



THE WARS OF RETRIBUTION

"As the brittle blade will shatter before it bends, so too will the brittle soul break before it turns."

The Seven Admonitions of Terra

AGE OF BETRAYAL

It was 007.M31, and the Age of Darkness had descended upon the Imperium.

The veil of night had fallen and it would not be lifted within the lifetime of any condemned by the fates to live through it. At Isstvan III, Warmaster Horus had purged four entire Legions of those elements who could not be trusted to follow him and his Traitor brothers into rebellion against their father-Emperor. Soon after, the terrible extent of the betrayal was revealed at Isstvan V, where three more Legions demonstrated their loyalty to Horus and three others were all but annihilated.

As the fires of war caught, entire worlds burned. The Imperial Fists were savaged at Phall, while the Ultramarines were betrayed at Calth and their Five Hundred Worlds plunged into a sea of blood by the combined war hosts of the Word Bearers and the World Eaters. Of the remaining Legions, little was known of the fate of the Blood Angels, White Scars and Dark Angels, for the artifice of the Warmaster and his agents had ensured they were scattered far and wide by the time his treachery was revealed. For the first years of the Horus Heresy, they were feared lost at best, and turned at worst.

Between Isstvan in 006.M31 and the casting back of the Shadow Crusade in 009.M31, the Imperium knew anarchy, uncertainty and bloodshed on a scale never before witnessed. Though still more destruction was to come before the end, this was a period of unprecedented confusion and chaos. Lorgar of the Word Bearers had, by the ritual offering of the Veridia star, invoked the Ruinstorm, a raging tempest that made warp travel and astrotelepathic communication across the galaxy-spanning Imperium perilous at best and impossible at worst. The Primarch Rogal Dorn of the

Legiones Astartes Imperial Fists had assumed command of the defences of Terra, while the Emperor appeared to have withdrawn entirely to pursue a mission he could not confide even to his most trusted sons. The Warmaster claimed world after world in the northern Imperium, and other spheres, systems and entire sectors across the galaxy declared for the Traitors' cause. Millions-strong armies reeled in disorder as desperate pleas for aid went unheeded. A torrent of orders flooded out from Terra with no notion of whether the intended recipients would receive them, or if they had already been slain or turned to the Warmaster's cause. Entire planetary populations fled across the stars, a migratory diaspora of refugees driven beyond sanity by the horrors unleashed by the rapidly advancing Traitor armies.

Thus it proved nigh-impossible for Terra to mount a truly coordinated defence of its worlds and so sector after sector fell to the Warmaster as he advanced upon Terra. There was no single frontline that could be held and no decisive salient that could be mounted. Individual forces, from small companies to entire armies, threw themselves willingly into the crucible of war in a desperate effort to stem the inexorable tide. Never before had Mankind been divided by such conflict, and soon a thousand worlds and more were transformed into blasted war zones across which millions of erstwhile brothers-in-arms, from the humblest militia conscript to the mightiest warrior of the Legiones Astartes, clashed.

The task of recounting the triumphs and tragedies of the Age of Darkness is one that can never be completed even should the Imperium stand for ten thousand years and our Order swell in size to rival the armies of humanity. Countless battles must therefore go unrecorded by posterity, so total was the destruction wrought by and upon both sides when at last the end came. Where once the young Imperium had stood upon the cusp of an age of unity and prosperity, suddenly it stood upon the very brink of the abyss. Between the outbreak of the Horus Heresy at the Isstvan system and the casting back of the Shadow Crusade from Ultramar, a period of around three years, all-consuming war came to Calth, the Coronid Deeps, Baztel, Anvillus, Paramar, Beta-Garmon, Tallarn and a hundred other worlds, many of them rendered to blackened wastes by the close of the Age of Darkness.

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

Warriors whose names had been carved in glory into a thousand triumphal memorials would come to be reviled by the multitudes, their names turned into bywords for fratricide and atrocity. Warriors whose names had never been known were at a stroke propelled to such heights that they held the fate of entire worlds in their hands. The task of redacting the names and deeds of the former and enshrining those of the latter is one that has already begun, but which is unlikely to be completed within the span of mortal years.

GALAXY OF WAR

For every world that burned in planet-wide conflagration, innumerable smaller scale, but equally bitter wars were fought, often far away from any war zone that might be considered a front line. At the opening of the Horus Heresy, many of the Legions had been operating as large bodies under the direct command of their Primarch, but even then, many smaller contingents had been seconded to service elsewhere. As the Age of Darkness ground on, many of these mighty hosts became fragmented and while individual Primarchs often remained in direct command of the core of their Legions, ever more sub-commands were despatched across the galaxy in pursuit of either Traitor or Loyalist goals. As the Ruinstorm cut yet more regions off from the greater Imperium, many such detachments were turned by circumstance into independent commands in all but name, their leaders vested with what amounted to total authority to conduct their own wars in whatever manner they deemed most appropriate.

Across the galaxy, independent Legiones Astartes forces varying in scale from sub-company to battalion or chapter conducted countless high intensity operations. Many were surgical strikes against targets of vital strategic worth – at Grendel's World for example, a mixed force of around three hundred Night Lords and Emperor's Children Legionaries destroyed the Astropathic relay station established there a decade earlier to serve the 78th Expeditionary Fleet as it pressed into the regions beyond. Whether or not it was their intent, the destruction of the relay station caused all contact with the 78th to be cut for many years. The fleet's high commander, Lord-Captain Morrachi of the Legiones Astartes Blood Angels, did not therefore learn of the outbreak of the Horus Heresy until after the event and was thus unable to intervene at a vital juncture in history.

