose dedication to the cause of the Imperium had stretched for more than two centuries. He would be declared lost on Nadress III, leading the defence of the outer bastions when the Night Lords began their final assault on that world. Yet, his armour does not grace any Night Lords champion's trophy rack, for in the final moments of the assault the venerable warrior used his grav-flux bombard to collapse the fortress around him, entombing both himself and the Night Lords vanguard in rubble.



## DARK ANGEL LEGIONARY

LEGIONARY ZEDIEL ARDARAL OF THE 42<sup>ND</sup> ORDER

Though a simple Legionary of the line, an ordinary warrior within the host, Legionary Ardaral also bears the rank of Proctor within the Stormwing, and that of cenobite within the Order of the Crimson Field. Within his unit he held a higher rank within the Stormwing than any other and was often called upon to advise the sergeant of his squad on appropriate tactics and organisation, as well as serving outside his squad in a cenobium of the Crimson Field during two separate engagements. Overall, he serves as an excellent example of the distributed command structure utilised by the Dark Angels, one designed to put skills and experience before simple rank and too complex to be made easy use of by those not well-versed in its intricacies. Of particular note in this pict-record is the Edict of Incorporation attached to his left vambrace, the left hand being that associated with the Orders Militant, and signifying a warrior honoured by selection to stand as part of a cenobium in battle.

Legionary Ardaral would survive the Thramas Crusade to great honour, fighting in the vanguard of the assault on Sheol IX. There he and his unit formed a vital part of the force that cut the Night Lords off from their ships, allowing the Lion and the secondary waves of the attack to catch their elusive foe off-guard and vulnerable. By the end of the battle, his company had been rendered almost combat ineffective, with casualties near halving their numbers, though the tally of their own kills more than proved their valour and skill in the face of such a fierce foe.

### The Keenest Blade

Lion El'Jonson went in answer to a call for aid from his brother, Jaghatai Khan. Of all the Primarchs, the Khan stood closest to the Lion, for despite their differences each appreciated the honest and forthright nature of the other, and so the Lion was ill-disposed to ignore his call. With the arrival of the White Scars, Sarosh had chosen to join the Imperium rather than fight it, but now belaboured at the shackles that were to be placed upon it. Once the Dark Angels took charge and the implacable nature of the Lion was brought to bear upon their intransigence, the Saroshi turned to treachery. By means of a hidden nucleonic charge they even sought to take the life of the Lion himself and, though their schemes came to nothing, they served to bring the whispers of dissension within the Legion to the ear of the Lion. They would deal a blow more deadly to the First Legion than they could know, though it would fester for many years before its true toll was known.

The rebels on Sarosh would be crushed, brought to heel swiftly by the might of the Dark Angels and the Imperium's armies, but the victory would bear a bitter taste for many. In the aftermath of the fighting, some questioned the ease with which the Sarosh had infiltrated the First Legion's defences, and though none would call what had occurred treachery, there were those whose devotion to the Legion's new path was questioned. Luther and a number of others among the veterans of both Terra and Caliban were to find themselves returned to Caliban, not in exile, but neither in triumph. There they were to serve as garrison and overseers of the Lion's sanctuary and leave the Great Crusade behind, regardless of the legacy of years in service in either the forest or the stars. This was the determination of the Lion, that he would set aside those whom he held dearest in the name of duty. Some would name it arrogance and others, with the benefit of hindsight, would call it foolhardy, but it was ever the way of the Lion. It was not the cold logic of battle favoured by some among the Primarchs, but the proud imperative of duty and excellence – that those who faltered be set aside, no matter how justified or small the failing, and the worthy grow stronger through the trials they faced.

By this creed the First Legion, the Dark Angels, lived and died, continuing the work of the Emperor in the last days of the Great Crusade. Wherever the tide of conquest slowed they were to be found, bright swords and grim resolve against the worst horrors of the galaxy. The Lion, now long parted from the forests of Caliban and a staunch believer in the dream of empire, fought with every moment given to him. He spent no time on parades, fortress building or in petty squabbles with his kin, but went stoically from battle to battle. He and his Legion began to shun the gatherings of the Great Crusade and the fellowship of their brothers, scorning those who would fret over such frivolities while there remained enemies of power and strength to test their mettle against. As years and wars wore on, a distance grew between the Dark Angels and the other Legions of the Imperium; few of the Primarchs cared to take the time to seek out their reclusive brother as he and his Legion continued to whet their blades to a keen edge. They began to forget the deeds he and his warriors had performed, for he rarely spoke of them. All except one.

Horus Lupercal, ever watchful, paid much heed to his brother and the actions of his Legion. Once he had tried to bind the First Legion to him, only to find the cipher of their ways a shield against his influence and their pride a foil to his manipulation. His lodges would find no purchase within their ranks, shunned by the preceptors of the Orders Militant and the proctors of the Wings of the Hexagrammaton as worthless and beneath them. They were not and never could be his to command. Their master was as his Legion, a rock in which Horus Lupercal could find no crack or chink in which to fix his barbs, no leash by which he could lead him along paths of his own choosing. The Lion was not well-liked among the brotherhood of Primarchs, but he had the respect of each and every one of his brothers, and more than that he had the trust of his father, the Emperor, and the keys to the hidden arsenals of Terra. Were the Emperor to choose a single one among his Primarchs to lead, to stand at the head of the Great Crusade then Lion El'Jonson was a choice easily understood, and this troubled the master of the Luna Wolves. So, when the conquest of Ullanor loomed before Horus, he was sure to see the Lion and the First diverted to far battlefields and tendered him no invitation to the great Triumph that followed.

So it was that when Horus was crowned Warmaster the Lion was not present, a victory to the covetous mind of the new Warmaster. Yet this was one of the few miscalculations made by the shrewd intellect of the Warmaster. He counted all men of power to think as he did, yet while the Lion and the Wolf of Luna shared many traits, they were not the same. When news of Horus' new rank reached the Lion he did not pause in his campaigns, did not offer congratulations or lament his own fortune and this, more than the reaction of any of his other brothers, gave the Warmaster pause. When Horus' thoughts turned to rebellion and treachery we cannot know, but it is likely that when they did it was the Lion he marked as among the greatest of threats to his plans. The Dark Angels were both numerous and skilled in all the arts of war, with access to the armouries of Terra and psyarkana forbidden to all others, and their Primarch was as inflexible as iron, loyal beyond doubt and resolute enough to rise up against any threat.

As with all of the Primarchs, the Warmaster did not feel fear as did lesser men, but the thought of facing Lion El'Jonson in open battle gave him pause, and if he would not be turned then he must be removed. There were three Legions Horus sought to remove from the path of his heresy before it began. The White Scars he hoped to preserve for his own use, the Blood Angels he hoped to destroy – but the Dark Angels he hoped to banish, to send far enough away that by the time they could return, his grim business would be complete. This was not to be, the Lion would return to the Imperium as the sun returns to the horizon each morning, blinding and implacable, and he would reach for the heart of his fallen brother. Horus had loosed a beast the equal of any that lurked in the dark between the stars, one that would tear apart the Imperium to grasp a victory of ashes and blood.

## UNIT ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE WITHIN THE LEGION

The organisation and structure of the Dark Angels predates the standard patterns laid out by the *Principia Bellicosa*, indeed many of the doctrines and formations in common use throughout the Legiones Astartes find their origins in the early practises of the First Legion. In fact, this would seem to have been one of the prime missions gifted to the First Legion by the Emperor – to discover, refine and perfect those strategies and patterns that would allow His new gene-crafted warriors to perform at peak efficiency. When we speak of the 'standard' form of a Space Marine Legion we speak of the Dark Angels, for it is in the sacrifice of the First that these structures were born. While Roboute Guilliman would later add to and adapt this structure, even that superlative general built upon the foundation that had been defined by the wars of the First Legion before the return of the Lion. Even Lion El'Jonson, upon resuming command of his Legion, would bow before the wisdom of these founders of the First Legion, content to bind this structure to a single vision and authority, and it has remained largely unchanged in form since that day if not in function.

In the earliest years of its existence, the First Legion would experiment with every form of war, every style of organisation and formation, with a host of warriors dedicated to almost any tactical or strategic ploy. This meant that the Legion contained specialists suited to every opponent and battlefield, but it lacked a cohesive structure to organise those warriors. It was by its very nature chaotic and fluid, ever changing as certain tactics fell out of favour and new ones rose to prominence, and as such it lacked an easily defined sense of organisation. This chaos was a necessary tool for its purpose, and in time it would resolve into order, into a system of supporting formations that allowed the Dark Angels to confront any foe on any battlefield and overcome them. This system of specialised formations stood at the very heart of the First Legion, the core around which it was built.

