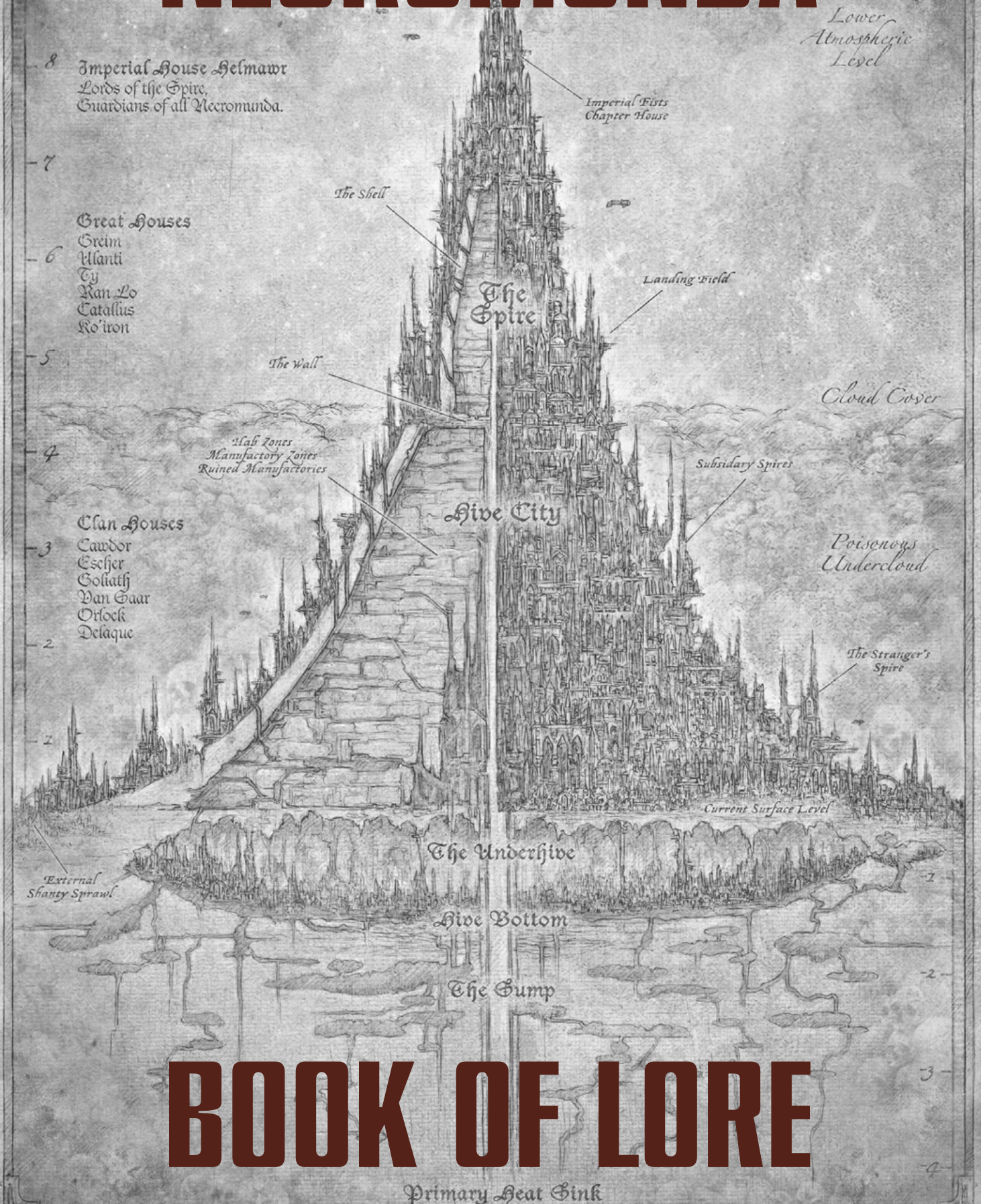


NECROMUNDA



BOOK OF LORE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR	3
HIVE CITY	4
HOUSE HELMAWR	6
BADZONES	8
DUST FALLS	9
DUST WALL.....	10
RUST TOWN.....	12
SUMP CITY	14
NAVIS MORTIS.....	16
PORT MAD DOG	18
HERETIC'S HOLE	20
LINGUA PRIMUS.....	22
THE REDEMPTION	24
PLACES IN THE UNDERHIVE.....	26
SCUM CITY	28
SLUDGE HARBOUR	30
ALEVAN TOWN	32
MARTYR TOWN	34
THE CHASM	37
LIFE FORMS IN NEROMUNDA	38
THE FIST.....	42
INHABITANTS OF THE PLANET.....	44
BONUS: LIST OF WD ARTICLES.....	55

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

This document was created by Kacper Kuc.

This is free, fan-made document, created from Warhammer Community Apocrypha Necromundus articles and old, out-of production materials from Necromunda 96 and Confrontation books, White Dwarf articles and other various sources.

This book was created to help Necromunda's fans get better knowledge of the setting, various inhabitants of the planet and many places in the Underhive and beyond.

All rights for texts and artworks belong to Games Workshop Group.

HIVE CITY

AN INDUSTRIAL NIGHTMARE

The boundaries of Hive City, as laid out by Helmawr's Primaria Geograph, state it begins where a man may lay a foot upon the ash of hive base, and ends where one may touch the Imperial seals of the Wall. In reality, it conforms to no absolutely defined borders – parts of it reaching down into the underhive, or crawling up the outside of the hive to cling to the lower levels of the spire. It is home to countless industries, from munitions plants to corpse-reclamation farms. Its residents live with the constant rumble of factories and machines rising through the floors of their habs or echoing down from domes overhead. To live in Hive City is to live in the heart of a great machine.

Though no serious attempt has ever been made to map Hive City, the Clan Houses being somewhat resistant to people poking around their domains, it can be broadly divided into a number of regions. The lowest level of Hive City is known as the Circulum Nexus, or Cargo Town to the locals. Here dozens of subterranean, maglev train lines converge and scores of great ash gates lead to the wastes. This section rings the outer section of the hive and is dedicated to the receiving, storing and sorting of the endless chain of cargo shipments. Vast warehouses characterise this level, each filled with endless lines of stacked containers, piled so high they reach up out of sight into the gloom. Entire towns exist in the artificial canyons created by these containers, their inhabitants endlessly numbering and checking each container to ensure it reaches its intended destination. At various points, the Nexus breaks through into the underhive



below – the most notable of these is Guilder's Pit, which leads down to Dust Falls.

HEART OF THE HIVE

Above the Nexus is the region known colloquially as Forge City. Here the heaviest industries operate, smelting ores and cooking chemicals to feed the factorums above. These industries expel a prodigious amount of waste, their runoff cascading down the hive shell to the ash heaps below. As the industrial domes and chambers of Forge City thin out, the Teeming begins. This is the living core of Hive City, where most of its habs and industries reside, each producing everything from lasgun focusing crystals to Adeptus Terra-sanctioned spoons. Within this tangle of sub-cities there are a number of noteworthy landmarks, such as the Grand Plaza where a massive statue of the Emperor (or is that Lord Helmawr?) holds the dome aloft, or the Lumin Halls, where the master overseers gather to read the endlessly scrolling production numbers of the hive and set their punishing quotas. The Teeming is also home to the Penitent's Vault. This vast guilders prison houses miscreants and recidivists of all kinds as they await execution, exile or slavery.

Sitting atop the Teeming like a crown is the Primus Spa-ceport. While hundreds of landing pads and hangers stud the outside of Hive Primus, the largest concentration can be found on the edge of the world's toxic cloud layer, where Hive City gives way to the Spire. A city in itself, the spa-ceport never sleeps, with gleaming strato-planes, massive orbital haulers and sleek landers all endlessly taking off and setting down here. Running along the upper reaches of the



Primus Spaceport is the Wall. This is the hard barrier between Hive City and the Spire, dividing the Clan Houses from the Noble Houses, and protecting the privileged elite who dwell above. It is a grave offence for a subject to even approach within sight of the Wall without permission – the punishment inevitably being death.

DOMAIN OF THE CLANS

An estimated 5 to 10 billion people live and work within Hive City. These range from clanners serving one of the great Clan Houses to the helot workers who make up the hive's drudging classes. The Clans are the de facto rulers of Hive City and their domains reflect their importance – nation states in their own right, each one dominates a region of Hive City. The Orlocks control much of the Nexus, and many of the ash gates that lead to it, in the name of the Guild of Coin. Goliaths rule Vat City, constantly expanding their realm to make room for even greater furnaces and new arena towns filled with fighting pits. The Van Saar and Escher, as befits their rank as the oldest Clan Houses, dwell largely in the upper reaches of the Teeming, controlling parts of the Spaceport and the domes that cling to the underside of the Wall. Cawdor and Delaque are different in that their Clans can be found almost anywhere in Hive City – the Cawdor thriving in every disused nook and cranny, the Delaque mysteriously appearing where they are least expected.