Many operations were specifically targeted attacks against key enemy leaders or individuals holding the balance of power, and many of these amounted to little more than callous murders and brutal assassinations. Far-ranging Legiones Astartes kill teams or larger strike forces were capable of reaching and striking against targets more conventional Legion forces could not engage, and so no commander or high administrator was guaranteed safe from the executioner's axe. Though reliable accounts of most such attacks are few and far between, the assassination of the Magister-Militaris of Constantinium serves as something of an exception, as was no doubt intended when it was conducted. Magister Karpath of Constantinium had declared the entire Viridis sector for the Warmaster in mid 007.M31 and expended prodigious resources to fortify his capital, claiming that its walls

would be built every bit as strong and tall as those of Terra and that no attacker would ever penetrate them. The Magister-Militaris was made a fool and a liar when within a year a strike force of Dark Angels, White Scars and Iron Warriors Legionaries conducted a *coups-de-grace* operation which penetrated straight into the heart of his massively fortified palace. Karpath was executed kneeling at the foot of his own throne before his entire court in what could only have been intended as an incontrovertible message to all who would turn against Terra. The presence of the Iron Warriors element in this force however remains unresolved and unexplainable, as do so many similar accounts of the unseen wars of the Age of Darkness.

UNHEEDED HEROES

Some Loyalist forces pledged themselves to defend individual worlds against the depredations of the Traitors, in particular if they found themselves stranded by the coming of the Ruinstorm and unable to penetrate its depths. History can never make a full accounting of the number of such actions fought by stoic and self-sacrificing Loyalists far from the main war zones; indeed, only they and possibly those they protected will ever know of the sacrifices made. Recently surfaced is a rare account of such an action – the Defence of Nagathar, where several scattered Legiones Astartes forces sought refuge in a pocket of relative calm against the suddenly tempestuous Warp. Not all of these groups were loyal to Terra though, for one belonged to the Legiones Astartes Word Bearers and was somehow able to navigate the surrounding warp routes and avoid the horrendous calamities that had befallen so many other vessels attempting to do so. Nagathar itself remained untouched as the storms swallowed nearby worlds, but the Word Bearers sought to prey upon its scattered settlements and enslave its peoples, and it was only the efforts of the Loyalists of the Imperial Fists and Dark Angels that saved a million souls from being sacrificed by the sons of Lorgar for an end that no sane man would attempt to perceive.

Other Legiones Astartes ranged for thousands of light years across the galaxy, braving the perils of the storm-wracked Warp in an effort to engage the enemy wherever they were to be found. Of this type of action there exist far more examples than others, but many are known to us only by hearsay alone. The names of some of these groups appear in accounts of battles the length



and breadth of the galaxy, making it nigh-impossible for historians to compile a true or complete accounting of their deeds. One name that is known however is Roscius, an Assault-Captain of the Legiones Astartes Ultramarines who had been assigned pathfinder duties ahead of the doomed 933rd Expeditionary Fleet by his Primarch soon after Roboute Guilliman assumed command of the Legion—Assault-Captain Roscius is not listed amongst those officers ordered to muster at the Calth Conjunction.

Several months after the outset of the Shadow Crusade against Ultramar, Roscius' assault company boarded and captured a strike cruiser of the Legiones Astartes Sons of Horus at Plutol, a segmentum away from Ultramar. Six weeks later, that cruiser ambushed and crippled a Death Guard heavy transport at Terrax out-system and a month after that conducted a lightning strike against a Traitor Mechanicum void fuelling station at Yspotua. The cruiser does not appear in any extant historical archives for the next year, but resurfaces when it is reported to have led a ragged flotilla of vessels against Traitor supply lines at Toreus, 3,000 light years away, where Assault-Captain Roscius commanded a force of over 3,000 Legionaries drawn from as many as four different Legions. The last engagement where Roscius is known to have commanded was the Duthovan Blockade, conducted against Traitor forces stranded on Duthovan by the coming of the Ruinstorm, a battle few of either side survived.

Lorgar's invocation of the Ruinstorm had cut the galaxy asunder, and so most Legiones Astartes forces not operating under the personal command of their Primarch were often required to act under their own cognisance for extended periods, in many cases for the entirety of the Horus Heresy and long after. The Ruinstorm did not serve only to stymie the coordination of far-flung armies, but had a more unsettling effect born of the dark powers underpinning the entire conflict. Even though it existed primarily in the other-dimension of warp space, the Ruinstorm bled through into realspace in many regions, the raw stuff of the Immaterium tainting the void itself with coiling ætheric tendrils and kaleidoscopes of unseen colours. From the surface of many worlds, the stars appeared to have been swallowed by the void or the night skies were transformed into a canvas upon which were rendered scenes from the hells of ancient superstitious texts. On the worst afflicted worlds, nightmares made flesh walked the lands, the veil between reality and the Immaterium stretched beyond breaking point and the infernal denizens first encountered by the Ultramarines at Calth—named by some 'Daemons'—spewing forth. Thus, in many cases, it was the smaller, detached Legiones Astartes forces that first encountered such abominations as they fought far from the key war zones, prosecuting isolated wars against creatures that defied all sanity and had no place in the secular Imperium the Great Crusade had founded upon the bedrock of Imperial Truth.

By 010.M31, the Imperium that had been stood no more. The fires of the Horus Heresy were consuming hundreds of systems in all-out war, while innumerable conflicts burned in the darkness far beyond the central war zones.

THE SHADOW WARS OF THE AGE OF DARKNESS

Those who would look back upon the Age of Darkness and attempt to compile anything resembling a coherent accounting of its myriad wars, campaigns and battles know they are faced with an impossible task. For every central battle—Calth, Tallarn, Mars, Yarrant and Terra itself—there must have been a thousand smaller engagements. Wherever a scribe might care to look, there they will discover some sign that blood was shed upon the ground for the Traitor or Loyalist cause. Over time, these unhallowed battles reveal themselves to us through the scattered and fragmented accounts of witnesses, survivors and in some small number of cases, participants. Savant-historators refer to these many conflicts as 'shadow wars'.

The shadow wars were fought not by conventional Legiones Astartes fighting units—companies, battalions and chapters, as part of a distinct and unbroken chain of command from Primarch all the way down to sergeant. Instead, they fought entirely apart from any structured authority or grand strategy. There was no single template for these forces and they are referred to in various accounts by a range of terms including 'irregular', 'non-doctrinal' or simply 'orphaned'.