### Of Hosts and Orders

The First Legion was composed of Chapters, Companies and squads as was any other, this was the shape of its overt structure, the uncloaked face it showed to its brother Legions and the Imperium at large. Yet each of the warriors of the Legion also held a position in a second, covert layer of organisation, one they kept hidden from those not of the Legion.

This secret strata of organisation was composed primarily of two distinct bodies: the great Hosts and the Orders of Battle. Both of these bodies served to allow the collection and codification of knowledge by the warriors of the Legion and to see that this knowledge was available on the battlefield when it was needed most by the generals of the Great Crusade.

The great Hosts were the larger of the two, numbering at first in the dozens, with each individual force claiming the loyalty of hundreds of individual warriors. The Hosts were each dedicated to the perfection of one art of war, some specialised in siege warfare, others in the art of skirmish and yet more in the brutal discipline of shock assault and many others besides. They did not fight as cohesive formations in most situations, being spread across the various Chapters and Companies of the Legion. Any given unit might comprise members from a variety of different Hosts all working together, lending their experience and skills to their battle-brothers so that the whole had a value far greater than any individual piece. No matter the challenge faced by even the least unit of the First Legion it would find at least one expert in its ranks, a distinct advantage when compared to many of the younger Legions, each of which was dedicated to a single brand of conquest and ill-equipped to fight outside its preferred sphere. Only in the most dire of situations did a Host assemble en masse, its acolytes called out from the ranks to form a single body of those most skilled in their chosen art. Be it the siege-wrights of the Host of Stone or the breaching clades of the Host of Void, such a body could be a potent force in its chosen element, more than capable of turning the tide of even the direst battle.

Each Host followed the same organisational structure, each with its own master, marshals and initiates organised into cells scattered across the Chapters of the Legion. These cells were embedded at the very heart of the Legion's core, operating alongside the Companies and squads of its open face. Any given squad might very well include members from several cells, each bound in service to different Hosts – they were at once brothers, sealed by the oaths made to Legion and sergeant, and made strangers by the secret ties and mysteries of their Host. A warrior owed his obedience to both his commander in the ranks of open battle and his superior in the hidden society of his Host, with only the subtle context of tradition to tell when one held authority over the other.

It is a testament to the fortitude of the minds and the enduring loyalty of these warriors that such a system not only functioned on the field of battle, but excelled in bringing triumph to the First Legion.

The great Hosts of the First Legion recruited openly and widely among the uninitiated warriors of the Legion. When new intakes of recruits reached front line Companies they would find themselves under constant scrutiny from the appointed procurators of the Hosts, each seeking signs of the aspirant's worthiness to join their Host in their conduct on the field of battle. Those selected by the procurators, having already faced their trials upon the battlefield and in the subtle tests conducted by their battle-brothers and commanders, would be swiftly inducted into the most basic tenets of the Host and granted the right to bear its mark. Those warriors initiated into a Host met freely within the precincts of the Legion's holdings and encampments to debate strategy and the proper use of arms, with those of the higher ranks responsible for the training of those below them. These gatherings, though not secret, were considered a private matter of the Host, a forum where a warrior's standing within his Host stood greater than that of his rank within the Legion. Members could speak on the business of the Host, the practise and protection of their unique rites of battle and tradition, without fear of censure, for it was considered the duty of the Hosts to preserve the Legion through their unstinting pursuit of excellence.

The Orders of Battle, though more numerous, boasted far fewer adherents than the Hosts. Of the hundreds of individual Orders, most could count no more than a few dozen initiates, a mere handful of warriors by comparison to the vast Hosts and Chapters of the greater Legion. Such warrior-fraternities could not disseminate their knowledge across an entire Legion in the same manner as the Hosts, and harboured a skill set ill-disposed towards such a use. The Orders of Battle were experts in a single bloody aspect of war, the destruction of a singular foe or the mastery of some aberrant field of conflict. When a battlegroup of the First Legion encountered a foe worthy of their hatred or a field of battle whose nature defied their contempt it was to the Orders of Battle that they turned, forming a cenobium, a cadre of the warriors from an Order trained to negate the foe, to lead the assault and to turn all their secret knowledge into a weapon to smite the enemies of Mankind.



## THE HEXAGRAMMATON



The Hexagrammaton, a phrase in ancient Terran that loosely translates as 'The Six Divine Ways', is the title given to the modern form of the Dark Angels' great Hosts. It came into use throughout the Legion at some point around 830.M30, when the Legion first reached a nominal strength of 100,000 warriors and had excised many of the early Hosts by means of attrition in battle and the failure of their doctrines. Those Hosts that remained were regarded as the purest and most efficacious expression of the tactics and strategies forged by the First Legion over its long history, worthy of a permanent place within their order of battle. So successful were they that, when he took command of the Legion, Lion El'Jonson retained the Hexagrammaton virtually unchanged. The Primarch took steps only to re-organise their hierarchies and to structure the Hosts to more closely echo the Calibanite knightly cohorts with which he had conquered the dark forests of his adopted home world, symbolically changing the title of those forces to 'Wings' to mark his ascension to the position of Grandmaster.

These six sub-strata of organisation within the Legion, the six Wings of the Hexagrammaton, would remain unchanged until the end of the wars ushered in by the Horus Heresy; the wide-spread destruction wrought by that era would see the near-annihilation of some of those bodies. At the time of the Dark Angels' return during the Thramas Crusade, the Wings of the Hexagrammaton took the following form:

### THE STORMWING



The largest of all the Wings, the Stormwing incorporated the majority of the Dark Angels' line infantry, training battalions and mobile ordnance

batteries within its ranks. The members of this Wing were drilled in the disciplined and stalwart arts of close order warfare and set-piece battles, unshakable on defence and resolute on attack. Its veteran warriors were the core of the Legion's infantry companies, capable of executing complex manoeuvres and formations under the heaviest enemy fire. When the Legion took to the field of battle en masse the veterans of the Stormwing stood in the front ranks, serving to steel the resolve of their brethren and to oversee the execution of orders in the chaos of battle; valued more for their attunement to the subtle shift of war as the massed ranks of friend and foe collided than their vaunted skill-at-arms. The inner circles of the Stormwing were notoriously difficult for initiates to gain admittance to, with rigorous trials for those seeking to assume the mantle of Marshal of the Stormwing. Only veterans of the largest engagements were honoured with titles in the Wing, including both senior officers and grizzled warriors of the line; for among their number the scars of war were the most treasured badges of honour. This inner circle also included a surprising number of the Legion's Apothecarion, who were often at the centre of the battle's fury and integral to the massed infantry assaults for which the Stormwing was famous. Indeed, at first the Master of the Stormwing had also held the title of Master of the Apothecarion for the First Legion. In contrast to the inner circle, whose ranks rarely changed and were accounted one of the most conservative and tradition bound groups within the Legion, the outer circles were in constant flux.

### THE DEATHWING



Formed from the shattered remains of the Host of Crowns, the formation once famed for its line breaker squadrons and marksmen.

Those of the inner circle who survived that infamous incident swore mighty oaths that no member of the Wing would ever leave the field of battle in the hands of the enemy, accepting death over dishonour or retreat. The Deathwing excels in special operations alongside other units of the Legion, especially as a counterpart to the more numerous Stormwing, with a multitude of sub-disciplines within its ranks. Most renowned among its specialists are those dedicated to the role of line breakers, elite veteran infantry that serve to shatter the enemy's formations and create openings for other units or Wings, and the lifeguard cadre deployed to protect officers during battle. These lifeguard cadre are especially prominent, with few high ranking officers in the Legion lacking a small force of Deathwing veterans sworn to give their lives to ensure their safety. Indeed, it is a detachment of the Deathwing that provides a garrison force for the inner citadels on both Caliban and Gramarye, charged with the safety of the Primarch himself. Given the stringent requirements for entry into even the outer circles of this Wing, its membership remains small but garners much respect within the Legion, often acting as force commanders in situations where the authority of other factions within the Legion is unclear. As the Horus Heresy wore on and casualties began to take a toll on the Dark Angels' officer corps, the veterans of the Deathwing came to assume a greater responsibility over their brethren, slowly taking a dominant position within the Legion and on the Council of Masters.

