



# THE SPACE WOLVES

**Numeration:** The VI<sup>th</sup> Legion

**Primogenitor:** Leman Russ

**Cognomen:** None officially recorded, but various informal and idiomatic cognomen inconstantly used.

**Observed Strategic Tendencies:** Shock Assault, Search and Destroy, Pursuit Operations, Punitive and Excoriation Campaigns.

**Noteworthy Domains:** The death world of Fenris (Enforced Dominion)

**Allegiance:** Fidelitas Sine Recursu

*'It matters not how high your walls soar,  
It matters not how many will answer your call,  
It matters not how keen your blade glimmers,  
Nor how bright burns your hearth fire.  
The wolf waits,  
The wolf waits in darkness for us all.'*

*From the Lay of Grimnr Cold-Tongue  
The Fenrisian Sagas*

Since the days of the VI<sup>th</sup>'s inception on Terra it has remained a Legion apart from its fellows, its origins shrouded as it garnered a fearsome reputation, both for its prowess as a shock-assault deployment and as a tireless pursuit and hunter-killer force. Unexpected violence was the Legion's calling card from its earliest involvement in the Great Crusade, its campaigns unsubtle but brutally swift. Like its latter-day namesake, the wolves of Old Terra, the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion's assaults have always resembled calculated exercises in ferocity aimed to tear and rend until the foe lies in ruins or is driven to its death. But it was with the restoration to the Legion of its Primarch, Leman Russ, and its settling on the icy death world of Fenris, one of the most perilous and strange of Mankind's ancient homes, that the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion's nature would find its apotheosis and the Space Wolves would truly be born.

Under its master and 'father' Leman Russ, the Space Wolves Legion would reave a bloody path across the stars of the Great Crusade, but never stray far in truth from the shadow of the Emperor. For, unlike their brother Legions, the Space Wolves were kept under the tight control of the Imperial Court and unleashed at the Emperor's command, as often to savagely chastise those who would renege their oaths of service as they were sent to destroy those who resisted the offer of Compliance upon the dark frontier. This oft-served role as bloody-handed tool of punishment, coupled with the secret purposes to which the Legion had been used and the Space Wolves' rapidly increasing cultural idiosyncrasy, steadily drove a wedge between the VI<sup>th</sup> and the other Space Marine Legions as the decades of war ground on. So it was by the closing years of the Great Crusade and the ascension of Warmaster Horus that the Space Wolves in many ways stood a Legion isolated and apart. With some of their brethren they maintained ties of comradeship and respect, however distantly, but with others there simmered mutual acrimony and distrust, and others still considered them no more than leashed monsters, set loose only to kill when needed—something less than human and in truth perhaps even less than Legiones Astartes. Of such opinions or considerations the Space Wolves cared little; they knew well enough that they were not the builders of empire, nor were they the watchers on its walls, nor lock-step soldiers who cared for bright pageantry and meaningless contests for rank and perfection—they were predators, thus they had been made, and woe betide any who fell into their jaws.

## THE SHADOW BEFORE THE WOLF

As with several of the proto-Legion groupings in the closing stages of the Unification Wars, much of the early details of the founding and intake of the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion remain shrouded under a quite deliberate veil of secrecy woven at the time of their creation. Beyond the usual concealment and security that the Emperor chose to surround the Space Marine project with in order to protect the nascent Legiones Astartes, the VI<sup>th</sup> division, along with that of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> Legion (that would later become known as the Salamanders) and the XX<sup>th</sup> Legion (who would become the Alpha Legion), was formed and established largely in separation from the rest, and it is generally thought created to very specific ends. There were none save perhaps a handful of the Emperor's closest and earliest confidants surviving from those lost and bloody days who knew the facts regarding this mysterious 'trefoil' of Legions, as it is sometimes known, and the truth likely died with them, though in the case of the strains of Legiones Astartes that would be known as the Salamanders and the Space Wolves, they varied considerably in gene-forged ability to their peers.

This element of mystery surrounding the trefoil proto-Legions can be seen to establish a distance between the three and their brethren, particularly in regards to their earliest intake of initiates, around which dark rumours circled. In the case of the intake of the VI<sup>th</sup>, vast divergence in origin and genotype was clear even to the briefest of observations. Closer study of the evidence that remains indicates that representatives of some of the most barbarically regressive and hyper-violent cultures and outcast groups of pre-Unification Terra were chosen to found the Legion, though with such diversity that selection appeared to have been taken on an individual-by-individual basis rather than to invoke or capitalise on any single strain of warrior society. So it was that while certain proto-Legions, such as the X<sup>th</sup> (later the Iron Hands) and the XV<sup>th</sup> (later the Thousand Sons) held strong cultural imprints from Terra's subjected warlord-empires, the nascent VI<sup>th</sup> was almost a blank slate. Instead, what bonded it together was first its training in isolation as a coherent military force under the direction of the Strategos of the Emperor's inner circle. What also made the VI<sup>th</sup> singular was the unique nature of its gene-seed, although what separated it from the other proto-Legions was not yet apparent to outsiders.

Evidence further indicates that the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion's passage between stages of expansion was slower than many of its peers, slower perhaps in its first years than any save the XX<sup>th</sup>'s, whose strange and obscured origins are the subject of another record. In retrospect this is likely to have been because of the high levels of fatal implant reaction rates among the Legion's candidates, which was to be demonstrated subsequently as a factor of the VI<sup>th</sup>'s gene-seed before its later stabilisation with its Primarch's genetic pattern. Regardless, like the other proto-Legions of the trefoil, the VI<sup>th</sup> was largely held back from full engagement in armed conflict during the closing stages of the Unification Wars and the re-conquest of the Sol System. This not only served to further isolate them from their peers but also denied them the boons of vastly increased recruitment intake gained by those Legions that had participated in the subjugation of Luna and the reward of primacy in the use of its gene-labs. Perhaps ironically however, this segregation also spared them the travails of the gene-seed crisis which almost destroyed the III<sup>rd</sup> (later the Emperor's Children) and caused damage to the V<sup>th</sup> (later the White Scars) and the IX<sup>th</sup> (later the Blood Angels) as well.

It was almost a decade after the Great Crusade had broken free of the confines of the Sol System and spread out to distant stars that the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion was to be unleashed openly en masse against an enemy. What occurred in the previous decade remains entirely lost, even to the Space Wolves Legion's own history, but record of that first great battle, the Compliance of '1-122', known to its indigenous human population as 'Delsvaan', are clear. Dispatched from the shadow of the Principia Imperialis, the great Expeditionary fleet commanded by the Emperor Himself, the then full strength of the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion, some 3,500 Legionaries, descended upon a world that had already met the overtures of the Imperium with violence. Delsvaan had weathered the Age of Strife relatively well, maintaining a technologically advanced, highly industrialised society, governed by a militarised plutocracy dedicated to the tangible profits and political control of its many production-combines. Hubris and arrogance rather than any deviancy or deep-seated malignity was its sin, but its people had defied the Imperium and they would be shown the error of their ways.

Left to their own devices as to the planning and execution of the operation—as was no doubt part of the testing of the Legion, for

surely a test this was— Commander Enoch Rathvin, the VI<sup>th</sup>'s first master, executed a multi-vector planetstrike operation aimed directly at Masaanore-Core, the fortified dormitory-city of the most powerful of Delsvaan's combines. Under cover of near-indiscriminate bombardment of the city's outer areas and infrastructure nexus, dozens of separate landing areas were breached in the ensuing confusion by gunship and drop pod strike, with Rathvin landing nearly his entire strength within a single hour and holding back no reserve. Tactical commentaries made by Imperial observers clearly state that what appeared at first sight to resemble the 'point of the spear' shock assault tactics already widely practised by the Legions as pioneered by the XVI<sup>th</sup> under Horus—then the only extant Primarch—were quickly shown to have developed, or as some detractors had it 'devolved', into something else.