The Knights-Errant

In the decades that have passed since the culmination of the Horus Heresy and the outset of the period now being referred to as 'the Scouring', tacticae-savants have identified a broad spectrum of categories into which many irregular forces can be placed. At one end of this spectrum is to be found the body of warriors coined the 'Knights-Errant'. We know all but nothing of this mysterious group, other than it was formed at the express order of Malcador the Sigillite. The so-called 'Chosen of Malcador' included many individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, but his Knights-Errant were all Space Marines, and many of these were the scions of the Traitor Primarchs

who had refused to follow their fathers into treachery and chosen instead to renounce their Legion and serve the Imperium directly at its highest level. All cast off their Legion heraldry and wore in its stead the gunmetal grey of bare ceramite.

Little is now known of the highly secret missions the Knights-Errant undertook at the behest of the Regent of Terra throughout the Age of Darkness, for many accounts have been deliberately suppressed, events have gone unrecorded at the time or reports were simply lost in the conflagration that descended upon Terra at the culmination of the Warmaster's great betrayal. Certainly, the Knights-Errant fought alone or in small groups against key foes identified by the Sigillite and in some cases aligned their interests with those of other Legion forces, serving side by side with conventional Legiones Astartes units when deemed necessary. It is considered likely by some historians of our Order that the Knights-Errant may have played a key, albeit mysterious role in the unseen 'silent war' that was waged between Malcador and the Primarch Rogal Dorn, for both found their interests frequently in opposition. As the Solar War gripped humanity's birth system, the interests of the Sigillite and the Primarch frequently clashed and while face to face the two remained cordial, if often coldly so, behind the scenes their agents and servants might very well have been murdering one another. Whether or not the Knights-Errant ever took up arms against Loyalist forces is unknown, but it is certain that they undertook missions that furthered the long term goals of the Regent of Terra at the expense of those of the Praetorian of Terra.

The Shattered Legions

Another form of unconventional or irregular Legiones Astartes formations were the so-called 'Shattered Legions'—a retroactive term applied to a broad range of forces and unlikely to have been used by the warriors themselves. The Shattered Legions forces were born of the fiery crucible of the Isstvan V Dropsite Massacre, where the treachery of the second attack wave resulted in the nigh-total destruction of the Raven Guard, Salamanders and Iron Hands. Initial reports claimed the cataclysmic news that three Primarchs had fallen and that no more than seven Legionaries had escaped the slaughter, although thankfully these accounts were later proved false. Nonetheless, these three Legions ceased to exist as coherent, operational military bodies and were forced to drastically adapt their

THE CRUSADER HOST

At the conclusion of the Unification Wars, the Legions stood upon the precipice of launching the Great Crusade, to depart the Sol System in a great many cases never to return. Before leaving at the head of the first great Expeditionary fleets, each of the Legions mustered a party of Legionaries who would remain on Terra and stand as their representatives before the Terran Council in all matters in which the Legions held a stake. In addition, they would serve as an honour guard to watch over Terra and all that the Unification Wars had won Mankind. Perhaps most importantly, they would record the names of those Legionaries who would lay down their lives conquering the great darkness beyond the light of Sol, so that no sacrifice would ever be forgotten. In accepting this honour, the Legionaries of the Crusader Host would be making an equally great sacrifice, for they would partake in none of the glory their brothers would win and all their victories would be won by proxy.

When the Warmaster's betrayal was revealed at Isstvan III, the members of the Crusader Host were as one incarcerated by the Praetorian of Terra, the Primarch Rogal Dorn. If such as Horus could turn, then who among the Host could be trusted? At length, Dorn was satisfied that those of the Host drawn from his own Legion were sound in their loyalties and he ordered them freed. Of the remainder, each is a tale in its own right. Some escaped, their fates unknown. A small number were freed on condition of their performing some great and vital task, such as service in the ranks of the Knights-Errant. The ultimate fate of many of the Crusader Host is bound up in the events of the climax of the Horus Heresy, when total war came at last to Terra, but that is a tale best accounted when at last it is time to do so.

organisation and their methods in order to remain functional in any way at all. In the aftermath of the massacre, bloody, scattered groups from all three Legions coalesced across an entire sector of space, driven by the hunter-killer forces of the Sons of Horus and the Emperor's Children, the latter taking especial delight in running the survivors to ground and forcing them to bear witness to the totality of their defeat. Harried by their relentless foe, the last of these remnant forces turned at bay and fought back, following the example of Shadrak Meduson of the Iron Hands Sorrgol Clan. By sheer force of will, Meduson forged disparate elements from these three Legions into an unbreakable alloy, and for a time led a fierce-fought campaign of vengeance against the Traitors that drew on and combined the unique skills and experience of each element, and which cost the Warmaster's war effort dearly.

But it was not only the remnants of the three Legions that were betrayed at Isstvan V who fought in this manner. Across the entire Imperium and beyond, Legion elements cut off from their chains of command were forced to adapt to circumstances or else perish in the all-consuming fires of war. Some detached Loyalist forces were able to break through the Traitors' lines and join the mustering hosts of the Imperium. Others however found themselves isolated deep within enemy-held territory and too far

behind enemy lines to make contact with allied forces. While many of these small forces were never heard from again and their fates go unrecorded, others determined to act on their own cognisance. Leaders of vision and character melded disparate Legion elements into highly effective forces and used them to prosecute the unseen shadow wars that raged across the galaxy, often unknown to the masters of either side of the civil war.

And neither was the formation of these Shattered Legion forces unique to those loyal to Terra. As the Age of Darkness progressed, many more found themselves acting alone, following the goals of their own leaders, and at times these goals differed from those of the chains of command that had once bound them. With the ebb and flow of war, Traitor forces too became isolated and, given the nature of certain of their leaders, many Traitor units determined to act entirely according to their own drives and desires. Some resurrected ancient resentments against erstwhile brethren now turned to blood-foes and pursued vengeance for slights of honour thought long forgotten. Others became consumed by the forces they had unleashed upon Isstvan V, shedding reason and honour and leaving across the stars as if to vindicate, or perhaps to forget, their treachery with the blood of all those they branded enemy.