With so many people and so many competing interests, violence within Hive City is carefully monitored by Lord Helmawr. While the streets of the Teeming, or the cargo canyons of the Nexus are far from safe, there is order of a sort – maintained by the Palanite Enforcers. Thus do the Clan Houses work out their grievances in the lawless expanse of the underhive, lest the precarious and ancient peace of Hive City ever be broken by open warfare, and the whole system come crashing down.



HOUSE HELMAWR

For over seven thousand years, House Helmawr has ruled over Necromunda in one form or another, making it one of the oldest noble families in the Segmentum Solar and certainly the oldest on Necromunda. In this instalment of the Apocrypha Necromundus, we take a look into the origins of the Great House of Helmawr, and some of its most noteworthy noble lords and ladies.

MARTEK HELM'AYR, THE FIRST HELMAWR

Necromunda has been part of the Imperium for ten thousand years, brought into compliance by the Imperial Fists Legion during the Great Crusade. Few reliable records of Necromunda remain from these early centuries, and those that do tell of a world suffering almost constant warfare as one warlord or another vied to be planetary governor.

During this lost age, Necromunda repeatedly rebelled against the Imperium, and the Adeptus Terra was forced to send forces to pacify the planet more than once. After three millennia of strife, a true leader, at last, emerged from the throngs of corrupt hive lords and savage gang kings.

Martek Helm'ayr, a street tough from the drudging-habs of Hive Primus, led a war of conquest, first within his own hive, and then out across the wastes of Necromunda. House Helmawr's progenitor remains an enigmatic figure within the histories of Necromunda, though if the grandiose statues and paintings in the Spire of Hive Primus are to be believed, he was 10 feet tall and impossibly handsome.

Martek and his reign have largely been lost to history, though rumour has it that within the Spear of Dorn, the Imperial Fists fortress atop Hive Primus, there is a fresco depicting one of the few remaining true images of Martek Helm'ayr, kneeling before an Imperial Fists Captain, taking the Oath of Governance.

THE TWO-FACED WAR

After centuries of able rulers and countless attempts by the other Great Houses of Necromunda to unseat House Helmawr, Martek's line had begun to stagnate. By the 37th Millennium, the House of Helmawr was succumbing to decadence and decline, its rulers often more interested in personal excesses than governance.

Voss the Younger spent his rule in a Ghast-induced coma, while his followers were forced to listen to his dreaming whispers for their commands. Targan III created chaos when he moved his entire court to the underhive to escape the incessant criticism of Necromunda's moons, while Dagorn the Scaled spent years indulging in horrific genetic experiments on himself and his kin.

It was not until the death of Hyrodo Helmawr, however, some time in the mid-point of the 37th Millennium, that Necromunda faced the greatest threat to the Pax Imperium since the Second Great Pacification. Hyrodo left two children with equal claims to rule – Lady Cinderak and Lord Gothrul. While this was not the first time a Lord or Lady Helmawr had died without a clear line of succession, it was complicated by the fact that the two siblings lived on opposite sides of the planet. Lady Cinderak resided in Hive Primus, and Lord Gothrul in the Needle. Each had their own armies and massive power bases. What followed was known as the Two-Faced War, as the two Helmawrs fought for rulership, all the while being careful not to let things get out of hand lest the Imperium intervene. In the end, Cinderak emerged victorious, and Gothrul got a hive named after him. Some say his remains are still beneath it somewhere.

GERONTIUS HELMAWR

In more recent times, few have seriously opposed the rule of House Helmawr, and succession has passed from one generation to the next with a minimum of disruption – not that there hasn't been the odd assassination or strange occurrence.

In 646.M41, Marius Helmawr was killed in his bed by the underhive gang leader Dogbit Karg. How a scummer like Karg made it into the Spire, let alone the inner sanctum of the Lord of Necromunda, still remains a mystery. Some say the assassination had something to do with a debt owed by Marius to House Delaque, others say it wasn't a debt but a secret Marius couldn't be trusted with – of course, Marius' eldest son Tiberius, who succeeded him to rule, didn't waste too much time looking into it. That House Delaque won a number of Imperial House contracts during those first years of Tiberius' reign probably has nothing to do with Marius' death.

The current Lord Helmawr, Gerontius, is perhaps the most formidable Helmawr to hold the title of Lord of Necromunda for a hundred generations. Born under auspicious astrological signs and a rare convergence of Necromunda's three largest moons, it was whispered among the seers of Hive Primus that Gerontius might be the last of his line. Despite these dark portents, Gerontius quickly made his mark upon the world. Under his rule, the planet has prospered like never before, despite record levels of conflict between the Clan Houses and their proxies. By his command, the Ghast harvests of the Forbidden Cities flourished, and enemies, like the Rebel Lords of Aranthus, were weeded out and exterminated.

Gerontius has also done much to secure the legacy of his family, siring dozens of sons and daughters, some of whom are more capable (and less homicidal) than others. Most of his children resent their father his long life and his reluc-

tance to give up power. They're also not fond of Gerontius' pet Caryatid, Blinky, whom many of his offspring believe he loves more than any of them.

Today, Gerontius keeps his court in the Spire of Hive Primus, surrounded by throngs of advisors and bodyguards. One eye is focused on the billions toiling for his benefit, and the other on the Imperium, lest they meddle in his affairs.



BADZONES

ENTER THE BADZONES

The underhive of Hive Primus is home to hundreds of settlements and holesteads. Some, like Irontree, Raffik's Folly, and the Tangle are built into the fabric of the hive, their streets hanging over yawning pits or latched onto the side of the primary heat sink. Others, like Dust Falls, Brunner's Dome or Port Mad Dog, guard gates, tunnels and bridges leading from one zone or another, their inhabitants growing rich off trade between clans and gangs. A few, most notably Misfortune and Rust Town, are held together by the singular will of a powerful individual, and survive in spite of their location or the industries of the underhive.

Then there are the Badzones. These are the wastelands between established towns and holes, where old trails and tunnels link one place to another, but there is little in the way of human habitation. Outlaws, muties and outlanders often call the Badzones home, having been driven out of more civilised society to eke out an existence among the rats and ripper jacks. Raiders, be they human, or otherwise, are the least of the horrors the Badzones have to offer, and faulty machinery, shambling horrors and carnivorous fungi can all kill a hiver as quickly as an outlaw's bullet.

HIVE PERILS

Among the various Badzones there are regions with particularly dire reputations. Perhaps the worst of these is the Ruin, a Badzone that sprawls out across the underhive roughly midway between Dust Falls and the hive bottom. This no man's land is a haunted waste, filled with every conceivable horror the underhive has to offer. It is also a known hideout of Chaos cults and xenos worshippers, there being some who say that in its depths whole alien armies are being mustered, awaiting the day when they might rise up and tear Hive Primus down.

Only the boldest gangs dare to brave the Ruin, often on the promise of creds from the Guild or some crime boss. As a known bolthole for outlaws it also attracts its fair share of Bounty Hunters, lone killers scouring the Badzone for signs of their prey. Most of those who go into the Ruin don't return, or if they do, they come back scarred, missing limbs or having been driven mad by the things they've seen.

In addition to outlaws and murderers, not to mention rats the size of cyber-mastiffs, the Ruin is filled with the kinds of perils that are only possible when complex artificial environments are subjected to thousands of years of neglect and pollution. Machines and servitors that once faithfully served Mankind have become hazards, their mindless routines fatal to anyone who gets in their way. After all, a mono-task servitor whose only job is to screw lumens into the ceiling of a dome might seem harmless, unless it decides a ganger looks a lot like a lumen...

The failure of these environments and their systems has also given birth to all manner of hostile flora, from carnivorous plants to sump jellies – leading to the popular hive saying 'Just because it doesn't have a mouth doesn't mean it can't eat you.'

ENCLAVE OF THE DEAD

The Ruin is a haven for those individuals deemed unsuitable to live among civilised society. Gangs of escaped slaves and pit fighters make homes among the ruins, fighting to survive on rat meat and wall-scrapings against corrupted-servitors and mutant monsters. From the edges of the Badzone they raid established settlements, dragging their loot and captives back into the shadows.