Rather than conducting a direct advance to areas of the enemy's command and control as was the standard pattern, the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion spread through the city more like a raging fire than an assaulting army. Their infantry and reconnaissance elements rapidly outpacing their armoured support, they seemed to flow like a destroying tide through the city, stopping to claim no strategic assets, holding no ground, but leaving anything in their path shattered in their wake. The armed resistance they met, caught suddenly fighting a war on a hundred fronts, was hopelessly outmatched, and what could not be easily overrun, such as fortified bunkers and watchtowers, was simply bypassed and isolated, and left for the second wave of armour to deal with. The native army—conscripts lightly armed with las weaponry, reinforced by detachments of better trained and carapace-armoured combine soldiers—stood little chance against this onslaught, utterly unprepared for the speed or strength of the armoured invaders, or the sheer violence with which they dove on. Most of the defenders were killed where they stood, trying to mount firing lines to hold the advance, or cut down in their hundreds as attempted counter-attacks turned into routs, the panicked militia themselves soon tangling with thousands of fleeing civilians.

Faced with this stampede of terrified humanity, the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion seemed to redouble its attack as if goaded on by the scent of blood and terror. They fell on the people of Masaanore-Core and there was great slaughter. There remains debate in the historical record whether at this time

Legion command actually lost control of its units to the ongoing violence, however briefly, but in any case Enoch Rathvin did not quickly rein in his forces, and when he finally accepted the surrender of Masaanore-Core, its streets had been painted crimson with the blood of its inhabitants. The fate of the city was example enough however for the leaders of the other combines, and quickly they saw the folly of further resistance and so Delsvaan was brought into Compliance. The cost to one city had been great, but comparably to other Compliance actions, the cost to the world had been minor. The VI<sup>th</sup> Legion's performance, while disquieting to some in the Imperium's hierarchy, more for its apparent ill-discipline than its results, was clearly sufficient for the Emperor's satisfaction to grant it its own sub-fleet to command; Expeditionary 115—still affiliated to the core of the great Armada of the Principia Imperialis but otherwise internally independent with its own tenders, escort craft and warships.

For the next dozen years, the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion continued as an active fleet command of the Great Crusade, its numbers steadily growing to recorded levels of nearly 5,000 at the Battle of Hyn'tal and then 7,000 active Legiones Astartes at the start of the Relovs Landing campaign. Given this relatively small size—Legions such as the Luna Wolves and the Dark Angels of the 1<sup>st</sup> numbered thrice and four times that number respectively—they often served alongside other Legions and large Imperialis Auxilia forces in major campaigns or were entrusted with smaller, often bloody missions to destroy particular knots of enemy resistance in shock assaults. Over time the Legion developed particular expertise also in conducting rapidly moving hunter-killer operations, particularly in city-fighting conditions, or in undertaking more generally punitive actions, such as suppressing rebellions by inflicting short, brutal reprisal actions—tasks for which the VI<sup>th</sup> under Rathvin seemed particularly suited, and indeed missions of which type Rathvin often requested for his Legion. During this period, when many other Legions were adopting liveries and slowly forging their own martial traditions, the VI<sup>th</sup> notably maintained a curiously unadorned appearance, seldom varying its armorials other than to feature an indication of role and tactical division. One notable exception was when it was placed in command of Imperialis Auxilia regiments, the addition of the twin flame-blade insignia of the 'Sanghauta' being prominently displayed. This icon, more commonly used by the



Discipline Master and Provost Corp of the Imperialis Militant, carried with it a very definite meaning; it displayed clearly the power of life and death every Legionary of the VI<sup>th</sup> had over the lesser troops under their command. It was a power they were infamously quick to exercise in its extreme, a summary punishment for any merely human forces who they felt lacked militancy or discipline alongside them.

#### Of Jackals and Hounds

The VI<sup>th</sup>'s reputation amongst the wider forces of the Great Crusade by its second decade was by this point something of a mixed one. They had an unarguable track record of success and had won numerous battle honours, but accusations and stories of unneeded collateral damage and casualties among human civilian populations where they fought were widespread. It was said, long before the influence of Fenris and its culture, that there was something of the bestial to the Legion's warriors, something readily apparent in the first foreshadowings of a mark of what was to become later known as the Canis Helix upon them, though insufficient time had yet passed for this to

become so very pronounced. More than this, some had concerns that the VI<sup>th</sup> were said to be an internally fractious Legion, ruled more by the strength of its officers than obedience to legitimate authority, and violence and factionalism within the ranks was said to be far too common. This was in an age where the Primarchs themselves, save Horus, had not yet been found to stamp their mark upon their Legion, but the likes of the VIII<sup>th</sup> Legion was already gaining a reputation as the Emperor's agents of terror and fear, and the 'unwonted savagery' of the VI<sup>th</sup> was often spoken of alongside the future Night Lords in the symposia of the great and the good of the Great Crusade's hierarchy, with some even warning that the Legion should be closely monitored lest it become uncontrollable. But of all the accusations, perhaps the most cutting was that the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion was never keener to the fight as when an enemy had already broke and fled before it—than where its victims were helpless.

With this came an informal and insulting cognomen for the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion of the 'Rout'; a collective noun often used for carrion jackals and the mutated pariah dogs of Terra's dry

seas that hounded and preyed upon refugee columns and wastelanders—creatures brave only when their victims were half-dead or exhausted. Ironically enough, this insult may even have been meant to unfavourably compare the VI<sup>th</sup> to the equally ferocious XII<sup>th</sup>, already become known as the War Hounds, a Legion also renowned for the unbelievable violence of its mettle in battle, but which was at this time held up as an example of honourably controlled fury, its rage directed only at the direst foes and used to overcome the most overmatching odds. This comparison seems now as some macabre joke given the very different paths these Legions were to take and what future history had in store for them—paths dictated in no small measure by the effect that the finding of their Primarch was to have upon them both. That change, and truly transformative it would prove to be, was not long in coming for the VI<sup>th</sup>.

#### THE WOLF KING

Unlike the rediscovery of Horus—the first Primarch returned to the Imperium—in the case of Leman Russ, and indeed many of those Primarchs whose rediscovery came

after, very few definite facts can be obtained, and with Russ, the matter is further shrouded by a fog of carefully and deliberately crafted allegory and myth. What can be said for certain is that Leman Russ was the second Primarch to make an appearance openly at the Emperor's side, doing so a handful of years before the rediscovery of Ferrus Manus on Medusa. Leman Russ had been found upon the death world of Fenris, a planet itself shrouded in considerable mystery and legend, and like Medusa, known by name to some of the most ancient star charts of the Dark Age of Technology still extant. The comparative swiftness of this finding has prompted some prone to conspiracy to hazard that the Emperor may have already known that this location, as deadly and as far-flung as it was, was the resting place of one of his lost sons, and it cannot now be said with any certainty how long Fenris and the Primarch may have been under observation before contact. Of the few Fenrisian allegorical saga-histories made available dealing with the early life of Russ and his rise to power as the pre-eminent warlord-king of that battle-torn world, the only details that can be gleaned that seem

## OF THE DEATH WORLD: FENRIS

TRANSCRIPT EXERTED FROM CHAPTER CLXXVIII OF THE 'PRINCIPIA CARTOGRAPHICA DOMINUS IMPERIA' OF LORD EPHRATA HOOD; CHARTERED ROGUE TRADER MAJORIS; CAPTAIN-GENERAL OF THE OMICRON-11<sup>TH</sup> VOIDCLAD; SCOLAM-GENATOR IMPERIALIS; ITERATOR-EMERITUS OF THE ALBIAN HIGH COLLEGES AND LORD ADMIRAL OF THE 2,113<sup>TH</sup> EXPEDITIONARY FLEET BY THE ORDER OF THE MASTER OF MANKIND

### In Preface

Fenris should not be. As a world its dangerously elliptical orbit should have seen it long ago stripped of viable atmosphere and of anything resembling higher order life, but this is not the case. As a world of such harsh climatic and extreme biospheric conditions, multiple competing genres of megafauna should not exist on Fenris, but they assuredly do. Human life should not be possible on Fenris, but human life is there. Fenris should not be—all generally observable phenomena of life and planetary formation tell us this emphatically—but Fenris most assuredly is as real as it is deadly.