THE HIDDEN HAND OF THE BLACKSHIELD

The histories of the Age of Darkness present far more mysteries and enigmas than reliable or complete accounts, and so entire armies of historian-scribes labour to piece together something of the truth from uncounted fragments of hearsay. In the examination, many such fragments reveal still more perplexing or troubling elements. At the twinned gas giants of Euros, for example, ashen-skinned, black-eyed warriors bearing the eye of the Warmaster upon otherwise featureless Mark VI battle plate, who could only have been renegade sons of Corax, sent the vast macro-bastions plunging through the crust, in so doing causing the fiery deaths of over twenty million colonists.

At Gamma-Dvalin, a force of warriors, each one wearing armour of discordantly mismatched heraldry and patterns torn from numerous dead foes, breached the Vaults of Ytterbia and plundered the forbidden stasis arsenals quantum-locked within. A month later, the stolen n-dimensional weapons were unleashed upon the 38th Company of the Sons of Horus Legion at Iantana Minor, consuming both armies and tearing an entire continent apart in the process. Fragmented pict-thief captures show several Blackshields bereft of their helms, each of them bearing an identical Cthonian gang rune tattooed across their scalp.

A Blackshield force is known to have launched attacks against Sons of Horus and Death Guard Legionaries at Taracanis, culminating in the boarding action against the Death Guard heavy cruiser *Morbid Revelation* and the spiking of its mighty nova cannon. The extent of the damage was not discovered until the weapon was next fired in anger, ten days later, against the Mechanicum Explorator Barque *Radiant Precept*, resulting in the *Revelation* being crippled in the ensuing back-blast and its forced withdrawal from the war.

At the Battle of the Ultinian Rings, Sons of Horus hunter-slayers under Tybalt Marr, tracking down survivors fleeing Isstvan V, were ambushed by a Blackshields force led by an individual later identified as the Raven Guard Strike-Centurion Morkan Sayle. In the ensuing battle, a sky-hive housing 100,000 colonists was destabilised and brought plummeting into the lyotropic crystal seas of Ultinia 7. Centurion Morkan was presumed dead in that operation, along with over half of his force, but contrary claims continue to emerge even decades later.

Each of these battles served in their own way to influence the course of the war not just at the local level, but at the strategic one. Even though the specifics of cause and effect were hidden at the time and are only barely perceivable to us now, many of our Order now believe that when considered as a whole, they amount to a significant contribution towards the ultimate ending of the war.

At first, most Shattered Legion forces focused their actions on high-intensity attacks against strategic targets far behind enemy lines, often with the military objective of disrupting lines of communication, but with the true goal of exacting bloody revenge on a hated foe too powerful to defeat in open battle. Soon however, opposed Shattered Legion forces encountered one another, and the result was inevitable. A second civil war erupted between rival Shattered Legion groups, and whilst neither was in direct communication with their own side's high command, inevitably both sides determined to destroy their foes at all costs and in so doing serve the strategic interests of the Traitors or the Loyalists. Though it went largely unseen, this war was said to have been every bit as bitter and bloody as the Dropsite

Massacre, albeit fought not between vast Legions grinding one another to bloody ruin, but mixed bands of warriors sworn to exact retribution even at the cost of their own lives. The shadow wars would be fought warrior to warrior, the killing stroke delivered by the hand of the vengeful while staring the vanquished in the eye and damning his soul to a hell none would have invoked mere months earlier.

Blackshields

Perhaps the most extreme example of Legiones Astartes forces acting as irregular fighting units was to be found in the phenomenon of the 'Blackshield'. Who first used the term or when is a matter of debate amongst our Order, but most doubt that the warriors in question described themselves

as such. Evoking martial tradition of ancient times, a Blackshield was a warrior who had entirely denounced his parent Legion, or in some cases may never have known which Legion had in fact sired him. They often fought quite literally under a false banner, or one which bore no colour or badge at all so as to confuse or repudiate their allegiances or origins.

Groups of Blackshields engaging in battle against both sides of the Horus Heresy have been traced as early as the war for the Coronid Deeps, where a number of Legionaries clad in black-painted battle plate and bearing no iconography other than the Terran Aquila were reported as fighting for the Loyalist cause, but entirely separate from the Loyalist chain of command. This force refused to respond to any attempts at communication and is presumed to have been swallowed up in the anarchy that was the Imperium's fighting withdrawal from the Coronid Deeps.

The phenomenon of the appearance of the many and varied Blackshield groups is but one mystery among countless others that surfaced during the Horus Heresy, and one that continues to vex the Lords of Terra greatly, especially as the troubling matter of the status of the remaining Legiones Astartes and the judgement of certain splinter factions remains yet unresolved. Many different types of Blackshield existed, most defined by the circumstances of their formation. Some were Legionaries driven beyond even the trans-human limits gene-engineered into the Legiones Astartes and consumed by grief or insanity at the sheer scope of the Warmaster's betrayal. Many were so broken in mind and spirit, they no longer recognised or acknowledged the mastery of any lord and were determined to claim their own destiny even as the Imperium tore itself apart in bitter civil war.

One of the few defining factors common across Blackshields groups was the fact that all had renounced their heritage and none considered themselves as belonging or beholden in any way to their Primarch or their erstwhile brethren. Most, though not all, obscured their colours in some way, some repainting their armour black, others scouring it to bare metal. At least one group scorched their armour in a fire rite redolent of certain feral world pyrolatory-cults, during which they repudiated their heritage and their heraldry, leaving their armour cinder black. Others adopted entirely new heraldry of their own invention, either on a warrior-



by-warrior basis or by a strong-willed leader imposing his vision on the entire band. Thus, by the middle years of the Horus Heresy, Legiones Astartes forces bearing previously unseen colours were witnessed fighting across the entire galaxy.

