WARHAMMER
THE HORUS HERESY

SKITARII
THE STEEL HAND OF MARS

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3RD EDITION RULES

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SKITARII
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The Horus Heresy was a war that had spanned the entire galaxy, touching every world claimed by Mankind and involving every force of arms. Of these forces, the Skitarii conclaves of the Cult Mechanicus are oft ignored by history, for their oaths bound them to a singular task – to safeguard the rarest and most dangerous technological relics at any cost.

These warriors fought across the galaxy, but not for glory, not for honour and not for the spoils of war. They fought simply because the Fabricator General bade them fight, and cared not for the cause that their struggle served. They battled to preserve that which had been lost so that it might be returned to their masters, be they loyal to the Throne or servant of the Warmaster.

Yet, this was no mere squabble over rusted and broken artefacts, but a deadly contest to control some of the most dangerous technological devices ever created. The Master of Mars had always known full well the power of Mankind's past genius, and were one faction to control that power it might well tip the balance of the Horus Heresy. The Skitarii had once fought to protect the Imperium from such relics, would now be called upon to decide who would unleash them upon the galaxy.

In the shadow of Horus' bitter war against the Emperor, the Skitarii fought their own war – one to control not worlds, but knowledge itself. For, as the wise have long known: Knowledge is a power greater than any blade.

THE SKITARII CONCLAVES

Where other armies had served the Warmaster, the Emperor or one of their proxies, the Skitarii heeded only the orders of the Fabricator General of Mars. They had borne his authority and had enacted his will, and on his orders they had roamed the galaxy seeking the most valuable and dangerous of relics to be returned to the vaults of Phobos and the vast halls of the Olympus Mons. Each of the conclaves of the Skitarii was dedicated to veneration and recovery of one aspect of the technological spectrum that formed the core of the Cult Mechanicum's beliefs, a specialisation that shaped their organisation, tactics and rituals. Some had sought out artefacts of the ancient masters of atomantic power, a science only recently returned to the Imperium, while others had cared only for relics of the plasma technology that powered so much of the Imperium. Dark rumours even spoke of conclaves dedicated to the pursuit of forbidden technologies and even xenos relics, that they might be sealed away and watched over by the priests of Mars.

BATTLE-PILGRYMS

In form the Skitarii were, as with many warriors of the Mechanicum, human in appearance but far removed from the weak flesh of that origin. Each had begun as a human thrall to one of the many wide-flung forge-fanes of the Mechanicum, claimed as tribute by one of the wandering conclaves as need demanded, under the authority of the Fabricator General and ancient tradition. Yet, after the secret rituals of initiation, known among the Skitarii as the 'Flesh-shriving', little would be left of that origin.

These bloody ordeals would see the flesh of each pilgrym augmented and replaced by the corpus-skitarii, as their augmetic armour was known, and their thoughts and memories overwritten with engrams. The thrall would be remade both within and without, reborn from a life of drudgery into a new existence as a servant of the Fabricator General. The corpus-skitarii was the most sacred of relics borne by the conclaves, a set of augmetics that both increased the strength and endurance of the bearer. It allowed the Skitarii to shrug off wounds that would kill an unaugmented warrior and to survive in environments that would otherwise prove toxic. In particular, the locomotive prosthetics were considered emblematic of the order, a holdover to the wandering clans that had once roamed the harsh and unforgiving wastes of Mars.

Not only did the corpus-skitarii reshape the body of the Skitarii, but also their minds. Held within the circuits and neural linkages of each set of augmetics was the distilled battle experience of all those it had once been part of. When combined with the hypno-indoctrinated training, this turned even the most unskilled of labourers into veteran soldiers, with each Skitarii created in a fraction of the time it required to train and prepare a Space Marine. This would give rise to the legends of Skitarii immortality, widespread within the ranks of the Imperial Army and even the Legiones Astartes, who little understood the Mechanicum's itinerant warriors. For no matter how many times a pilgrym was struck down in battle, they would soon return to make war in the name of the Mechanicum, seemingly unchanged by death.

In battle, the Skitarii fought as a fast-moving force of light infantry, trusting to speed and firepower over the attritional warfare that marked the doctrines of the Solar Auxilia and Legiones Astartes. Fleet of foot in even the most dangerous terrain and with their minds reforged to respond to war with cold and brutal logic, the Skitarii were remorseless foes that gave an opponent no pause or respite in battle. Heedless of their own survival, they committed to both attack and defence with an intensity that no sane warrior could match, nor mortal army endure for long.
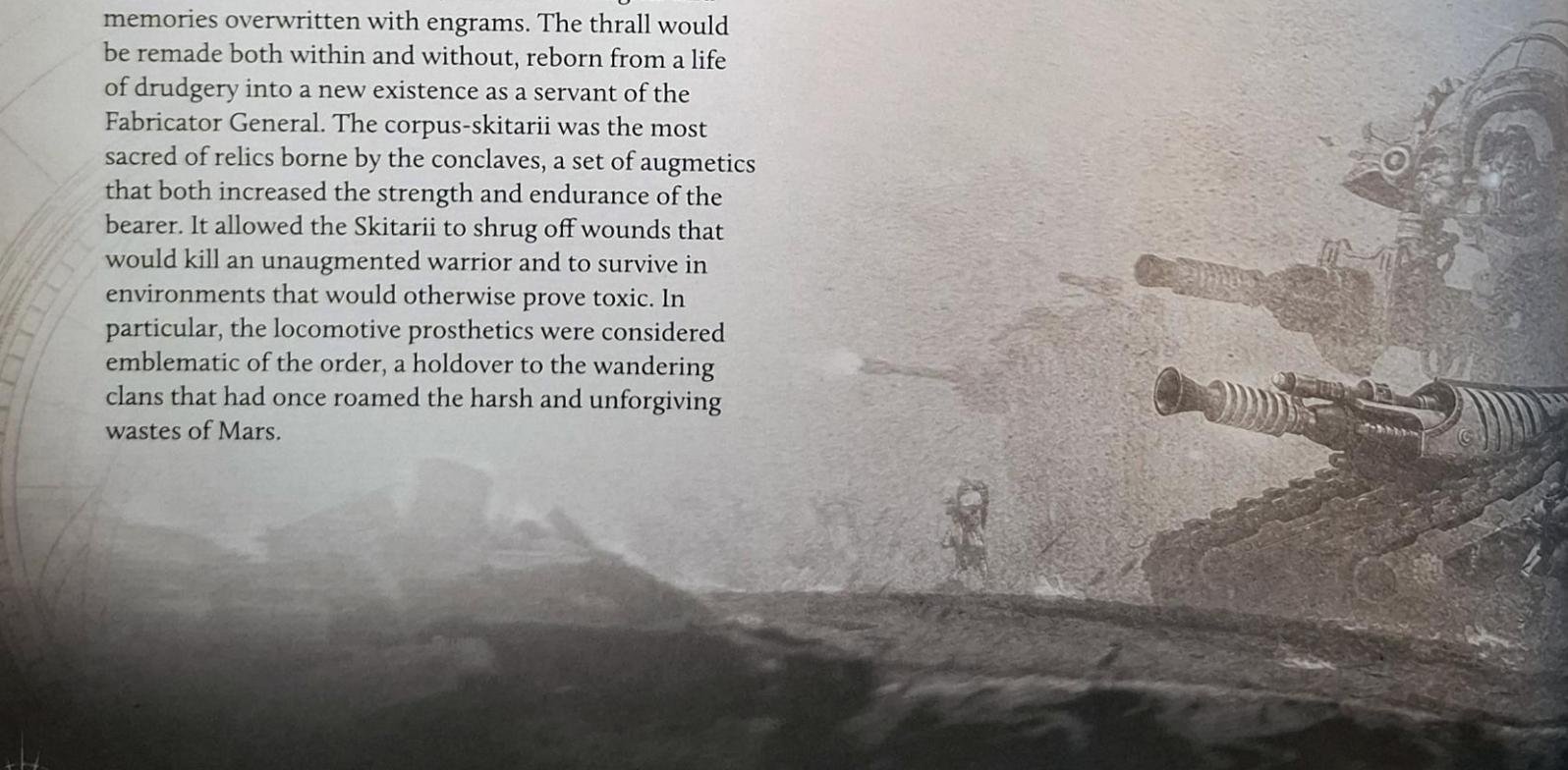
THE PILGRIMS OF THE RED WASTES

Scholars of the Mechanicum place the origin of the Skitarii conclaves long before the formation of the Cult Mechanicum proper. The augmetics that would become the corpus-skitarii are based on the adaptations used by the ancient migrant scavenger clans that once roamed the desolate surface of Mars. In the days when Mars' surface still teemed with ferocious cy-carnivora and other technological abominations, these wanderers survived by outpacing their foes and uncovering the ancient remains of Mars' glory days. Many of the artefacts they recovered would aid in the foundation of the modern Mechanicum, and in honour of their service they were inducted into the personal service of the first Fabricator General.

THE LEGACY OF AGES

Unlike the Tech-Priests and magi that made up the ranks of the Mechanicum, the Skitarii did not bear names or any form of identity in the manner of other mortal creatures. The Flesh-shriving rituals stripped them of any form of human characteristics, the flesh little more than a receptacle for the corpus-skitarii and the centuries of knowledge it contained. Though more than a simple automata, the Skitarii were both less and more than human – a gestalt of all the consciousnesses that had been bonded to a corpus-skitarii, fixated on war and death and forever bound in unflinching obedience to the Fabricator General.

Each such warrior was branded with a code that identified its conclave, lochos and the identity of its corpus-skitarii. For the flesh there was only a simple number after the corpus code to show how many iterations of that set of augmetics had walked in the service of the Mechanicum.

In later years they would grow from their small origins into a mighty force wielded by the Fabricator General to serve the needs of the Mechanicum – and the personal goals of the incumbent Fabricator General. The Skitarii were organised into conclaves, small self-sufficient armies capable of operating far from Mars for long periods of time with limited support. The number of conclaves varied over time, but at the outbreak of the Horus Heresy there were thought to be around 30 such forces in existence. The majority of these conclaves remained loyal to Kelbor-Hal, and through him the Warmaster, while a smaller number would take the side of the Fabricator General in exile, Zagreus Kane.

Each conclave maintained its own specialisation, one brand of technology for which they had a particular affinity and had developed strategies for discovering and recovering such artefacts. Despite this, the Skitarii were not priests of the Mechanicum, they were not trained in the mysteries of the various tech-arcana nor were they granted any position within the Cult Mechanicus. They could not, and did not seek to, control or use that which they recovered, but instead were dedicated to its preservation. Most of the relics recovered by the conclaves prior to the Horus Heresy resided within the great vaults of Phobos, guarded by the First Conclave and removed only on the direct orders of the Fabricator General. Most of the artefacts kept within those halls were considered either too fragile – or too dangerous – to ever be removed.

NOMINAL STRUCTURE
OF THE SKITARII CONCLAVES

Such is the command hierarchy of the standardised Skitarii Conclave and the organisation of its assets under the overall command of the rightfully appointed Arch-Ordinator, answerable only unto the Fabricator General of Mars.

The Arch-Ordinator
The principal ruler of the collected Skitarii Conclaves, directly subservient to the Fabricator General.

The Skitarii Conclaves
Defined within Imperial record as the *'Ancient standing armies of elite cybernetically and genetically engineered troops, originating on Mars and principally loyal to the office of the Fabricator General.'* The constituent Battle-Pilgrym themata within each Skitarii Conclave are bound by specific Clade Parameters, governing their coded doctrines and dominant behaviours in battle.

Themata 1-16
Each standard conclave is divided into 16 individual themata.

Armoured Contingents
Including Conveyor and Venator units held at themata level and assigned to the purview of the Commanding Marshal as per strategic requirements.

Lochos 1-22
Conclave themata are further sub-divided into Lochos 1 through to 22.

Corpus 1-12
Each lochos is further subdivided into 12 corpus of Skitarii, analogous to squad formations.

Skitarii Marshal
Not appointed as a held rank or position of authority, but instead derived from and granted authority over battle formation based on specific mission requirements.

Skitarii Battle-Pilgrym 1-16
The Battle-Pilgryms of each corpus are assigned a position numeral, retained throughout the duration of servitude.

Bonepicker Hosts
Ad-hoc accompanying forces, circumstantially under the command of the ranking Marshal.

EXEMPLARY CLADES OF THE PILGRYM CONCLAVES

Of the known Skitarii Battle-Pilgrym Conclaves, the majority abide by specific Clade Parameters, governing the protocols and behaviour patterns of the individual Battle-Pilgryms and the conclave as a whole. Exemplary Clade Parameters and the conclaves that adhere to them are detailed herein, with numerous specialised and divergent examples also recorded elsewhere.

INCURSUS CLADE
'Ad membra ferrax'

To respond with dauntless and impetuous aggression in the face of any enemies.

EXCIPIO CLADE
'Acquisitor et cognitio'

Sworn to the acquisition and analysis of relics and sacred technology above all else, no matter the cost.

SPECULOR CLADE
'Occulus omnisior'

To remain ever watchful, ever listening as the eyes and ears of the Arch-Ordinator.

VIGILUS CLADE
'Contra cladem'

Unyielding and unfaltering in the protection and custodianship of the vaults of the Mechanicum.

- ΙΩΨ -
INCURSUS-OMEGA-PSI
Exemplary of the Conclaves of Incursus Clade Parameters.

Nominal standing: 75,008 Battle-Pilgryms

- ΕΚΔ -
EXCIPIO-KAPPA-DELTA
Exemplary of the Conclaves of Excipio Clade Parameters.

Nominal standing: 76,387 Battle-Pilgryms

+++ ADDENDUM+++

Themata 4 reduced to 12% operational capacity following Engagement 436 of the Third Stranthos Pilgrimage. 94.3% of Conveyor Units assigned to Themata 4 presumed lost.

+++ADDENDUM+++

- SΔΘ -
SPECULOR-ALPHA-THETA
Exemplary of the Conclaves of Speculor Clade Parameters.

Nominal standing: Unknown

- VΔΩ -
VIGILUS-ALPHA-OMEGA
Exemplary of the Conclaves of Vigilus Clade Parameters.

Nominal standing: 88,000 Battle-Pilgryms

+++ ADDENDUM+++

Entered into record are four stasis-locked themata, held in reserve at an undisclosed location.

+++ADDENDUM+++

LOYALIST SKITARII: THE LOGIC OF DISSENT

Given the nature of the Skitarii conclaves and their absolute loyalty to the Fabricator General, it may seem impossible to contemplate that some fought for the Loyalist cause and against Kelbor-Hal and his treacherous master – the Warmaster Horus. Yet, it is the inherent logical and traditional nature of the Skitarii that forced many of them to commit to such a path. Such was the power of the Horus Heresy that it broke what had once appeared even the most inviolable chains of loyalty and honour.

Enshrined in the engrammatic commandments of nearly every conclave is the codicil "*The Skitarii serve the Fabricator General, the Fabricator General serves the Mechanicum.*" It is a simple logic that has been at the root of their loyalty for centuries, an unspoken promise that they serve the preservation of the Mechanicum as a whole through the Fabricator General. When Kelbor-Hal set in motion the events of the Death of Innocence, the bombardment of Mars and the unleashing of numerous terrible and forbidden relics from the vaults of Phobos upon the Mechanicum he was bound to serve, he would bring the truth of this into doubt.

By the strict logic of the Skitarii ordinator's cogitator arrays, the Fabricator General existed to serve the Mechanicum, and if he did not then he was no longer the Fabricator General. If Kelbor-Hal had forfeited that position by his treachery, logic dictated that it must pass to his successor, Zagreus Kane. To the Loyalist Skitarii there was no change in their loyalties, they served the Fabricator General, the one who served and guided the Mechanicum. Kelbor-Hal had simply renounced that position by his own actions and the cold judgement of logic, for to lay waste to Mars and slaughter its people could not be seen as proper service to their ancient cause. Worse, this treachery had required the removal and destruction of several of the most ancient of the Skitarii's relics to further that wasteful madness, a betrayal not only of the Fabricator General's duties, but also of the Skitarii's own legacy.