In my nigh two centuries voyaging the darkness between the stars in the service of humanity and the Great Crusade, I have seen countless wonders and terrors beyond measure. I know full well that there abound strange domains whose very existence defies logic and the dictates of reason, worlds whose ancient mysteries care little for the common predictions of scientific lore or our preconceptions of what is possible. Fenris is such a world. Even if it were not home to human life where human life should not exist, it would still be classed as such a dark wonder, and that it is also the home to one of the most fearsome and dreaded of all of the Legiones Astartes only makes it all the more remarkable.

It has been my honour to have personally visited Fenris twice and walked upon its icy shores, and I am one of the very few lords of the Imperium to have had that chance. For unlike Legion worlds such as Olympia and Baal, which while distant have become beacons in the darkness of the far frontiers, Fenris, though relatively close to Terra on the galactic scale, has remained as cold and forbidding as it ever was. No provender fleets stop at Fenris but by the infrequent request of its masters, and no fleets find ready shelter from the rigours of the void there unless hard pressed by desperation. How then came I to its bleak and forbidding shore? The first time I was but one of any number of lesser chartist captains, and my galleass by happenstance had been assigned to deliver certain arms and munitions to the newly homed VI<sup>th</sup> Legion in the days when the great fortress of the Fang was still under construction and all on Fenris was strife and fever. Then, many void ships and off-world cabals of bonded tech-magos and Terran arch-wrights swarmed the system forging defences, vaults, armouries and fortifications suited to its purposes under the Emperor's own plan and writ, for it took a colossal effort on such a scale to make an isolated ice world

a bastion that could stand off an armada if needs be. The second time was nearly eight decades later, and by my will, my diligence and my good fortune I was Rogue Trader Militant then, and I returned to see the fruits of that frenzy of labour and vast expenditure of resources so many years prior. Here now sat the domain of the Space Wolves, a Legion rightly feared and spoken of in whispers across the Imperium, and I and my fleet were to lead them to a fresh quarry to destroy. I was to meet with and give council to their Lord of Winter and Ruin, and never have I been greater struck with awe and terror in equal measure, save in the presence of the Master of Mankind. But of my dealings with the wolves that stalk the stars in human guise this is not my place of recording, but it is of their dark and wondrous world of which I shall now speak.

### THE WORLD OF BLOOD AND ICE

Fenris is a category Omega death world, an orb of ice-shrouded oceans subject to deep volcanic turbulence that destroys as quickly as it creates a shifting scatter-pattern of islands and archipelagos across its storm-wracked surface. Beyond this only a single stable northern continental landmass exists, and that is all but inaccessible from the seas. It is a world biologically active but fundamentally inimical to human life, where our presence should not be possible without substantial technological aid. Its Omega classification indicates severe threat from multiple sources, and in the case of Fenris this comes from the extremes of its climate, deadly geological instability and some of the most dangerous fauna encountered by Mankind.

Fenris follows a long elliptical orbit around its pale sun, called the 'Wolf's Eye' in translation from its native dialect. During much of this, Fenris is remote from its star and it plunges into a long geo-climatic winter. Over this period the oceans all but entirely freeze over, and at its furthest point even the equatorial seas are covered with ice and the bleak volcanic islands that punctuate the waters of this largely ocean-covered world become mountains in a vast ice plain as treacherous as it is temporary. As the planet slowly swings back out of its 'helwinter', a violent thawing leads to quakes and storm surges, a vast increase in tidal force-wrought volcanism and the febrile blossoming of deep sea life, much of it predatory, in quest of kilometre-thick swarms of pelagic life drawn to the brief warmth of the surface. The world is transformed during this period into a carnivorous feeding frenzy and each life form struggles to feed as much as it may to store energy for the long cold to come, and also to destroy any

competition for that same food resource. The apex of the orbital passage close to the sun cracks the sub-oceanic mantle of Fenris and causes ever more violent tectonic disturbances which force an end to this season of slaughter, their effects drowning some land masses entirely and sundering others. While a few might endure unscathed and others yet be born anew from the welling lava, the sub-sea quakes bathe the world in scalding fogs and poisonous fume-clouds as the pale sun looms large in its skies.

### Kraken, Wurm and Wolf

If a single word is appropriate to sum up the native fauna of Fenris, that word is 'deadly.' From kilometres-long deep oceanic predators ranging from the famed Fenrisian 'Kraken' to a host of batrachian and ichthyic nightmares without ready classification, the seas of Fenris are perilous beyond measure, while even the shifting islands as well as the great northern granite mass of the world's only true continent, known in the local dialect as 'Asaheim', are home to a host of apex-alpha class predators, ranging from cold-adapted mega-saurids to carnivorous pseudo-primates and ursids, to the legendary Fenrisian Wolves themselves. Of all these, the latter creatures are the most remarkable, not only in posing vast physical danger to any they encounter by virtue of their phenomenal strength, aggression and resilience, but also because they are undoubtedly semi-sentient creatures, and capable of co-operation and abstract thinking beyond any mere beast. What is striking perhaps to the genitor-scholar and student both of history and myth such as I, where perhaps to others it might go utterly unremarked, is the simple fact that these creatures both are, and are not, wolves. Which is to say, they give every appearance of the ancient and long-extinct 'lupus' genus of Terra, except in the degree of their size and power, which exceeds any natural creature of humanity's cradle and reaches into the range of myth and fable. And herein lies I think a clue to not only the Wolves of Fenris, but also to the nature of Fenris itself.

So many super-predatory species exist on a world so unsuited to having evolved even one of them—so many variations in form and type and development, and with few common gene-markers between them; why? My inescapable conclusion is that Fenris itself was made to be as it is by some conscious will, by some hand or master lost to time. Fenris then to me cannot be anything else but a vast and monstrous menagerie left to go wild down the millennia, a manufactured death

world. The host of super-predators we see there now are the survivors of some bloody and forced competition between the apex species of perhaps a thousand scattered worlds drawn together to fight for survival, and also perhaps with them was introduced the product of arcane science seeking to bring to life creatures that had only ever before existed in myth. And if this is so, then what of the human population?

### The Tribes of Ice and Steel

That human life could have endured on Fenris during the long night of the Age of Strife given all I have said of this death world should be patently impossible, but it did not only endure, it thrived. When restored to the Imperium, Fenris was found to be the home of numerous fractured yet culturally cohesive human tribes, reduced to a barbaric, preindustrial condition and near-feral levels of technology by which the forging of steel was the highest art known. Conditions on Fenris mean that daily life was nothing but a ceaseless

battle to survive against a host of dangers—from the treacherous climate to the beasts that hunted the seas, and of course each other. Semi-nomadic and driven on by the merciless cycle of the formation and destruction of ice and land, competition for resources and survival between the tribal groups was relentless and bloody, with every battle a matter of life and death not just for those who fought, but for all their kin who depended on them. The men and women of the sea raider peoples of Fenris lived hard, attenuated lives, often cut short by ill-fortune and the stroke of blade or claw, but burned bright if briefly with passion and the will to survive, and they could endure much.