As with the Shattered Legion forces, Blackshields were encountered on both sides of the war, and in many cases were fighting entirely for themselves. Some bore the eagle of Terra, while others wore the eye of the Warmaster, but others fought entirely for their own causes. None were part of any coherent chain of command and while they might occasionally have been co-aligned with the strategic aims of one side or the other, they never followed or sought orders from outside forces or consciously coordinated battle plans with them. Many bands of Blackshields were later declared by edict of the Terran Council to be murderers and pirates concerned only with claiming their own domains beyond the sight of Emperor or Warmaster, as was the case with the so-called Company of the Sundered at Boras Minor. While some of these might have been attempting to rebuild something of what Horus had destroyed, others were concerned only with carving out their own petty empires and enslaving those who were too weak to oppose them, as occurred at the Truan Systems at the hands of the Nine Blades. Some believed themselves to be continuing the work of the Great Crusade, carving a swathe of blood and ash across the void in memory of a dream which had turned to nightmare with the Warmaster's betrayal at Isstvan.

Many years of laborious investigation reveal that few Blackshield groups numbered more than a thousand or so warriors, and in terms of assets, they were often severely limited indeed. Most had access to some form of warship, either a Legion vessel or a lesser void craft captured during the course of their formation. Legiones Astartes escort vessels and rapid strike cruisers provided a combination of assault vessel and base of operations, being large enough to transport the group and what vehicles and landing craft it possessed, and sufficiently potent in battle to support assaults against lightly defended, outlying target worlds. The crews of such vessels were often bonded or indentured in some manner to their masters. Many were Legion serfs whose loyalties were simply transferred to their new lords, while others had willingly thrown in their lot with the outcasts or been forced to do so by cruel circumstance.

Whatever their origins, Blackshield groups were invariably led by individuals possessed of a fierce presence and the drive to forge their own destiny, and to sweep others along with them in their quest. Some, such as Nuhmarak, the so-called Crippled King of the Void, were darkly brooding warrior-lords, bitterly resentful of the fate that had befallen the galaxy. Others enthusiastically embraced their new existence and relished the chance to prey upon those weaker than themselves and to take by force that which they considered their rightful due, as was the case when the Umbral Hundred scoured twelve entire systems in the southern marches of the Chonma sector throughout 011.M31.

One particular sub-type of Blackshield is known of almost entirely through hearsay and myth, and our Order has struggled in vain to discover the full truth of their creation. These are the warriors who actively turned against their own and raised their weapons to oppose their Primarch and their erstwhile kin. None can say how many such groups existed, but certainly rumours abound of Legiones Astartes rejecting their heritage and defacing once proudly-worn Legion icons. Even clad in black, the origins of such warriors might be discerned by careful observation, for each of the Legions utilised its own artificer-wrought and often highly idiosyncratic sub-patterns of Legiones Astartes battle plate that betrayed the origins of the bearer.

These forces and many more, from the unseen Knights-Errant, the vengeful Shattered Legion formations to the outcast Blackshields, fought throughout the Age of Darkness, sometimes adding their weight to one side or the other, at other times pursuing their own inexplicable goals. As with so much of that anarchic era, little went recorded and many accounts that were committed to record were destroyed in the flames of war consuming the entire Imperium. The greater number of the battles of the shadow wars may never be known, but their consequences will no doubt echo down the ages unheeded by mortal men, the fates of some of the greatest heroes and villainous despots ever raised up from the hosts of Mankind lost to the Age of Darkness.

A KINGDOM DIVIDED

Between the breaking of the Ruinstorm across the galaxy in early 007.M31 and Roboute Guilliman's establishment of Imperium Secundus in 010.M31, civil war erupted across the entire galaxy. While most of the Legions, whether Traitor or Loyalist, operated as mighty armies led in person by their Primarch, every one of them had smaller forces detached to serve myriad roles across the Imperium. With the coming of the Ruinstorm, many of these detached forces were lost, cut off, isolated or simply never heard from again. In some cases, Crusade detachments returning from the outer void to find the Imperium in flames had no way of knowing the fate of their brethren, and were forced by circumstance to forge their own fates and to determine their own allegiance in a galaxy of blood, war and chaos.

Entire cohorts of historians and savants have attempted to piece together a coherent picture of the status and deployment of the major Legiones Astartes forces in this period. In all likelihood such a picture is impossible to compose in entirety, and so our knowledge must remain incomplete.

DARK ANGELS

The bulk of the 1st Legion was engaged against the Night Lords for much of the period, and in the aftermath of the Lion's victory over the Traitor Primarch at Tsagualsa despatched numerous strike forces across the eastern galaxy to hunt down the splintered foe. Many did not return, pursuing their own missions across the Ultima Segmentum and beyond. Some of these detached forces encountered other similarly isolated or orphaned Legiones Astartes groups, finding common cause with some and fighting others to the death, the Ruinstorm making it impossible for them to return home or receive new orders.

EMPEROR'S CHILDREN

As the Traitors advanced towards Terra, the bulk of the IIIrd Legion massed in a single fleet about its flagship, the *Pride of the Emperor*, and for many months after Isstvan V the Legion experienced a traumatic rebirth, falling from grace and becoming something other than it had been in the pursuit of its newly awakened dark passions. Fulgrim would at length regain control over his wayward sons and lead them in a quest that would see him attain a new and horrific mode of existence. The bulk of the remainder of the Emperor's Children had been ordered

to track down and slay any Loyalists who had escaped. It was a mission many an Emperor's Children Legion praetor accepted and undertook with relish, and which many proved highly adept at prosecuting.

IRON WARRIORS

After Isstvan V, the Primarch Perturabo was tasked by Horus with a campaign of planetary assaults against key Loyalist fortress worlds, in particular those defending the marches of the Segmentum Solar. By the close of 009.M31 these were well underway, and while the Iron Warriors fleet remained centred on its Primarch, detached siege forces operated across the Imperium.

As they ground through Loyalist sectors, taking key bastion worlds as they advanced, the Iron Warriors assumed the role of brutal overlords, overseeing the consolidation of Traitor power on recently captured worlds. As such, they were often the target of attacks by orphaned Legiones Astartes forces and became experts in countering such raids.