As bad as Ratskin renegades and mutie warbands might be, perhaps the most feared residents of the Ruin are the living dead. One of the reasons travellers avoid the Ruin like the plague is because of the actual plague. Known as the neuron virus (believed to be the remnant of some ancient Dark Age bio-weapon, or perhaps the influence of some malign power) it can turn humans and critters alike into brain-dead zombies. The Ruin is a well-known nest of the infected, with the occasional herd of the undead shambling out into the sentry guns of Two Tunnels or trying to claw its way up the Abyss into Dust Falls. All this would be bad enough if there weren't pyskers with the power to command those afflicted by the neuron virus, and turn them into their own personal army.

In the Ruin, the dubious honour of being named lord of the dead belongs to Karloth Valois. An off-worlder, Karloth was drawn to Necromunda by the Mercator Pallidus, and once served the rulers of the Corpse Guild. When his dark psychic gifts were uncovered, he was forced to flee downhive, where some claim he contracted the neuron plague, becoming something altogether more and less than he once was. Able to command those touched by the plague, and spread it through the hive, it was only a matter of time before Karloth was declared underhive enemy number one. Despite the fact the Redemption claim to have killed the necromancer (more than once, depending on who you ask), rumours still say he 'lives' within the Ruin, biding his time and plotting his revenge.

DUST FALLS

AN ANCIENT AVALANCHE

Dust Falls straddles the divide between Hive City and the underhive of Hive Primus, and is a centre for gangs, Guilders and criminals. Like most things in the underhive, however, Dust Falls was created by chance. Much of the lower hive is made up of domes, each a cavern of plasteel, pipes, factories and hab blocks all stacked on top of each other. Between these domes even more tunnels, conduits and cables link everything together. Over centuries of neglect, the spaces between the domes gather dust – a lot of dust – among other things. Sometimes this dust builds up so much it causes a collapse. Such was the case with Dust Falls, an avalanche of powdery detritus smashing down all the way to hive bottom. Around the ragged hole left behind, the settlement of Dust Falls grew, a place where travellers from above and below could traverse the hive. While the disaster that created the settlement has long since faded into memory, the dust still falls from above, a fine pale rain that covers everything and gives the town its name.

GATEWAY TO THE UNDERHIVE

The wealth of Dust Falls comes from the Abyss. This is the name given to the yawning chasm that dominates the centre of the town. Scavengers, gangs and Guilders all use its hanging cages to be lowered down and winched up and out of the underhive. Given the depth of the Abyss – literally miles of dark all the way to hive bottom – landings have been built at various heights down the shaft face. Some lead to other settlements like Two Tunnels or Dead End Pass, while others have their own transport cages leading down into the Badzones below, or even deeper. This area in the middle of the settlement is collectively known as the Gates, and it is why most folks come to Dust Falls. The town itself hangs from the upper edges of the Abyss and then sprawls out into the wreckage around it left by the ancient avalanche. Roads wind their way through this morass and on toward Hive City above, and are constantly filled with traffic.

The second most important part of Dust Falls is its markets, known locally as the Haggie Market, or just the 'Haggie.' Here the wealth pulled up from the underhive is sold to traders from Hive City and tourists who visit the town for a taste of the wild frontier – though one that is not too far from home. The importance of Dust Falls also means both the Guilds and the Clan Houses have heavily invested in its infrastructure. Warehouse silos and Guilder slave pens litter its outer streets. The town's largest structures are the fortified Trader's Tower controlled by the Mercator Gelt, and the Six Clans drinking hole, designated neutral ground by the Clan Houses. The size of Dust Falls also affords it a Palanite Enforcer presence, and Precinct 1313 looms over the settlement entrance like a dark sentinel, its troopers watching travellers come and go through the sights of their guns.

COUNCIL OF DUST

Like most underhive settlements, Dust Falls is a den of criminality tempered by the greed of the Guilders and the brutality of Lord Helmawr's Palanite Enforcers. It is ruled over by a loose alliance of civic leaders and Guild Procurators tolerated by the local Enforcer Precinct Proctor. In fact, Proctor Clause Bauhein doesn't care much about the goings-on in Dust Falls as long as the caravans keep running and the Gates stay open. Only twice has the Proctor mustered the full might of his command. Once it was to lock down the town when Lord Helmawr's 17th son Gilbarn was found passed out in a Haggie parlour room, the second time was during the great Plague Zombie outbreak of '93, famous for Bauhein's chief sergeant Rosco barging into the taproom of the Six Clans and deputising everyone sober enough to stand.

The day-to-day running of the settlement falls to two individuals – Mistress of Coin Melerva and the Narco Lord Balthazar Van Zep. Together, they govern the Guild and criminal businesses respectively and, despite their differences, get along quite well. Gangs find equal employment with both and there is more than enough wealth flowing out of the Abyss for them to enjoy. This does not always prevent conflicts, as neither Melerva nor Balthazar is the type to play well with others. For the most part, Balthazar tolerates the hefty bribes he must pay to move chems up into Hive City while Melerva ignores the screams of those who have displeased the narco lord as they are thrown head-first into the Abyss.

All told, Dust Falls works for the various parties involved in its dealings. Discounting the crazies like the Brotherhood of the True Resurrection or the Hunters Triumvirate, it is pretty safe by Necromundan standards, making it one of the most important settlements in Hive Primus as one of the gateways that guard the underhive.



DUST WALL

Far to the southwest of Hive Primus, as the Spider Points give way to the Great Equatorial Wastes, the desert turns to burnt glass and chemical lakes. Here in the shadow of the Ashen Barrens lie the shattered remains of Hive Secundus. Around the xenos-ravaged hive stretch thousands of miles of fortifications, manned by hundreds of militia regiments – this is the Dust Wall.

THE FATE OF SECUNDUS

Over its long history, Necromunda has been the subject of planetary invasions, rebel uprisings and alien incursions. Since coming under the control of the Imperium some 10,000 years ago, the world has, for the most part, remained in human hands. There remain, however, places where the scars of these attacks remain open and festering. One such blight is Hive Secundus. Once it was known as the second city of Necromunda, a place of architectural and arboreal beauty among the drab unending horror of its neighbours. Then in 879.M41, an alien cult rose to power in its underhive, before spilling out to take over the upper levels. For over twenty years, war raged throughout Secundus – Palanite Enforcers, House gangs, guilders and planetary militia regiments sold their lives to contain the threat. Lord Kael Helmawr prepared for the worst – work was begun on a massive series of fortifications around Secundus to ensure nothing escaped.

Dubbed the Dust Wall, the finest military minds of Necromunda, counselled by agents of the Munitorum, the Adeptus Terra and the Adeptus Astartes of the Imperial Fists, de-



vised its construction. When at last the fortification neared completion the hive was cut off, the regiments and gangs fighting in its nightmare domes abandoned, and the whole site cleansed with nuclear fire. A thousand square miles were blasted from orbit, the hive broke, and its spire fell across the ash wastes. And yet, despite the might of the Imperium unleashed upon it, the alien cult and its monstrosities endured beneath the radioactive ruins.

LIFE ON THE WALL

In the century since the fall of Hive Secundus, the Dust Wall has changed. While guardsmen of the Necromundan Planetary Militia still watch the ash cloaked horizon beyond their gun pits and trench lines, hundreds of settlements now dot the wastes around them. When a hive falls, even under such perilous circumstances, there are those who see not danger, but rather a rich scavenging ground just waiting to be looted. Towns were built to service the soldiers of the walls, and those travellers who came to glimpse the ruins of Secundus through the ashen fog. Some of these settlements are little more than specks on the map, like Bane Town. Built in and around the hulls of a company of destroyed Baneblade tanks, it straddles the wall – each tank now a dust bar, scrap merchant or slop house. Others, like the Crater, which nestles in a pit left by a stray apocalypse missile, is a teeming settlement home to almost three thousand souls. The largest by far, however, is Ashgrad. Part of a tank refitting and repair complex, Ashgrad was abandoned by the militia not long after the war, when the precious Necromundan armoured divisions were withdrawn and replaced with static fortress battalions. House Orlock and the Guild of Coin were the first to move in, but since then, the Clan Houses and guilds have all staked a claim.