Culturally, just as with the beasts of Fenris, there was an undoubted stain of deliberate adaption from certain cultural patterns of Ancient Terra, which along with their dialects, clear derivations of Terran Gothic, points to the original population of Fenris being direct colonists from Old Terra itself, placed there by some cohesive effort at some

time within the Dark Age of Technology. But again more questions are begged. Why would a population of men and women clearly large enough and well-selected to remain genetically viable over the long term be set down with such a vast coterie of monsters on a world of such murderously intemperate nature? The only answer now perhaps lies in the fact that in certain obscure and ill-provenance star charts of Dark Age of Technology origin, there lies Fenris marked under the name 'Fenryr Perdita'; a term in the ancient form some have translated simply as 'Fenris/forbidden' and others as the 'Prison of Wolves'. There have also been some who have wondered that Fenris was so swiftly rediscovered by the Great Crusade and seen meaning in this, and they may be right. But what the Emperor knows of Fenris' lost history and indeed perhaps its purpose, He has shared with nought, save perhaps its king.

[Transcript ends]

**Name:** Fenris

**Classification:** Legiones Astartes home world  
[Death World]

**System Data:** GR/3/2546//ZΩ

**Stellar Grid:** 99-RBAL/CT-31

**Segmentum:** Obscurus/Coreward

**Notation:** [Unstable orbital path: topography reformation twice per solar cycle. Flora and fauna extremely hostile]

++[Operational base of VI<sup>th</sup> Legion]++





## HRIMTHURSAR ARN THEROD

ICE LORD OF THE SONS OF YMIR, ANCIENT OF THE FOURTH GREAT COMPANY

THE PROSPERINE CRUSADE, THE BREAKING OF THE ACROPOLIS MAGNA, 004.M31

Renowned among even the bitter ranks of the Hrimthursar for his grim demeanour and unremitting wrath, Therod was among those present for the sundering of the Acropolis Magna's gates and the slaughter of all within. The systematic slaughter of the Prosperine Guard, whose weapons proved little more than annoyances to Therod's Dreadnought shell, continued for some hours before the Ancient deemed his work complete.

As with all Space Wolves Dreadnoughts, Therod's shell is replete with decorative inscriptions and designs, mostly commemorating past deeds and victories. Of note is the Hagalaz rune on the Dreadnought's left greave, the mark of the Hrimthursar, the most hateful of all the Sons of Ymir, as the Space Wolves named their Dreadnought cadres.

certain is that alone in the wilds the infant-Primarch, post-human as he was, survived despite the death world's many terrors and, after finding and joining with Fenris' human population, integrated into its warrior society and embraced its culture as his own. In doing so, and without advanced technology of any kind, he mastered a domain as deadly as any world found in the wide cosmos in its degree of hostility to human life. Taken to the Emperor's side, there appears to have been little or no difficulty in his comprehension of what he truly was, or indeed in absorbing the ways and means of the Imperium's advanced technology, scale and society.

Russ' education appears to have been short but thorough, and his testing brief. Very swiftly he was sent to command his Legion, and he did not go alone. With Leman Russ went as many as several hundred Fenrisian warriors who had, despite their age, undergone and survived the implantation and gene-processing required to become Legiones Astartes, at least to the greater part. Many had died in the attempt, but far less than might have been expected, and this was for two reasons. The first was the stabilising effect of Leman Russ' own gene-helix pattern over the existing VI<sup>th</sup> Legion gene-seed, which seems to have all but reversed the prior difficulties of candidate survival. The second was that the Fenrisians themselves proved of extraordinarily resilient stock, a factor attributed to long-term human survival on Fenris in general, and that world's own many mysteries. These men were to be Leman Russ' first 'Varagyr', rendered sometimes as 'Varangii' in Imperial records, or more literally 'Wolf Guard.' They were Russ' oath-bound warriors, sworn to him even if it meant denying the jaws of death to be at his side, and whose loyalty had seen them leave their world of ice and blood and ascend uncomprehendingly but undaunted to the stars in their lord's footsteps. These Varagyr were valued by their king for this loyalty over the might of the superhuman Legiones Astartes of the VI<sup>th</sup> he was given to command, despite their vaunted strength and savage reputation, for they had not yet proven themselves as warriors or earned his respect. This lesson was the first Leman Russ was to teach the VI<sup>th</sup> and an early sign that under the Wolf King's rule, his Legion would be very different to any other.

### The Wolves that Stalk the Stars

Records which remain about the transition of command in the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion indicate that things went generally smoothly, at least at first. That their Primarch had been

the second recovered was a matter both of rejoicing and some pride within the ranks of the Legion, and that their new lord was of barbaric mien was perhaps of less consternation to them given many of the individual Legionaries' origins than it otherwise might have. Russ also was charismatic and readily inspired awe among those he had been given to command, and in a Legion which already respected strength over perhaps anything else, here was a warrior whose strength exceeded any of them by a degree as to seem almost absurd in comparison. Rathvin relinquished command to his Primarch perhaps grudgingly but without open challenge, and if the presence of the Varagyr, who Leman Russ had ordered dispersed partly through the ranks, was cause for some resentment, it was quickly made known that both Russ' rule was not to be questioned, and that the Varagyr were more than willing to offer themselves in single combat to decide any argument over the matter. Before any acrimony could fester, Leman Russ in his wisdom determined to take his Legion into battle so that he, his kinsman and his gene-sons would spill blood and face death together and so be forged anew as one, or in his words; *"...as the strands of iron are twisted and hammered together in the forging of a killing blade, so shall we be. I and my oath-sworn have been until now the Wolves of Fenris, and you, cousins of my blood, the Wolves of Terra. Together we shall become the Wolves that Stalk the Stars, and the beasts that crawl and feed in the darkness of the void shall come to fear us, and know themselves hunted."*

The target for this first campaign undertaken with his Legion had been carefully selected in council with the Emperor and Horus, and would prove for the VI<sup>th</sup> a true test of its mettle. Their target was a sector of the expanding frontier known as the 'Wheel of Fire', to the galactic east of the Segmentum Solar. It was a sprawling wilderness of erratically transiting star systems and burning nebula, wracked by frequent ion and Empyrean tempests and home to at least a score of xenos-occupied worlds, many under the dominion of the Orks, and thereby a source of periodic drifting space hulks and marauder attacks into the nascent Imperium. Human occupation in the region was scant, viable resources few and the cost of pacification projected to be high. For this reason the Wheel of Fire had so far been left alone save for a few probing raids, but now the Great Crusade sought again to expand towards the far larger and more dangerous prize of the worlds beyond Seraphina, an

area itself controlled by a vast Ork empire. The threat of the Orks of the Wheel of Fire attacking at the Great Crusade's back in support of their kind was a real one, and to negate that threat, the VI<sup>th</sup> would take the Wheel of Fire and purge it, regardless of any cost they would pay.

### The Wheel of Fire

Under the guidance of the renowned Navigator Durlan Ocellati, the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion fleet, reinforced with new strike cruisers dispatched from Mars but shorn of its human auxiliary regiments at Leman Russ' direct order, drew its plans of attack against the Wheel of Fire. Russ' decree was that they would mount a rapid series of assaults on key worlds, focussing on pulling apart the Orks' domains and isolating them from each other. He saw no merit in a set piece invasion or grinding campaign of conquest and attrition in which the divided and fractious Orks were given a chance to come together against an outside threat and mass their strength as they had proved they could many times before. Instead they would be set reeling, attacked on many fronts at once and left scrambling to claw back at shadows. The iron-bitter lessons of Fenris' eternal wolf-wars of sea raid and sudden slaughter would serve the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion well in such a campaign, and off-set the advantage of a foe whose warriors outnumbered that of the Legiones Astartes force tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, to one.