Kelbor-Hal was quick to realise his mistake, and by means of scrap-code infection he rewrote the directives of many of the conclaves, warping their logic to enforce their loyalty. Yet, the damage was already done and fully a third of the Skitarii conclaves had reassigned their loyalty to Zagreus Kane and through him the cause of the Emperor. The first action of these Loyalists was a near-suicidal raid on the vaults of Phobos that saw the capture and removal of a number of key relics, some brought to Kane on Terra and others vanishing with their caretakers.

In the aftermath of the Death of Innocence and the raid on Phobos, a number of conclaves would be reported fighting in support of the Loyalist cause. Some on the orders of Zagreus Kane, the Fabricator General in exile, and others simply chose Traitor forces that threatened valuable or dangerous relics. Given that less than a third of the Skitarii conclaves chose to follow Kane instead of Kelbor-Hal, some have questioned the impact these warriors had on the course of the Horus Heresy. However, though they lacked the sheer numbers of the Legiones Astartes or Solar Auxilia, the warriors of the Loyalist Skitarii made up for this with the strength of their determination and their willingness to sacrifice all they were in order to fulfil the orders of the true Fabricator General.

TRAITOR SKITARII: THE UNBREAKABLE CHAIN

Bound by a loyalty burned into the very core of the being, the vast majority of the Skitarii conclaves followed Kelbor-Hal into the service of the Traitor cause. Many would take part in the initial actions of the Death of Innocence, for of all the warriors that were available to him, Kelbor-Hal placed the most faith in the unbreakable loyalty of the Skitarii. Tasked with deploying a number of relic-weapons in forge-fanes whose loyalty the Fabricator General doubted, Traitor Skitarii would be responsible for some of the most deadly strikes of the Horus Heresy's opening battles. In surgical attacks to breach forge-domes and deploy phosphex charges, ancient phage-weapons and even nucleonic charges, the Skitarii would succeed in wiping nearly a dozen cities from the maps of Mars, earning themselves a new and terrible reputation as the harbingers of apocalypse.

In the wake of the raid on Phobos and the revelation that not all of the Skitarii would remain unquestioningly loyal to him, Kelbor-Hal enacted a new edict. Those Skitarii that remained on Mars were infected by a new strain of the scrap-code, the engrammatic coding of their corpus-skitarii warped so that they could not betray Kelbor-Hal or the Traitor cause. It would also see a degradation of their logic processors, subtle at first but slowly becoming more pronounced. Its first symptoms were apparent in the aftermath of the fighting on Mars, where many warriors of the Traitor conclaves began the practice of anointing their corpus-skitarii in the blood of the slain.

As the Horus Heresy progressed, this aberrant behaviour would become worse. The Skitarii bound most closely to Kelbor-Hal became increasingly more erratic and prone to macabre displays after or even during battle. Though, as this did not lessen their capability as warriors, indeed seemingly making them more ferocious and cruel than ever before, their magi overseers turned a blind eye to the corruption. Only as Kelbor-Hal himself was drawn further and further into techno-heresy was the influence of the Warp noted in the ongoing debasement of the Skitarii conclaves, with only those Traitor conclaves operating far from Mars spared from the influence of the scrap-code infection.

With the greatest portion of the Skitarii conclaves still bound to his service, Kelbor-Hal made extensive use of them as enforcers and shock troops. They were dispatched to Forge Worlds that showed any signs of dissent with the Warmaster's cause and set as bloody watchmen over the ruling archmagi of that world. No few archmagos-intendants that displeased Horus or Kelbor-Hal would meet their end at the arquebus of the Skitarii, their fanes toppled as a sign of what fate those disloyal would meet. Indeed, among the Traitor ranks, the Martian Skitarii would earn the sobriquet 'The Red Hands of Mars' for the brutal manner in which they treated both ally and enemy alike.

A number of Traitor Skitarii would also be placed at the disposal of Horus and his chief lieutenants, where their skills as relic hunters were put to use. Across the galaxy, Horus sought a number of artefacts, and the Skitarii were the perfect agents in their discovery. Granted both the authority of the Fabricator General and Warmaster, these gruesome warriors sought out the most terrible relics of Old Night – and some, it was rumoured, of xenos provenance – and saw them delivered to Horus at any cost. Many of the atrocities of the Horus Heresy were possible only due to the efforts of the Skitarii in recovering these profane weapons, the effects of which would scar the Imperium for millennia.

SKITARII BATTLE-PILGRYM

PILGRYM INCURSUS/33/03/INWIT

This Skitarii Battle-Pilgrym served as part of the Incursus-Ω-Z Conclave.
The third pilgrym of the 33rd Corpus assigned to the Inwit theatre.

The Skitarii made extensive use of refined volkite technology, the so-called 'voltlock' weaponry.

VOLTLOCK HANDGUN

VOLTLOCK ARQUEBUS

THE AUCTORIT CREST

SKITARII CAPITA

The corpus-skitarii incorporates numerous cranial augmentations, some unique to certain conclaves.

SKITARII POWER SWORD

AUCTORIT SCEPTRE

CORPOSANT STAVE

THE MARK OF THE TRAITOR

Those Skitarii bound to the service of the traitorous Fabricator General were often marked by the blood of the fallen, both friend and foe.

BOUND BY LOGIC

Those Skitarii loyal to the Imperium and the Fabricator General in exile, Kane, bore a stylised rendition of an ancient symbol for the Skitarii.

CORRUPTED BY POWER

Those Skitarii that Fabricator General Kelbor-Hal commanded made use of a symbol gleaned from texts long forbidden.

SKITARII VEHICLES: TRIBUTE & ARTIFICE

The Skitarii conclaves were warriors and nothing else, dedicated to a single craft with a focus that left them incapable of other roles. What wargear they possessed was forged for them and only the most basic of maintenance was performed by the Skitarii themselves, leaving them dependent on the aid of the Forge Worlds to prosecute their never-ending search for technological relics. This was an ancient and intended limitation on the power of these warriors, keeping them bound to the service and protection of the Mechanicum as a whole.

Given that a Skitarii ordinator bore the authority of the Fabricator General himself, they could technically simply order any magos of the Mechanicum to supply them with arms, munitions and support as required to fulfil their mission. However, in principle few of the lords of the Mechanicum would brook such arrogance from outsiders within their own domains, and the further the Skitarii strayed from Mars the more limited their authority became. Most often they would be forced into compromise, allying their own missions with the needs of a host Forge World in order to gain the use of its factorum, warriors and arsenals.

Fortunately, a conclave on campaign had much to offer the isolated Forge Worlds of the Mechanicum and it was rare for such warriors to be turned away. Many archmagi would loose the Skitarii on their foes, scouring xenos raiders and other enemies from their domain in exchange for providing the Fabricator General's servants with vehicles and supplies. In time, the wandering Skitarii would accumulate a wide variety of transports and tanks, some incorporated into their ranks permanently and others serving for a short time before returning to their old masters.

INCURSUS/TRIAROS/31/09/INWIT

Shown below is an example of a Triaros bound in service to the Incursus-Ω-Z Conclave of the Skitarii. Markings on its hull indicate it was manufactured on Phaeton in 943.M30 and granted in service for a period of 100 years in return for the conclave's aid in battle. It would later be destroyed in battle on Inwit in 012.M31, some 31 years before it was to be returned to its makers.
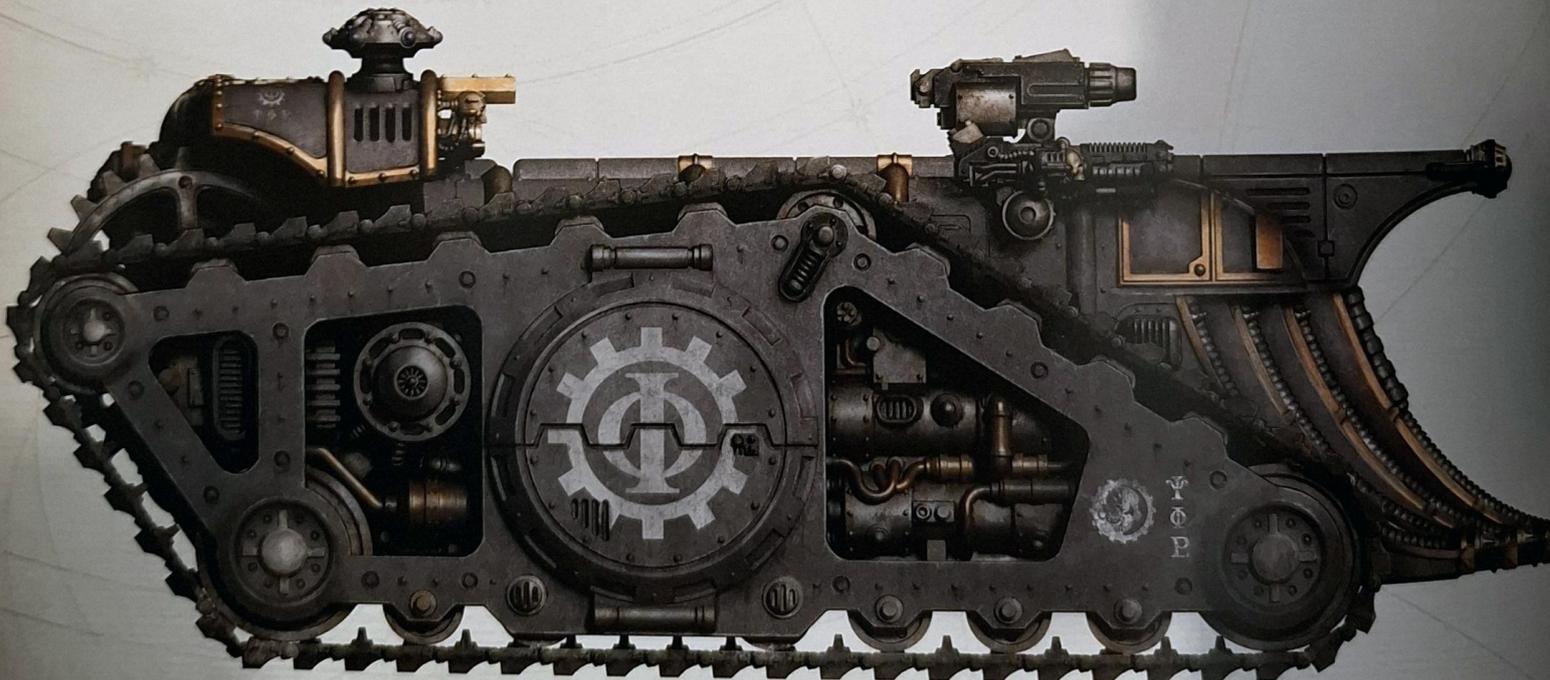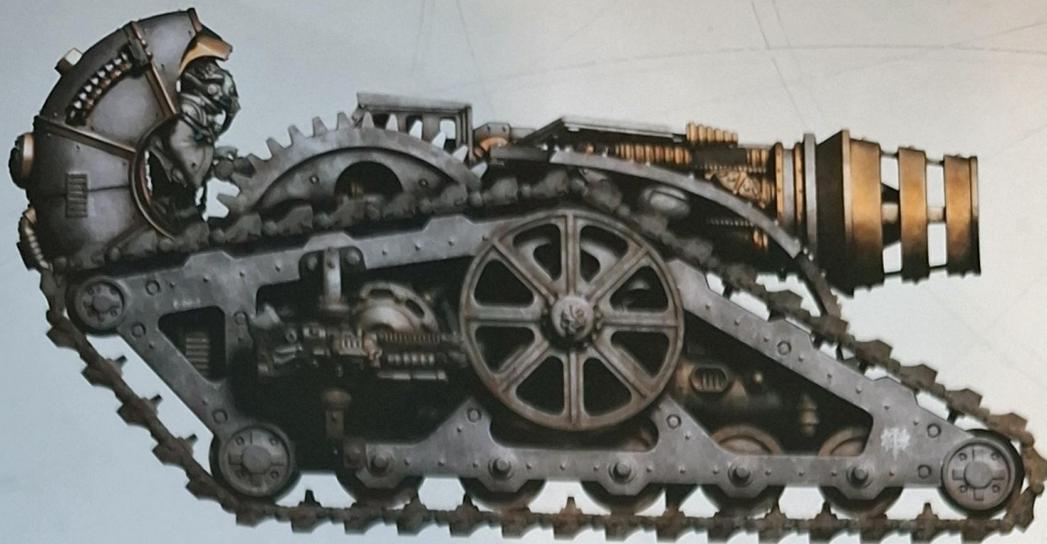
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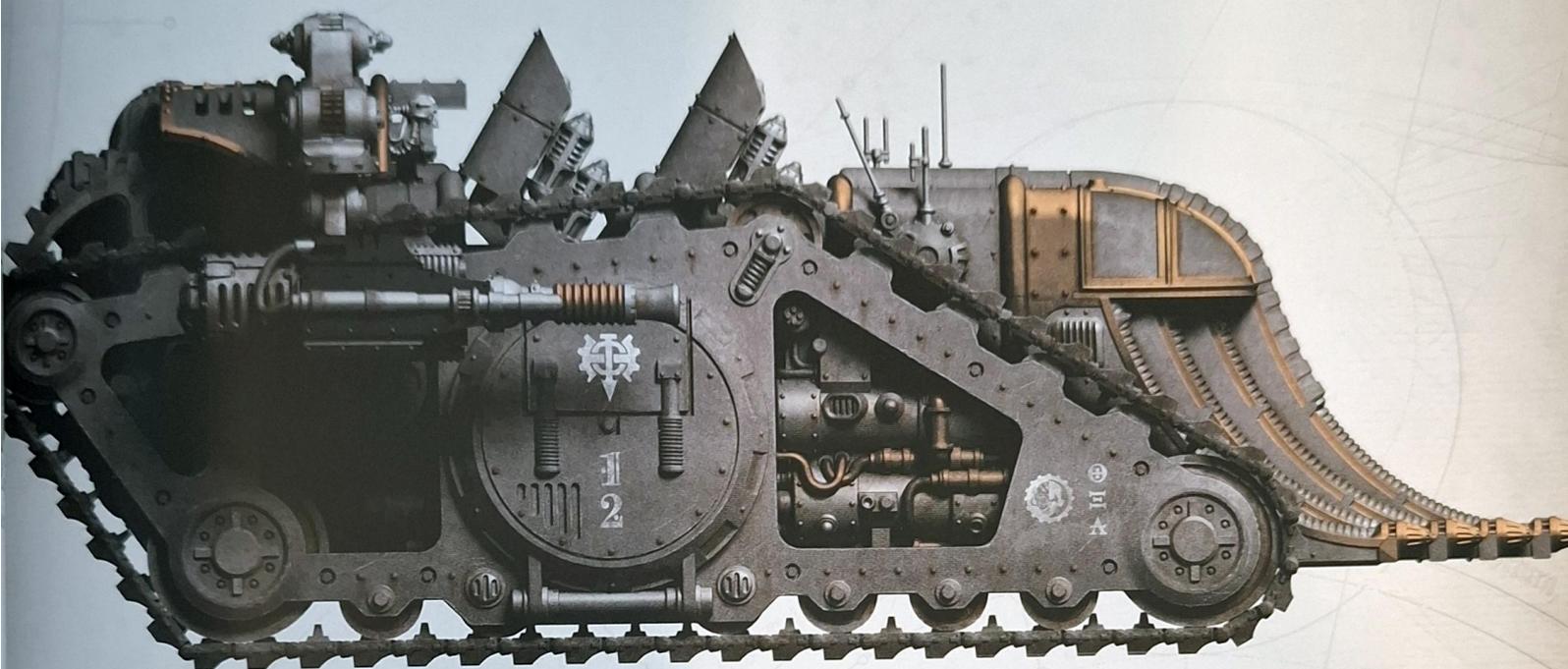
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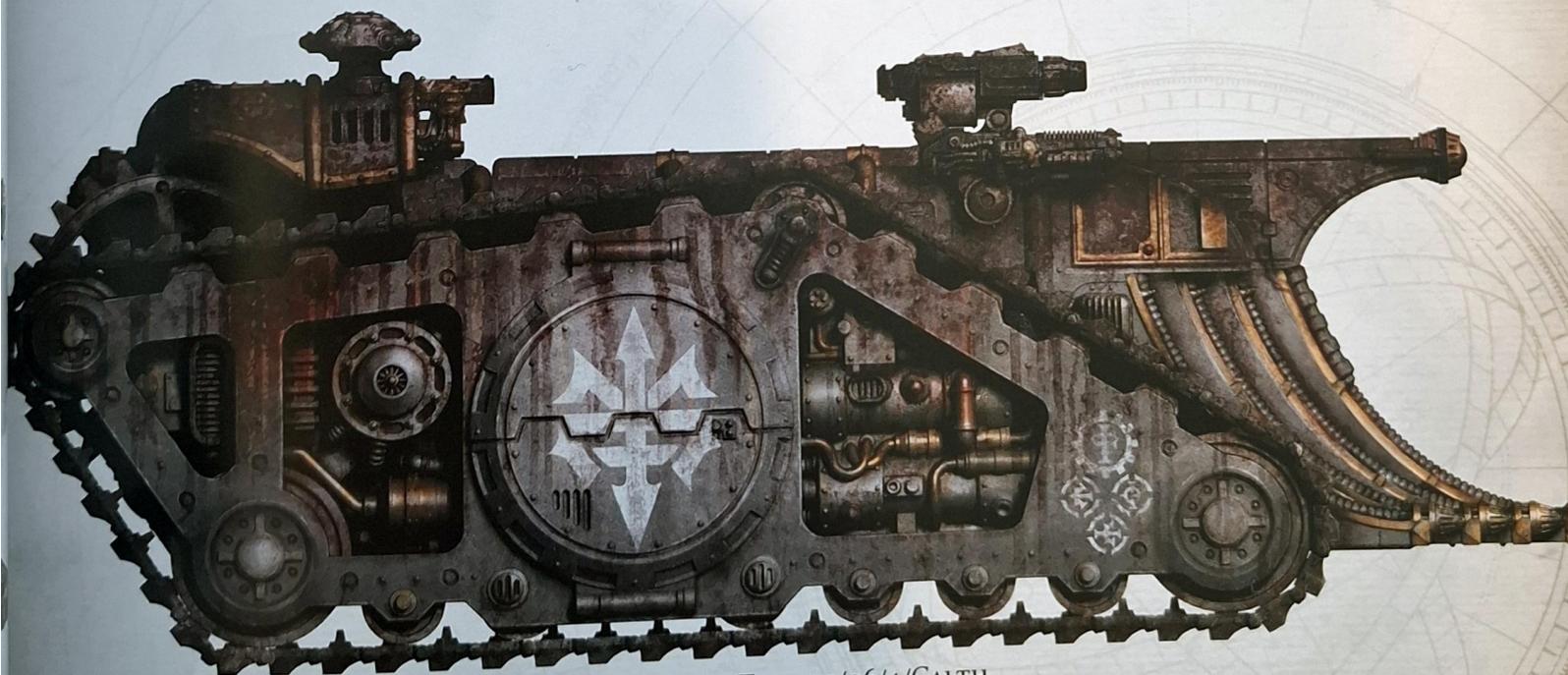
Excipio/Triaros/06/4/Calth