### THE RAVENWING



The Wing most changed by the return of Lion El'Jonson, the Ravenwing was named for the Calibanite Order of the Raven which had trained

the most fearsome mounted warriors to be found on that savage world. Combining those warriors of the Order of the Raven inducted into the Dark Angels with the remnants of the Hosts of Wind and Void, the Lion created a formation that would carve a legend for itself on the battlefields of the Great Crusade and beyond. Based around the principles of mobile attacks, of strike and fade tactics and skirmish warfare, the Ravenwing excelled at the use of light skimmers and aircraft, but also incorporated significant infantry assets. These were mostly reconnaissance squadrons, though among those infantry units specialised in the use of drop pods and other orbital assault doctrines, there were many initiates of the Ravenwing marked by the symbol of a white corvid. When the Legion gave battle to a foe that sought to evade or confuse them, or one whose overwhelming power compelled them to counter it with speed, it was the initiates of the Ravenwing that took to the fore. These initiates were often considered mavericks and glory-hounds by the more hidebound veterans of the other Wings, for the Ravenwing retained a number of more barbaric customs associated with its recruits, many of which hailed from remote feudal worlds. As such, those Calibanite warriors who gained admission to its ranks were often those out of favour with the Masters of the more prestigious Wings or those eager to forge their own legend.

### THE DREADWING



Perhaps the most feared of all the branches of the Hexagrammaton, garnering a reputation that far outweighed the Wing's influence within the Legion, the

Dreadwing was composed of those whose role was the utter annihilation of the enemy, the salting of the earth, and breaking of worlds. When called out from the ranks, the initiates of the Dreadwing were experts in the brutal tactics of massacre, purge, and the deployment of Exterminatus class weaponry, though many also specialised in the use of terror as a weapon. It was an evolution of the Host of Bone, its brutal tactics refined and temperamental nature dulled by the influx of Calibanite recruits, though it retained many of the Skandic ceremonies and titles that had marked its origins. Its initiates were, however, far from dim brutes, for the Dreadwing saw to the duty of caretaking some of the most dangerous technologies that existed anywhere within the Imperium. Its ranks included not only the vast majority of the Legion's Destroyer and Moritat cohorts but also a large number of Techmarines, forge adepts and no few Apothecaries, those considered among the least orthodox of their kind and often of morbid disposition. In the sealed vaults of the Dreadwing rested the least stable of the Dreadnoughts maintained by the Legion, those whose minds were trapped within the horrors of wars long since ended, as well as artificial warriors of a more fearsome nature. In the years after the initial outbreak of the Horus Heresy, as attrition and despair cut at the prohibitions of the Great Crusade, it would also play host to those warriors given dispensation by their Primarch to resume use of their psychic powers. For the Lion would not see his Legion plunged into the greatest war in recorded history barred the use of one of its most powerful weapons. To choose between victory or the sanctity of the dictats of Nikaea was no choice at all, for the Lion would always choose victory, no matter the cost to be paid in the aftermath.

### THE IRONWING



The Ironwing was dedicated to the use of overwhelming firepower on the field of battle, to confound the foe by means of barrage

and conflagration, to defy their riposte with inviolate armour and carry the day by means of force alone. It was not a subtle Wing, composed as it was of the majority of the Legion's armoured vehicles, heavy Dreadnoughts and field artillery batteries, a force ill-equipped for operations reliant on stealth or subterfuge. Yet, they excelled at the breaking of fortresses by superior firepower and the rapid onslaught of massed war engines to overrun and annihilate an unprepared foe in the open field. Its marshals were experts on the engagement and destruction of enemy war machines and heavy guns, often called upon to see to the destruction of those apocalyptic engines of destruction encountered by the Legion in its lonely crusade. Though this deployment of massed war engines was by far the most renowned aspect of the Ironwing, it was not the only facet to their doctrine of overwhelming strength. As a merging of the old Hosts of Iron and Stone, the Ironwing also included a substantial number of initiates from the infantry arms of the Legion, mostly those attached to heavy weapon support units, breacher cadres and Terminator squadrons. Indeed, during the last years of the Great Crusade, the Ironwing fielded the largest concentration of Terminators not only in the Dark Angels but in any of the Legions, including a number of experimental patterns of armour unknown in the panoply of other forces. Often employed en masse to storm fortresses or repel the onslaught of the enemy, these warriors earned a fearsome reputation within the Legion, many retaining the old emblem of the Host of Stone and assuming the title of Stoneborn. The brutal attrition of the early years of the Horus Heresy would decimate the ranks of these valiant warriors, ever first in attack or defence of the Legion, and by the end of the rebellion they were a shadow of their former strength. Given the wealth of technology fielded by the Ironwing, its inner circle was dominated by the forge lords of the Legion, but of all the Wings only the Dreadwing was more despised by the Mechanicum, for the Ironwing and its masters paid little heed to the creed of Mars and employed much technology that was forbidden to the adepts of the Mechanicum.

### THE FIREWING



The smallest of the six Wings of the Hexagrammaton, the Firewing was dedicated to all the bloody subtleties of warfare. It was the

hidden blade of the Legion, the knife in the dark and the blade against the throat of the foes' commanders. Within its ranks were to be found an eclectic mix of stalkers, champions and Moritat killers, all bound by their shared expertise in the arts of blade and knife, duellists and assassins without peer. The Firewing sought the destruction of the enemy through the violent depletion of their command structure, whether in honourable duels at the heart of a battle or at the hands of subtle killers far from the battlefield. When given free rein upon the field of battle, the initiates of the Firewing chose to wage a war of wills against the enemy, seeking to break their resolve rather than slaughter their ranks. They counted knowledge among the keenest of their weapons, allowing them to strike at the enemy's weakest points where their limited numbers would be most effective. As such they possessed the most extensive library of any of the Wings, a vault that contained the detailed accounting of thousands upon thousands of xenos and sub-human empires, and which was guarded by a sub-sect of the Firewing dedicated to the cataloguing of those records. Of all the Wings, they remained least changed from their origins in the wars of Unity on Terra, with many of the eldest marshals of the Firewing being veterans of that conflict and steeped in the culture of Terra and its nearest colonies. The Calibanite influence had little impact on the entrenched and complex systems of ritual within the veteran ranks of the Firewing, whose marshals had long made a tradition of recruiting only from Terra and the densely-populated colonies that surrounded it. It was also notable for its strong links to the Sons of Horus, who recruited from a number of the same worlds, a connection that turned to the bitterest hatred with the outbreak of the Horus Heresy, for it would pit those once sworn to eternal loyalty against each other. During the second Rangdan Xenocide, the Firewing would sustain severe casualties, reducing it to a fraction of its former size as its initiates stood toe-to-toe against Rangdan warmasters and reavers.

### The Five Hundred Companions

The first 500 warriors of the Dark Angels to stand alongside their Primarch on Caliban would come to be known simply as the Five Hundred, an honorary Company embedded within the Legion's system of Orders Militant. Each of the Five Hundred were sworn to a unique duty, bound to gather information and to keep it hidden for the benefit of the Legion just as the other Orders Militant, save that the subject of their scrutiny was the Primarch himself. For among all the doctrines of the Hosts, each carefully crafted and honed by centuries of war, they had never accounted for such a manifest icon of war and death. Study was required that they might learn how best to fight at his side, which weapons were best suited to be deployed alongside the Primarch and how the Legion would need to be re-shaped to serve his will. The Lion himself would prove no more forthcoming to his sons than he had been to his brother Primarchs, prone to silence and self-reliance. He offered his new Legion the chance to prove itself in battle, but gave them no guidance on the means by which they would best earn his respect.

The Five Hundred would serve as his life guard, to fight and die ever in his shadow, that the Legion might learn that which their new master was reticent to speak of and earn his favour in war. Their hard-won secrets, the *Lion Codex*, is among the most cleverly and completely ciphered records within the Legion, for it contains the sum of their knowledge of Lion El'Jonson – his fighting style and strategies. Such secrets would be valuable beyond reckoning to any foe of the Legion, and just as priceless to his sons, for with the guidance of the codex the Council of Masters has sought to reshape their Legion in his image. As such, the Five Hundred are its only keepers and they accept no new initiates, ensuring that the secrets within will live or die with them. The Lion himself has never mentioned this enterprise, never uttered one word of praise for the ever-present guard at his side even as their numbers dwindle over time. Yet, nor has he forbade them their study and on the eve of battle he waits patiently for those of the Five Hundred present to assemble at his side before he sets forth. This silent acceptance is counted by the Dark Angels as the ultimate mark of recognition, worth more to them than any honour marking or gaudy token of victory.

Each Order of Battle maintains a strict hierarchy, though no two are exactly the same, with each organised to best serve the aims and lore kept by that Order. For, unlike the Hosts, which openly recruited and shared much of their knowledge when called to battle, the Orders were of a more secretive nature. The true position and nature of the ranks within a given Order were only truly understood by the inducted initiates of that Order, with a system of ciphers and cryptic signs unique to each Order used to mark them out to those who had been inducted into their ranks. Each tier of the Order granted an initiate greater understanding of the mysteries it had been created to preserve and placed upon them a greater burden of responsibility to keep that knowledge ever ready to be called upon at need. The Order would meet to affirm their knowledge in the form of rituals and tradition as well as to train in more practical ways – to keep ready blade and bolt for the day when their knowledge would be required in the name of the Legion and the Imperium.