Entering the Wheel of Fire as one, the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion fleet split into a dozen smaller squadrons of various sizes, each dispatched to strike at targets of their own. The largest force with the heaviest ships was under Leman Russ' personal command, and it set out directly for the heart of the Ork powerbase in the Wheel of Fire, a star system propitiously enough entered upon ancient maps of the region as 'Lucan,' where a vast tangled conglomeration of hulked ships and debris had been turned into a ramshackle star-fortress and shipyard of sorts by the Orks. A secondary force of lighter vessels, formed under Rathvin, was sent to target the teeming Ork worlds of Gundastol and Karkash, while the final third of the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion fleet was fractured down into much smaller units, each comprising a handful of warships, or even assigned as the raider-crew of single frigates with orders to roam freely and attack targets of opportunity.

At Leman Russ' command, war came to the Wheel of Fire like a raging hurricane, war the likes of which even the brutal and

bellicose Orks that claimed its mastery had never known. Riding the backs of the squalling ætheric storms under the masterful warp-navigation of Ocellati, the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion fell upon the Orks without warning. These were no clear-cut clinical raids, but slaughters and shock assaults, reavings and acts of mass destruction that left the Orks' crude city-sprawls shattered and whole landscapes burning in their wake. Provender worlds of enslaved lesser xenos who provided the greenskins with food and ore were thermo-bombed into ash wastes, while the 'War-'Eds and 'Mekkaz' which led the Orks were singled out and broken. Battles were conducted in the teeth of the foe's strongholds, and fortifications were overwhelmed before their garrisons could even rally to their defences. Jagged-hulled Ork killships were boarded and stormed while still at their docking ports, and dozens of 'rok' asteroid bases were penetrated to their depths before being blown apart from within.

For five standard years the war went on, never letting up in tempo, never abating in fury. Casualties for the Legion both in terms of warriors and in ships were frighteningly high, with almost a full third of the Legion destroyed before it was done and the Wheel of Fire left a graveyard of its war dead. Of the many slain were included the increasingly unstable Enoch Rathvin, crushed in the hydraulic claws of an Ork hell crawler while leading a suicidal charge on Xyat. But for every Legiones Astartes who fell, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Orks perished. This was war without quarter, war without relenting; it was not an act of conquest, but of extermination, and was carried out with a ruthlessness and indefatigability that no unaugmented human could have maintained. It was what the VI<sup>th</sup> had been made for, and on the Wheel of Fire, just as Russ had promised, it was re-forged anew.

The old enormities and excesses of which the VI<sup>th</sup> had been accused were themselves made good under Leman Russ. Its blood lust controlled with discipline and iron will, and its rage shackled by duty and oath-sworn loyalty, Russ gave his Legion pride in what it was, pride in the power it wielded, pride even in the monstrous violence which lurked within its heart, but with all this he did not allow them to crave glory for its own sake, nor wallow in the bitter poison of mindless bloodshed. He gave them purpose and he gave them honour, bleak as it was. They served the Emperor and that duty was a sacred one; they were made to be the fangs fastened around the throat of humanity's

foes. Just as on Fenris, war was ever slaved to the survival of kith and kin, the galaxy would be made a safe and secure home for human life, even if the Wolves that Stalked the Stars had to wash it clean in blood first.

#### The Fang

After the Wheel of Fire, the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion —its surviving warriors as battered and rent as the warships they voyaged in— returned home for the first time to Fenris, the legendary death world upon which their Primarch had been found. For the survivors of the old VI<sup>th</sup> and what remained of the first Varagyr, Fenris was now indeed home for both, for during the trials of the great campaign they had undertaken, all had indeed come to adopt elements of the Fenrisian culture their Primarch embodied, and its martial traditions. The dark wisdom which the Varagyr brought with them found favour with those in the Legion who wished to be closer to their gene-sire, just as the Fenris-born embraced new weapons and ways of war more fitted to the vast and unimaginable battlefields they now prowled across.

What they found waiting for them was one of the mightiest citadels ever built during the Great Crusade: the fortress of the Fang, set upon the rocky peaks of Fenris' single polar continent. Still under construction by the hands of Mechanicum magos and artisans belonging to the Emperor's own Chamber Castellanis, its vaults plunged deep into the granite, kilometres below the surface, just as its bastions and docking ports pierced the icy skies above. It is clear in retrospect that both Leman Russ, who had a hand in the fortress' design, and the Emperor, who had assigned vast resources and expertise to the project, had intended for the Fang to make the VI<sup>th</sup> essentially self-sufficient as a Legion, both in terms of wargear and munitions, as well as in gene-works and extensive psychomemetic conditioning facilities, allowing for the Legion's independent continuance in isolation from the Sol System. This latter factor in the Great Crusade's early decades was a rare thing, and only over a century later was it common for each Legion to hold this function, when the sheer scale of distance to which the Imperium had reached made the previous system impractical. This self-sufficiency had a deliberate purpose, both for the Legion and the Great Crusade, but this would not be clear until later.

Leman Russ' first order of the day was to expand his Legion. Many were the foes to be fought, and those scant 15,000 who had survived the Wheel of Fire would not be

enough by a long measure to fight them. This expansion was made possible first of all because of his own genetic pattern, which could be used in conjunction with the facilities being built within the Fang to stabilise, amplify and greatly expand the Legion's gene-seed stock—this particular and unique pattern entering into the Imperium's lore as the 'Canis Helix'. To this end was the world of Fenris turned with subtle but deliberate steps into a machine dedicated to the sole purpose of the creation of new warriors for the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion. There would be no rising of Fenris' children from the darkness and savagery of their primitive lives; such harshness bred formidable warrior stock and warriors were what was needed. For the same reason, there would neither be attempts to annul the fury of Fenris' climate or its treacherous geology, nor any attempt to pacify or corral the many beasts, both proud and horrific, which trod its ice fields or hunted its oceans' depths. None at all. There are even unconfirmed reports that matters were in fact deliberately inflamed, the better to test future candidates for the Legion, and rumours have persisted that a program existed early on to expand the planet's native population base, and that men and woman of suitable feral and primitive worlds were brought to Fenris against their knowledge and will, their minds and memories tampered with, re-programmed and set loose to fend for themselves so that the strongest would survive and swell the population pool for potential Legion recruits. There is no extant proof of this, but there are few who would claim such a thing as impossible and so the stories persist.

The plan to adapt Fenrisian culture to serve the Legiones Astartes went far deeper than any base demographic tampering however, it also sank deep into the bodies and souls of the natives. The Wolf King, master of Fenris before the coming of the Emperor, had gathered to him all the most potent and respected skalds and priests of his adopted people, for he knew that they were both the guardians of its oral history and myth, and also the keepers and promulgators of its laws. To these he also granted the technological boons of long life and increased endurance, mere fractions of what a Space Marine was, but more than enough to mark them out as 'blessed' and apart from their people. Through these men and women he adapted the ancient superstitions and sagas of Fenris to accept him and his Legion as something of preternatural power and holy purpose. To the people of Fenris, the Fang itself became equated to the hall of the gods and immortals,

the Legionaries of the VI<sup>th</sup> the warriors of the skies, and there was no greater honour than to be chosen to join their ranks and sail the void of night as a champion in the service of the 'Allfather'—the Emperor cast as the godlike father of humanity, and Leman Russ, His favoured son and strong right hand. To some onlookers, before and since, this deliberate use and manipulation of superstition and religious belief runs in direct contravention of one of the most key tenets of the Great Crusade: the liberation of humanity from the lies of ignorance and the worship of false gods. In this it seems the Emperor agreed that the ends justified the means, and in this as with much else, the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion proved an exception to the rule.