THE BATTLE FOR VAULT THARSIS DECA-NINE

Along the northernmost ridges of the Icaria Planum, where the long tail of the Noctis Labyrinthus finally petered out into open dust plains, the Skitarii warriors of Conclave Speculor-Gamma-Mu waited. Draped in blood-splattered cloaks and set in silent, unmoving ranks, the Skitarii were inured to the cutting winds and radiation of the Martian wastes and seemed more a forest of strange statues than a force of deadly warriors at rest. The marshal elected from the gathered ordinators to lead the force silently parsed a long vox-link communication in dense binaric code, while in the distance the dull boom of explosions marked the ongoing doom of Mars – the Death of Innocence.

Colossal ash clouds eclipsed the Martian sky, draping a slow blizzard of ash across the wastes, both a testament to the destruction Kelbor-Hal had unleashed on Mars. As the Skitarii waited, a Thunderhawk squadron in yellow heraldry dropped from the clouds, kilometres distant over the city of Mondus Gamma and met a hail of anti-aircraft fire that set two craft aflame and plummeting towards the ground. Ignoring the plume of smoke that marked the crash site of the fallen craft, the Skitarii of Speculor-Gamma-Mu remained impassive, until a subtle gesture from the marshal set the entire lochos of 600 warriors into sudden motion.

The Skitarii raced across the rugged wastes in a tireless and perfectly synchronised wedge. The few Karacnos assault tanks and tech-thralls that accompanied the lochos fell behind, slowed by the rough terrain, while the unique augmetic legs of the Skitarii allowed them to pass unimpeded. The Skitarii headed for an otherwise unremarkable ravine carved into the ridges of the edge of the Icaria Planum. Yet, the Skitarii did not relax their guard for, as warriors of the Speculor Clade, their carefully calibrated ocular implants made plain to them signs of danger that others would easily miss.

Tell-tale energy signatures marked servitor controlled turrets and dormant automata concealed beneath the dusty wastes. This site was one of many hidden vaults, built to contain relics of Mars' history that the Emperor had deemed too dangerous to be unleashed. Now, with the treaty between Mars and Terra in tatters, Kelbor-Hal had directed his loyal Skitarii to seek out and recover those artefacts that might prove of use in the war that he had begun. Marshal Speculor-19/Σ/Tharsis began this task by ordering forwards the 'bonepickers' that trailed his lochos.

These were no Skitarii, but simple forge-serfs who had abandoned their fanes to follow the Skitarii. With only rudimentary augmentations and wargear, these were but scavengers that the Skitarii tolerated for such times as this. Urged forwards at the point of Skitarii power bayonets, the bonepickers moved into the defile, unable to detect the defences hidden there and utterly surprised when they burst forth from the red sands. Energy blasts tore apart dozens and the narrow defile turned slick with gore. Screams echoed down its length, but the Skitarii watched the slaughter impassively.

THE DEATH OF INNOCENCE

In the opening hours of the Horus Heresy, Mars burned. The Fabricator General Kelbor-Hal unleashed the full fury of his arsenal, the worst of Old Night's relics, upon any archmagos he deemed not completely loyal to him. This overwhelming onslaught drained much of the arsenal of relic-weapons he had amassed. For his war to continue, and for him to hold off any counter-attack from Terra, it was essential that more such weapons be found. Fortunately, there were many artefacts hidden away in the remote corners of Mars that had long been forbidden to him by the treaty forced on Mars by the Emperor, a treaty that had been annulled when Kelbor-Hal raised the flag of treachery on Mars.

Rusted Castellax, caked in dirt from long years of slumber, trampled the corpses of the bonepickers even as servo-turrets on the canyon walls tracked and slew the last of the thralls. With the automata now exposed, the Skitarii sprang into action. Each corpus moved with well-practised efficiency, the front ranks bracing and holding the hulking automata at bay with their bayonets, while the rear ranks used the mobility of their augmetics to flank the Castellax and blast their most vulnerable points. Their simple cogitators were no match for the keen instincts and tactics of the warriors of Speculor-Gamma-Mu, but their durability put the lightly armed Skitarii at a disadvantage. However, once the automata were forced back into the defile by massed voltlock blasts, the Karacnos tanks to the rear opened fire. The resulting blast, contained within the narrow defile, emitted radiation powerful enough to fuse the circuitry of the automata and flash-burn the servitors controlling the turrets to cinders.

With the defending force annihilated, the Skitarii lochos paused. Not to celebrate or regroup, for the augmented warriors of Speculor-Gamma-Mu neither required nor understood the need for either. Instead they waited as the few surviving bonepickers gathered up the bodies of those Skitarii that had fallen in combat, torn and rent by the claws of the Castellax. The augmetic carapaces of the fallen were treated with the utmost reverence, carefully stored in special caskets aboard the Triaros that accompanied the lochos, while the dead flesh was unceremoniously discarded. This sacred duty done, the Skitarii turned and approached the concealed vault portal, a ceramite-reinforced blast door nearly half a metre thick, sealed by the authority of the Fabricator General nearly 300 years before when the Emperor had first descended to Mars.

Now that Kelbor-Hal had betrayed that trust, he had granted Marshal Speculor/4/19/Σ/Tharsis the code-engrams to unseal this vault. The dread weapon kept within would then be unleashed upon the Loyalists, to reap a monstrous tithe of lives in the name of Horus. The marshal stepped forwards and began the transmit sequence that would unlock the vault. The canyon was silent for a moment, save for the popping of ruined Castellax frames cooling in the air and sand shifting in the restless Martian wind. Then, a sharp crack sounded as the door began to open and Marshal Speculor/4/19/Σ/Tharsis' armoured head exploded.

AN UNEXPECTED INTERVENTION

High on the ridge above the canyon, a Legiones Astartes warrior in yellow heraldry and bearing an ornate nemesis sniper bolter rose from concealment. The cameleoline cloak that had hidden him from the keen ocular implants of the Skitarii whirled away in a sudden gust of wind and a dozen voltlock beams blasted the rocks around him, one blackening the armour of his pauldron marring the insignia of a Space Marine Vigilator. His speech accented by the guttural accent of Inwit, the Space Marine bellowed forth an order even as the Skitarii bracketed him with arcing energy beams: *"In the Emperor's name, attack!"*

With a sudden roar, a dozen jump pack-borne Space Marines landed amid the Skitarii vanguard, heavy chainswords screaming as they bit into augmented flesh, and atop the canyon walls more Imperial Fists moved into firing positions. Such a sudden and brutal onslaught would have broken most forces, but the Skitarii did not falter. Those warriors to the fore of the Speculor force charged the Space Marines in their midst, matching power bayonets against chainswords in desperate hand-to-hand combat. They knew they could not prevail over the hulking warriors of the Legiones Astartes, but they bought time with their lives for the bulk of the Skitarii force to withdraw from the defile and the ambush it had walked into.

THE HAND OF FATE

Initially part of the taskforce led by Camba Diaz of the Imperial Fists, the Thunderhawks *Ice Hawk* and *Inwit's Spite* were shot down before the attack began. Both crashed in the Icaria Planum, by pure coincidence no more than five kilometres from the hidden vault. With the Demi-Company's captain killed in the crash, and scrap-code interference leaving the Space Marines unable to contact either Camba Diaz or First Captain Sigismund, the highest ranking officer that remained alive, the Vigilator Korben Talar, took command. While scouting the area in the hope of restoring communications, the Space Marine detected the radiation blast within the ravine, and Vigilator Talar made the fateful decision to investigate. Though they could not at that time have realised what it was they fought to claim.

For a full five minutes the Skitarii fought, some continuing to battle even with arms hewn away or terrible gashes in their torso and others throwing themselves onto the chainblades in their final moments to stall the Space Marines. Some 30 Skitarii died, either in battle with the assault troops or struck by well-placed bolter fire from above, before the main force of the lochos reached the far end of the defile, leaving only a few power-armoured corpses in their wake. There, as the Imperial Fists repositioned to enter and defend the vault itself, it became obvious that they were few in number and with limited supplies. Though, if allowed to fortify a position within and around the vault such superlative warriors would prove difficult to eliminate without incurring significant casualties.

The warriors of Inwit had not wasted this brief respite, but with so little time granted them had erected only the most basic of defences. The wreckage of the fallen Castellax formed a series of crude barricades along the defile, while the vault entrance had been turned into a rudimentary fire-point for heavy weaponry. Above, on the ridgeline, Space Marine seekers waited with their guns covering the length of the canyon and further out recon squads maintained a short perimeter in the wastes to counter any attempt to flank the high ridgeline. They expected a series of feints to determine their positions and numbers in detail, a drawn-out battle with the foe attempting to limit its casualties.

As the Space Marines secured the vault and set their defences, the warriors of Speculor-Gamma-Mu did not attack. Instead, the ordinators of the surviving corpus gathered, connected by invisible carrier wave and vox implant, a necessary ritual conducted by mind-impulse link and dense binaric code that left them blind to outside events. Hours of debate passed within a few moments, and a new marshal was elected to lead the force, the ordinator amongst their ranks most suited to lead this new battle. Marshal Speculor/4/11/Θ/Tharsis gave her first order and the warriors of the lochos snapped to order, adapting to the change in command in mere seconds and mustering for an all-out assault.

Well versed in the tactics of the Legiones Astartes, for Speculor/4/11/Θ/Tharsis had fought alongside them before, the newly elected Skitarii marshal sent the bulk of the lochos, near 400 warriors, forwards. Switching from defence to assault with a speed other warriors could not match, each corpus forming up and charging ahead in the space of a few short moments, the Skitarii were on the attack almost before the Space Marines could react. Despite their speed, they could not escape the fury of the Emperor's elite, and a hail of heavy bolter fire slammed into the advancing Speculor warriors.

The mass reactive shells tore through the Skitarii armour, but only the most grievous wounds could stop one of the Skitarii in their tracks and many continued to advance with arms blasted apart or with horrific holes punched into their bodies. The wounded stalled their advance, sending bursts of actinic voltlock fire into the Space Marines, though only a few fell, their bright heraldry blackened and burnt by concentrated barrages of energy beams. From above, Vigilator Talar and the Imperial Fists marksmen targeted the ordinators who led the Skitarii charge. The vigilator alone slew near a dozen Skitarii officers, but unlike less disciplined forces, the loss of their leaders seemed not to deter the Skitarii.

Sheer numbers and an utter devotion to their goal carried the Skitarii to the barricades outside the vault doors. There they leapt to the attack, their loping gait providing a sudden burst of speed that surprised the foe. Swarming the enemy, the first Skitarii across the barricades sacrificed themselves to distract the Space Marines while others darted past them to stab at vulnerable joints, inflicting numerous wounds that eventually brought down even a Space Marine. Yet each dead Imperial Fist fell surrounded by corpses of broken Skitarii, and the weight of fire poured into the attackers from both the ridgeline snipers and heavy weapon positions in the vault gatehouse were reaping a fearsome toll on the Skitarii.

Despite the total commitment of the Skitarii to the attack, it was quickly obvious that the speed of their onslaught was not enough to dislodge the Imperial Fists. However, with the Space Marines entirely focused on the fighting below, the remainder of the lochos, led by the marshal herself, had swept around the ridgeline to overwhelm the Space Marine pickets and attack the seekers directly. Caught unprepared, the snipers proved far easier prey, and Marshal Speculor/4/11/Θ/Tharsis herself confronted Vigilator Talar, her phase claw a deadly threat to the Space Marine at close range. Despite her advantage, Talar's skill at arms kept the Skitarii at bay for the first few exchanges while the warriors below looked on. Yet, as the seekers were overwhelmed and cut down, the Vigilator was forced back against the cliff edge, until finally a blow from the marshal's phase claw slashed through a yellow-armoured leg and sent the Space Marine down into the canyon. His broken corpse landed on the steps of the vault, a bloody symbol of the Skitarii's success.

No sooner had the marshal attacked above than the Skitarii within the canyon fell back, their task complete, and almost as quickly as they had begun their assault the Skitarii were gone, leaving the Space Marines no chance to pursue. While they had held their ground and inflicted a toll on the foe, the Space Marines could not call this a victory, for in holding back the Skitarii, their force had been cut in half. Worse, they had lost the high ground and their commander, though much like the Skitarii they faced, the Space Marines would fight on even without an officer to lead them. With few other options, the remaining Space Marines pulled back to the reinforced vault gatehouse and set up a final defence line, hoping that reinforcements would come to their aid and that the Skitarii would not dare risk the casualties it would cost to face them head on in the confined space of the vault.

The Space Marines had made two mistakes. They had misjudged their foe, for the coldly logical Skitarii cared not the cost they must pay for victory, and they had no idea of the importance of that which they had captured. The relic within, an artefact of the ancient wars on Sedna against xenos fiends so terrible all record of them had been expunged, was more than worth the sacrifice of a single lochos of the Skitarii. Marshal Speculor/4/11/θ/Tharsis gave the order and the Skitarii advanced once more. With chilling pragmatism, the marshal set the injured to the vanguard of the attack, allowing them to absorb the first volleys of the Imperial Fists as her forces charged. Many fell to the weapons of the Space Marines, but their fire had slackened as ammunition ran short and within moments the gatehouse was thick with Skitarii. Point-blank voltlock fire and phalanxes of bayonets forced a path into the vault, each dead Imperial Fist riven by dozens of wounds and with broken Skitarii at their feet.