WHITE SCARS

Thanks to the machinations of the Traitor Alpha Legion, the bulk of the Vth Legion was embroiled in a long and bitter war against the Orks at Chondax when the seeds of the Horus Heresy were being sown, and for quite some time the allegiance of their Primarch, Jaghatai Khan, was unknown. Those operating further afield were ignorant of their Primarch's intent and forced to determine their loyalties for themselves. The Primarch would later purge his Legion of those who had declared for Horus, and expel those who had come close to doing so. The latter were ordered to undertake a nigh-suicidal campaign of infiltration and assassination, numerous small forces of 'Sagyar Mazan' let loose into the galaxy to act as autonomous death-seekers.

SPACE WOLVES

The Space Wolves sustained heavy losses in their battles against first the Thousand Sons Legion at Prospero and then the Alpha Legion in the aftermath of that operation, but remained a potent force largely held in reserve to defend Terra for much of the early to middle period of the Horus Heresy. Earlier however Lemar Russ had, for his own reasons, despatched numerous small detachments to keep watch on other Legions, and of these not all are accounted for and some are likely to have acted either alone or

in small groups alongside other, similarly disposed forces also cut off from their Legion's chain of command.

IMPERIAL FISTS

The bulk of the Imperial Fists stood at Terra with their Primarch, building Terra's defences against the Warmaster's inevitable invasion. However, a great many had been lost or scattered on the tides of the Warp on the voyage to or from the Phall system and so fought alongside other similarly isolated Legiones Astartes forces. Others had been deployed before the Horus Heresy as garrison forces across vast swathes of the Imperium and as worlds fell to the Warmaster's 'Dark Empire', so those forces that could fought a fighting withdrawal.

NIGHT LORDS

Throughout much of this period, the Night Lords were a highly splintered Legion, their fleet having been ambushed by the Dark Angels at the height of the Thramas Crusade and their Primarch grievously wounded at the hand of his brother. Sevatar, First Captain of the Legion, attempted to take control of the core of the Legion, but many of its individual companies and chapters rampaged through the Ultima Segmentum, pursuing their own dark missions of bloodshed among the stars. Not until the Legion was finally reunited with its Primarch were these forces drawn together into a coherent whole, and even then many remained in the darkness, accustomed to the night they had made their own and unwilling to submit themselves to higher command.

BLOOD ANGELS

At the opening of the Horus Heresy, the fate of the Blood Angels was unknown and this would remain the case until the Legion's return in 010.M31. The Blood Angels had been ordered to muster at the Nartaba System and from there to deploy to Signus Prime to crush a major recidivist uprising. Several thousand Legionaries never arrived there however, some serving as Lamentii honour guardians watching over silent battlefields wherever the Legion had shed its blood while others simply never reached Nartaba, their vessels cast far and wide upon the tides of the Warp when the Ruinstorm struck.

It was only later that news of their survival began to filter out and then only very slowly thanks to the Ruinstorm. For a period of

almost five years, many of those lost and scattered Blood Angels forces who survived their mis-jumps to Nartaba had every reason to believe themselves orphans.

IRON HANDS

The most numerous of the Legions that were betrayed at Isstvan V, the Iron Hands were also the most affected for they lost their Primarch on the black sands of the Urgall Depression and with him all that made them the 'Iron Tenth'. The Legion fractured into factions and many coalesced, along with elements of other Legions, to form autonomous warfleets prosecuting their own wars against the Traitors. Many served in the Shattered Legions of Shadrak Meduson, some under Autek Mor and others still pursued their own campaigns of redemption at such 'places of vengeance' as Gagia, Sacrisan and Agromis, serving bloody justice upon their erstwhile brothers.

WORLD EATERS

The bulk of the World Eaters were fully committed to the Shadow Crusade far to the galactic east, yet the Legion was in possession of a number of fief worlds, not least among them the muster world on which Angron had assumed command of his Legion—Bodt. Many were used as rapid induction and indoctrination centres in order to fuel the Legion's ceaseless hunger for new recruits. It was Loyalist Shattered Legion forces that first encountered these centres, and a long shadow war was waged for control of them, the World Eaters leading forces of hideous, rapid-grown inductii to hunt down and slaughter their troublesome foe.

ULTRAMARINES

The bulk of the Ultramarines Legion had mustered at Calth and for most of 007.M31 and 008.M31 were engaged in the bitter war to repulse the so-called Shadow Crusade of the Primarchs Angron and Lorgar. Nevertheless, Legion detachments were stationed elsewhere, on lynchpin worlds such as Molech and serving in the Conquestor fleets of Rogue Trader Militants. There are likely to have been Ultramarines units that had not arrived at Calth when the Word Bearers' betrayal struck, and such units are likely to have operated as independent, autonomous forces until they re-established contact with their chain of command.

DEATH GUARD

The bulk of the Death Guard Legion was accompanying the main Traitor advance

alongside the Sons of Horus, and as such most of the Legion remained close to and directly under the command of their Primarch. The Legion came into frequent conflict with various elements of the Shattered Legions, in particular those of Shadrak Meduson whose forces operated deep behind Traitor lines in an effort to disrupt their control of the Warmaster's dark empire. Some accounts describe Death Guard Legion units detached from the main force with the aim of enacting terrible atrocities upon seemingly innocent target worlds in order to draw attacks by Loyalist elements operating far behind the main lines, unprecedented levels of destruction being unleashed simply to engage these comparatively small, yet highly disruptive forces.

THOUSAND SONS

Throughout this period, the majority of the Thousand Sons Legion was lost to the galaxy and their fate would not be known until sometime later. Nevertheless, rumours lingered of smaller groups fighting across the Imperium at locations as far-flung as Prism, Chbal, Logan's World and Yamnan, seemingly on both sides of the Loyalist/Traitor divide and frequently in the company of other orphaned forces, including Blackshields elements. None of these rumours have been, nor in all likelihood can ever be confirmed.