#### Warlord of the Imperium

Regardless of what ultimate plans and purposes the unique arrangements of the creation and expansion of the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion under their Primarch served, other matters pressed. The Great Crusade was still young and the Imperium's wars were yet unwon. Its war machine needed as many warlords of Leman Russ' calibre as it could get, despite that several other Primarchs such as Ferrus Manus, Fulgrim and most lately Rogal Dorn had also now re-joined their Legions. With the trials of the Wheel of Fire behind them and fresh waves of Legiones Astartes neophytes first refilling then expanding their ranks, the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion was again ready for battle. War beckoned on many fronts and the VI<sup>th</sup> was ready to answer. The decades that were to follow saw Leman Russ and his Legion participate in scores of successful Compliance actions and military campaigns, both alone and in command of numerous secondary war fleets, regiments of the Imperialis Auxilia and even on several occasions, other bodies of Space Marines whose Primarchs had not yet been found.

This period of the Legion's history often goes unremarked but in it can be seen a series of victories that reveal Russ and his Legion to be far more than the savage semi-beasts some later portrayals make them out as, and confirm Russ as a field general of surpassing skill and noteworthy record. Before the VI<sup>th</sup>, xenos domains of the Orks and Eldar, Taralais and Saharduin all fell, and famously on the ancient hive world of Nova Borilia, the alien tyranny of the Noman, an enslavement that went back millennia, was destroyed. This last conflict in particular was a celebrated victory, for which the ancient battle tank STC restored to the Imperium in that same campaign was named in Leman Russ' honour by the Mechanicum.

#### THE CANIS HELIX

The term 'Canis Helix' is applied to the altered gene-seed strain which gives the Space Wolves their distinct nature. Its mutations from the standard pattern offer the scions of the Legion vastly enhanced sensory acuity and reaction time, as well as inducing certain physical characteristics such as extended and hardened canine teeth and an otherwise animalistic appearance. The presence of the Canis Helix, it has been argued, is also linked to the Legion's almost uncontrollable aggression, bordering on frenzy in combat possibly due to violent overstimulation of their enhanced senses. The effects of the Canis Helix only became apparent over time as the early generations of the Legion's intake aged, with the psychological effects appearing earliest in those who had survived the troubled implantation process. Longer term, the instability of these mutations would lead in some cases to mental and physical breakdown of the most extreme kind, the man truly devolving into the monster. Thankfully, this instability was greatly ameliorated after the Legion's re-unification with its Primarch, though some cases of the gene-breakdown crisis, known now in the Legion as the 'Curse of the Wulfen', persisted but were relatively rare. This was the case at least only until the psychic cataclysm which marked the final deadly act of the Battle of Prospero. Then was the curse visited upon the Legion in numbers and to a degree never before seen, particularly in the case of the warriors of the all but lost Thirteenth Great Company, where it is believed hundreds fell to the curse's terrible effects.

The VI<sup>th</sup> was now a Legion on who Leman Russ' famous words and the snarling crimson wolf's head badge —adopted now as the Legion's own— had long since confirmed the common epithet of 'Space Wolves'. Much, it was said, to the private consternation of Horus, whose own 'Luna Wolves' wore such a similar name first, but seemed the worse fit for it. But for all the Legion's conquests on the expanding frontier, it was for the traitor and the turncoat that Russ and his warriors savoured a particular ire. On Rama Sula, Russ' Legion subjugated a rebellion of more than a million militia soldiers in a single blood-soaked day, while across the stars of the Nyrcon Cluster, they hunted down the fleet of the renegade Rogue Trader Belisarius Hayte and hurled the body of the self-proclaimed god into the fires of his flagship's reactor core. It was for the aftermath of such actions as these and scores of others, of punishment meted out to 'oath breakers' whose savagery was named 'excessive' even by generals upon whose orders armies went to their graves and worlds were set flame, that the dark tales that had long surrounded the Legion were once more kindled. The stories were fuelled by the increasingly savage disposition and appearance which was starting to take over the Space Wolves, a name which now seemed as much a statement as an enunciation of heraldry.

#### THE DARKEST WAR

The turning point for the Legion perhaps came during and after the Rangdan Xenocides of the 860s. At last the Expeditionary fleets had breached the Eastern Fringe of the galaxy and in doing so

had attracted the attention of the Rangdan Cerabvores, a species of such macabre power and technological might it seemed, for a time at least, that the Imperium had met its doom. Facing waves of attack from the galactic east and north, and suffering losses that would not be exceeded until the dark days of the Heresy, the wars of the Rangdan Xenocides were the most terrible of any yet fought. Whole Expeditionary fleets went to their deaths without a single survivor, worlds were laid waste, dozens of Titan Legions were obliterated and by the end, entire Space Marine Legions [REDACTED SECTION] lost to the Imperium. Much of what happened during this abyssal conflict is still locked under seal, but what can be said is that with the breaking of the Labyrinth of Night by the Emperor, the threat was at last stymied. What remained was for the Rangdan taint to be purged in a subsequent decade-long series of bio-pogroms that left entire human inhabited sectors lifeless to ensure what was hoped to be a final victory. It was then given to the Space Wolves of the VI<sup>th</sup> and the Dark Angels of the I<sup>st</sup> —the latter who had suffered themselves so very dreadfully against the horror— to conduct these purges, these two Legions entrusted above all others to do what had to be done.

Horus and his Legion, who had been otherwise occupied in the ongoing wars in the galactic west, were now firmly in the ascendance in the eyes of the Great Crusade, and with him and those other Legions who retained their strength having not suffered at the Rangdan's hands did the future of the next few decades of conquest



and expansion now rest. In comparison to these new 'paragons', for the Space Wolves now came the whisper of 'executioner' rather than warrior, and the image of destroyer that had always been theirs in part now came to replace that of savage but noble conquerors in the minds of many in the Imperium. As for Leman Russ, to some he was no longer a wise warrior-king as if sprung from the pages of legend, but a blood-spattered tyrant kept on the Emperor's leash, as feared as any who had held sway in Old Night—a keeper of monsters and devourer of worlds, a fiend in Primarch's form. Whether there was justice either in these accusations, or the distrust that seemed also to dog the Dark Angels as well from these times, it is not for this record to judge except to note that the Imperium endures, but this might have not been so if not for they who bled to ensure its survival.

#### THE WOLVES IN SHADOW

By the second century of the Great Crusade, the Space Wolves were truly a Legion apart from their brethren. Their Expeditionary fleets and taskforces went where they willed, fought where they willed, and undertook

such requests for aid as their master and his warlords saw fit, and most often they fought alone. The high commanders and Lords Solar of the Imperium knew better than to try to bring them to obey their orders, for it was widely known that the Legion heeded only one commander, Leman Russ, and Leman Russ only acknowledged one overlord: the Emperor Himself.