Most Orders maintained a sanctum chamber aboard any void ship to which a cell of their members was posted, a private space

in to which entry was only granted to ordained members of the Order and where ritual training and study could be pursued in seclusion. Some of the largest Orders controlled space stations, most often based in and around warzones that supported or required their unique skills. The Order of Broken Spears operated an orbital stronghold capable of hosting all 138 known members, set in place above the broken mesas and twisting canyons of Argyel III, a death world whose rock was laced with traces of heavy metals that countered most active sensor systems. Given that the Broken Spears were masters in the art of ambush and the silent war of wits that prevailed in such dense and confusing terrain, this served as the perfect location for the training of its initiates and as a retreat for those veterans seeking to contemplate the teachings of the Order without distraction.

These sanctum, whether grand strongholds or spartan chambers aboard a ship of war, also served a crucial role in the recruitment of new members. Such prospective acolytes were identified by the senior members of a cell by the record

of their achievements and skill, and were subject to much debate within the cell before any decision was made. Once summoned by the cell a warrior could expect to face a series of gruelling physical and mental trials, administered in the seclusion of the Order's domain where these candidates were granted limited rights of entry, though often under binding oaths to hold secret all that was witnessed. Such trials varied widely between Orders, though often presented the very real possibility of serious injury or even death for those that accepted the challenge. The exact nature of these rituals was kept secret and even those that failed were bound by the honour of the Legion not to speak of that which they had faced, such was the respect given to the Orders by the rank and file warriors of the Legion. Only once fully inducted would they receive the freedom of the Order's domains and the right to begin study of the first tier of the hidden lore of their new warrior-brotherhood and to bear the mark of acolyte upon the ceramite of their war plate.

To hold a position even in the outer circles of one of the Orders Militant was considered a great honour, and of the entire Legion less than half could claim such an achievement. Though few outside of the ranks of a given Order knew the full import of the insignia borne by its adepts, all of the Legion's warriors granted the bearer of such a sigil due respect and few even amongst the most senior of commanders would fail to heed their advice, no matter what rank they might hold outside the Order. Though it is a rare occurrence, some particularly skilled warriors within the Legion bear the insignia of more than one of the Orders Militant upon their armour. In some cases such warriors have formally departed one Order to take up a position in a new brotherhood, sworn to keep the secrets of their old association, while in the most exceptional of cases they may hold rank in two or more Orders at the same time. There are only a handful of examples of this, the most well-known being Lion El'Jonson himself, who holds the rank of High Preceptor of every Order within the Legion, and Knight-captain Atreus Deucalion, bearer of the sword *Chrysaor*. Knight-captain Atreus, who was also a Marshal of the Firewing, was counted one of the finest swordsmen in the Legion and held station within three separate Orders, blending the blade-techniques of each to form a unique and deadly style of his own.

### The Hekatonyxika

The Hekatonyxika is the hidden counterpart of the Dark Angels Legion's infamous Hexagrammaton. Transliterated roughly as 'The Hundred Esoteric Arts' in the language of the broken lands of Mykene on Old Earth, the term used to refer to the body of secretive military Orders embedded within the structure of Wings and Chapters. Each Order was an autonomous body of warriors dedicated to the protection of one portion of the Legion's hard-won secret lore, most often regarding the weakness of some specific foe or mastery of a certain terrain or weapon. They were equal parts scholars and warriors, both researchers and practitioners, and as deadly on the field of battle as they were enigmatic in the halls of the Legion. Though rarely gathered all in one place, small cells of these warriors were often assembled prior to battles that would benefit from their skills, forming a temporary unit known within the Dark Angels as a Cenobium to lead the charge and advise the officers in command.

In addition to the Orders Militant there also existed the Orders Civilis, organisations dedicated to non-battlefield tasks requiring specialist knowledge and vital to the success of the Legion. These Orders rarely counted any full battle-brothers among their ranks, but instead were a means of honouring those Legion serfs and failed aspirants who dedicated themselves to the support of the frontline warriors. Among their number were counted armourers, quartermasters, cargo pilots and maintenance crew, the unseen backbone of the Legion's operations. Yet, as these lesser Orders were given no representation among the Conclave of Preceptors, there are few records of their structure and history available to outsiders.

Many hundreds of Orders Militant have been recorded during the history of the First Legion – many of which have long since been forgotten or destroyed in battle. Of those that remained active at the outbreak of the Horus Heresy, the following presents a brief sample:



**The Order of Shattered Crowns:** One of the oldest Orders still active within the Legion, with its origins to be found during the Unification Wars on Old Terra, the Shattered Crowns are unparalleled experts in the identification and open execution of the enemy's leaders. Not assassins or silent killers, but proud champions that seek out the heart of the foe's defiance and cut it from the body of their army, they practise a number of secret duelling arts, once commonplace in Terra's forgotten duelling cults, but now all but forgotten. Most are also initiates in the Deathwing and Firewing, whose doctrines mesh well with the Order's teachings, though the Preceptor of the Order is rumoured to stand in the Inner Circle of the Dreadwing.



**The Order of Broken Wings:** Almost entirely represented within the ranks of the Ironwing, the adepts of the Order of Broken Wings are masters in the art of anti-aircraft work. Dedicated to both the arts of deflection targeting and the craftsmanship of superior weaponry, most often heavy calibre autocannon, the Order are considered experts in the placement and operation of ordnance to defeat enemy airborne incursions. Commanders will often summon their adepts from the ranks to oversee such deployments or to man particularly important defensive emplacements during battle.



**The Order of Santales:** An Order dedicated to the detection and destruction of certain dire clades of xenos, specifically those that thrive by means of psychic or physical parasitism. Once spread widely throughout the Legion, the Order of Santales had access to a large arsenal of psyarkana weaponry collected from a hundred fallen realms. The hidden battle-honours of the Order include such battlefields as Rangda, Nemodiae and Muspel – fields of blood and terror that rival even the legendary battles at Ullanor. In the aftermath of the Council of Nikaea, the Order of Santales was much reduced in number and influence, as those of its number that had once held positions within the now-defunct Librarius found themselves stripped of title by order of the Emperor.



**The Order of the Argent Spire:** An Order whose doctrines are specialised in the mastery of battle upon the frozen wastes of winter-worlds and other ice bound landscapes. Its adepts practise a number of rituals based around enduring extremes of cold that would sap even the strength of the Legiones Astartes, and several unique blade-kata intended to provide stability amid the shifting floes of ice and snow. Its adepts are most commonly found among the ranks of the Stormwing, where small cells are often summoned from the ranks to take the lead in campaigns upon frozen death worlds, though the veterans of the Firewing have also shown some admiration of the specialised sword-skill practised by the Order's Inner Circle knights.



**The Order of Broken Claws:** Formed in the wake of the Second Rangdan Xenocide, this small Order holds the only full and complete accounting of that war and the xenos strain known as the Rangda. With access to the detailed catalogue of anatomical data compiled by Firewing operators and Dreadwing cheirophages, the adepts of this Order are trained to stand against the worst Rangdan bio-forms in combat and emerge victorious. During the bloody sieges of the Third Rangdan Xenocide they won much renowned for their prowess, both in combat and in anticipating and countering the strategies of the Rangdan warmasters, but in the wake of the Rangdan's apparent annihilation they have dwindled in number. By the time of the Horus Heresy few members of the Order remain, with only a single chantry station still in service over the ruined world of Advex-Mors where the relics of the dread Rangda are entombed.

### LEGION COMMAND HIERARCHY

Given the multitude of layers of structure to be found in the organisation of the Dark Angels, the Legion's command hierarchy can seem impossibly confused to outsiders. The three strands of authority woven into the form of the Legion, that of Wing, Chapter and Order, would seem to compete to claim each warrior's allegiance and attention upon the field of battle, as well as presenting complex schemes of heraldry that defy easy identification by those unfamiliar with their intricacies. However, for the warriors of the First Legion it has proven to be not only effective but also capable of quickly adapting to the flow of battle and the ever changing vicissitudes of war, allowing it to not only overcome the challenges of the Great Crusade but to thrive as one of the most dangerous of all the Legiones Astartes.

Taken separately, each of these chains of command is actually quite traditional in form, based upon the precepts of the *Principia Bellicosa* which the First Legion helped define, with authority invested in a single chain of command, from the highest ranks down to each individual of the Companies, Orders and Wings that made up the Legion. This allowed commanders to efficiently maintain control of large bodies of troops by dividing the responsibility among a multitude of lesser officers while staying true to the vision and strategy of a single general.