Within the cramped passages of the vault waited the veteran assault marines that had led the Space Marines' initial attack, jump packs discarded so they could fight unencumbered within the vault. They fought to the death, hacking apart dozens of Skitarii as they came at them in the tight passageways of the vault, the last of them making a stand at the final vault door, armour punctured and stained by his life's blood. Marshal Speculor/4/11/θ/Tharsis dispatched the warrior, her phase claw tearing away the Space Marine's head and cutting through the door in a single blow. It revealed the glistening metallic bulk of the relic, a spiked hexagonal device of bulging cables and ice-wracked metal. This was what the Skitarii had sacrificed so much for, a new and terrible weapon to place at the feet of the Fabricator General.

Too late the marshal's augmetics scanned the web of melta bombs crudely wired about it, Talar's last gift to the foe. Speculor/4/11/θ/Tharsis made a brief burst transmission in binaric code, ordering the Skitarii to evacuate the vault, before making a futile attempt to defuse the crude explosive device. For while the Skitarii fought in the name of the Machine Cult, they were not trained artificers, and knew only how to fight and how to die. The marshal's fate was marked by an explosion that brought down much of the canyon, burying her corpse, the fallen Space Marines and the relic under tonnes of broken rock. The surviving Skitarii outside paused long enough to elect a new marshal and recover the corpus-skitarii of the dead before departing, making no memorial nor showing anger at their failure. Within the space of a few short hours, the warriors of Speculor-Gamma-Mu loped back out into the wastes, seeking other lost vaults in the name of the Fabricator General.

THE LOYALTY PARADOX

Twelve hours after Kelbor-Hal unleashed the Death of Innocence on an unsuspecting Mars, a squadron of unmarked shuttle craft approached the orbital fortress of Phobos. Dozens of servitor-controlled turrets and roving Vultarax automata had sensor-locked the ships as soon as they breached Mars' ash-stained atmosphere, tracking them as they approached. The overwhelming firepower of Phobos' automated defences was more than enough to annihilate the approaching ships in moments, but the guns remained silent. Ident codes broadcast by the shuttles identified the incoming force as the Skitarii warriors of Conclave Incursus-Lambda-Psi, and all knew the loyalty of the Skitarii to the Fabricator General was absolute and unwavering.

GENERAL ORDER OMEGA-99

Far below Phobos, on the surface of Mars, open war raged between the isolated Loyalist strongholds and the hosts of the Fabricator General. It was a war initiated in secret, allowing the foe neither warning nor mercy, and sacrificing large portions of the Martian infrastructure to ensure its success. It was a war fought and won purely for Kelbor-Hal's personal gain, to eliminate his enemies – be they real or imagined – and to remove any within the Mechanicum that might oppose or weaken his own power. He cared not for the destruction wrought on Mars, only that his foes would burn. It would later be named the Death of Innocence.

The Skitarii conclaves on Mars were forewarned of this cataclysm, by means of general order Omega-99. Transmitted in encoded binaric to all ordinator-prime six hours before the attack was begun, for all knew that as long as Kelbor-Hal remained Fabricator General and upheld the tenets of that esteemed role, the Skitarii would never question or disobey. The first law of the Skitarii conclaves remained: The Skitarii serve the Fabricator General, the Fabricator General serves the Mechanicum.

Allowed to land, the Skitarii warriors disembarked, nearly 3,000 strong. They assembled not in parade formation as visitors to the ancient vaults of Phobos, but instead in battle array with voltlock arquebus at the ready and the burnt ash of Mars' ruin heavy on their robes. Tech-thrall defence units dispatched as escorts were met by a point-blank volley of energy blasts, the front ranks scythed down before they could even raise a weapon or signal the treachery of their visitors. Even as the smoking corpses of the first detachments of tech-thralls fell, the second line of Skitarii stepped forwards and fired another volley that left no tech-thrall standing.

The Skitarii of Incursus-Lambda-Psi did not pause to celebrate their victory, and made no show of triumph as other warriors might. Instead their formation split wordlessly, with detachments sprinting away in the long loping run of the augmented Skitarii to place fire upon approaching automata and tech-thrall defenders, while others moved to secure the nearest of Phobos' grand gatehouses. A dozen firefights broke out across the landing fields and among the nearest of Phobos' fortifications, the automata and simple servitor defenders a disorganised mob compared to the disciplined tactics of the Skitarii. Time and time again the defenders were drawn into cross-fires and lured into ambush – outmanoeuvred, outgunned and outfought at every turn. Within a few short minutes the Skitarii had disabled or destroyed all of the enemy, and by means of melta-charges and haywire bombs disabled the local defence turrets.

With the garrison destroyed, the warriors of Incursus controlled Auxiliary Gate 14 and access to the tertiary sub-vaults of Phobos. However, the Phobos augury-net could not have failed to detect the battle they had fought, and within a short span the full might of the moon's defenders would fall upon Incursus and overwhelm the small force of invaders. Lascutters and melta bombs made short work of the gateway, and the main force of Incursus warriors plunged into the heart of Phobos. They moved directly towards the central vaults, where the most dangerous weapons and relics were secured, following encoded map data that was the legacy of all the Skitarii conclaves. Phobos, as the repository of the technology the Skitarii recovered, was familiar ground to all the conclaves, a sacred place of pilgrimage that they would normally never dare to profane.

As they moved through the labyrinthine passageways and reliquary halls of Phobos' interior, the Skitarii made no pretence of stealth. At every junction chamber they destroyed augury arrays, and at each custodial archive they slaughtered the Tech-Priest curators and the garrisons of tech-thralls set to watch over them. Eventually they reached the vast open space of Reliquary Vault 19-C, a kilometre below the surface, where cryogenic vapours seeped from hardened storage bunkers and drifted between towering sensor monoliths. As the warriors of Incursus-Lambda-Psi advanced through the frozen shroud, they found themselves surrounded by another force of Skitarii.

An ordinator stepped forwards amid the icy mist, their corpus-skitarii displaying the distinctive heraldry of Conclave Vigilus-Alpha-Omega. Interrogative code bursts were exchanged by the two Skitarii warbands, for these warriors had never before taken up arms against their own. The leader of the Vigilus garrison had but one question, expressed in the complex and subtle code of Mechanicum binaric and transliterated here in a crude approximation of that speech: [Query: You defy the authority of the Fabricator General?]

An almost identical figure stepped forth from the Incursus-Lambda-Psi ranks, so similar in wargear and heraldry that few outside of the Skitarii's own ranks could easily tell the two apart. What passed between them was an impassioned plea rendered in stark machine code, a refutation of the brutal destruction wrought on Mars for one man's greed and a call to arms in the name of the true Fabricator General, Zagreus Kane. [Negative response: Logic dictates that subject Kelbor-Hal has forfeited the role of Fabricator General. The subject no longer serves the Mechanicum. Logic stipulates that Subject Zagreus Kane is the Fabricator General. The Fabricator General must be protected and his authority enhanced.]

Yet, despite the logic of this insurrection, the warriors of Vigilus-Alpha-Omega were bound to an ancient dictat, to protect the great vaults of Phobos against any intrusion. While the Incursus warriors argued skilfully for their cause, they bore no order from any Fabricator General past or present that ended that duty. It was an impasse of logic with only one solution, one that both ordinators realised within 8.2 seconds of debate. With no hesitation, both sides raised their weapons and opened fire, the Vigilus ordinator falling in the first salvo – the first Skitarii to ever fall at the hands of his own brethren.

Reliquary Vault 19-C was lit up by intersecting webs of energy beams as the two Skitarii forces fought amid the icy vapours and storage blocks. Vigilus held the advantages of superior numbers and prepared positions, and pressed that advantage without mercy, forming ranks to pour voltlock fire into the Incursus force. The Incursus warriors charged headlong into the maelstrom of energy beams, continuing the advance even as searing bolts arced through their ranks, seeking to engage their foe at point-blank range. Both sides fought with equal skill, but where the warriors of Vigilus-Alpha-Omega fought with measured determination, seeking to both defeat the foe and preserve their own ranks, Incursus-Lambda-Psi fought with the single intention of killing the foe. They left nothing in reserve and made no attempt to stop the more numerous pilgryms of Vigilus from encircling them, trusting everything to one ferocious assault.

A sprawling melee of near identical warriors raged, voltlock lightning arcing through the ranks even as Skitarii hacked at each other with bayonets, blades and even metal fists. Despite their fury, the warriors of Incursus were eventually reduced to a small knot of fighters surrounded by a sea of foes. The commanders of the Vigilus force made no attempt to offer terms, for they knew full well the determination of their foe. The last pilgryms of Incursus in Reliquary Vault 19-C made their stand in the atrium of one of the storage bunkers, where they knew the other Skitarii would not risk weapons fire, lest it damage the relic within. The final battle was fought with hooked bayonet and power blade, a savage struggle conducted in near silence and with brutal efficiency.

Each warrior of Incursus fought to the last breath, despite the obvious end their struggles must lead to, for there was no tactic or trick of war that would see them to victory. Yet, when Reliquary Vault 19-C was empty of Incursus pilgryms, the wounded summarily executed by the victors, Phobos' augury net continued to register intruders. For while the bulk of the Incursus force had struck at the obvious target of the main reliquary vaults, a second smaller force had infiltrated an ancient tertiary vault, one rarely visited and containing only a single relic with no value as a weapon: the sarcophagus of the first Fabricator General.

A technological marvel that preserved the last fragments of the first Fabricator General's wisdom, the sarcophagus was valuable not for its destructive capacity, but as a symbol of the authority of the Fabricator General. The elite troops of Incursus-Lambda-Psi, free to move while their brethren gave their lives to distract Vigilus-Alpha-Omega, slaughtered the small ceremonial guard set on the tertiary vaults and seized the sarcophagus. Retreating to their ships, the Battle-Pilgryms of Incursus carried off the sarcophagus, treating it with the reverence such a relic was due, and knowing that while they bore it the warriors of Vigilus would be reluctant to attack, lest they damage it. Blasting free of Phobos, the survivors of the raid set course for Terra, for Zagreus Kane and the court of the Emperor.

THE CORONID LEGACY

As the armies of Horus began their full-scale assault on the defences of the Segmentum Solar, a full company of the Sons of Horus landed on the isolated world of Cambrae in the Coronid Deeps. The Sons of Horus cruiser *Eschaton* took a position in high orbit and immediately obliterated the ancient city of Mithras, home to a culture that had survived Old Night and been spared Compliance at the orders of the Emperor himself. Dropships in the sea-green heraldry of Horus' own Legion descended and the Sons of Horus spent near a month excavating the ruins.

There in the broken wreckage of Mithras, among the remains of the hundreds of thousands killed to secure it, the Sons of Horus brought up into the light something truly terrible. The Emperor had not spared Mithras lightly, but rather to ensure the relic buried beneath the city remained lost for all time. The device extracted by the Sons of Horus was known as the Rhadamanthus, or The Judgement of the Dead. It was a black metal sphere three metres across, studded with coolant hoses and wreathed in a haze of steam, based on a technology unknown even to the Mechanicum. Though its exact purpose was unknown it was powerful enough to have given the Emperor pause, and with the Horus Heresy locked in a grinding stalemate Horus set forth his warriors to claim any and all advantages they could in order to turn the tide of the war.

However, before the Sons of Horus could fully excavate their prize, a new ship translated into the system. A battered cruiser of ancient design, its hull bearing the markings of the Forge World of Mezoa, opened fire on the Sons of Horus craft, forcing it to abandon its vulnerable position in orbit. As the two capital ships engaged in battle, squadrons of gunships streaked groundward towards the ruins of Mithras. Forewarned by the *Eschaton*, the Sons of Horus prepared their defences well, deploying batteries of Tarantula air defence platforms along the edge of the ruins of blasted Mithras. The main body of their forces, the heavy infantry that had once conquered the galaxy, remained in close guard of the Rhadamanthus in the fortified ruins of the old governor's palace.

Unwilling to test the Tarantula's bite, the gunships set down outside of Mithras' ruins, disembarking an unexpected interloper. Space Marines in a heraldry of roaring flames, led by an ancient Dreadnought, formed up in loose ranks, and though their numbers did not match those of the Sons of Horus, they bore a panoply of rare and exotic weaponry. These Blackshields were renegades, outcasts from their own Legion known as the Disciples of the Flames.

The Disciples of the Flames first mounted a spoiling attack on the Traitor position. Engaging and destroying the Tarantulas in a brief and one-sided assault, the Blackshields then dug in along the edge of the city, drawing the main force of the Sons of Horus forwards to meet them. A fierce firefight erupted, with both sides trading shots across the ruins of the city, its ferrocrete buildings melted and warped so badly that they hampered any attempt to make a decisive assault.

THE WISDOM OF THE BONES

Later records would provide no explanation as to how the warriors present on Mezoa could have learned of the Sons of Horus' activities on Cambrae. Few Loyalist forces were active within the region, which was still firmly under Traitor control, and the closest Loyalist enclave of Baal remained under close siege. Yet, isolated Mezoa still managed to intercept Horus' warriors before they could escape, assembling and dispatching a force across contested space at exactly the right moment to catch the Traitors off-guard. Given the involvement of the Disciples of the Flames, some less reputable scholars have posited the use of that force's commander's affinity with certain divinitory rituals, a psychic discipline that, while esoteric, has been documented to be effective. However, the region around Isstvan and other centres of Traitor influence had been proven to interfere with and distort all rituals once practised by the now defunct Librarius, leaving only practices that had long been proscribed effective. How the Disciples of the Flames might have made use of proscribed rites to discern Horus' plans is unknown, but it remains the only explanation for their appearance at Cambrae at exactly the right time.

The second contingent to emerge from the dropships was a Skitarii conclave in full battle panoply, their banners reading Expurgis-Zeta-Phi in the binaric script of the Mechanicum. This force made no attempt to reinforce the Space Marines, but instead moved to flank the battle, traversing along the eastern edge of the city. The unique augmentations of the Expurgis warriors, the corpus-skitarii, allowed them to traverse the twisted ruins with ease, though their heavy armour could not match their agility and fell behind. Moving into the heart of the ruins, the Skitarii formed a wide skirmish line, taking full advantage of the broken terrain to conceal their numbers. Waiting for them were the elite of the Sons of Horus force, set as guards for the Rhadamanthus.

Assuming the approaching foes were more Space Marines, the Sons of Horus praetor, a veteran of the Great Crusade inculcated with the sense of honour that had once been common amongst the Legions of old, brought forth his honour guard to meet them. Choosing what had once been one of Mithras' many ornamental plazas, an open space suitable for true battle in the preferred style of the Legions, the praetor planted his flag in the path of the enemy. Unhindered by the terrain, any sense of honour, or by any desire for glory in combat, the Skitarii swept by the plaza and ignored what they saw as an irrelevant distraction and instead attacked the line infantry that stood watch over the relic.

Even the least of the Sons of Horus were indomitable warriors, their armour proof against a few energy blasts and their strength enough to tear an individual Skitarii limb from limb. However, they faced many times their number of the foe and the Skitarii spread out to draw the Space Marines from cover and into the open. Carefully placed fusillades of voltlock fire scorched and blackened sea-green armour, crippling Space Marines so they could be finished off with hooked bayonets. The few Sons of Horus that reached the Skitarii lines wrought havoc on the warriors of Expurgis-Zeta-Phi, the isolated Skitarii turning at bay to hold the Space Marines in place while their fellows retreated to fire a new volley.

In short order the Sons of Horus fell before the sheer numbers of the Skitarii, but they reaped a heavy toll of the enemy. For each Space Marine had dragged two or three of the Battle-Pilgryms down with them when they fell, and though the Skitarii felt no remorse at the loss of their brethren it left them depleted and vulnerable to counter-attack.

The Sons of Horus reacted to this sudden shift in the tide of battle, by disengaging from the Disciples of the Flames. A small force of skirmishers remained, keeping the Loyalists pinned in place, while the main body moved to intercept the Skitarii. The Sons of Horus praetor, humiliated by the warriors of Expurgis, ignited his jump pack and took to the sky, leading his veteran bodyguard in a rash charge into the teeth of the waiting Skitarii.