In this loyalty the Legion was adamant and unshakable, and they cared little or nothing for the good opinion of any other, be they Primarch or provincial governor. Of their brother Legions, they maintained something of a particular comradery and rivalry in equal measure with the Dark Angels, with whom they had shared dark passages of history, but for the others they seemed to have held a distant respect at most, barely disguised indifference for others and at least in the case of the Thousand Sons, outright scorn. The Legion maintained no domains but Fenris, and needed none. It had long since been all but self-sufficient save in the production of the greater patterns of warships and the introduction of newly-minted war engines

and weapons intended for the Legiones Astartes, which it acquired directly from Terra or from the forge-shipyards of Ryza or Lucius in infrequent batches. Approach to Fenris was forbidden without invitation, save for the emissaries of the Throne World, even to brother Legiones Astartes, and the Legion had become profoundly strange and inscrutable to outside observers.

To those who knew not the truth, the Legion and its warriors now seemed terrifying savages aping the manner of the Legiones Astartes. Some heard only the guttural tongue of Fenris and words wrapped in the primitive enigmas of myth and saga, and did not understand their meanings, laced as they were within and without with memetic complexities and rich allegory as eloquent as any High Gothic cant. They saw only armour adorned with pelts and the trinkets of superstition, the leather ritual masks of the Legion's 'priests' and the twisting animal imagery entwined upon their wargear, and rankled at the worship of false religion. They did not see the outward trappings of an intricate martial culture which brought

else that side-by-side with the Blood Angels they had exterminated a fourth stage Enslaver outbreak on Poseidonis Secundus, marking one of only three occasions in the entire Great Crusade that an Enslaver outbreak of that intensity had been defeated without resort to Exterminatus. Known to few but the Wolf King and his Emperor, the Legion faced and bested many threats both nightmarish and arcane, from the godlike power of the psyker-kings of Vhallach to the insidious menace of the Lacremara infestation of Morox. These victories and unknown others, conflicts so terrible they are recorded only as battle honours on the Great Bell of Terra, remain occluded—all data regarding them sealed or purged from human memory.

It is the case that many of the Space Wolves' victories of the latter years of the Great Crusade—even those that were not sealed under order of high authority—were neither widely lauded nor eulogised by the remembrancers and iterators of the Imperium with which the Legion held little truck. Indeed, in scorn of such men they freely lied and mocked, and played the barbarian as expected. For where the Wolves stalked, they often stalked alone. For their true histories were theirs alone, preserved in webs of saga and myth where the facts and direct memories had been purged from the mind by psycho-memetic obliteration to preserve the sanity of the warrior from the things they had seen and done, and to remove from them knowledge they were not meant to have. The secrets the Space Wolves had been charged to keep by their Allfather and their Wolf King they would keep to their grave, and beyond if needs be.

#### Before the End

It is the truth that at the time of the Horus Heresy's inception, the Space Wolves Legion was not objectively stronger than any other, nor were its warriors objectively greater than any other, but it carried with it a bloody reputation and an aura of fear which few other Legions could match. It was also, even to its brothers, an unpredictably dangerous and unknown quantity, but that it was absolutely loyal to Terra and its master none doubted, just as none doubted that if called upon there was nothing the Space Wolves would not do, no act of destruction so great that the Legion would not perform it without question should the Emperor demand it. Set apart and opaque to outsiders as the Legion was, much of the political turmoil that surrounded both the Librarius Project and the Chaplaincy Edict had no real impact

on the Legion, the Space Wolves' own rule and martial culture swallowing any such attempt at outside interference without trace, while any notion of Horus' 'Warrior Lodges' gaining ground within the Legion was laughable. Indeed, there is no evidence such a thing was even attempted.

When Horus was made Warmaster, all evidence holds that the Space Wolves and their Primarch respected this decision as the will of the Emperor and obeyed, but did so in duty as by oath bound rather than eagerly, and did little to develop any direct relationship with the new overlord of the Great Crusade—while even before his fall from grace, Horus seems to have dealt with the Legion at arm's length, preferring the company and direct service of other Legions of longer association and more receptive to his command in the Emperor's stead. Because of this, it is perhaps the case that Horus saw the assignment of the Space Wolves to the censure of the Thousand Sons as a gift of fate, allowing him to neutralise two potential thorns in his side for the treachery to come, and it is perhaps the case that the reduction in the Space Wolves' strength by attrition was just as much the arch-Traitor's goal as the silencing of Magnus. What was in some ways the Legion's strength could also be their weakness, for by playing upon their antipathy for the 'sorcerers' of their brother Legion, the Thousand Sons, Warmaster Horus, not yet revealed in treachery, manipulated the Space Wolves into turning what was to be a mission of censure and arrest at Prospero into a massacre. So was the Horus Heresy set in motion, the Thousand Sons all but eradicated and the Space Wolves Legion weakened, all before the first shot of open civil war had been fired.

The Space Wolves Legion's wounds were still not yet healed when Space Marine blood was spilt upon Istvan's black sands, and they found themselves isolated, distrusted by those who ought to be allies, and bitterly hated by those of their brothers with whom grievance had long sat and now festered into poison. In the years of civil war that were to come, at the Alaxxes Nebula, on Vanaheim, and at Daverant Reach, and in a host of lesser engagements, the Space Wolves were to clash with their fellow Space Marine Legions turned Traitor in an Imperium thrown into anarchy and turmoil. But it was at Yaran that they would face their darkest hour. Here they would pay the price for their history and their unswerving loyalty to the Emperor that created them, but they would do so unbowed.

## UNIT AND FORMATION STRUCTURE WITHIN THE LEGION

When Leman Russ took over the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion, it adhered rigidly to the guidelines and dispositions laid down by the *Principia Belicosa* of the Imperium's High Command. This rule was clung to by the warriors of the Legion as an anchor against the disorder their own increasingly fractious character was sowing in their ranks. Enforced discipline was common and even executions in the field were not unknown in the VI<sup>th</sup>. With the rediscovery of Leman Russ and the cultural influence of Fenris which he imprinted on the Legion, these factors however rapidly fell by the wayside. The fury which lay within the Legion's heart was given form and discipline mastered by will, and this wellspring of savagery was channelled and directed in battle rather than left unfocused, providing a catharsis which purged the Legion of its self-destructive tendencies and unified it under the Wolf King's banner. Both the Fenrisian way of warfare as adapted by Leman Russ and the natural tendencies of the Legion to want to close and get to grips with its foes at close quarters led to a rapid and shifting focus away from the generalist and combined arms approach advocated by the *Principia Belicosa* and towards tactics dependent on highly mobile shock infantry units, with heavier support elements maintained, but largely focussed in specialised detachments rather than as part of the general line of battle. The Space Wolves were conditioned to hold a near-suicidal disregard for danger and trained to exploit this to the fullest on the battlefield, pitting their courage and might where it would be most effective; in the very teeth of the foe, overwhelming opponents by sheer speed and ferocity of attack, both in hand-to-hand combat and in brutal short ranged fire fights. As time went on, their tactical dispositions shifted to better accommodate this preference, leading to the creation of unique shock units such as the 'Grey Slayers' and 'Bloodied Claws', which gradually came to comprise the bulk of the core infantry of the Legion by the time of the Burning of Prospero.

By the late Great Crusade era, the Space Wolves Legion had strongly deviated from the *Principia Belicosa's* definition of the Legion's Astartes structure and organisation, although they could, if pressed, readily enunciate how each warrior would fit in such a structure should it be needed. At the macro level, the Legion consisted of thirteen 'Great Companies' designated by their number in the order of battle, with each nominally composed of a theoretical

10,000 Legiones Astartes, though in practice attrition and casualty rates meant this was never more than a notional figure. Below this strategic level, the Legion's host was now broken down into a shifting array of ad hoc formations either put together for a particular mission or beholden strongly to the personal authority of a particular company commander, and below them to a series of tributary sub-commanders, known variously as 'Wolf Lord' (Jarl) or 'Claw Leader' (Thegn), regardless of their notional or accorded rank within the Imperium's order of battle. These warband-like forces—while each was part of one of the overarching Great Companies which comprised the Legion—were largely autonomous and heavily infantry-focussed. They often lacked certain specialised units and formations found in other Legions, and could range in size from between battalion to chapter strength in conventional terms, while below this, the more general terms of 'Pack' or 'Claw' became an accepted descriptor of any small tactical unit, be it a single squad of warriors or a small combined taskforce. These arrangements could be confusing to outsiders with, for example, a particular Great Company having within it several 'Jarls', whose relative seniority or areas of command were far from clear to any but the Space Wolves.