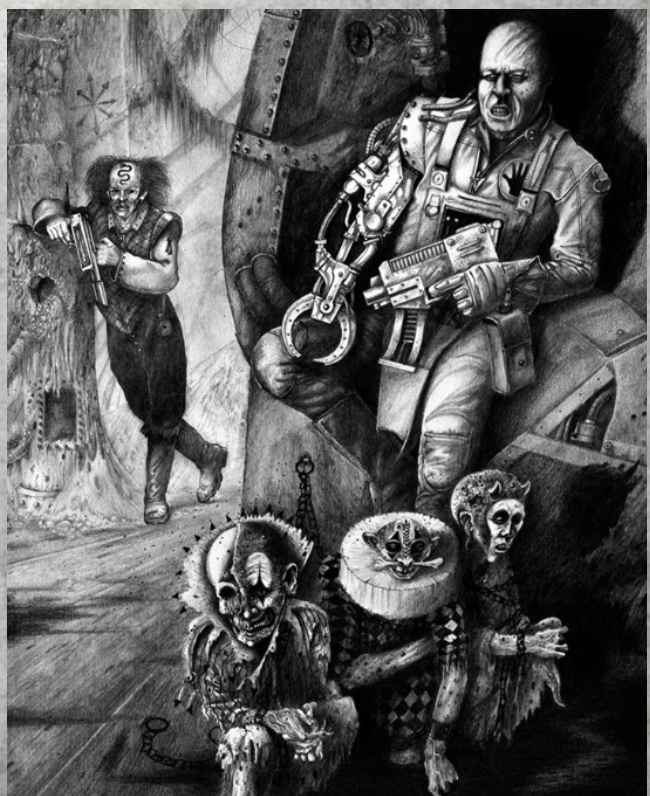


Ashgrad survives off the soldiers who frequent its drinking holes and gambling houses, and the scrappers who venture out into the no man's land beyond the wall to loot in the shadow of Secundus. In Scavenger's Row, gangs and wasters buy and sell all manner of things dug up from the ash deserts, from genuine xenos skulls to strange literature. Meanwhile in the Busted Skull, an old command bunker, travellers can try Ashgrad's infamous Gunshine Snakebite – made from real gunpowder (and snakes) – that even glows in the dark! All in all, Ashgrad is a place for gangs to try their luck in the wastes, sell their finds, and maybe even live to make the long trek back to civilisation.

HORRORS BENEATH THE DUST

Of course, gangs don't come to Ashgrad just for the Gunshine, or the view. The militia tolerates gangers and wasters sneaking off into no man's land to loot wrecks and ancient bodies, provided they don't stray too far, bring anything living back with them or fail to pay their bribes. Such ash runs are, of course, only lucrative for a gang up to a point – years of scavenging have left the area near the wall almost devoid of good loot. For a real score, a gang needs to venture out deeper into the exclusion zone surrounding the ruined hive city. Crossing the open wastes, by day or night, is practically suicide for a man or woman on foot, regardless of their personal protection. Fortunately for scavengers, thousands of tunnels run under the Dust Wall, part of the old mag-lev and under-road network that connected Secundus to the rest of the world. Dome Runners, cold traders, mutie guides and ex-militia guardsmen will all guide fighters through these tunnels – for a price.

Most of the tunnels were caved in or walled up when Secundus fell, but there remain pathways out under no man's land. If a gang is willing to risk run-ins with radioactive ash rippers, cannibal waster tribes, and xenos abominations, then they might be able to return with something of real value plundered from ancient vaults containing the remnants of Secundus' once peerless culture. For the bravest gangs, some tunnels even run all the way to Secundus and offer the chance to loot the fallen spire. Of course, actually entering the ruins of Hive Secundus is something else entirely...



RUST TOWN

BALD BRYEN'S DOMAIN

Quite possibly the oddest thing about Rust Town is not its location in the middle of the Bonedry, far from the main tunnels and domes of the underhive, but rather the fact that no one can say for sure how long it's existed.

Some traders swear the isolated settlement only sprung up a few cycles ago, and claim to have crossed the Bonedry dozens of times without ever laying eyes on it before then. Others reckon it to be among the oldest of the underhive settlements, saying its foundations were laid long before the cataclysm that created Dust Falls, or before Sump City rose from the slime of hive bottom. Why it exists in the middle of what constitutes a man-made desert is unclear, though hivers, Guilders and nobles all make the trek to its gates to trade and visit the court of Bald Bryen.

The enigmatic Bryen, a tall lanky man of indeterminate age and origin, is the self-proclaimed mayor of Rust Town. He rules over a settlement of hivers who are devoted to maintaining the Rust Town Run – Bald Bryen's deadly dungeon extravaganza. Scrappers and scavengers bring in their finds from the Bonedry, while caravans trade goods from farther afield, but in Rust Town the only thing the locals seem to produce are trinkets associated with their Rust Town Run. These range from Grinning Bryen gun belts and Runner Kill Coins to 'genuine' chrono crystal polishing kits. Even the town itself seems to exist solely for the run, its slanting streets and wonky buildings perched upon a plasteel hill containing the run itself.

THE RUST TOWN RUN

While Rust Town might not produce junk rounds, fungi paste, gunk, or any of the other substances useful to underhivers, it does have one thing in abundance – entertainment. The Rust Town Run is legendary throughout the underhive. Even in Hive City and the Spire, people have heard of the run, and challengers from throughout Hive Primus, and even beyond, have been known to make the journey to try their luck in Bryen's maze.

Each great cycle, Bryen invites challengers to brave his maze, these hopefuls entering into one of the mayor's lotteries to see who will be chosen. Even for those who aren't chosen to run, Bryen offers a chance for glory, this time as hunters. The hunters stalk the maze, trying to stop the runners reaching their goal (one of Bald Bryen's fabled chrono crystals), and earn creds for each one they can take out.

The run itself changes every time it is used, sometimes in subtle ways, such as a previously safe door now rigged with a deadly booby trap, and sometimes less subtly, like chambers being flooded with toxic chemicals or the entire run being filled with plague zombies. Typically the perils are

those gangs might face out in the Badzones, ranging from the grinding teeth of ancient machinery to pitch-black tunnels riddled with pitfalls. All this becomes even more challenging when hunters are shooting at the runners or trying to push them into pits of ripper jacks. While gangs rarely complete the run, each time it is held, the town's economy booms, and Bryen grows rich on the thousands of creds bet on the outcome.

CHRONO-CATACLYSM

Only a handful of gangs and individuals have ever won one of Bald Bryen's chrono crystals. Some of these crystals are still in the hands of their original owners, though many have been lost, stolen or sold. Hagan's Hole has one above the bar, sold to Hagan to cover an outlandish drinking tab by a notable underhive bounty hunter. Some drinkers claim the gem does strange things to the flow of time when you look at it – though that might just be the booze.

'One-Eyed' Kitty, a blade dancer out of Two Tunnels, has one too, given to her by an admirer. When she dances she wears the crystal in her navel, its sparkle mesmerising the audience. Then there's the one owned by Caustus the Chain Lord, set into the hilt of his shock lash. Its brilliance forms a stark contrast to the slaver's grimy appearance and broken grin.

To most hivers, these crystals are nothing more than fancy baubles, and their owners and placement throughout the



hive completely random. However, there are those who would argue otherwise. These rumour mongers claim Bald Bryen serves dark masters, and his crystals are part of some far reaching plan to bring about the Chrono-Cataclysm.

What is the Chrono-Cataclysm? Well, that varies depending on which drunken conspiracy theorist you ask. Some will tell you that it is a plot by the Immortal Cult of Necromunda to bring about a psychic awakening of all humanity, or perhaps a plan by the ancient Iron Lords of the Araneus Continuity to free Necromunda from the yoke of the Imperium. Others whisper that Rust Town was created by House Aranthus, that Bryen is in fact Bryen Aranthus, last true heir of his family, and the crystals are intended to turn back time and restore his bloodline. Then there are those who say Bald Bryen isn't an Aranthus at all, but an agent of the Throne. They suggest that his plans have already come to pass, and they are all living in an alternative reality created by the Ordo Chronos...



SUMP CITY

BOTTOM OF THE HIVE

Down the Abyss from Dust Falls, past the tunnels to Rust Town, Spoilheap and Port Mad Dog, the underhive grows dark. Deeper still, beneath the Delta-7 Badzones and the old ratskin trail to the White Wastes, the Abyss lives up to its name and the light of Dust Falls is hidden by miles of twisting tunnel. Finally, beyond the road to Two Tunnels and the Tangle, the Abyss reaches its end, opening up over the vastness of the hive bottom, and the frontier settlement of Sump City.