Searing voltlock beams criss-crossed the sky, many striking home on the Sons of Horus as they hurtled through the air, sending several crashing down in bloody ruin. More of the Space Marines were injured as they landed amongst the broken wreckage of Mithras, one impaled on several broken spars before he could even strike at the foe. To the Skitarii, for whom pride was unknown, this course of action seemed insane for they held the advantage of both numbers and terrain, and they recoiled from the unexpected onslaught.

The praetor cut a swathe through the Skitarii alongside those of his guard that had survived, for the superlative skills of the Space Marines were more than a match for the awkward bayonets of the Battle-Pilgryms. Sensing victory was within his grasp, the praetor led his warriors deeper into the Skitarii formation, roaring the battlecries of Cthonia. However, before the main body of the Sons of Horus could reach his position they fell under intense bombardment from the Karacnos assault tanks the Skitarii had left at the edge of the ruins. Rad-bombs and cluster munitions wreaked havoc among the Sons of Horus, forcing them back onto the guns of the Disciples of the Flames, who showed them no mercy.

The Sons of Horus praetor, his warriors scattered and pride broken on the guns of a ragged band of renegades, reached the relic he had hoped to present to the Warmaster. However, his guard was gone, his ammunition spent and his armour rent asunder. Dozens of Skitarii had fallen beneath his blade, but many more remained, all undaunted by the carnage he had wrought. The ring of Skitarii closed in, bayonets raised and they made a bloody end of Horus' proud servant.

The Disciples of the Flames would spend the next few days hunting the last survivors of the Sons of Horus force through the ruins of Mithras, making grim sport of the hunt. Such inefficient activity confused the surviving Skitarii of Expurgis-Zeta-Phi, who busied themselves with the recovery of the Rhadamanthus. When their ship returned to the broken ruins of Mithras, the Skitarii departed without fanfare of celebration, the completion of their duty the only reward they craved.

THE BLOODY TRIALS OF THE SKITARII

THE DEATH OF INNOCENCE

Kelbor-Hal unleashes destruction upon Mars, with the goal of eliminating any magi that are not loyal to him and to Horus. In the wake of the initial bombardment, the Fabricator General looses the Skitarii to hound those that he deems his enemies, the first time in the history of the Mechanicum in which a Fabricator General has set the full might of the Skitarii loose upon the order he is sworn to protect. Most conclaves follow these orders without question, slaved to the scrap-code that now blankets Mars, and reap a bloody toll of those marked for death. Others refute the orders, either switching their allegiance to Zagreus Kane and declaring him the rightful Fabricator General or descending into a fratricidal madness as they try to rationalise the illogical orders they have been given.

Of those Skitarii conclaves that refuse or ignore Kelbor-Hal's orders, almost all are hunted down and destroyed. A mere handful survive and either escape off-world in commandeered ships or take refuge in the Martian wastes to continue a guerilla resistance. A few conclaves arrive on Terra, following on the heels of the Imperial Fists force that extracts Zagreus Kane. These conclaves swear loyalty to Kane and are afterwards dispatched to aid the Loyalist cause in distant warzones.

006.M31

THE BROKEN KEY

In the months after news of the Dropsite Massacre and Ferrus Manus' death reached Medusa, the warriors of that world were wracked by internal dissension. The Gorgon had built his rule on strength, and yet now he himself was dead and the world where he had grown fell into a brief madness of grief and rage. During this tumult, a small force of Word Bearers made use of the warp powers they now controlled to insinuate a small cruiser into the system, landing several conclaves of Skitarii to raid the great treasure house of Ferrus Manus – the Keys of Hel. The battle that followed would prove only a pyrrhic victory for the Traitors. For though the Skitarii were able to gain access to Ferrus Manus' vaults and secure a small number of dangerous relics, the attack served to galvanise the Iron Hands and would lead to the outbreak of the War of Bitter Iron.

007.M31

THE HARROWING OF LASTRATI

The nine hollow worlds of Lastrati, a distant outpost of the Lucian Mechanicum, fall under attack by the World Eaters and the aberrant techno-constructs of Sarum. Among the defenders of the Lastrati system are four different conclaves of Skitarii, all pledged to the service of Zagreus Kane as the true Fabricator General. These indomitable warriors, with no means to escape the onslaught of the Traitors, gave their all in defence of the Loyalist enclave. Conclave Vigilus-Gamma-Phi stood in support of the Legio Astorum within the hollow surface of Lastrati II, warding the duelling titans from the corrupted automata of Sarum, while on Lastrati IV's outer skin Conclave Incursus-Lambda-Psi held back a tide of technological horrors spawned from Sarum's descent into madness.

008.M31

Yet, all of their bravery would prove for naught. The *Conqueror*, flagship of the World Eaters' fleet, wrenched open the vast portal sealing off the inside of Lastrati I with its ursus claws, permitting a massive XIIth Legion ground assault. Conflict among the system turns to utter carnage as Angron's daemonic form joins the fray, his presence sending the World Eaters into a violent mania which only ends after a week of slaughter, whereupon every Loyalist within the system lies dead.

THE RANGDAN DISAPPEARANCE

The Loyalist Skitarii Conclave Vindicor-Kappa-Delta is recorded as lost in action as of this date by the Fabricator General in exile, Zagreus Kane. The conclave had previously been operating from the world of Endyris, part of the forces dedicated to keeping the Traitor Forge of Xana II isolated from the wider Traitor host. However, combat logs recovered from the warzone in later years indicate the full mustered might of the conclave had travelled to the forbidden world of Rangda for unknown reasons. No trace of the conclave was ever discovered at Rangda in later expeditions, and their intent and fate remain unknown to this day.

009.M31

THE VAULTS OF CYRAXUS

Cut off from Sol and the main body of the Mechanicum, the Loyalist Skitarii conclaves in the Ultima Segmentum began stockpiling recovered techno-relics on the remote forge enclave of Cyraxus. This isolated world within the Dominion of Storms was little more than a research station at that time, but its seclusion would prove an asset in keeping this stockpile safe from those that might misuse its power. By the last years of the Horus Heresy it is estimated that Cyraxus played host to one of the largest armouries in the segmentum, but after the destruction of several Skitarii conclaves in the battle for Honourum its exact location was lost.

010.M31

THE END OF THE MECHANICUM

Zagreus Kane is officially appointed head of the new Adeptus Mechanicus, separate from the old Mechanicum that had turned against the Emperor, and granted title as a High Lord of Terra. At the same time, the captured followers of Kelbor-Hal were executed in their thousands, deemed a threat to the new Imperial organisation. It was feared that some among the Skitarii that had served the Loyalist cause would resist this change, for the encoded engrams of their corpus-skitarii were not designed for such deviations from tradition. These traditionalist conclaves were quietly disposed of – either sent on suicidal pilgrimages or their transport craft detonated in flight. All trace of these actions would later be removed from the official record, now listed only in the deepest archives of the Imperial Palace.

012.M31

THE FALL OF PHOBOS

As Horus led his final assault on the Imperial Palace, when all logic dictated that the Imperium would fall into the Warmaster's hands, a coalition of Loyalist Skitarii Conclaves made a near suicidal assault on the fortress moon of Phobos. Raided before at the outbreak of the Horus Heresy, the defences of Phobos had been improved considerably and the defenders did not wait before opening fire on the Skitarii attackers. Upon landing they would find the moon defended by warriors forged of some debased experiment that subjected the Skitarii that had served Kelbor-Hal to the worst excesses of the Dark Mechanicum's corruption. The warped and twisted creatures that staggered forth to defend the moon were a horrific vision of the future that awaited the Mechanicum should Horus triumph, mewling, half-formed flesh wedded to the corrupted shells of the corpus-skitarii.

014.M31

Faced with such horrors, the Skitarii fought with a rare fervour to cleanse the moon of that taint. With the vast bulk of the Traitor host and all Horus' will bent on Terra, the Skitarii would manage to seize control of Phobos, a feat they had expected to be a temporary victory, but made permanent in the wake of the final events of the Siege of Terra. Yet when they fully explored the ruins of Phobos, they would find many of its stores of relics long since removed and spirited away to distant Traitor strongholds.

THE VAULTS OF THARSIS

The Skitarii Battle-Pilgryms of Conclave Speculor-Gamma-Mu will stop at nothing to prevent the relics of the Tharsis Vaults from falling into the hands of Vigilator Talar and his Imperial Fists battle force.

In order to claim victory in The Vaults of Tharsis, both Players must attempt to Control the Relic and carry it towards their Battlefield Edge.

PLAYING THIS LEGENDARY MISSION

A Demi-Company of Imperial Fists are forced off of their targeted drop site at Mondus Gamma and instead land in a remote region of the Labyrinthus Noctis. Despite this, they set about engaging the Skitarii Battle-Pilgrym Conclave, Speculor-Gamma-Mu.

The Vaults of Tharsis Mission represents the clash of the Loyalist Imperial Fists against the Traitor Fabricator General's Skitarii Battle-Pilgryms on Mars as both factions strive to recover a mysterious relic artefact.

This Mission can, however, equally be used to represent other battles to claim an objective of strategic importance and Players may wish to vary the forces used according to their own wishes.

When playing this Legendary Mission, Players must use the Core Mission Sequence from the *Warhammer: The Horus Heresy – Age of Darkness Rulebook* with the following changes:

- During Step 1, this Mission is selected instead of the Core Missions listed.
- During Step 2, both Players should select Armies using a Points Limit of 3,000 Points.
- During Step 3, the selected Terrain should represent the high canyon walls of the defile that run along the long edges of the Battlefield and the relatively sparse terrain of its floor. If Players have chosen to use the Concealed Sentinels Mission Special Rule, a single Castellax is placed on the Battlefield, in the locations marked on the Deployment Map opposite. These Models should be equipped with only the Wargear shown on the Model's Army List Profile and none of the Options available, unless Players agree otherwise.
- Do not select a Deployment Map during Step 5. Instead Players must use the Deployment Map opposite.
- During Step 7, when Deploying their Army, each Player should Deploy one Unit from their Army that has not already been placed in Reserves, then, before Deploying each other Unit, they must declare their selected unit and roll a Dice. On a Result of a 1, the selected Unit is also placed into Reserves instead. If the selected Unit cannot legitimately be placed in Reserves, for example, it has a Movement Characteristic of 0, then those Units are placed to one side and cannot be used in the Mission, but do not count as having been Removed as Casualties.

VICTORY CONDITIONS: EXTRACT THE RELIC

The following Mission Objectives are used in this Mission:

Primary Objectives
- Both Players: Secure the Relic

Secondary Objectives
- Slay the Warlord (4)
- Giant Killer (2)
- Last Man Standing (4)
- First Strike (3)

This Legendary Mission ___ ___ Objective Marker placed in the centre of the Battle___ __ the lowest level of the Battlefield, representing t__ ___ that both Players must attempt to extract. Neither ___ __ can score Victory Points if they Control this Objecti___ __ any Victory Sub-Phase.

At the end of Battle Turn ___ ___ Player whose Battlefield Edge the Obje___ ___ker is closest to is the victor.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

This Mission uses the Reserves, Seize the Initiative and Carry the Relic Special Rules. Additionally, Players may choose to use the Concealed Sentinels Mission Special Rule.

CARRY THE RELIC

Any model with the Sergeant or Command Sub-Type that is not Routed, Stunned, Suppressed or Pinned can pick up and Carry the Relic if they end a Move in base contact with the Objective Marker. Once the Controlling Player declares that a Model will Carry the Relic, the Objective Marker is removed from the Battlefield. A Model that is Carrying the Relic gains the Heavy Sub-type if it did not already have it, and may not Move or Rush more than 6" in any single Movement Phase and may not Embark on any other Model.

If a Model that is Carrying the Relic gains the Routed Status, is reduced to 0 Wounds or Hull Points, or is otherwise removed from the Battlefield for any reason, it must drop the Relic. To Drop the Relic, immediately before a Fall Back move is made, or the Carrying Model is removed from the Battlefield, the Controlling Player must place the Objective Marker on the Battlefield anywhere in base contact with the Carrying Model. The Controlling Player of a Model that is Carrying the Relic cannot voluntarily Drop the Relic.

The Objective Marker is automatically replaced on the Battlefield at the end of Battle Turn Five to determine the victor.

CONCEALED SENTINELS

If Players have chosen to use this Mission Special rule, the four Castellax (see page 35 of *Liber Mechanicum*) placed on the Battlefield are Dormant. Dormant Models are under the Control of neither Player and are treated as a Terrain Piece.

During the End Phase of any Battle Turn, the Reactive Player may choose to spend a point of their Reaction Allotment to become the Controlling Player of one of the Dormant Models.

DEPLOYMENT MAP
THARSIS VAULT ENTRANCE
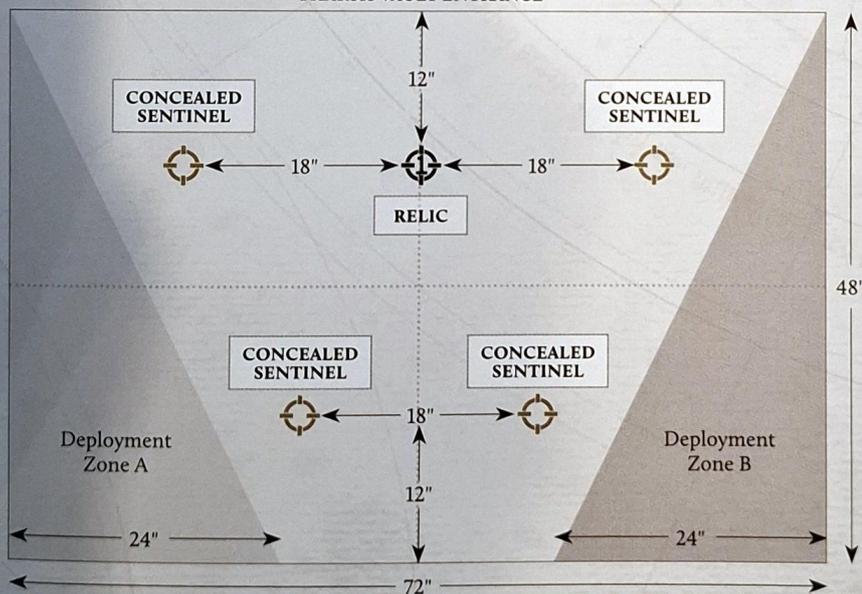
Loyalist Skitarii Battle-Pilgryms and Ordinator
with Voltlock Handgun and Power Sword

Mechanicum Taghmata
Myrmidon Destructor Host

MODEL SHOWCASE

Skitarii Battle-Pilgrym Marshal
with Phase Claw

Skitarii Battle-Pilgrym Marshal
with Auctorit Sceptre

Skitarii Battle-Pilgrym Marshal
with Corposant Stave

Traitor Skitarii Battle-Pilgrym Corpus

RELIC HUNT MISSIONS PACK

The Relic Hunt Missions focus on capturing and controlling variable objectives and provide a dynamic and ever-changing battle experience.

These Missions are intended to be used as Players become more familiar with the fundamental rules. These Missions are balanced for both competitive and casual play alike, and allow Players to make full use of the tactical options presented in the Warhammer: The Horus Heresy Rules.

How To Use Relic Hunt Missions

The following Rules will allow Players to make use of the Relic Hunt Missions when playing Battles, from selecting Armies through to resolving the end result of the Mission.

Battles Using The Relic Hunt Missions

Regardless of whether using the Relic Hunt Missions for standalone Battles or as part of a campaign, all Players must follow these Steps in order to resolve a Relic Hunt Mission. Each of these Steps should be completed in the sequence they are presented in, with each Step being fully completed before moving on to the next.

Relic Hunt Mission Sequence
1. Select Relic Hunt Mission.
2. Select Armies.
3. Prepare the Battlefield.
4. Deploy Objectives.
5. Select Deployment Map.
6. Declare Mission Reserves.
7. Deploy Armies.
8. Play Relic Hunt Mission.
9. Decide Victor.

1. Select Relic Hunt Mission

The first Step in resolving a Relic Hunt Mission is to select a Mission for the Battle. The Players may either select one of the Relic Hunt Missions that both Players agree on or roll a single Dice on the table below to decide which Relic Hunt Mission will be played.