SONS OF HORUS

The Legion of the Warmaster himself was the main army of conquest throughout the Traitor advance on Terra, but smaller forces were detached, often alongside elements of the Emperor's Children, to hunt down those broken and scattered Loyalists who had escaped Isstvan V. Later on, the Legion would become the main target for numerous Loyalist Shattered Legion attacks. It fell to Tybalt Marr, a captain of the Sons of Horus, to combat these attacks and it was he who first perceived that they were not random assaults but each part of an impossibly complex strategy to bleed the Warmaster's Legion to a husk before it could reach its ultimate target – Terra.

WORD BEARERS

The bulk of the XVIIth Legion was engaged alongside the World Eaters in the Shadow Crusade against the Five Hundred Worlds of Ultramar, until their assault was cast back in late 008.M31. Numerous Word Bearers detachments served alongside other Traitor Legions however, often in order to impart

their fell wisdom in matters of the Abyss and as such, they also had a presence in the Traitor forces assigned to hunt down and eradicate Loyalist Shattered Legions. Such forces often took the form of a Word Bearers Chaplain or Diabolist, attended by a number of Legion squads, who would serve alongside other Traitor Legion forces, support their operations and advise them in matters of esoteric lore.

SALAMANDERS

The Salamanders suffered the most grievously of the three Legions betrayed at Isstvan V, and for several years had every reason to believe their Primarch was dead alongside that of the Iron Hands. Many of those who could fight clear of Isstvan V made their way back to Nocturne, while many others threw in their lot with the Iron Hands and Raven Guard, and fought on in these mixed units for much of the Horus Heresy. The fate of the Salamanders Primarch would only be revealed much later and it would be many generations before they were able to mount conventional operations again.

RAVEN GUARD

Having survived the horrors of the Urgall Depression, the Primarch Corax began a program of rapid-induction of new recruits into his 'Raptor' companies in order to swiftly bolster his Legion's numbers, although many of these proved unstable. The bulk of the Legion then undertook a campaign to liberate worlds whose leaders had declared for the Warmaster, but it is suspected that several dozen smaller autonomous groups remained active in the darkness, perhaps following the 'nomad predation' mode of warfare.

ALPHA LEGION

The activities of the Alpha Legion throughout much of the Age of Darkness are shrouded in mystery; though the Legion's activities and operations may not always have been hidden, their objectives and aims certainly were. After Chondax, certain elements of the Alpha Legion appear to have been tasked with hunting down Loyalist Shattered Legions, a task they proved exceptionally adept at. Unlike Emperor's Children hunter-killer forces tasked with such missions, Alpha Legion hunters engaged in subtle and far-reaching espionage, sowing disinformation and confusion among the Loyalists and in so doing significantly furthering the Traitor cause.

RAVEN GUARD APOTHECARY

APOTHECARY KAYLAR NORN
SHATTERED LEGION ATTACK CELL 'PLUTONIAN SHORE'
BATTLE OF ARRISAK

Apothecary Norn was once a member of the 4th Battalion of the Raven Guard 5th Chapter, a formation almost entirely wiped out by the Gal Vorbak of the Word Bearers Legion at the Istvan V Dropsite Massacre. Norn was one of only a few dozen Legionaries of his battalion to escape the Urgall Depression that day, being evacuated on board a massively over-loaded Thunderhawk of the Iron Hands Legion to the Xth Legion warship, the *Ion-side*. Norn would later represent the Apothecarian of his Legion when scattered elements of the Raven Guard, Iron Hands and Salamanders gathered at Aeteria, and he witnessed the death of the Iron Hands flagship, the *Crown of Flame*, at Oqueth Minor at the hands of Tybalt Marr's hunter-killer force of Sons of Horus and Emperor's Children, swearing that day to follow Shadrak Meduson into the very pits of hell in order to bring the Traitors to justice.

Heraldry of the Apothecarian

Norn is depicted here bearing the full range of specialist Apothecary's equipment, as he appeared at the outset of the Battle of Arrisak, where he served as the most senior Apothecary on board the Raven Guard rapid strike cruiser, the *Plutonian Shore*, the red stripe on his Mark VI battle helm distinguishing him as a senior specialist. His skills were to be put to the most arduous of tests during that battle, when twenty entire decks of the *Plutonian Shore* were caught in a ravaging plasma fire which consumed 300 Legionaries of four different Legions, and hideously wounded 500 more.



Raven Guard Legion Armourial



Legion Apothecarian, Common Icon

IRON WARRIORS HEAVY SUPPORT LEGIONARY

LEGIONARY KROVORN
BATTLE GROUP 'KURGHAN'
SCOURING OF THE WHEEL OF FIRE

Legionary Krovorn was once a member of the 14th Grand Company of the Legiones Astartes Iron Warriors. Having been wounded almost unto death at the Siege of the Schadenhold however, he was removed from the line as punishment and reassigned to a hunter-slayer force tasked with scouring the Wheel of Fire region of Loyalists thought to have fled there in the aftermath of Traitor ambushes along the coreward edge of the Hangman's Void. The Iron Warriors Primarch had little concern whether or not the force returned, and as a consequence it was constituted in a very similar manner to the Loyalists it was to pursue, acting in effect as a Traitor Shattered Legion.

Scars of Battle

Legionary Krovorn is depicted here as he deployed to the hunter-killer operation, still clad in the Mark III Legiones Astartes battle plate which, with deliberate symbolic intent, still bore the damage sustained at the fall of the Schadenhold. Of note are the jagged molecular bonding studs embedded in the right shoulder pauldron—the application of such ad-hoc armour reinforcement became so prevalent on both sides of the civil war that it was officially integrated into the specifications of Mark V and Mark VI Legiones Astartes power armour and informally retrofitted to many individual suits.



Variant Close Combat Modified Pauldron



Iron Warriors Legion Armourial with Olympia Device

SALAMANDERS TERMINATOR LEGIONARY

LEGIONARY NARVIK DRE'HAAN
 BAAL AUXILLIARY DEFENCE FORCE,
 7TH PROVISIONAL BATTALION,
 UNDER THE COMMAND OF CAPTAIN KAR'TOR

Legionary Dre'Haan was one of three members of his cadre to escape the massacre at Isstvan V, managing to fight through the press of Traitors and secure one of the few orbital transports to survive the firestorm in the skies of that dead world. The battered squadron of Imperial Army cruisers that carried Dre'Haan and the scattered remnants of his brethren arrived at Baal months after that fateful battle.