What complicated this arrangement was that to outsiders it seemed that the three different strands of authority within the Legion were not linked, and left no standing and fixed method by which one could tell when the authority of one commander outstripped that of another. To the warriors

of the Dark Angels it came down to a simple matter of battlefield context and a deep-seated trust and respect for the abilities of the warriors that stood alongside them. In battle, authority was seeded to the warriors of the highest rank in whichever branch of the Legion was best suited to exploit the situation around them. Where the specialised knowledge and skills of a given Wing or Order officer would provide the Legion an advantage, their authority superseded that of the more traditional commanders, with both the rank and file and the line officers implicitly trusting them to lead the fight. When the veterans of Wing and Order moved to implement the overall strategies of the Chapter commanders, the warriors around them followed.

Such a disregard for strict and unchanging lines of command and control frustrated some Legions and Primarchs, with Guilliman in particular making many attempts to convince the Lion to reform his Legion along the lines of his own codex. Some attempts by other Legions were made to emulate the success of the Dark Angels pattern, with the Raven Guard applying a similar structure to separate certain strata of their Legion, however, none of the other Legions retained the solid core of long standing veterans required to fully implement the complex organisational doctrines of the First Legion. Just as it had been intended, they took from the example of the First those elements of their tactics that meshed with the direction of their own Legion and adapted them to their own purposes. It was only the superb skills and long-term indoctrination and familiarity of the warriors of the Dark Angels that could fully utilise such a complex arrangement to its fullest potential. It allowed them to adapt and evolve from moment to moment on the battlefield, claiming victory without the grinding attrition that marked the conquests of other, more inflexible, Legions.

### Lords of the Inner and Outer Circles

Given their unique structure of organisation, it is not surprising that the Dark Angels also employed a number of variant titles for their officers. The line officers of the Legion retained a standard pattern of identification prior to the Calibanite influence that the Lion brought to the Legion, though in the years after the Primarch's return, a variant system based on the titles of the knights of Caliban found favour with many. By the outbreak of the Horus Heresy, only the most intransigent veterans of the old Legion, those of Terra, Gramarye and beyond, still used the older, more plain titles of praetor, centurion and consul.

The warriors of the Hexagrammaton adhered to their own system of titles, denoting both the bearer's authority and skill within the Wing to which he belonged. This system was in use with all six of the modern Wings with few variances between them. Some employed distinct honorary titles to distinguish warriors of particular renown, such as the title Eskaton, which is used within the Dreadwing to denote a warrior that has overseen the final death of an entire race or world.

By contrast, the secretive Orders of the Hekatonystika maintained few set titles across the hundreds of individual Orders. Of the few titles used by almost every Order the most well-known were that of Preceptor, used to indicate the leader of an Order, and Seneschal, which was granted to high ranking members that oversaw the hidden chambers of the halls of an Order. When openly garbed in the full panoply of the Order and bound to open war in the name of the Legion, members would also use the honorary title Cenobite to illustrate the temporary supremacy of their standing in the Order over that within the Legion.

What follows is a brief summary of the more commonly known and used titles and ranks for the three chambers of the First Legion:

#### Of the Hekatonystika

(Corpus Sinister)

- Preceptor
- Seneschal
- Cenobite
- Adept

#### Of the Principia Bellicosa

(Corpus Nobilis)

- Knight-praetor
- Knight-commander
- Knight-captain
- Knight

#### Of the Hexagrammaton

(Corpus Dextera)

- Master
- Marshal
- Proctor
- Initiate

# HERALDRY OF THE FIRST LEGION



These banners show both the original winged reaper insignia of the old Terran First Legion, and the later banner of the Lion's Dark Angels. Of particular note is the emblem of the Hexagrammaton in conjunction with the winged sword, while the facing banner shows the original symbol of the old Hosts of the First.



The Reaper is an honour mark often associated with the Legion's Terran veterans, those who had served during the conquest of the Sol System.



Bearing the ornate mark of the First Legion and of the Hexagrammaton, this MkII pauldron belongs to a warrior of the Great Crusade.



This MkII pauldron bears the mark of a lesser initiate of the Firewing, and despite its low station, it belongs to a Consul Invigilator of the 9<sup>th</sup> Order.



The Golden Lion emblem shown on this MkII pauldron marks the command staff of the 48<sup>th</sup> Order, all of whom were drawn from Caliban.



The mark of the Stormwing was a common sight on the panoply of the First Legion's infantry, signifying their status as infantry veterans.



The crossed swords of the Deathwing on a field of bone-white, marking a warrior that has survived a mortal wound.



By the time of the Thramas Crusade, this stark symbol had become the standard Legion icon in use by the First Legion.



This icon is the personal heraldry of a praetor. The display of such personal arms was a common feature of the First Legion.

### THE FORBIDDEN ARSENALS OF THE FIRST LEGION

Complementing this concentration of skill and hard-won knowledge was one of the most deadly arsenals in the entire Imperium. Much of the technology routinely deployed by the Dark Angels was of an order of complexity beyond that available to the younger Legions and on par with those of the Legio Custodes, produced in dedicated manufactoria on Terra and elsewhere to the specifications of the Dark Angels learned forge masters to designs dating back millennia. Exotic plasma weaponry, munitions of archaic and unstable design as well as variants of armoured vehicles and void craft based on unique technologies, all were the sole province of the First Legion. This proved a potent force multiplier on the battlefield, amplifying the superior skills of the Dark Angels and allowing them to prevail against foes that lesser technology could not defeat. As well as those advanced weapons and designs they used openly, the Dark Angels also maintained large stocks of weapons of a darker renown. Within the sealed vaults of Caliban and Gramarye, as well as a number of secret caches scattered across the Imperium and guarded by dedicated Orders, were vast stores of weaponry long since proscribed to the other military arms of the Imperium. Gene-phages capable of annihilating all life upon a planetary body in mere hours, core-breaching magna munitions that could tear a planet apart from within, stockpiles of ancient silica-virae – the dreaded scourge of the nanite pronounced the ultimate heresy by the adepts of Mars – all could be found within the armouries of the Dark Angels. Such weapons could not be unleashed lightly, for they served only a single purpose – the utter destruction of life. They were of no use to conquerors, only to destroyers, and they served as the ultimate sanction for those enemies deserving of only annihilation.

Outside of the battlefield authority of individual Knight-praetors or Order Preceptors, there were three bodies that exerted control over the strategic deployment of the Legion. Foremost among these was the Primarch Lion El'Jonson, who held the ranks of Lord of the First Legion, Grandmaster of the Hexagrammaton and High Preceptor of the Hekatonystika. He held absolute and final authority over the entire Legion, and when he took the field, his orders superseded all others regardless of position or knowledge. Given the known tendency of the Lion to engage in frontline control of smaller battle forces and leave the widely-flung elements of his Legion to complete their objectives as they saw fit, much scope existed within the Legion for secondary forms of control to handle the more mundane administration of the massed forces of the Legion. Fortunately, the Dark Angels were both more than capable of operating without direct oversight, having proved their mettle in centuries of independent operation, and already possessed additional bodies of authority well suited to directing the arduous task of seeing the far-flung fleets of the Dark Angels supplied.

The Council of Masters, comprised of the heads of the Wings of the Hexagrammaton or their appointed agents, had long overseen the strategic operation of the Legion. The assembled masters were often integral in the process of assigning First Legion forces to the various fleets and warzones of the Great Crusade, and there was often much

lively debate within the council halls as to which Wings should provide troops and commanders to which deployments. As some of the most experienced and veteran warriors of the Legion, the Wing masters and their marshals were ideally suited to such high level planning and the Primarch granted them the honour of his implicit trust, freeing him to undertake a more active role in the Legion. The Conclave of Preceptors rarely took on a similar role, for although it consisted of warriors of equal skill and experience, it was convened in full on only a few ceremonial occasions. The Preceptors of the Orders took on strategic leadership roles largely only when their specialist skills were demanded by the conflict at hand, but still served as a reserve of talented officers should the Legion ever stand in need of direction.

This layered system of leadership, from Primarch, to the Council of Masters, to the Conclave of Preceptors and then individual officers of the line, was flexible enough to support the Legion's preference for a multitude of simultaneous deployments rather than massing in a single warzone. It played to the strengths of their Primarch, who had little interest in the micro management of his Legion's strategies and excelled in direct battlefield command. That the Lion made few changes to this existing structure speaks of his approval of it, and that he granted such autonomy to his warriors shows the trust he had for the veterans of the First Legion.