Rising up from the toxic sea around it, Sump City is the last port of call for gangs and guilders, who come here looking to seek wealth out in the midnight expanse of the hive bottom, or to sail out onto the sump sea in search of the sump spiders and their priceless diamond eyes. Sump City's only connection to the underhive is a series of ancient cable cars, the battered gondolas ferrying hivers up into the lowest levels of the Abyss, from where they can make the long journey back up to Dust Falls. Despite thin, poisonous air, chem-clouds that would make a Goliath's eyes water, and regular mutie raids, Sump City is almost as prosperous as Dust Falls. The wealth brought in by spider hunters, archeotech scavengers and sump prospectors ensures its scrap markets are filled with rare and valuable items. Traders from Two Tunnels, Port Mad Dog and Dust Falls ferry the best of these goods up the Abyss, and sell it on to the guilds – at a substantial mark-up of course.

This is largely possible because there is no formal Merchant Guild presence in Sump City. Despite agents of the Guild of Coin and Slave Guild frequenting its streets, the settlement has always been run by one gang or another. Up until recently, Sadie 'Original' Sinn and the Sump City Sirens did the job, though nobody has seen the Sirens for a while, and recently the Carrion Queens and the Iron Lords have been duelling over the settlement.

GREAT SPIDER HUNTERS

One of the principal industries of Sump City is the trade in giant spider eyes. Spire Nobles will pay a small fortune for these precious gems, with the largest worth enough for a slimedrifter captain to move uphive and live out their days in luxury. Harvesting the spider eyes, however, is no easy feat, and the larger the spider, the greater the challenge.

Even an immature sump spider is usually the size of a slave-Ogryn, with the largest as big as an Orlock battle-rig – gun turrets and all. With this in mind, serious hunters sail out in

massive armoured scrap-ships, often with flotillas of smaller craft to act as lookouts and bait-men, to herd the spider toward the big ship's gas-harpoons.

Of course, this is not always enough, and on the docks of Sump City, where hundreds of battered ships, barges and boats of all kinds hang out over the inky blackness of the sump, half-cut sump-sailors like to spin yarns of the ones that got away. The tale of the Hydra, and its captain Haagan Valgotha, is perhaps the most persistent of these.

So the story goes, Valgotha and his ship the Hydra were the greatest spider hunters to ever sail out of Sump City. Each cycle his crew brought in the largest hauls of spider eyes, and the grizzled old veteran could have retired many times over. But Valgotha was hunting a legend – the Great Albino Spider. Time and again the Hydra went out hunting the beast, and time and again its captain returned empty-handed – until one day, when the Hydra was overdue by many cycles, and a member of Valgotha's crew was found drifting on the sump, all alone and mad with fear. Valgotha had at last found his nemesis, and the man claimed he had seen both gigantic spider and sump captain sink beneath the slime, Valgotha still hacking at the beast's massive diamond eyes even as the black claimed him.

FORGOTTEN RICHES

While some hivers come to Sump City to crew slimedrifters and trade in spider eyes, many come to hunt for archeotech. It is a widely accepted truth of the underhive that the lower you go, the better your chances of finding great wealth become. Guilders, nobles and crime bosses regularly hire gangs to head out into the wilds of the hive bottom in search of lost treasures. These can be anything from tech left over from centuries past to veins of valuable scrap or pools of concentrated chemicals, rare underhive fungi, or even sump monsters for the fighting pits.

Gangs like the Covenant of Shadows offer protection for archeo-hunters, and claim to know the best places to explore. To no one's surprise, the Delaque gang seems to use each expedition to somehow advance their own standing in Sump City. Then there are enterprising individuals like 'Gruesome' Gale, who professes to be the best Dome Runner in all hive bottom, and guarantees that with her, you'll come back richer than you went out – or you won't come back at all.



NAVIS MORTIS

Necromunda is an ancient world; its endless ash deserts littered with half-buried ruins and lost settlements and only the nomadic tribes and mutant creatures who walk the wastes truly know what lies beyond the walls of the hive cities. However, there are places so infamous, even the Clan gangs know their name – such as the ship graveyard known as the Navis Mortis.

ANCIENT WRECKS

Thousands of years before the birth of the current Lord Helmawr, there was a schism within the Imperial House. In 459. M37, Lord Hyrodo Helmawr died suddenly while on a hunting expedition without naming an heir. His two eldest children, Lady Cinderak and Lord Gothrul both shared a claim to the mantle of planetary governor and they fought each other bitterly for over a century for the right to rule. Eventually, Cinderak triumphed and imprisoned Gothrul within his hive, the Needle, which had been one of Necromunda's first spaceports. To cement her control of Necromunda she constructed the Eye of Selene – part space station, part trading hub – and declared all inbound off-world goods and all outbound planetary production would now pass solely through Hive Primus.

In the centuries that followed, hundreds of ship captains thought to brave this blockade and land at the Needle. Cinderak proved the worth of her words and, as the years ground by, the wastes around the Needle grew thick with vessels shot down by the Eye of Selene and the Necromundan system fleet. To the nomads, it was known as the Time of Raining Iron, for not a cycle passed without a flaming wreck falling from the sky, and the growing field of wreckage soon became known as the Navis Mortis. Despite being a rich picking ground, Cinderak declared the region off-limits – she refused to let anyone profit from cargoes carried by the dead captains, and soon the borders of the crash zone were heavily patrolled by the armoured ash runners of the Palanite Enforcers. Of course, where there is loot, there will be looters.

LORD HELMAWR'S GRAVEYARD

As the centuries have slipped by, ship captains no longer try to run the blockade and instead accept the hefty tariffs imposed for passing through the Eye of Selene. Smugglers still attempt to bring illegal goods to Necromunda but usually do so far from the hives. Meanwhile, among the wrecks of the Navis Mortis, an ash waste society has sprung up. From their starship fortresses, tribes wage war on each other and anyone foolish enough to enter the graveyard. Some are settled ash waste tribes who have put down roots, some are muties looking for a safe place to weather the constant ash storms, but many more are outlaws who have been driven out of the hives. Settlements and tribes take their names from the ships they control, like the red-ro-

bed Occluddites who live in the broken bowels of the heavy hauler Occluid Dias, the Ash Terrors, who rule the wreck of the fleet monitor Pax Terra, or the trade-settlement of Pilgrim's Grave, built beneath the gutted hull of the Ministorum chartist vessel the Solar Pilgrim. Clan House gangs and guilders can also be found in the graveyard, drawn by the chance to find lost treasures. They come up the old scrap roads from Gothrul's Needle, or down past the ruins of Hive Arcos, or from the north and south around the far edges of the Dust Wall. The Guild of Coin maintains trade towns around the edges of the Navis Mortis, patrolled by Enforcers, ensuring Lord Helmawr gets his cut of everything to come out of the graveyard.

Visitors to the graveyard have to contend with the locals – powerful warlords that rule from the conning towers of their ship-fortresses, commanding the wastes out to the range of their guns. The Noctus-Riders are perhaps the largest of these gangs, their boss, 'the Humungan', an eight-foot-tall masked savage, who somehow awakened the Noctus' void shields. His main rivals, the Occluddites and the Sons of Ash, have at times challenged his rule, capturing nearby wreck-fortresses and turning their guns on the Noctus. Inevitably these ship to ship engagements across the vast desert wastes end in the Noctus' shields keeping it intact, while ancient lance weapons and macro cannons pound the other wrecks to dust.



WAR OF THE DEAD

In recent years the tribes, gangs and settlements of the Navis Mortis have been forced to band together against a common foe – the Grave Wyrm. A vast underground brainleaf plant, the wyrm extends out from its nest for hundreds of kilometres, its tendrils reaching up through the ash into dozens of wrecks. During Necromunda's long winter, the plant slumbers and gangs risk warrens of brainleaf zombies to raid the ships it has infested. A few bold gang leaders, like the Orlock Road Boss Ajax Bones, have even tried to find the heart of the Grave Wyrm and kill it. Ajax, like so many before him, ended up vanishing into the graveyard, though one of his lieutenants, Wall-eyed Joe, was later seen trying to eat someone's brain.

As the season of fire comes to the graveyard, and Necromunda enters its summer cycle, the wyrm stirs. Amid the seasonal ash storms and burning sun shafts that occasionally break through the planet's toxic cloud layer, hordes of brainleaf zombies shamle out across the desert. Made up of ash wasters, luckless scavengers and even the long-dead crew of the ships themselves, these hordes seek to spread the dominion of the Grave Wyrm. Five times Pilgrim's Grave has been attacked, guilders and gangers fighting shoulder to shoulder with outlaws and ash tribesmen to see off the undead. Each time, the hordes were larger and the margin of victory more narrow. About the only place safe from the wyrm seems to be the Noctus, its guns sweeping the desert clear of zombies as the Humungan stands on its battlements laughing.