The Blood Angels, much reduced in number with the departure of Sanguinius and the bulk of the Legion, were quick to press these ragged stragglers into service against any Traitor assault on Baal. In total the Seneschal of Baal commissioned eight provisional battalions, a force of almost 8,000 Legiones Astartes warriors, for the defence of Baal. The 7th Battalion, of which Legionary Dre'Haan was a member, was typical of these formations, consisting of a mixed company of Salamanders and Iron Hands cataphractii, a line company of Salamanders infantry, a demi-company of Raven Guard reconnaissance units and a single company of Blood Angels assigned as custodians.

Pictured here prior to one of several Traitor probing assaults on Baal's defensive fortifications, Legionary Dre'Haan bears the ornate heraldry typical of his Legion, painstakingly repaired and restored after the damage inflicted on his battle plate on the killing fields of Isstvan V. The Nocturnean symbols on his greaves mark his expertise in both the forge and on the battlefield, while the chest ornamentation marks his prowess as a hunter of the fiery drakes that make their home in Nocturne's many volcanic mountains.



Nocturnean Runic Cadre Symbols, as used during the fighting on Isstvan V.

SALAMANDERS TACTICAL SUPPORT LEGIONARY

LEGIONARY DHA'LOK
 SHATTERED LEGION ATTACK CELL 'HESIOD'
 ASSAULT ON DWELL

Legionary Dha'lok was once a member of a Tactical Support Squad belonging to the 17th Line Company, most of whom were slain by the Traitor Alpha Legion at the Isstvan V Dropsite Massacre. Dha'lok was one of only a score of warriors from his company to escape the massacre; having been rendered unconscious by the blast of a Traitor Vindicator, he awoke in the bay of a Salamanders Storm Eagle in time to take part in the capturing of the Sons of Horus warship, the *Grey Talon*. Rescuing scores of Loyalists before being forced to break orbit, the boarders fled into the Warp, though the battle to root out every last Traitor onboard would grind on for many weeks. At length the vessel, renamed *Hesiod* in honour of one of Nocturne's great cities, would join the fleet of Shadrak Meduson and take its place in his vengeance-fuelled Shattered Legions.

Shattered Legions Wargear

Dha'lok maintained his role as a member of a Tactical Support Squad, and although his favoured weapon was the phaestos pattern flamer he had carried into the breach at the Urgall Depression, he was also adept in the use of melta and volkite weaponry. Dha'lok is depicted here clad in a hybrid suit of Legiones Astartes battle plate later codified as Mark V power armour. Dha'lok retained the helm and pauldrons of the Mark III armour he had worn at Isstvan V, marking the suit as a non-production class of Mark V.



Support Squad Designation Icon Variant



Salamanders Legion Armourial, Standard Usage

IRON HANDS TACTICAL LEGIONARY

LEGIONARY MORKARCH
SHATTERED LEGION ATTACK CELL
(FORMERLY OF CLAN VURGAAN)
CAVOR SARTA INCURSION

Morkarch was a survivor of the Dropsite Massacre, one of the few of Clan Vurgaan to escape the Urgall Depression after being outflanked by World Eaters and Death Guard units. Morkarch linked up with a band of Raven Guard survivors and was evacuated to orbit on a XIXth Legion Stormbird and carried from the Istvan System on the Iron Hands strike cruiser, the *Sisyphium*.

In the months after the flight from Istvan, Morkarch fought in a mixed force of survivor Iron Hands, Raven Guard and Salamanders, each element united in bitter purpose as they ranged the southern marches of the Segmentum Obscurus hunting for Traitor pathfinder vessels scouting ahead of the Warmaster's advance on Terra. At length, the warriors of the *Sisyphium* established contact with other groups of the so-called Shattered Legions and coordinated their efforts with them in a campaign of vengeance that spanned half of the galaxy.

Battle Scars

Morkarch is depicted as he deployed to his attack cell's operation on the Mechanicum fief, Cavor Sarta, where he was slain by a previously unseen machine abomination wrought in the captured forge-fanes by Traitor Mechanicum. Morkarch retained the Mark III power armour he had worn at Istvan V. The destroyed left arm was replaced by elements of Mark IV power armour, a feat that only Iron Hands Techmarines could achieve given the underlying incompatibilities between these two marks.



Iron Hands Legion Icon, Mid-Crusade Provenance



Mechanicum forge-issue ident markings



IRON WARRIORS CONTEMPTOR DREADNOUGHT

ANCIENT KHRAGAN, 'KING-KILLER'
UNIDENTIFIED IRON WARRIORS ELEMENT, LOYALIST SHATTERED LEGIONS FORCE
CONSTANTINIUM INCURSION

Ancient Khragan was once a member of the 14th Grand Company of the IVth Legion under Warsmith Dantioch. The 14th was heavily defeated in battle against a massive Hrud migration, and when Dantioch blamed the migration on the actions of other Iron Warriors units in a neighbouring war zone, he and many of the survivors were censured by their Primarch. Khragan was amongst those assumed to have been slain in that battle, and so his appearance, along with several dozen other Iron Warriors also thought fallen, in a Shattered Legions attack force at Constantinium is a mystery. It was by Khragan's hand that the Traitor Magister-Militaris of Constantinium was slain, earning him the epithet 'King-Killer'.

Ancient Khragan's Contemptor Dreadnought bears the hallmarks of the IVth Legion's forge, its main body wrought according to the brutalist sensibilities of the Iron Warriors, including additional armour plating and reinforcing bonding studs. The Dreadnought is equipped with the multi-melta that Khragan used to burn through the Magister-Militaris' twenty metre-high, two metres-thick throne room doors, and the power claw which he used to choke the life from the Traitor leader at the climax of the Constantinium Incursion.

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