Relic Hunt Missions Table

Dice	Result
1-2	Rewards of Battle
3-4	Salvage Site
5-6	Seize the Spoils

2. Select Armies

The second Step in resolving a Relic Hunt Mission is for all Players to create an Army Roster, a list of all Models, Units and options to be included in their Army. All Armies for use in a Relic Hunt Mission must use a Points Limit of 3,000 Points as per the Select Armies Step of the Core Mission Sequence.

3. Prepare the Battlefield

At the start of Step 3, the Players must set up an area to be used as the Battlefield. This should be a flat area 4'x 6' in size. Players may also require additional space to place accessories, Dice, Reserves and any Models removed from play. Once an area for the Battlefield has been set aside, the Players must place Terrain on the Battlefield in accordance with the Rules for the Prepare the Battlefield Step of the Core Mission Sequence.

4. Deploy Objectives

In the fourth Step, the Players must set up all Objectives required for the Mission that was selected in Step 1. Each Mission will give specific Rules for how Objectives must be set up.

5. Select Deployment Map (Optional Step)

Each Relic Hunt Mission uses a default Deployment Map, however, if Players wish to add further variety to their Battles, the Deployment Zones from an alternative Deployment Map may be selected. If so, the Players may either select one of the Relic Hunt Deployment Maps that both Players agree on, or roll a Dice on the table below to decide which Relic Hunt Deployment Map will be used.

Relic Hunt Deployment Maps

Dice	Result
1-2	Clash of the Line (see page 35)
3-4	Breakthrough (see page 36)
4-6	Dawn of War (see page 37)

Once the Deployment Map Type has been determined, the Players must allocate one specific Deployment Zone to each Player. All of the Relic Hunt Deployment Maps list a Deployment Zone A and a Deployment Zone B – both Players must roll a single Dice, with the Player that rolls the highest using Deployment Zone A and the Player that rolls lowest using Deployment Zone B. If the result of the roll is a tie, then the Players must roll again until one Player rolls higher than the other.

6. Declare Mission Reserves

In this Step both Players should roll off. The Player that loses the roll-off must then declare if they intend to place any of their Units into Reserves. Once these Units have been noted on that Player's Army Roster, the Player that won the roll-off must declare if they intend to place any Units into Reserves. Note that all Players must deploy at least one Unit onto the Battlefield at the start of play, unless another Special Rule states otherwise.

During Step 7, further Units may only be added to Reserves if there is no position where the Controlling Player can legitimately deploy them according to the deployment Rules of the Core Mission being played. Where this is the case, those Units that cannot be deployed are placed immediately into Reserves.

7. Deploy Armies

In this Step both Players should roll off. The Player that loses the roll-off must then deploy all Units in their Army that were not placed in Reserves in Step 6 to the Deployment Zone allocated to them in Step 5. If there is no position where the Controlling Player can legitimately deploy one or more of their Units within the required Deployment Zone, those Units must be placed into Reserves instead – if the Reserves Mission Special Rule is not in use, then those Units are placed to one side and cannot be used in the Mission, but do not count as having been Removed as Casualties.

DEPLOYMENT

The Relic Hunt Mission Rules will often refer to 'deploying' Models, Units and Armies. When told to deploy a Model, Unit or Army, Players must use the Rules for Deployment as per the Core Mission Pack, found on page 306 of the *Warhammer: The Horus Heresy – Age of Darkness Rulebook*.

8. Play Relic Hunt Mission

The Player that deployed first in Step 7 takes the first Player Turn. All Relic Hunt Missions are played for five Battle Turns. At the end of the fifth Battle Turn, this Step ends and the Battle ends.

SUDDEN DEATH

If, at the end of any Battle Turn, any Player has no Models on the Battlefield, the Battle immediately ends regardless of the number of Turns that have been played. Models that are in Reserves do not count as being 'on the Battlefield', however Models in a Unit that includes any Models with the Routed Tactical Status, or Embarked in a Model with the Transport Sub-Type or in a Building or Fortification, do. If a Battle is ended due to the Sudden Death Rule then the victor is still decided by Victory Points scored up to that point in the Battle, but the Player that still has Models on the Battlefield scores an additional 3 Victory Points.

9. Decide Victor

Once all five Battle Turns have been completed, the victor is decided by the number of Victory Points each Player has scored. Victory Points are scored either by the Primary Objective or by Secondary Objectives, these offer different tactical challenges to Players and in general Primary Objectives will offer the most reward.

RELIC HUNT MISSION

The Relic Hunt Missions make use of a number of Mission Objectives. Mission Objectives are the goals that Players must achieve in order to claim victory in a Battle. The Relic Hunt Missions feature both Relic Objectives and Secondary Mission Objectives – these function largely the same, in that they provide a goal that must be achieved in order to score Victory Points, but Relic Objectives may offer a greater reward than Secondary Mission Objectives. The Mission Objectives used in the Relic Hunt Missions are detailed here.

RELIC OBJECTIVES

Each Relic Hunt Mission will require Players to control 'Relic Objectives' in order to score Victory Points. Relic Objectives, marked by Objective Markers, are intended to represent an item of value on the Battlefield that must be retrieved – this could be a valuable piece of archaeotech, salvageable wreckage or technology, or an encrypted databank containing intel that may swing the balance of the wider war.

In all cases a Relic Objective Marker will be represented by either an Objective Marker token (as included in Warhammer: The Horus Heresy – Age of Darkness: Saturnine boxed set), or a 32mm Base.

Relic Objective Markers are treated in the same manner as Objective Markers, as detailed in the Core Mission Pack and are Controlled and Contested in the same manner.

Relic Objective Values

Unlike the Objectives in Core Missions, the Objective Markers in Relic Hunt Missions do not have a defined value at the start of the Battle (unless otherwise stated) and instead their value is defined when that Relic Objective Marker is Analysed (see the Unknown Value Mission Special Rule).

Once defined, the value of a Relic Objective Marker is the number of Victory Points scored when a Unit Controls that Relic Objective Marker in the Victory Sub-Phase. Both the Line (X) and Vanguard (X) Special Rules can have a major effect on the number of Victory Points scored from Relic Objectives.

RELIC HUNT MISSION SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

Secondary Objectives are a series of optional conditions which, if met, award the Player additional Victory Points. In any Relic Hunt Mission, the Secondary Objectives used will be noted. Additional Secondary Objectives used in these missions are listed below:

- No Stone Unturned (X): The Player who Analysed the most Relic Objectives in total scores Victory Points at the end of the Battle. The number of Victory Points scored is equal to the value of X attached to this Secondary Objective
- Bloody Ground (X): The Player who has Destroyed the most enemy Units at the end of the Battle scores Victory Points. The number of Victory Points scored is equal to the value of X attached to this Secondary Objective. Units that have the Routed Status at the end of the Battle count as Destroyed for the purposes of this Secondary Objective.

The Player with the most Victory Points is the victor. If both Players have scored the same number of Victory Points then the game is a draw.

RELIC HUNT MISSION SPECIAL RULES

The Relic Hunt Missions make use of a number of Mission Special Rules. These are Special Rules that only apply during a Mission that lists them and they supersede certain aspects of the Core Rules or add new options to play. In addition to the Mission Special Rules used in the Core Missions (see 310 of the *Warhammer: The Horus Heresy – Age of Darkness Rulebook*), additional Relic Hunt Mission Special Rules are detailed here.

Unknown Value

Augurs may reveal the telltale signs of a reliquary or scans detect the stasis fields of a secure vault, but the true worth of a relic may only become apparent once it is in hand.

In Relic Hunt Missions that use this Special Rule, Relic Objective Markers have no value and cannot be Controlled until they have been successfully Analysed.

At the end of their Movement Phase, the Active Player can attempt to Analyse one or more Objectives. To Analyse an Objective, that player selects one Unit they control that is within 3" of the centre of that Objective Marker and not Locked in Combat and must make an Intelligence Check for that Unit. If the Check is failed, nothing happens. If the Check is passed, that Objective is considered to have been successfully Analysed and has a value of equal to the amount the Check was passed by, with a minimum value of 1 to a maximum value of 3.

Immediately after each time either Player scores Victory Points from an Objective, the value of that Objective Marker is set to 0 and it cannot be Controlled until it has been successfully Analysed to establish its new value.

Unstable Artefacts

Lost technology, itself millennia old, may become inherently volatile as charge-packs leak and containment fields rupture, but also, through the malicious efforts of their keepers, false prizes may be sabotaged to injure or kill those who would lift them from their places of rest.

If the result of the Intelligence Check made to Analyse a Relic Marker is failed with a result that is 'doubles', the Unit for which the Intelligence Check was made suffers D3+3 automatic Hits, with a Strength of 8, an AP of 2 and Damage of 1.

Surveillance Augurs

Through data-interpolation and reference triangulation, an accurate picture of the surrounding region can be built, allowing astute commanders to better understand the lay of the land and the treasures it may hide.

When this Mission Special Rule is in use, before beginning the First Turn of the Battle, the Player that is not taking the first Player Turn may select one Relic Marker and reposition it by up to 6", without placing the Relic Marker in Impassable Terrain or under the base of a Model.

REWARDS OF BATTLE

Ever is the field of battle a rich wellspring of technological relics, but only through victory and domination of the ground can its spoils be claimed.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The following Mission Objectives are used in this Mission:

Primary Mission Objectives

- Capture Relic Markers

Secondary Mission Objectives

- No Stone Unturned (2)
- Bloody Ground (2)

In the Victory Sub-Phase of each Player's Turn, as the Active Player they may score Victory Points if they Control any Relic Markers (Players may also score Victory Points from the Relic Hunt Mission Secondary Objectives).

At the end of Battle Turn Five, the Player with the highest total of Victory Points is the winner.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

This Mission uses the Unknown Value, Unstable Artefacts and Surveillance Augurs Relic Hunt Mission Special Rules, and the Reserves Core Mission Special Rule (see the *Warhammer: The Horus Heresy – Age of Darkness Rulebook*).

OBJECTIVE MARKERS

This Mission uses five Relic Markers set up as shown on the Deployment Map below. These Objective Markers have no value and cannot be Controlled until they have been Analysed by either Player.

Note that if a Marker cannot be placed in the specified location due to Impassable Terrain, it must be placed as close as possible to the specified location, without being placed any closer to the nearest Battlefield Edge.

DEPLOYMENT MAP – CLASH OF THE LINE

Deployment Zone B

Deployment Zone A

12"   12"   12"   12"   24"   48"   24"   72"
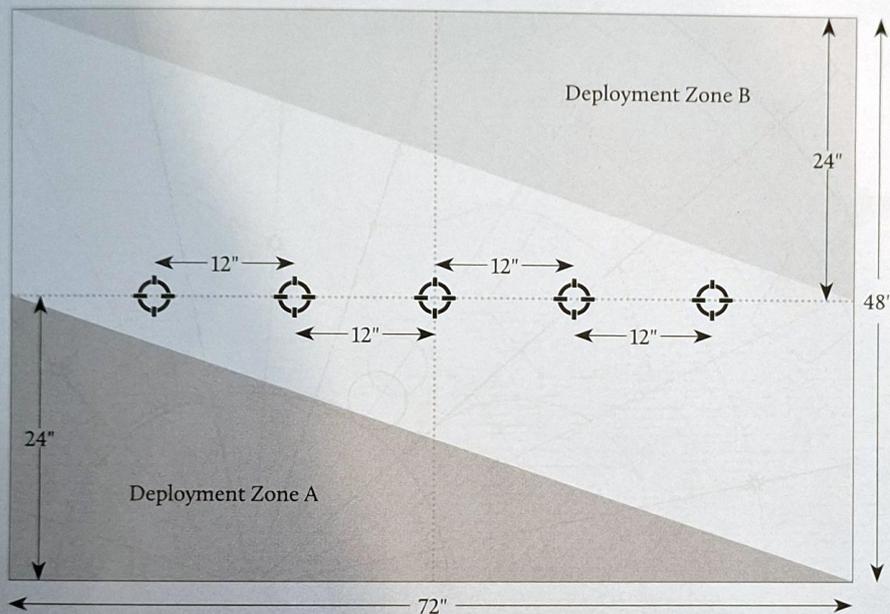
SALVAGE SITE

Two forces converge on the crash site of a cargo hauler. The contents of the hauler's hold is spread across the area and a vicious battle to recover the relic technology amongst the twisted wreckage unfolds.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The following Mission Objectives are used in this Mission:

Primary Mission Objectives

- Capture Relic Markers

Secondary Mission Objectives

- No Stone Unturned (2)
- Bloody Ground (2)

In the Victory Sub-Phase of each Player's Turn, as the Active Player they may score Victory Points if they Control any Relic Markers (Players may also score Victory Points from the Relic Hunt Mission Secondary Objectives).

At the end of Battle Turn Five, the Player with the highest total of Victory Points is the winner.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

This Mission uses the **Unknown Value** and **Surveillance Augurs** Relic Hunt Mission Special Rules, and the **Reserves** Core Mission Special Rule (see the *Warhammer: The Horus Heresy – Age of Darkness Rulebook*).

OBJECTIVE MARKERS

This Mission uses five Relic Markers set up as shown on the Deployment Map below. These Objective Markers have no value and cannot be Controlled until they have been Analysed by either Player.

Note that if a Marker cannot be placed in the specified location due to Impassable Terrain, it must be placed as close as possible to the specified location, without being placed any closer to the nearest Battlefield Edge.

DEPLOYMENT MAP – BREAKTHROUGH
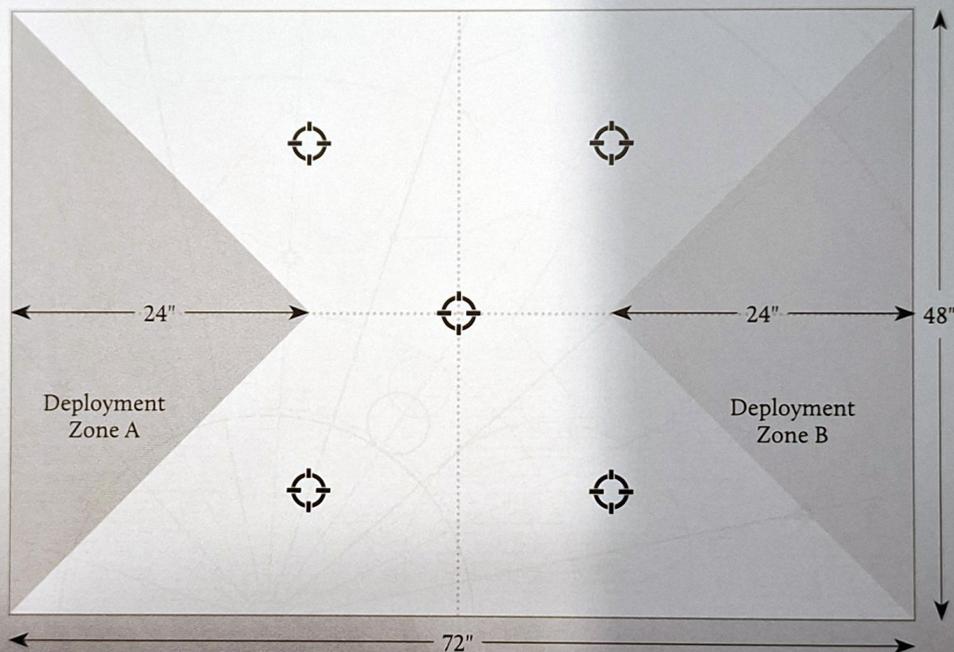
SEIZE THE SPOILS

A trans-terrestrial mag conveyor has been derailed in an ambush and two forces race to recover the precious cargo contained within it.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The following Mission Objectives are used in this Mission:

Primary Mission Objectives

- Capture Relic Markers

Secondary Mission Objectives

- No Stone Unturned (2)
- Bloody Ground (2)

In the Victory Sub-Phase of each Player's Turn, as the Active Player they may score Victory Points if they Control any Relic Markers (Players may also score Victory Points from the Relic Hunt Mission Secondary Objectives).

At the end of Battle Turn Four, the Player with the highest total of Victory Points is the winner.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

This Mission uses the **Unknown Value**, **Surveillance Augurs** and **Extraction Complete** Relic Hunt Mission Special Rules, and the **Reserves** Core Mission Special Rule (see the *Warhammer: The Horus Heresy – Age of Darkness Rulebook*).