### OPERATIONAL DOCTRINE

By the last years of the Great Crusade, shortly before the outbreak of the Horus Heresy, the Dark Angels claimed a strength of approximately 180,000 warriors. In terms of sheer size this placed them in the upper tier of the Legiones Astartes, alongside such Legions as the Ultramarines and Sons of Horus, and despite the rise of the younger Legions to rival their glory, they still remained one of the single most powerful military forces in the Imperium. Some records from the period have noted a much lower field strength for the Dark Angels, sometimes as low as 50,000. These reports are likely due to the confusion that the Dark Angels' organisational procedures and heraldry caused for most unfamiliar observers.

The dense nature of the ciphers they used and the secretive nature of many of its sub-formations often led to some amount of bewilderment for outsiders, especially when combined with the fluid and shifting nature of authority and command within the Legion, sometimes even to the degree that it led to military setbacks when working alongside other Imperium forces. Surprisingly, the Dark Angels have made little attempt to remedy this situation, indeed some of their commanders, especially the older veterans of the Great Crusade, seem to take a quiet pride in the confusion it occasions among the least disciplined of their allies. In particular, a common practise by some Dark Angels forces is to arrive without announcing to their allies who commands the First Legion contingent, leaving their counterparts to determine whom to greet as warlord by the heraldry they display. Those few who make the correct choice, or who are wary enough to make no judgement, are treated with respect and those who choose poorly watched carefully for further lapses in judgement. Such tests of worth are commonplace among the Dark Angels, both for their own initiates and for those that would fight alongside them, for the sons of the Lion judge the worth of no warrior on rumour and hearsay alone.

Such actions are most often encountered among the more veteran formations of the Legion. Those forces whose tallies of victories and vanquished foes were so impressive that some among the newly-recruited regiments of the Imperium's armies thought them fabrications and even those who had served in the Great Crusade long enough to have heard of the valour of the First Legion rarely knew the full scope of their victories and sacrifices. Indeed, the Dark Angels remained one of the most experienced bodies of warriors within the Legiones Astartes. Despite the many dire battles they had faced, they had always retained a core of veterans to pass on the hard-won skills and knowledge of their struggles, indeed much of the structure of the Wings and Orders was dedicated to exactly this task. As such they had maintained a level of skill and proficiency in every sphere of warfare that, while

sometimes less specialised than the younger Legion, could rarely be equalled among the Legiones Astartes.

Given these material and organisational preferences the Dark Angels tended to a sparse pattern of deployment, scattering their numbers widely in relatively small detachments, relying more on the potency of their weaponry and the individual prowess of their warriors than on sheer numbers. Capitalising on the diverse nature of the warriors that made up each Chapter and Company, individual battle forces of the Dark Angels were most often little more than a handful of Chapters operating in close support, often a force as small as a few thousand warriors. Where other fleets relied more on the numbers they could bring to bear, the Dark Angels emphasised the fluid nature of their units which were able to quickly and efficiently reform as needed

within a local theatre of war in order to meet the challenges of a given engagement. It was a rare sight to see large numbers of the First Legion gathered in any one place, and such a sight was considered a portent of the worst kind, for the grim, black-armoured ranks of the Dark Angels were only amassed to face the most dire of threats. Indeed, many among the ranks of the Imperial Army considered it a grave misfortune to be tasked with serving as support to the Dark Angels, not due to any mistreatment at the hands of the Legiones Astartes, but rather because the battlefields upon which they walked were inimical to the lives of merely mortal warriors and only the most skilled or fortunate soldiers survived such a tour of duty. Despite this long-held superstition, those few regiments that had served alongside the Dark Angels and survived held the battle honours granted them by the Lion with pride, despite the bloody price paid for their acquisition.



In order to support this widely spread web of independent Companies and Chapters the Dark Angels maintained perhaps the greatest fleet of all the Legiones Astartes, both in terms of sheer number of capital class vessels and in the impressive firepower of those craft. Just as with the many disparate Companies of the Legion, the fleet was also widely spread, most often operating either as a support flotilla attached to a Chapter or as one of the rarer deep range patrol squadrons. Support flotilla were comprised of the heaviest ships available, with the core of many being a Glorianna class battleship or other first-rate warship supported by one or more squadrons of cruisers. Support flotilla were intended to provide transport for the attached Chapters, allowing them to breach heavily-defended systems without support and assault a specified target without the

need for extensive auxiliary forces. They also served to provide orbital fire support to Legiones Astartes forces engaged in battle and a base for Legion interface craft, either to serve as an orbital supply line or to launch airstrikes or interdiction missions. By contrast, the patrol fleets maintained a smaller contingent of Legion warriors, rarely more than Company strength, and fielded more deep range cruisers and sleek escort craft mounting scanning augurs and other equipment unique to the Dark Angels. These squadrons were tasked with seeking out unknown nests of xenos or isolationist and belligerent human enclaves, much in the same manner as the more specialised White Scars fleets. Those Legiones Astartes Companies accompanying the fleet were used solely to assess the threat level of the enemies discovered, mounting spoiling raids or brief hit and run campaigns before withdrawing back to their orbital fortresses. Those deemed dangerous by the veterans of the First Legion were annihilated from orbit and those marked as vulnerable left for the Great Crusade that followed in the fleet's wake.

With assets spread across the galaxy, the First Legion placed little emphasis on maintaining a large number of holdings and fortresses. Indeed, there are only two large outposts held by the Dark Angels, the ancient fortress of Gramarye which played host to the halls of the Council of Masters and the vast industrial facilities that produced many of the Legion's more esoteric weapons and had long been concealed from the scrutiny of the Mechanicum, and the more recently acquired fortress of the Order on Caliban. These two worlds saw the largest concentration of the Legion's infrastructure, and were both heavily fortified and defended. Other holdings on Terra, where a significant portion of the Legion's recruitment was still conducted, and the scattered chantry houses of the various Orders Militant, were less well defended, but not intended as frontline combat installations. The standard pattern of operations within the Legion saw these holdings used as bases for resupply for a force that was primarily based within the mobile halls of the fleet. Only on the rarest of occasions did any of the Chapters of the Dark Angels return to their halls for any lengthy period of rest, with garrison duty left to the rawest recruits and those masters and seneschals with Deathwing lifeguard cadres that stood warden over those domains.



## WAR DISPOSITION

Horus chose the moment to raise his banner carefully, setting plans to have those Legions that threatened his revolt divided and distant from the fighting that would decide the fate of the Imperium. The Dark Angels, ever on the move and split across the vast territory of the Imperium, had been subtly divided by the orders of the new Warmaster, set to patrols and campaigns far from Terra and cleared away from the northern bounds of the Emperor's domains. A significant portion of the Legion had gathered under Lion El'Jonson and been dispatched beyond the bounds of the Imperium in the galactic east, beyond news of what was to come and far from those who might call upon them for aid. Both Caliban and Gramarye had seen a sudden drop in shipments of crucial supplies and news from the far front of the Great Crusade, all blamed on the vicissitudes of war rather than the hidden orders of the Warmaster, leaving them gradually more isolated and vulnerable. To any conventional assessment of military strength, the Dark Angels had been forced into a corner before even the first rebel cannon was fired at Isstvan.

Of their full strength, most likely somewhere slightly less than 200,000 warriors, no more than a third had been dispatched alongside the Lion and placed beyond the reach of the Imperium. This left perhaps 120,000 Dark Angels active along the borders of the Imperium, mostly clustered to the galactic south and west in small battleforces of no more than 5,000 warriors. Most of these forces were either heavily engaged in prosecuting difficult campaigns or fresh from the fields of victory and still counting the toll upon their strength. Few had been given the opportunity to make contact with either the upper echelons of their own Legion's command or that of the Divisio Militaris that co-ordinated Great Crusade deployments,

and the Primarch Lion El'Jonson remained far from the reach of his Legion with no news of his progress or the fate of the troops that accompanied him. The Dark Angels that remained were in essence blinded and by accepted military logic exhausted and as such Horus, his strategists and co-conspirators deemed such small forces to be of negligible threat to their plans, that isolated from any central command they would be unable to mount any real opposition to the rebellion.

They were sorely mistaken. Among all the Legions, the Dark Angels' complex system of Wings and Orders had long defied any foothold to Horus' treacherous warrior lodges, denying that insidious seed of corruption that had stymied so many other Legions' ability to react swiftly to the news of Horus' perfidy. Nor were the Dark Angels distracted by the confusion that afflicted the Imperium's control channels in the immediate aftermath of the Isstvan revolt, for they had long disdained to subject themselves to the direct oversight of the Imperium's authorities. Where other Legions and fleets scrambled to react to the unified onslaught of the Traitor forces and struggled to combat the influence of the Warmaster within their own ranks, the Dark Angels fleets each took initiative on their own and met this new challenge head-on. Purposefully kept to the outskirts of the initial conflict by the Warmaster's machinations, the Dark Angels Knight-praetors set their Chapters upon those outlying worlds that dared to openly espouse loyalty to the Warmaster, deprived of the chance to directly strike against Horus' new centres of power. The Dark Angels turned their disadvantage to opportunity, each fleet an unpredictable threat to the Traitors and their allies, and more than capable of annihilating forces larger than their limited numbers might suggest. The destruction and chaos they wrought kept many systems and industrial centres along the southern and western galactic rims from supplying the main rebel force as well as threatening the Death Guard home world of Barbarus and slowing the rate of troops from that key world to the front.