The formation of the Great Companies themselves varied considerably, both as a result of their history and the preferences and dispositions of their commanders, who had much leeway in determining their composition. Of particular note was the First Great Company (or 'Omn' in the Fenrisian) which served as Leman Russ' core of veterans, including his chosen elite, the Varagyr. The Seventh Great Company in contrast held the distinction of being the 'Landayvan'—the destroyers and layers waste—and in this company were concentrated many of the Legion's siege warfare and artillery assets, as well as those skilled in the use of such sanctioned weaponry as phosphex. It was also the home of the largest concentration of a particular sub-cult of the Fenrisian mythos centred around the wolf-spirit Morkai, a pseudo-deity of death and the dead. The Space Wolves who were attracted to this cult were said to be those who most 'felt the breath of the wolf in their bones' and within them the fiery passions of their brethren had chilled to a bleak killing frost and only the prospect of immediate bloodshed could bestir them with feeling once more. Many such warriors

were drawn together to form the packs of the Black Cull, an extermination corps which also specialised in near-suicidal and all but unstoppable line breaker attacks, embracing the touch of death as one might a lost friend.

Also of particular note within the Legion was the role played by the so-called 'Priests of Fenris'. This sealed chamber within the Legion embodied much of the special command functions provided by the separate Apothecarion, Librarian and Armourium in other Legions. They were suffused both with an aura of ritual and secrecy, for as well as the continuation of the Legion's martial culture, the maintenance of its wargear and the preservation of its gene-seed, these 'priests' also occupied the role of keepers of the Legion's occluded history and superstitions, and served as the wardens of its secrets. The senior representatives of this varied priesthood, be they Priest of Iron, Caster of Runes or Speaker of the Dead, had a place of honour on the Einherjar, the Legion's council of war, which advised their Primarch, and on which every Jarl and Thegn had a place, and where every warrior of the Space Wolves had the right to speak.

### War Disposition

At the time the order reached the Space Wolves Legion for the censure of the Thousand Sons, it was able to muster what is believed to have been roughly two-thirds of its active strength. This comprised some 75,000 Legiones Astartes assigned to the Prospero assault, with the estimated remaining 20,000-25,000 either scattered across various sub-fleets and taskforces beyond their master's immediate call, with a small contingent left to garrison Fenris in the Legion's absence. This itself reflected the heavy degree of campaigning the Space Wolves had conducted in the preceding decades, having fallen in overall strength from about 130,000 after a series of actions, some of whose nature remains sealed. Its fleet is believed to have comprised some sixty capital vessels at this time, with perhaps four times this number of smaller strike craft and escort vessels. In particular, the Legion was disposed towards heavily armed and augmented frigate designs, which allowed for the long-range independent operations of small task forces. In contrast, its flagship by the time of the Heresy, the *Hrafnkel*, was one of the largest patterns from the Gloriana class frame, and configured both as a heavy battleship and capable of conducting independent planetkill operations.

## SPACE WOLVES LEGIONARY

LEGIONARY HRUGA  
KARIC OF THE NORN'S WARBAND,  
EIGHTH GREAT COMPANY  
THE PROSPERINE CENSURE HOST, 004.M31

Legionary Hruga and the bulk of the Eighth Great Company spent the earliest stages of the fighting on Prospero engaged in combat with Imperial Army elements at the Palatinate Mansions. Unlike the fighting against the lightly equipped Spireguard infantry, the troops entrenched within the Mansions' walls had access to the full panoply of the Great Crusade's vast armoury and proved more serious opposition for the reavers of the Eighth Great Company. Hruga and the other members of his warband were tasked with the reduction of enemy self-propelled guns and armour, a mission complicated by the relative lack of heavy support weaponry among the Eighth. Utilising the ornamental hedgerows, culverts and canals of the Mansions' gardens to assault enemy positions, Hruga and his companions used melta bombs and other improvised explosives to disable and cripple the Medusas and the ironically named Leman Russ battle tanks arrayed against them.

The Eighth was equipped primarily with MkIV power armour, the advanced augur array incorporated into that design proving beneficial to their role as advanced scouts and skirmishers, but even this newer armour had soon found itself remade in the image of the Legion. The suit worn by Legionary Hruga was brought into service less than ten years before the fighting on Prospero, assigned to the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion from a macro-cache manufactured on Anvillus and shipped to the distribution yards at Beta-Garmon. Despite its relatively short operational lifespan, it has already undergone significant modification, most notably the entire right pauldron has been replaced with a reinforced MkIII pauldron, a common field augmentation of the lighter MkIV suits. Additionally, Hruga has engraved several knotwork patterns across the chest and greaves. Though the exact meaning of the patterns is difficult to ascertain, they are likely warding talismans against harm.



Shown is an alternative Legion icon in use among reconnaissance units of the VI<sup>th</sup> Legion, the so-called 'Fimbul-wolf', the silent and deadly spirit of ice storms.

## SPACE WOLVES LEGION HERALDRY



Legion Icon  
Common Heraldic Form



Legion Icon, 'Varagyr'  
Command Variant



Ninth Great Company  
Command Armorial  
(Inc. 'Devouring Sun' honour)



'Cult of Morkai' Armorial  
(associated with  
'Deathsworn' units)



'Void Wolf' Armorial (associated  
with Breacher troops and  
ship-to-ship specialists)



'Horns of Winter' (associated  
with Destroyer units)



Legion Tactical Icon (Later  
Great Crusade Armorial use)



Second Great Company  
Grey Slayer Heraldry



'Wurm Mark' – Decorative  
engraved forms with encoded  
memetic significance



'Gyre Triskel', etc. Indicative of  
survival against dire odds



Legion Apothecarion  
Heraldic depiction



Pre-Fenrisian Legion  
Overseer markings



### THE PANOPLY OF WOLVES

The wargear and armour of the Space Wolves Legion were renowned for their use of unique Fenrisian cultural artefacts, runic script and artisan modification in their appearance. More than simply an aesthetic influence, these carried various coded references to the history and deeds of the bearer and his unit and Great Company, and their markings could often carry multiple meanings depending on their relation and positioning.



### ELDTHURSAR HAR SKRINN

FLAME LORD OF THE SONS OF YMIR, ANCIENT OF THE THIRTEENTH GREAT COMPANY  
THE PROSPERINE CENSURE HOST, THE IMPOSSIBLE BATTLE, 004.M31

Also known as the Sons of Muspel and the Destroyers of Worlds, the Eldthursar are the most violent of the Sons of Ymir, as the Space Wolves style their Dreadnought cadres. Most often these warriors have suffered terribly before being placed within the Dreadnought's sarcophagus and the pain of their death drives them to bouts of killing mania when left conscious. Rarely are they awoken unless the Legion requires the utter annihilation of the enemy, for these war engines are not subtle weapons.

Eldthursar Skrin was destroyed during the fighting on Prospero when his berserk fury drove him to stand against the immense power of the *Canis Vertex*, yet even after his metal body was laid low by the Titan, the Eldthursar continued to twitch and claw impotently at the churning heavens, his fury unquenched even in his final death.