OBJECTIVE MARKERS

This Mission uses five Relic Markers set up as shown on the Deployment Map below. These Objective Markers have no value and cannot be Controlled until they have been Analysed by either Player.

Note that if a Marker cannot be placed in the specified location due to Impassable Terrain, it must be placed as close as possible to the specified location, without being placed any closer to the nearest Battlefield Edge.

DEPLOYMENT MAP – DAWN OF WAR
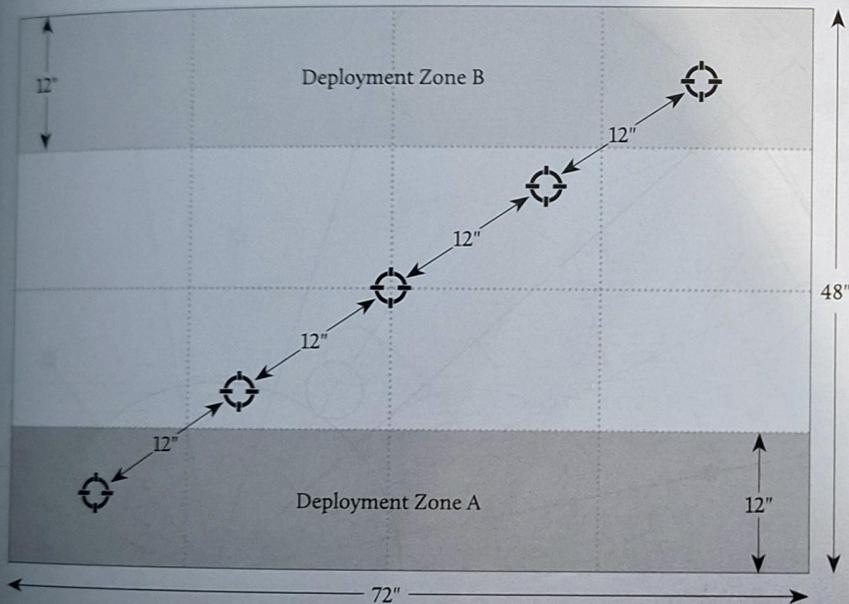
Extraction Complete

Once the work of technoarchaeologists is complete and the ancient vaults and arcologies of long-dead civilisations are stripped of their relic bounty, they may hold no inherent value and are once again left for time to reclaim.

As soon as either Player scores any number of Victory Points from Controlling a Relic Marker, the Active Player must roll a Dice. If the result is equal to or less than the current Battle Turn, that Relic Marker is immediately removed from play and can no longer be Controlled or scored from.
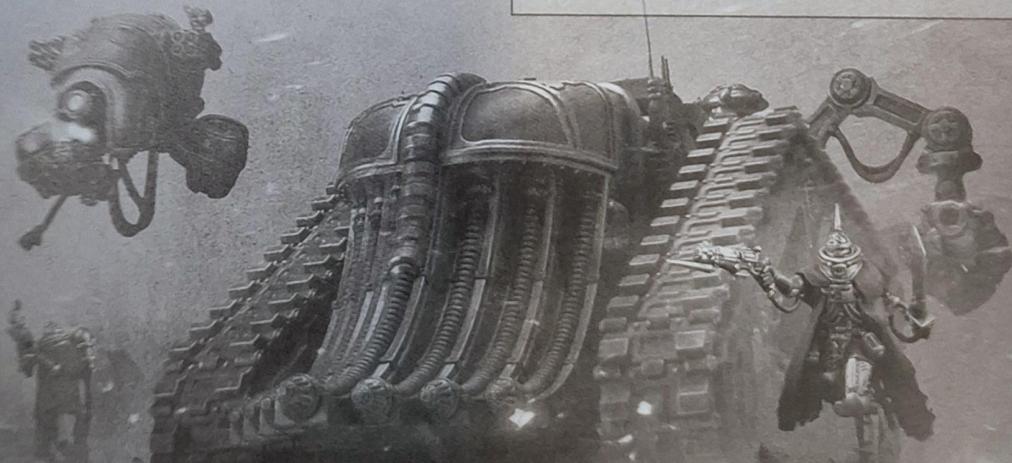
THE SKITARII CONCLAVES ARMY LIST

The following comprises a fundamental listing of the principal warriors and war machines of the Skitarii Conclaves under the Fabricator General of Mars which fought during the Age of Darkness. It includes Army List Profiles for the most widespread militant assets of the Skitarii Conclaves, allowing Players to build and field Skitarii armies. This volume introduces the standard corps of Skitarii troops that fought on both sides of the schism during the Horus Heresy alongside the Rules needed to represent them on the Battlefield.

The Rules found in this book are used in conjunction with the Rules for Armies in the Age of Darkness on page 278 of the *Warhammer: The Horus Heresy – Age of Darkness Rulebook*. The Rules in the *Warhammer: The Horus Heresy – Age of Darkness Rulebook* describe the process of creating an Army, while the additional Rules that follow provide Unit Profiles for Armies of the Skitarii Conclaves.

THE CONCLAVES AT WAR: BUILDING A SKITARII ARMY

Each Unit in this Skitarii Conclaves Army List is a Core Unit and is not specific to a particular Allegiance, represented by '[Allegiance]' entry under the Traits heading of each Unit Profile. When you add such a Unit to your Army, this Trait is replaced with either 'Loyalist' or 'Traitor', based on which Allegiance you have selected for your Army.

Some Units may be introduced to this Army List in further publications and will have either the Loyalist or Traitor Trait on their Unit Entry. Such Units cannot select which Allegiance they are part of, and can only be selected in an Army with the appropriate Allegiance.

Vassals of the Forge Lords

If the Primary Detachment of an Army is selected from the Mechanicum Taghmata Army List, an Allied Detachment selected from the Skitarii Conclaves Army List does not count towards the 50% maximum of the total Points Limit set for a Battle (see page 281 of the *Warhammer: The Horus Heresy – Age of Darkness Rulebook*).

SUB-FACTIONS OF THE SKITARII CONCLAVES

This volume presents the conclaves of the Skitarii Battle-Pilgryms as they existed up until the point of Horus' rebellion. However, that does not mean that they can only be used to represent armies of the Loyalist Allegiance and players should feel free to use this volume to create armies of either Allegiance.

Every Unit from the Skitarii Conclaves Army List will also have a Faction represented by a Trait on its Unit Entry. For Units which are not specific to a Faction or other Organisation, this will be represented by '[Skitarii]'. When you add such a Unit to your Army, you must select one of the following Traits to replace this with (this replaces only that individual instance of the [Skitarii] Trait on that Unit Profile, not that of other Units in the same Army or Detachment).

Future publications may also provide other options for replacing the [Skitarii] Trait on your Unit. Units or variants of Units which are specific to a certain Skitarii Conclave will already have the appropriate Trait, and this may not be replaced. All Units selected as part of a given Detachment must have the same Faction Trait unless another Rule or Special Rule states otherwise.
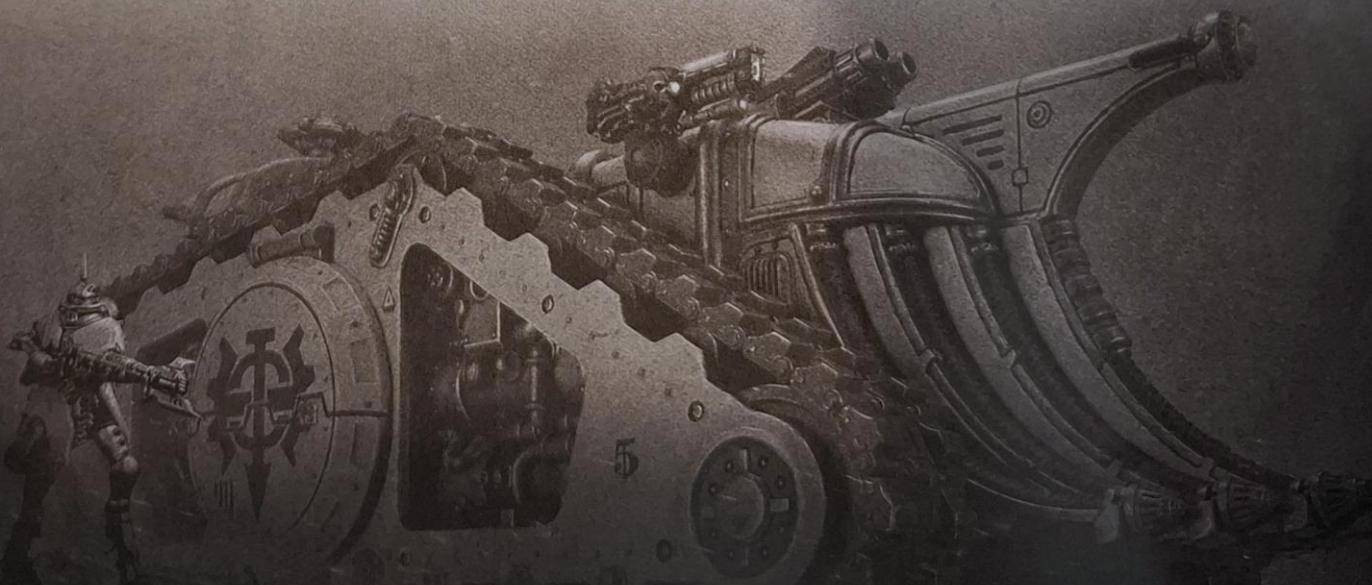
Acquisitor

Under Acquisitor protocols, Battle-Pilgryms sweep the battlefield seeking relic technology, or anything they expect to aid them in their unceasing search for the lost.

All Models with the Acquisitor Trait (excluding Models with the Vehicle Type) gain the Line (1) Special Rule.

Expurgator

Under the conduct of Expurgator bonds, each Skitarii corpus adopts an aggressive role upon the field of battle, seeking to actively engage and eliminate any who they factor to be a threat, to prevent their quarry from falling into the wrong hands.

All Models with the Expurgator Trait (excluding Models with the Vehicle Type) gain the Vanguard (3) Special Rule.

Vindictor (Loyalist Allegiance Only)

With the outbreak of the Horus Heresy, Vindictor data-doctrines containing previously prohibited routines were distributed to many Loyalist conclaves in order that each Battle-Pilgrym could tune their rifle to deadly effect, in an effort to thwart Horus' allies with greater efficacy.

All Models with the Vindictor Trait (excluding Models with the Vehicle Type) increase the value of any instance of the Deflagrate (X) Special Rule they, or any Weapons they have, by +1.

Scourger (Traitor Allegiance Only)

The cold, calculated logic of the Skitarii loyal to Kelbor-Hal was fractured, as the Fabricator General repledged his allegiance to the Warmaster's new cause. Those conclaves that followed with him overrode the logic-restraints coded into their battle doctrines and began to allow a thirst for destruction to guide them.

All Models with the Scourger Trait (excluding Models with the Vehicle Type) must add +1" to Set-up Moves, to a maximum of 6".

ADVANCED REACTION

The Controlling Player of any Units that include only Models with the Skitarii Trait can spend Reaction Points to make the following Advanced Reaction:

Marshal Elect

When the marshal falls in battle or is otherwise judged to have failed in their allocated task, the ordinators of the conclave convene via their mind-impulse link, conducting hours of ritual deliberation in just moments, in order to appoint a replacement marshal from the worthy candidates that are present.

This Reaction allows the Controlling Player to select an Ordinator to gain the Command Sub-Type and improved Weapon Skill and Leadership.

Trigger: Once per Battle, the Reactive Player may declare the Marshal Elect Advanced Reaction when a friendly Skitarii Battle-Pilgrym Marshal Model is reduced to 0 Wounds.

Cost: The Reactive Player must spend 1 point of their Reaction Allotment to declare the Marshal Elect Advanced Reaction, this cost paid as soon as the declaration is made.

Target: For the Marshal Elect Advanced Reaction, the Target Unit is always a Friendly Unit with the Skitarii Trait with at least one Ordinator Model.

Process

1. In the End Phase of any Turn in which this Advanced Reaction was Declared, the Reactive Player must select one Ordinator Model from the Target Unit.
2. The selected Model gains the Command Sub-Type, and has its Base Weapon Skill, Attacks and Leadership Characteristics each increased by +1. Additionally, the Controlling Player may select one Melee Weapon that the selected Model has to gain the Icon of Authority Special Rule.
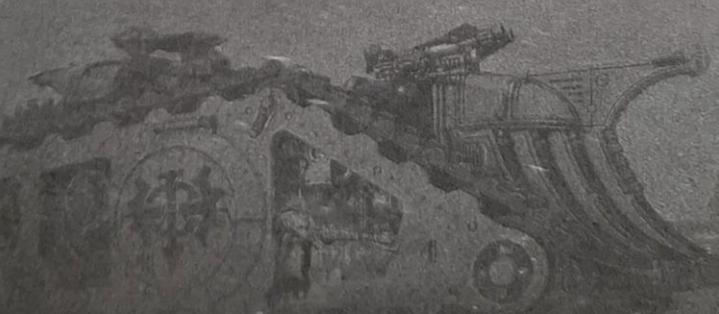
SKITARII BATTLE-PILGRYM MARSHAL
UNIT COMPOSITION: 1 SKITARII BATTLE-PILGRYM MARSHAL

100 Points

Selected from the most compatible, often veteran, ordinators within a particular conclave, each Battle-Pilgrym Marshal leads the warriors of a battle pilgrimage, acting as both a field commander and representative of the Fabricator General's authority. In the conduct of this duty, a Battle-Pilgrym Marshal is permitted to draw sanctified relic-arms from the conclave's vaults, including the auctorit sceptre, the physical embodiment of the marshal's duty. With such tools at their disposal, they are at once elevated to a position of authority over the conclave itself, but also as formidable warriors.

	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD	CL	WP	IN	SAV	INV
Marshal	6	5	4	3	4	4	4	4	9	8	8	8	4+	5+

WARGEAR
- Voltlock handgun
- Auctorit sceptre
- Frag grenades
- Krak grenades

SPECIAL RULES
- Fast (2)

UNIT TYPE
- Infantry (Command)

TRAITS
- [Allegiance]
- [Skitarii]

OPTIONS
- This Model may have its auctorit sceptre exchanged for one of the following options:
  - Phase claw ....+20 Points
  - Corposant stave..+15 Points
- This Model may have its voltlock handgun exchanged for one archaeotech pistol for +5 Points.

- This Model may have rad charges selected for it for +2 Points.
- This Model may have haywire grenades selected for it for +2 Points.

WARGEAR

Ranged Weapon	R	FP	RS	AP	D	Special Rules	Traits
Voltlock handgun	10	1	5	5	1	Pistol, Deflagrate (5)	Volkite, Assault
Archaeotech pistol	12	1	6	4	2	Pistol, Breaching (3+)	Assault
Rad charges	8	1	4	-	1	Phage (T)	Rad, Assault
Haywire grenades	8	1	4	-	1	Shock (Stunned)	Haywire, Assault

Melee Weapon	IM	AM	SM	AP	D	Special Rules	Traits
Auctorit sceptre	1	A	+1	4	1	Breaching (6+), Icon of Authority	Power
Phase claw	-3	A	+3	2	2	Rending (6+)	Power
Corposant stave	1	A	+1	3	1	Shock (Pinning, Stunned, Suppressed)	-

Icon of Authority: When a Weapon with this Special Rule is selected to make Attacks during the Declare Weapons and Set Initiative Steps stage of the Fight Sub-Phase, all Models with the Skitarii Trait that are part of the same Unit as the Model with a Weapon with this Special Rule immediately recover from Pinned, Suppressed and Stunned Tactical Statuses.

SKITARII BATTLE-PILGRYM CORPUS

UNIT COMPOSITION: 1 SKITARII ORDINATOR AND 7 SKITARII BATTLE-PILGRYMS   **100 Points**

- May include up to 8 additional Skitarii Battle-Pilgryms at +10 Points per Model.