Even as the hastily-assembled Imperium task force headed to Isstvan V, the Dark Angels were fully engaged at a dozen worlds far from Terra, utilising the terror weapons at their disposal to make examples of those Imperium worlds most vocal in their support of the Warmaster. The burned and

poisoned husks of once-populous worlds were intended to bring a swift end to any insurrection, but could not stem the tide of rebellion that rose up in the wake of the dropsite massacre at Isstvan V and the momentum it granted to the rebel armies of the Warmaster. Despite this, the Dark Angels did not hesitate to destroy that which they could not hold in the Emperor's name, preferring to leave Horus as the Warmaster of an empire of ashes than allow their temporary weakness to cede him territory, with only the most heavily-fortified worlds proof against their onslaught. So for the first handful of years of the Horus Heresy the limited size of the Dark Angels companies restricted them to small scale raids, with many using the superior void craft of their attached fleets to take on the role of commerce raiders, cutting the throat of the Traitors' supply chain. Gramarye and Caliban, while never directly attacked, were kept isolated from the greater war, both by the actions of Word Bearers esoterists and the strange powers they now wielded, and the disturbing silence from certain echelons of the Legion's leadership. The Dark Angels remained a potent force, but one divided and bereft of cohesive direction, at the time seemingly little more than a painful thorn in the side of the juggernaut Horus had aimed at Terra. Yet, with the advantage of hindsight, it is clear that by the actions of the raiding fleets of the First Legion, Horus was denied the early victory he craved, for the supplies they denied him and the chaos they sowed amid sectors that might otherwise have fallen to him without a shot fired slowed his advance just enough.

The stubborn refusal of the Dark Angels to consolidate and grant Horus' lackeys a final decisive battle, a defiant and suicidal assault to express their anger and frustration, granted Dorn time to rally the remaining Loyalist elements around the Imperium's core. It also kept them from the series of massacres and last stands that plagued the Loyalists during the early years of the Horus Heresy, the carefully arranged decimation by which Horus had removed those obstacles that stood in his way. This carefully chosen strategy left the Dark Angels perfectly placed for the return of their lord, poised at the borders of Horus' fragile empire and ready for the Lion to give the word, to let loose the fetters of Imperial decree and give them leave to unleash all the fell tools they held ready for such a cataclysm. Horus' first gambit had failed, Terra remained outside his grasp and the First Legion stood ready to show him the terrible cost of his ambitions.

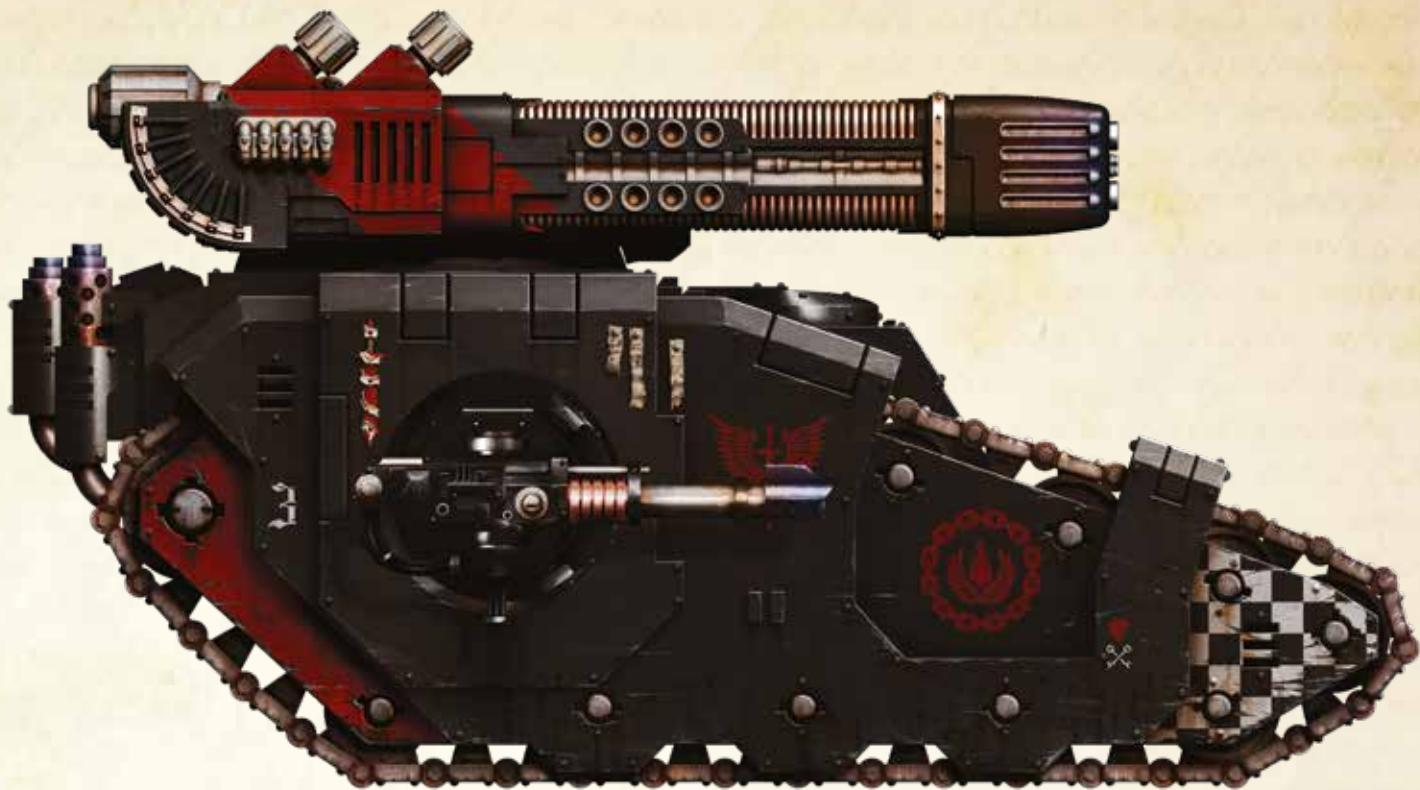
# THE BATTLE FOR KENRAC

Among the initial objectives of the Dark Angels as they pushed outwards from Triplex was the world of Kenrac, its modest industrial output marking it as a target of some value in the ongoing war for the Thramas sector. Before the arrival of the Dark Angels, the Night Lords had seen to the extermination of Kenrac's planetary defence force and begun a process of forced conscription in order to form new slave regiments to feed the war effort, and it would be these forces and a small core of Night Lords warriors that would oppose the Dark Angels' landings. The Lion assigned elements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Orders to the assault, placing Logaine, Knight-praetor of the 17<sup>th</sup> Order and Marshal of the Firewing, at the head of the battlegroup, his orders clear: eliminate all occupying forces and secure the planet for the First Legion.

Rather than waste manpower and munitions in the direct annihilation of the slave regiments that the Night Lords placed in the frontline, Knight-praetor Logaine made use of the Firewing's doctrine of precise strikes and the careful accumulation of intelligence. Initials attacks on the surface were limited to small Firewing teams of Seekers and reconnaissance Legionaries directed to plot enemy positions and secure the Night Lords overseers scattered amongst the bulk of the slave regiments. With the information gained from traditional scouting and the interrogation of the captured Night Lords, the location of the main Night Lords host itself was quickly ascertained, these forces would be the main target of any assault, leaving the ill-motivated conscripts out of the real battle for the planet. The final assault would come

suddenly and with overwhelming force, with the bulk of the Dark Angels battlegroup's heavy assets landing with pinpoint precision amongst the Night Lords' own units, seeking to overwhelm them with the sheer speed of their assault. Without the screening force of slave-soldiers, the small Night Lords garrison found itself hopelessly outnumbered, with even their command post within the fortified hive spire swiftly falling to the onslaught of a combined force of heavy transport vehicles and Terminator assault squads.