PORT MAD DOG

18

Hive cities are macrocosms of human society, millions of citizens concentrated into a towering metropolis of plasteel and ferrocrete. Sealed (mostly at least) against the hostile atmosphere of Necromunda, these societies endure via ancient mechanical systems and brutal feudalism. Yet even a self-contained city needs connection to the outside world. Gatehouses, landing grounds and ash ports each form gateways to the toxic world beyond. One such place is the settlement of Port Mad Dog.

GATEWAY TO NECROMUNDA

Every cycle, whether under sickly moonlight or the feeble rays of Necromunda's sun, billions of tons of weapons and

other equipment are shipped through Hive Primus and then off-world through the Eye of Selene in low orbit. These goods come from the hive itself, the surrounding hives of the Palatine Cluster, and hundreds of other more distant hives.

The finest goods are brought in by strato-plane heavy lifters, flown over the toxic cloud layers from one hive to the next. The most valuable mass-produced goods arrive via transit-tubes or what remains of the old underground mag-lev lines that still connect much of Necromunda. For the rest, overland convoys haul all kinds of materials and finished goods across Necromunda's wastes. And when they reach Hive Primus, it is through the great Ash Gates that they are brought.



The largest of the gates is the one at Port Mad Dog, a settlement that clings to the edge of Hive City Primus and sprawls out into the wastes. Such is the importance of Port Mad Dog that it is ruled with an iron fist by the Coin Lords of the Mercator Gelt, the guilders given special authority by the Imperial House to ensure the flow of cargo never stops. It is a responsibility that Hagar Cripplefingers, Lord Miser of the local Mercator Gelt family, takes very seriously, and gangs from Dust Falls to Big Hole know that if you want easy creds, Hagar is always willing to pay for hired guns to keep the peace.

LAW OF THE WASTES

Hagar's peace, of course, usually involves making sure the Guild of Coin is making money, while his rivals go begging. Hagar's Longshore clanners make sure that any "acceptable losses" permitted by the Imperial House are confined to the families of Guilds other than his own.

A long-standing rivalry between the Guild of Coin and the Slave Guild has seen violence erupt more than once between rival clans and gangs on the streets of Port Mad Dog. It doesn't help that the settlement's exposure to the wastes means it exists in a perpetual twilight of ash clouds and toxic fog, the massive stab-lights of the primary loading domes struggling to illuminate the clustered habs and slave pens that nestle among the long rows of guilder warehouses. In this poisonous gloom murder comes easy, and body peddlers make a good living clearing up the streets after each night cycle.

Most of the conflict in Port Mad Dog is centred on the massive ore conveyers. Once, these were just huge lifts, designed to transport land trains up from the ash roads. Over the centuries the conveyers have been covered with ramshackle structures that have turned them into moving shanty towns, each one a settlement in its own right. While a conveyer is making the ponderous journey from the ground to the port, its inhabitants, and passengers, are cut off, and many gangs use this opportunity to strike. However, woe to the gang who gets caught mid-heist when a conveyer reaches level with the port. Autocannon turrets and flamers prove Hagar has a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to messing with Guilder trade.

This doesn't stop the gangs. The Sump City Sirens enjoyed a long run raiding guilder convoys, ambushing them on the conveyers, before rappelling down into the wastes to safety. Their run might have continued, had Hagar not hidden hundreds of murder-servitors in the shipments targeted by the Sirens.

SCUM OF THE HIVE

Given its location on the edge of Hive Primus – linked to the hive itself, the upper reaches of the underhive, and the Spider Points – Port Mad Dog is a natural habitat for scum of all kinds. For outlaws and criminals, it offers a connection to the sanctioned organisations of the hive, like the Guilds or the Clan Houses, allowing them to move illegal goods or visit established trading posts. The famous Mad Dog Fog also works in their favour, as it's hard to identify a ganger when you can't see more than a few yards and everyone is wearing a respirator.

Wanderers, from ash waste nomads to muties, also frequent the dust markets of Port Mad Dog, selling items they've found out in the wastes and buying goods only found within the hives, like reliable weapons and processed foodstuffs. Of course, Hagar doesn't like these wanderers in the settlement proper, and so most are confined to the shanty sprawl beneath the conveyers. Known as the Ashheap, this is a warren of adobe ash-brick and corroded sheet metal huts. Periodic purges ensure the Ashheap doesn't get too big, though even when an ash storm inevitably obliterates it, its residents emerge from their pits and build it once more.

The most interesting residents of Port Mad Dog can be found in the Hall of Bullets. Here, in an old Imperial shrine paved with spent shell casings, bounty hunters and hive scum come to sell their services to prospective gangs, crime bosses and guild families. Buyers can walk among the alcoves as the hired guns brag about their deeds, or show off their skills with pistols and blades. Fighters like Mad Dog Mono and Janus Gor got their start in the Hall of Bullets. It remains the first stop for many gangers when they come to Port Mad Dog, looking to buy some extra muscle or sell their skills at killing.

HERETIC'S HOLE

DEN OF HERESY

Far from the inhabited regions of the underhive, where the few still functioning flood lights and guttering lumens grow faint, ancient paths and tunnels lead to Heretic's Hole. Only the most dedicated travellers come this far, the journey in itself almost as dangerous as the destination. And yet, through the tangled Badzones of the outlands, the settlement endures, built into the hull of an ancient spaceship, itself jutting from a lake of slime. So old is the vessel that houses Heretic's Hole that it conforms to no known Imperial pattern, only the barely legible human scrip on its hull 'AN-A-R' hinting at its origins. The ramshackle town clings to the partially sunken ship like some kind of obscene growth, its citizens living inside gaps between hull plating, gloomy cargo holds, and the ship's flame-scarred engine mount. The most prominent inhabitants of Heretic's Hole reside in the vessel's rusting conning tower. This twisted spire rises up from the town centre at an alarming angle, but provides an excellent vantage to see anyone approaching the settlement.

The people of Heretic's Hole are as you would expect for such a lawless and remote place. They are the scum and outlaws who have been thrown out of more respectable places like Dust Falls or Rust Town, or those who find themselves with a pressing need to disappear. As an outlaw settlement, no-one is turned away from its gates, provided they are willing to respect its ruler. Ursan Graves, the current overlord of Heretic's Hole, has only one rule: if you do something he doesn't like, he'll kill you. Graves and his cabal of 'Lost Ones' have survived due in no small part to the overlord's psychic gifts of precognition. Rumour has it that he was once one of Lord Helmwar's slave psykers, reared in the Psykanarium of the spire and put to work hunting down recidivists. After escaping he went to the only place he believed to be beyond the reach of the Palanite Enforcers – Heretic's Hole.

Since then, Graves and his coven of wyrds have had to contend with numerous gang assaults, zombie outbreaks and the odd wandering sump horror attracted by the big metal tin full of crunchy things. In recent times, the crime lord Balthazar Van Zep has taken an interest in Heretic's Hole, and its access to the hive bottom, as a means of circumventing the monopoly on spider eyes and deep sump fungi held by the rulers of Sump City. So far though, Graves has countered every one of Balthazar's moves and sent the crime lord's agents back to him in pieces.

TRUE RESURRECTION

Ursan Graves' open door policy on outlaws has its drawbacks, however. While the welcoming atmosphere has seen his motley collection of wyrds grow exponentially, it has also seen some less than desirable elements take root. For as long as Heretic's Hole has existed, it has been a favo-

ured haunt of Cawdor gangs. The frontier nature of the settlement meant it served as a good forward base for scavenging expeditions into the outer Badzones of the underhive, while the non-judgemental locals didn't seem to mind the lax personal hygiene of the ragged gangers. Graves tolerates them provided they direct their religious zeal toward the Badzones and not his subjects. It is, however, not a perfect system.

Over the years, Graves has clashed with Cawdor gangs who thought they could 'clean up' Heretic's Hole. Each time, though, the gangers have come off the worse for it – like the time Old Tym the Preacher's head exploded in the middle of giving a rousing speech about killing wyrds, or when the Pipe Rats gang tried to attack the tower and were found the next day all inexplicably turned inside out. Recently however, a new and more insidious threat has begun taking root in the settlement. A collection of outlaw Cawdor gangs have taken up residence in Heretic's Hole, calling themselves the Cult of the True Resurrection. Outcasts from the Clan House, they believe that only with the death of the Emperor and his domain can the galaxy be reborn, and they will spread their message to all who will listen. Part of their crazed beliefs also espouses self-mutilation, the cult cutting off limbs, putting out eyes and carving their own flesh to show their devotion to the notion that all things must die. Most of the other inhabitants of Heretic's Hole avoid those areas controlled by the True Resurrection, but their influence is building. More worrying than their dark beliefs is that they have found purchase in other settlements such as Sump City and Dust Falls, converting those dedicated to the Redemption or who have lost all hope or reason. Though Graves keeps an eye on the cult and its activities, they are not his main concern. He has learned that there is a secret war going on within House Cawdor between the traditionalists of the Redemption and extremists such as those who believe in the Path of the True Resurrection. It is a war Graves fears might one day find its way to his town, and one he prepares for everyday by bringing in new outlaw gangs and more wyrds for his Lost Ones.