The bulk of the nomadic contingents of the Skitarii Battle-Pilgryms are bound together as conclaves and each of these war formations is each led by an ordinator, an individual through which the will of the marshal is conducted. Attuned to an unnaturally long existence of unceasing pilgrimage and war, the Skitarii care little for the comforts of civil life nor do they possess aspiration to ascend through ranks or hierarchy. Instead, they are singularly focused on the defence of the domains of the Omnissiah and the acquisition of lost technology, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the unworthy.

	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD	CL	WP	IN	SAV	INV
Battle-Pilgrym	6	3	3	3	4	2	3	2	7	8	8	7	4+	6+
Ordinator	6	4	3	3	4	2	3	3	8	8	8	7	4+	6+

WARGEAR
- Voltlock arquebus
- Frag grenades
- Krak grenades

TRAITS
- [Allegiance]
- [Skitarii]

SPECIAL RULES
- Fast (2)

UNIT TYPE
- **Battle-Pilgrym:** Infantry
- **Ordinator:** Infantry (Sergeant)

OPTIONS
- The Skitarii Ordinator in this Unit may have its voltlock arquebus exchanged for one voltlock handgun and one power sword for Free.
- Any Model in this Unit may have rad charges selected for it for +2 Points per Model.
- Any Model in this Unit may have haywire grenades selected for it for +2 Points per Model.

WARGEAR

Ranged Weapon	R	FP	RS	AP	D	Special Rules	Traits
Voltlock arquebus	20	2	5	5	1	Deflagrate (5)	Volkite
Voltlock handgun	10	1	5	5	1	Pistol, Deflagrate (5)	Volkite, Assault
Rad charges	8	1	4	-	1	Phage (T)	Rad, Assault
Haywire grenades	8	1	4	-	1	Shock (Stunned)	Haywire, Assault

Melee Weapon	IM	AM	SM	AP	D	Special Rules	Traits
Voltlock arquebus	1	A	+1	4	1	Impact (I)	-
Power sword	1	A	S	3	1	Breaching (6+)	Power

BONEPICKER HOST

UNIT COMPOSITION: 10 BONEPICKERS
- May include up to 20 additional Bonepickers at +5 Points per Model.

Following the Skitarii Battle-Pilgrym's path come the hosts of the Ostologoi or 'bonepickers'. In hordes of numberless individuals they painstakingly comb through the detritus of battle, intent on salvaging the remnants of righteous war. To those of unerring faith in the divinity of the Omnissiah, these scraps, often as insignificant as spent box magazines or empty shell casings, are low-grade relics – items that have been in contact with higher forms of venerated technology – and thus are revered by them.

	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD	CL	WP	IN	SAV	INV
Bonepicker	6	2	2	3	3	1	2	1	4	4	4	4	6+	-

WARGEAR
- Las-lock

TRAITS
- [Allegiance]
- [Skitarii]

SPECIAL RULES
- Expendable (2)
- Support Unit (1)
- Zealous Followers

UNIT TYPE
- Infantry

BUILDING THIS UNIT
Bonepickers can be represented using the Necromunda Cawdor Ganger bodies and Mechanicum Tech-Thrall arms and weapons.

WARGEAR

Ranged Weapon	R	FP	RS	AP	D	Special Rules	Traits
Las-lock	18	1	4	6	1	-	Las

SPECIAL RULES

Zealous Followers

Hordes of bonepickers follow in the wake of Skitarii Battle-Pilgryms, eager to serve and earn the favour of their masters through duty and obedience.

Bonepickers may use the Characteristics of nearby Skitarii Units when making Characteristic Checks.

When a Characteristic Check is taken for a Unit made up of Models with this Special Rule, the Check may be made against the Base Characteristic of any Friendly Model with the Skitarii Trait that does not have the Routed Tactical Status, that is part of a Unit that has a Model within 6" and Line of Sight of a Model from the Unit for which the Characteristic Check is made. Note that Modifiers applied to the Unit for which the Characteristic Check is being made, for example, from the Pinning (X) Special Rule, are applied to the Characteristic of the Model with the Skitarii Trait that is used for the Check.

SKITARII VULTARAX STRATOS-AUTOMATA

UNIT COMPOSITION: 1 VULTARAX

100 Points

Where the Magos of the Mechanicum employ the Vultarax as a forward unit, ranging ahead to engage and harass the foe, the examples of this automata they deign to grant the Skitarii conclaves the use of are employed primarily in a role of scout-surveyor. In this seconded role, the Mechanicum permit some Stratos-automata to be retrofitted with additional auspex scanning arrays to facilitate the search for relics. In combat, the Battle-Pilgryms rely on the mobile fire support of the Vultarax to provide cover and suppress enemy forces.

	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD	CL	WP	IN	SAV	INV
Vultarax	12	3	3	5	6	6	4	3	7	12	4	4	3+	5+

WARGEAR
- Arc blaster
- Vultarax missile launcher
- Dendrite talons

TRAITS
- [Allegiance]
- [Skitarii]

OPTIONS
- None

SPECIAL RULES
- Bulky (6)
- Implacable Advance
- Explodes (6+)
- Firing Protocols (2)
- Firestorm

UNIT TYPE
- Automata (Antigrav)

WARGEAR

Ranged Weapon	R	FP	RS	AP	D	Special Rules	Traits
Arc blaster	24	6	6	5	1	Suppressive (1), Shock (Suppressed)	Arc
Vultarax missile launcher							
- Airburst	36	1	6	4	1	Blast (5"), Phage (T), Panic (0)	Rad
- Shaped charge	36	2	10	2	2	Phage (T), Panic (0), Shock (Stunned)	Rad

Melee Weapon	IM	AM	SM	AP	D	Special Rules	Traits
Dendrite talons	1	A	S	4	2	Breaching (6+)	-

Skitarii Triaros Armoured Conveyor

Unit Composition: 1 Skitarii Triaros

The Triaros is a heavy transport found on almost every Forge World. Its combination of heavy armour, potent weapons and a built-in flare shield have been proven on a thousand worlds during the Great Crusade, marking it the equal of those transports used by the other armies of the Imperium. It has served as the mainstay transport of the Skitarii's infantry conclaves for centuries, for while more powerful armoured transports are certainly at the Fabricator General's disposal, the Triaros' familiarity across the Mechanicum ensures that repairs and replacements can be conducted on-campaign with ease.

	M	BS	Front	Armour Side	Rear	HP	Transport Capacity
Skitarii Triaros	10	4	14	12	12	7	22

WARGEAR
- Two Centreline Mounted volkite calivers
- Pintle Mounted twin mauler bolt cannon
- Flare shield
- Searchlights

TRAITS
- [Allegiance]
- [Skitarii]

OPTIONS
- This Model may have up to two Hull (Front) Mounted hunter-killer missiles selected for it for +5 Points per Weapon.

ACCESS POINTS
- This Model has Access Points on each Side Facing.

SPECIAL RULES
- Auto-repair (4+)
- Shock Ram

UNIT TYPE
- Vehicle (Transport)

WARGEAR

Ranged Weapon	R	FP	RS	AP	D	Special Rules	Traits
Volkite caliver	30	2	6	5	1	Deflagrate (6)	Volkite
Twin mauler bolt cannon	24	6	6	4	1	Shred (4+), Pinning (2)	Bolt
Hunter-killer missile	48	1	9	3	3	Armourbane, Limited (1)	Missile

SKITARII KARACNOS ASSAULT TANK

UNIT COMPOSITION: 1 SKITARII KARACNOS

235 Points

Of the frontline combat vehicles employed by the Mechanicum, only the largest super-heavy tanks can claim to match the sheer destructive power of the Karacnos. Protected by both heavy frontal armour and layers of defensive energy shields, the Karacnos is designed to assault and smash the enemy's lines, its long-range mortars raining phosphex down upon the foe while corpus of Skitarii advance before it. This flexibility and brutal firepower make the Karacnos a prized asset whenever the Skitarii conclaves are required to bring utter ruin upon the foes of the Fabricator General, be they recalcitrant magi or monstrous xenoforms.

	M	BS	Front	Armour Side	Rear	HP	Transport Capacity
Skitarii Karacnos	10	4	14	12	12	7	-

WARGEAR

- Hull (Front) Mounted Karacnos mortar battery
- Two Sponson Mounted lightning locks
- Flare shield
- Searchlights

TRAITS

- [Allegiance]
- [Skitarii]

SPECIAL RULES

- Auto-repair (4+)
- Shock Ram
- Explodes (6+)

UNIT TYPE

- Vehicle

OPTIONS

- This Model may have up to two Hull (Front) Mounted hunter-killer missiles selected for it for +5 Points per Weapon.

WARGEAR

Ranged Weapon	R	FP	RS	AP	D	Special Rules	Traits
Karacnos mortar battery	60	1	6	4	1	Blast (5"), Barrage (2), Poisoned (2+), Phage (T), Pinning (3)	Rad
Lightning lock	36	1	7	3	2	Blast (3"), Breaching (5+), Shred (5+), Suppressive (0)	Arc
Hunter-killer missile	48	1	9	3	3	Armourbane, Limited (1)	Missile

SKITARII KRIOS BATTLE TANK
UNIT COMPOSITION: 1 SKITARII KRIOS

The compact Krios tank is a marvel of technology, protected by layers of energy fields rather than simple bulk armour and powered by a fusion power plant capable of accelerating it to speeds few other tanks can match. In battle it serves as a rapid response and flanking unit, capable of out-pacing most other armour and outgunning lesser units. Its systems are too complex for simple servitors or a cybernetica cortex to properly control, and so a Tech adept is integrated into the chassis to pilot the vehicle in combat.

	M	BS	Front	Armour Side	Rear	HP	Transport Capacity
Skitarii Krios	14	4	13	12	10	5	-

WARGEAR
- Centreline Mounted lightning cannon

TRAITS
- [Allegiance]
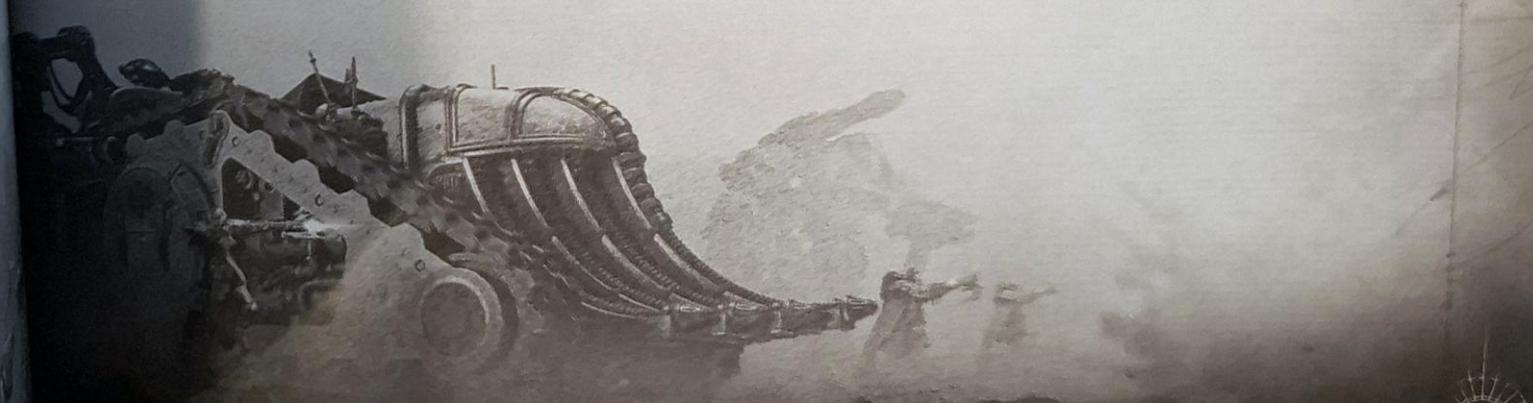- [Skitarii]

SPECIAL RULES
- Auto-repair (4+)

UNIT TYPE
- Vehicle (Rapid)

OPTIONS
- This Model may have up to two Hull (Front) Mounted hunter-killer missiles selected for it for +5 Points per Weapon.
- This Model may have two Sponson Mounted volkite calivers selected for it for +15 Points.
- This Model may have its Centreline Mounted lighting cannon exchanged for one Centreline Mounted irradiation blaster for Free.

WARGEAR

Ranged Weapon	R	FP	RS	AP	D	Special Rules	Traits
Lightning cannon	36	1	7	3	2	Blast (5"), Breaching (5+), Shred (5+), Suppressive (1)	Arc
Irradiation blaster	16	1	2	4	2	Blast (5"), Ordnance (D), Phage (T), Shock (Stunned), Poisoned (2+), Panic (2)	Rad
Volkite caliver	30	2	6	5	1	Deflagrate (6)	Volkite
Hunter-killer missile	48	1	9	3	3	Armourbane, Limited (1)	Missile

SKITARII KRIOS VENATOR TANK DESTROYER
UNIT COMPOSITION: 1 SKITARII KRIOS VENATOR

160 Points

The Krios Venator trades the lightning cannon of the more common Krios for a pulsar-fusil, a dedicated anti-armour weapon of devastating power. Combining speed and firepower, the Krios Venator is capable of intercepting and destroying enemy heavy armour before it can reach the frontlines, or of reaching key positions early in an engagement to lay a trap for targets of opportunity. The rare and temperamental pulsar-fusil is a weapon more than capable of tearing other armoured vehicles apart in a storm of energy blasts, and can even prove a threat to the largest of enemies.

	M	BS	Armour Front	Armour Side	Armour Rear	HP	Transport Capacity
Skitarii Krios Venator	14	4	13	12	10	5	-

WARGEAR
- Centreline Mounted pulsar-fusil

TRAITS
- [Allegiance]
- [Skitarii]

SPECIAL RULES
- Auto-repair (4+)

UNIT TYPE
- Vehicle (Rapid)

OPTIONS
- This Model may have up to two Hull (Front) Mounted hunter-killer missiles selected for it for +5 Points per Weapon.
- This Model may have two Sponson Mounted volkite calivers selected for it for +15 Points.

WARGEAR

Ranged Weapon	R	FP	RS	AP	D	Special Rules	Traits
Pulsar-fusil	36	2	9	2	3	Ordnance (FP), Suppressive (2)	Las
Volkite caliver	30	2	6	5	1	Deflagrate (6)	Volkite
Hunter-killer missile	48	1	9	3	3	Armourbane, Limited (1)	Missile

LIBER ADDENDA

As the range of Horus Heresy miniatures grows and transitions from resin to plastic kits, there will be occasions where Units and profiles from the various Liber books need to be updated. The Liber Addenda will present those changes so that players have access to the most up-to-date rules for their Units. The following profile replaces the Myrmidon Destructor Host profile found on page 29 of *Liber Mechanicum* – rules for Weapons, Special Rules and Traits used on this profile are found in *Liber Mechanicum*.

MYRMIDON DESTRUCTOR HOST
UNIT COMPOSITION: 1 DESTRUCTOR LORD AND 2 DESTRUCTORS

150 Points

- May include up to 7 additional Destructors at +45 Points per Model.

Much like their Secutor brethren, the Myrmidon Destructors view combat as a method by which they might divine the will of the Omnissiah. However, they do so through the thunder of heavy guns, the blast of plasma and searing pulse of rad-flame. For these towering ancients, each salvo is a prayer and each battle won a humble offering to the Omnissiah. Such is the power of their onslaught that the Magos Militant of a Forge World will go to great lengths to seek out and recruit such warriors when conflict looms and the horns of war sound.

USING THIS UNIT: This Core Unit can be included in Detachments from the Mechanicum Taghmata Army List.

	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD	CL	WP	IN	SAV	INV
Destructor	6	4	4	5	5	4	2	2	9	9	8	8	3+	5+
Destructor Lord	6	5	5	5	5	4	2	3	9	9	8	8	3+	5+

WARGEAR
- Shock chargers
- Frag grenades

TRAITS
- [Allegiance]
- Myrmidax

SPECIAL RULES
- Bulky (3)
- Vanguard (3)
- Battle Meditation (Destructor Lord only)

UNIT TYPE
- **Destructor:** Infantry (Heavy)
- **Destructor Lord:** Infantry (Heavy, Champion)

OPTIONS
- All Models in this Unit must select one of the following options:
  - Volkite culverin..Free
  - Irradiation engine ....+15 Points per Model
  - Conversion beamer........................+15 Points per Model
  - Darkfire cannon.............................+20 Points per Model