## DARK ANGELS SICARAN-OMEGA

### BRAND OF TRUTH

Operated under the aegis of the Firewing, and incorporated into the 19<sup>th</sup> Order at the time of the Thramas Crusade, the tank hunter *Brand of Truth* was one of the few Omega pattern Sicaran tank hunters within the ranks of the First Legion. During the assault upon the Night Lords defence force, it would be the *Brand of Truth* and other swift tank-hunters that would be assigned the task of destroying the hidden Night Lords armoured vehicles, isolating each position using the intelligence gathered by the first wave and then obliterating it with overwhelming firepower. The *Brand of Truth* would garner four kills, including a Cerberus super-heavy tank caught in the middle of the complex procedure required to service its internal atomantic reactor.

## DARK ANGELS SPARTAN ASSAULT TANK

### GRIM VISAGE

Though technically an asset of the Ironwing, the *Grim Visage* is shown here during the fighting on Kenrac bearing the emblem of the Deathwing. This was common practise for vehicles carrying infantry assets from other Wings, with the transport compartment of the Spartan showing not only the symbol of the Deathwing, but also the personal heraldry of its cargo's commander. For the battle to retake Kenrac, the Legion Terminator squad commanded by Knight-captain Dariel made use of the *Grim Visage* as their assigned transport, taking part in the final assault upon the hive spires of Kenrac. The *Grim Visage* would endure a blizzard of anti-armour fire in order to bring its cargo to the optimal insertion point, continuing to advance even after a salvo of Kraken penetrator missiles had shattered its glacis plating and injured the vehicle's driver, unwilling to force the Terminators to suffer under the hail of enemy fire in order to reach their objective.

In the wake of the battle, Knight-captain Dariel and his warriors, whose swift insertion into the heart of the enemy's fortifications allowed them to put a quick and bloody end to the Night Lords' commander, gave up the honours they had earned for the victory. These would instead go to the crew of the *Grim Visage*, adorning the rebuilt glacis armour for the remainder of the tank's service.

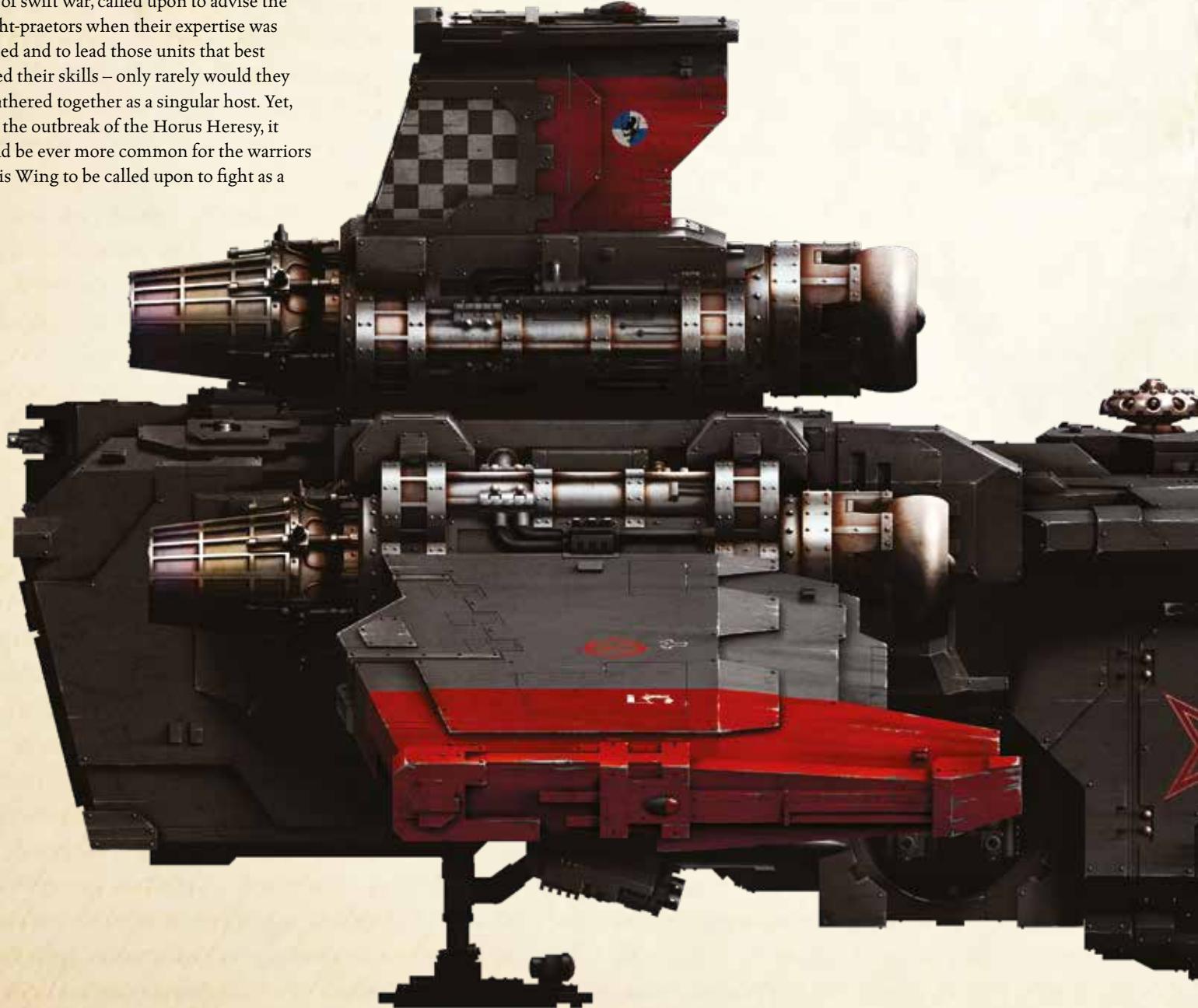
## SWIFT WRATH AND SURE BLADES

As with all the Wings of the Dark Angels, the Ravenwing was intended to gather and focus the Legion's expertise within a singular battlefield art. In this case it was that of skirmish warfare, of the swift advance and sudden withdrawal, to engage the foe and frustrate its strategies rather than simply grind down its will to fight in a simple war of attrition. As such, the Ravenwing tended to focus on battlefield assets that complemented this style of warfare, with their ranks comprising the largest numbers of Land Speeders, aircraft and strike tanks in the First Legion, all scattered across the various Orders and Companies that formed the vast host of the Dark Angels. During the long years of the Great Crusade, the warriors of the Ravenwing served as experts in the field of swift war, called upon to advise the knight-praetors when their expertise was needed and to lead those units that best served their skills – only rarely would they be gathered together as a singular host. Yet, with the outbreak of the Horus Heresy, it would be ever more common for the warriors of this Wing to be called upon to fight as a

singular whole, often deployed to blunt the advance of more traditional Legion hosts or to deny ground to a larger enemy army without attempting to directly contest them, and resorting to spoiling attacks and swift raids to keep a superior force at bay.

During the Thramas Crusade, this gambit would be employed on a number of occasions with great success, with a number of worlds along the fringes of the Dark Angels' advance being denied to the Night Lords by the presence of small Ravenwing task forces. It became only natural that in the larger engagements of the crusade, at Sheol and Yaelis amongst others, that the Ravenwing continued to act as a unified force, ranging

ahead of the main host to harry the Night Lords as they drew up their lines for battle and to discourage enemy forces from attempting flanking assaults of their own. It was a tactical convention that would survive the Thramas Crusade and continue throughout the Horus Heresy, and given the Ravenwing's doctrine of limited war and hit-and-run strikes, it would see them survive Horus' rebellion with one of the largest and most cohesive forces still combat ready within the First Legion. What had begun as a quirk of the Horus Heresy's dire needs would become tradition during the Scouring that followed, seeing the Ravenwing become a force unto themselves in the new age of the Imperium that followed.



## DARK ANGELS SABRE STRIKE TANK

ONYX-03

The third vehicle of a squadron assigned to the conflict on Mortain, a world on the far flank of the main Dark Angels assault into the Thramas sector. Sabres were amongst the armoured vehicles most often assigned to Ravenwing veterans, for the design of these swift hunter-killers complemented the tactics and temperament of the Ravenwing well.



## DARK ANGELS SOKAR STORMBIRD

LEXICON OF GLORY

The Lexicon of Glory is one of the oldest Sokar pattern Stormbirds in Legiones Astartes service, being one of the original prototypes that entered testing with the old Host of the Void. It is a testament to both the durability of its design and the skills of its Dark Angels pilots that after a century and a half of the most brutal wars in humanity's long history, the Lexicon of Glory still operates at peak efficiency. As a mark of respect for its glorious record of success in battle, it is a tradition within the Legion to allow the Lexicon of Glory to be the first craft to make planetfall during an assault at which it is present, a tradition which has never failed to bring victory.



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