WYRD AND WONDERFUL

The true value of Heretic's Hole for underhive gangs comes not from its criminal elements or black markets, but rather its large collection of wyrds. Outlaws willingly brave the strange occurrences of the settlement, like ghostly apparitions of long-dead gangers or reflective surfaces showing glimpses of the future, with the hope of contracting the services of one of Grave's Lost Ones. For most outlaw gangs, the risk of employing a psychic Hired Gun is no more dangerous than spending a night cycle out in the Badzones, or eating at Heretic's Hole's main drinking hole, the Slopper's Grave. Annoyingly, many wyrds tend to find gangs before the gangs even go looking for them. More than one visitor to the



settlement has been greeted at the gates by a shifty-looking individual claiming their fates are intertwined – sometimes these individuals even turn out to be genuine psykers.

Psychic phenomena are a daily occurrence in Heretic's Hole. Hive-wisps are often seen lurking at the edges of the settlement, luring gangers out into the wilds and their inevitable doom – or sometimes to hidden stashes, giving credence to the belief they are the spirits of dead hivers. Frost creeps around the chambers of the void ship with a life of its own, while ancient dead screens might suddenly flicker to life showing glowing eyes, grasping hands or grinning fangs. Gangers might even experience "Heretic's Luck," which is often another way of saying "misfortune." Guns jam at

the most inopportune time or perfectly good blades become dull while in their sheaths. Perhaps the most notorious incident related to these phenomena was when Venators came for Joe Twice-Shy and tried to execute him outside the Slopper's Grave. After three broken ropes, two failed beheadings and every gun the Venators' had misfiring, they decided the bounty wasn't worth the effort and gave Joe a job instead.

LINGUA PRIMUS

Necromunda is home to thousands of languages and dialects, each hive and region having its own unique version of Imperial Gothic. High Gothic (the language of the Adeptus Terra) is seldom spoken below the spire. Even the various types of Low Gothic (the day-to-day tongue used, with much regional variation, across the Imperium) are typically restricted to Hive City and the Merchants Guild – though most gangers and underhivers know enough to get by. Each clan has its own local dialect based on common clan argot, or words and phrases appropriated from other languages, or a bastardisation of Low Gothic.

GOLIATH GUTTER TONGUE

House Goliath has a broad vernacular when it comes to clan speak. Common words such as “skinnies” and “starvins” are both terms Goliaths use for non-clanners, though they have their own terms for specific rival clans. “Wastes” is a common Goliath term for Van Saar, while they like to refer to Eschers as “vyys”, “seks” or “vens” because of the all-female clan’s heavy use of poison. Guilders are called “scrugs” possibly a reference to Hive Lugs, an old term referencing the Merchants Guild’s role in Necromundan society.

Alphas, the Over-tyrant and Lord Helmawr are all “boss-meyn”, or “korf-boss”, representing a boss or forge boss respectively. Goliaths are also rightly proud of their forge fanes and have their own terms for these sacred places. To a Goliath, his forge is his “korf”, or “meyn-korf” if he wants to accentuate the fact it is his home. His gang is his “korf-bro-heyem”, or forge-brothers. Vatborn, natborn and unborn also have their own terms within the clan, known as “bron-embo”, “bron-tru” and “bron-ost” respectively.

Despite this wealth of distinctive clan words and phrases, Goliaths don’t communicate by spoken language alone. In the deafening roar of the factorum, the Goliath use their own kind of sign language known as Half-hand. Using one hand, the Goliath signs common phrases like “stand back”, “help me” or “fight me.” Gangs have further adapted Half-hand to include their tattoos, the fighters gesturing to body markings with different signs to communicate “enemy ahead”, “bad air” or “scrag ‘em!”. This level of sophistication is often lost on their enemies, who think the Goliath are merely slapping their muscles, or making obscene gestures, not communicating battle tactics.

ESCHER CLAN ARGOT

Of all the Clan Houses on Necromunda, House Escher is perhaps the most multilingual. High Gothic is spoken within the vaulted chambers of the Council of Crones, and is the favoured language when dealing with the Great Houses or representatives of the Imperium. Meanwhile, Low Gothic is also spoken by the Escher of Hive City, especially those who must deal with off-world merchants or Cold Traders, it being the ‘common tongue’ of the hive world.

House Escher, because of its long history and dealings with all of the Great Houses, has many groups who speak the noble languages of Necromunda, such as the picture dialects of House Ran Lo or the sprac-speak of House Greim. The largest of these groups, however, know how to speak Ulanti Reg’le Argot, the language of the Regent House of Necromunda. House Escher’s own clan dialect borrows many words from Ulanti Argot, like “dreckos”, the Ulanti word for rubbish or waste, or “carvos”, a specific strike with a narrow bladed weapon. In gang culture, these words are often shortened and mixed in with regular underhive dialects or gutter speak. So for example a “drek” is a “dodgy situation”, as in “she’n stepped proper-right into drek”.

Individual Escher gangs have their own dialects as well, created to allow a gang’s members to talk to one other without letting their enemies know exactly what they are saying. Metals and gems form a basis for a lot of these dialects, and often each gang might attribute different meanings to them. When one gang says something is all “nickel and gelt” it might mean it is good, while another gang might decide these words are bad. Likewise, a “jade” or “jet” might be a hardened fighter, a useless hiver, or anything in between.

ORLOCK ROAD SLANG

House Orlock is a melting pot of dialects and languages from across Necromunda. The far ranging settlements controlled by the Clan House incorporate people from all corners of the world, and its gangers usually talk in a mix of Low Gothic, Waster, Duster or Drudge.

Duster clan cant is common to those who must traverse the wastes, phrases like “voltrum dai” or “kaeyan dai” used as greetings depending on the season, while Duster hand signs, like the rotated fist that means one cycle, or the splayed fingers swept over the sky indicating a storm front coming in, are used without thought. By contrast, Drudge words are based on a form of pidgin Gothic, the words themselves seldom having more than one syllable. A “tor”, for instance, is a factorum, while “gids” are Guilders and “seers” are bosses.

Orlock gangs who spend any amount of time outside the hive cities are also likely to pick up Waster, the language of the outlands. Wasters have lots of words for things hivers seldom use, like the sky, as well as almost a hundred different words for ash – ranging from “fuma”, the fine ash that falls like mist and finds its way through the smallest cracks, to “atar”, the burning ash that clings to everything it touches and eats through respirator seals.

VAN SAAR TECHNO-LINGUA

The House of Artifice prides itself on the sophistication of its communication. While other Clan Houses might engage in crude or base versions of more evolved languages, members of House Van Saar use binary codes and ancient dialect forms to talk to one another.

Among the Archeoteks, this is especially prevalent as they use a tongue known as Tek-Nik-El. This was handed down through the generations from the first of their kind, who themselves claim descent from those first colonists of Necromunda. Tek-Nik-El is a form of ancient Terran, and uses words like Dosrite – a term to denote someone speaks true – or Harshtarg – a word that can mean ‘everything I say is now connected’ or ‘heed my words for they carry great import’

It is from Tek-Nik-El that many Van Saar objects and jobs derive their names, like the Koders who mind-wipe mono-task servitors, or the Tek-Jacks, whose job it is to follow power cables to their true source.

Over the centuries, House Van Saar has also been influenced by its association with the Adeptus Mechanicus and the worship of the Omnisiah. Though the faith is still a small part of the Clan House, and these connections are mostly made through the passing down of archprints to the factorums of Necromunda, some of the tongue of the Red Planet has found a home with the clanners of House Van Saar.

The most prevalent of these is the binharic cant practised by the lowest echelons of the tech priesthood. Van Saar gangs have adopted this, as it is a code few other gangs can crack – the varying code bursts sound like background noise to the untrained ear. Sometimes the Van Saar even turn the cant into actual words – phrases like all ones and no zeros or two by none are instantly recognisable as terms for untrustworthy fighters or places.

CAWDOR PILGRIM CANT

Even the lowest members of the House of Faith speak in religious phrases and ritual greetings. So ingrained in their culture are these liturgies of the Redemption that they talk in little else, and two Cawdor clanners can carry on a lengthy conversation using nothing but the words of the faith. For example, one might remark ‘On Sentinels Walls did the Golden Giant die, his doom the bell that rings yet still,’ to which the other might say “‘I hear it tolling” spoke the pilgrim, purged of fear by the Gene-Father, purged of doubt by the World-Master.’

To outsiders, there seems little meaning in these rote phrases, but to speakers well-versed in the teaching of the faith, they are laden with information. Most seem to allude to the Imperial Creed, as seen through the lens of the Redemption. References to the Father, the Great Deceiver and the Enemy Beyond, can all be found in the works of the Ministorum. Over centuries they have become distorted on Necromunda – the ‘Father’ is sometimes used to refer to Lord Helmawr rather than the God-Emperor, just as the ‘Great Deceiver’ can be any enemy of the faith, not just the ancient enemy of Mankind.

Pilgrim cant is also commonly used by House Cawdor, often mixed in with their own faith speech. The cant is a more religious form of Low Gothic – developed over the millennia by lay priests and missionaries who needed a way of conveying the ideals of the Imperial Creed to the savage populations of far-flung worlds or rallying a diverse people around a single cause.

In the case of Necromunda, pilgrim cant was brought to the planet by the Ministorum and became popular for those travelling between the hives. For the Cawdor, they enjoy using it when speaking with other Low Gothic speakers as it makes them feel superior to the rest of the population.

DELAQUE DARK TONGUE

Of all the languages spoken on Necromunda, by far the most unusual is that of the Delaque. While they pride themselves on being multilingual, conversant in the tongues of the other clans so they might better delve into their secrets, the language they speak among themselves is ancient and unknowable by any not within their house. It is whispered that the Delaque Dark Tongue, as outsiders often refer to it, is not a human language at all, but a remnant of a lost age of the galaxy, when speech itself was unknown to men.

The house also takes great care to limit the use of the language outside the clan, though fragments do sometimes slip through. The phrase ‘Chuhan-R’lega-Niss-Chulua-Riss’ has appeared more than once in spidery script scrawled on the walls in dark corners of the underhive of Hive Primus, and it seems one the Delaque themselves use frequently when greeting each other. While it is possible that not even the Delaque know the true translation of the speech, some believe it refers to something ancient on Necromunda itself, and approximately means ‘The Deathless Sleeper Waits, Beneath the Dead World.’ Most of the Dark Tongue is like this – the meanings of the words hinted at only in rumour. Those who say they know what they mean are unsure of how they even came by the knowledge, only that they are sure of the truth of what they speak.

Other phrases, like ‘Shun-akus-Vor-foralonith-Chu-vaya-Chu-vor-Kun’ seem to be invocations. Underhivers have seen the Delaque intoning the words over fallen members of their clan, as if they were commending their bodies to a higher power or giving a dark blessing for some unknown service to the clan. Some of these witnesses, the ones who are still willing to speak of what they saw, swear the Delaque paused as they spoke over these bodies – as if the bodies themselves were speaking back...

THE REDEMPTION

24

Who beholding the filth and degradation of the Underhive could doubt that the people of Necromunda have had visited on them a terrible punishment, but not a punishment undeserved? For are not those who dwell in this hive prone to every kind of immorality and excess? The hive is swollen with corruption and it must be cleansed, and made into a realm of piety and purity. So the Cult of the Emperor's Redemption believes.

The Redemption is a cult who believe that the only way to achieve redemption for themselves, Necromunda and ultimately mankind, is to cleanse it of sinfulness. This cleansing is best achieved by fire, which leaves no trace of corruption and by the death of the corrupt so that there taint cannot spread from them to others who may yet be redeemed.

BEGINNINGS AND BELIEFS

The Redemption bases its beliefs on the Imperial Creed which holds that mankind is ruled and guided by The Immortal God Emperor. While the Imperial Creed has definite militant overtones the Redemption has taken it one stage further. Originating in Hive Primus the original Redemptionists looked at the lives of toil by the inhabitants of hive city, the unreachable luxury of the nobles and the violent anarchy of the Underhive and concluded that they were in a living hell. The first Redemptionists were penitents and ascetics who took to practices such as flagellation and fasting with relish. Over time the cult grew drawing in many. Slowly the word spread to the gunslingers and holesteaders who dwelt in the dark of the Underhive. Perhaps it was that contact between the early Redemption and the hives anarchic under belly that changed the cult into the wrathful monster it is now. For it was not long after this point that leaders of the Redemptionist cult began to preach against the corruption that existed around them. No longer was the cleaning and purification of the body and soul merely a matter for the individual; now the purity of all was the concern of all true Redemptionists. There was one obvious source of sin and corruption, from out of which came the foul liquors that rotted the mind and bred wickedness beneath their feet, the Underhive. So the Redemption began its never ending war for purity; purity at any cost. The beliefs of the Redemption are many and various but the core belief is that The God Emperor of Mankind is manifest proof of mankind's holy destiny to rule the stars. The sinfulness that is all around them keeps mankind from fulfilling its destiny.

So the duty of the faithful is to remove the sin which holds back mankind; to cleanse it of its chains of impurity. Around the core belief of the Redemption there are numerous other pieces of doctrine that make up the basic tenants of faith for a follower of the Redemption: These include numerous rules about behaviour and conduct, prohibitions against the consumption of narcotics and alcohol, the requirement for

daily periods of self flagellation and prayer and the obligation for the righteous to hide their faces (this is famously adhered to by members of house Cawdor, but it is usually only required that followers hide their faces during gatherings and while undertaking holy activities). Crucially though the Redemption believe that three sins encompasses, and surpass all others. These are the sins of Abomination, Witchery and Heresy. Abomination is sin and corruption made manifest by the distortion and corruption of the flesh into unnatural forms, generally referred to as mutation. Witchery is the ability to use, and use of unnatural powers. Heresy is refusing the truth of the Redemption or working against its holy purpose. As it might be imagined this makes most citizens of the Underhive the worst kind of sinners

THE FAITHFUL

The faithful of the Redemption are not merely the masked terrors that reeve through the Underhive. The way of the Redemption has its adherents throughout Hive City. Smelt workers, street hawkers, corpse handlers and slag hawlers all may be followers of the Redemption. Even amongst the ruling houses of Hive City there are believers. Some of the faithful declare their beliefs openly, but there are more who keep it hidden, and only emerge masked and hooded to join their fellows in acts of worship and witch burnings. Above the faithful are the rulers and guides of the Redemption; the Priesthood. Most people think of the Redemptor Priest at the head of his followers, cloaked in crimson haloed by fire. This though is only half the truth.

The Redemption is a powerful organisation, which maintains overt and covert followers throughout the Hive. Priests not only lead Crusades through the Underhive they also pass amongst the ordinary followers of the Redemption, strengthening faith, ensuring that the holy strictures are observed and that the next wave of Crusaders are recruited. Beneath the Priests in authority, but hugely important are the Deacon Redemptors. These members of the priesthood maintain the Redemption's network of support in the Hive. It is the deacons who ensure that funds and equipment reach the militant gangs in the Underhive and that they have sanctuaries to rest in. If the priests redemptor are the thundering voice of the Redemption, then the deacons redemptor are the glue that holds it together and prevents it from consuming itself. Amongst all the followers of the Redemption there is one name that cannot be ignored; House Cawdor. House Cawdor, also known as the House of the Redemption, has become utterly pervaded by the teachings of the Redemption. All members of the house hold to the strict codes of conduct imposed by the Redemptionist creed. All members of the house wear masks to hide their features and their holdings in Hive City are run along strict Redemptionist codes. Similarly the Underhive gangs loyal to Cawdor are similarly pious and intolerant. Fanatical as they might be House Cawdor are still one of the six industrial houses

of Hive Primus. Extensive industrial contracts tie Cawdor to the other houses, the Guild and the nobility of the Spire. While Cawdor sponsors destructive Crusades they are still part of the established order of the hive; as piously militant as business allows them to be. This has of course made some particularly stringent Redemptionists denounce House Cawdor as false devotees and even attempted to raise crusades to burn their holdings. Given the influence that House Cawdor has with the Priesthood of the Redemption such actions are usually swiftly and bloodily cut short. In the Underhive the word of the Redemption is carried by fire and blood. It is the ultimate aim of almost all Redemptionists to do the holy work of their Crusade by physically cleansing their Hive of abominations, witches and heretics. If this impulse grips a group of faithful then they may take up their weapons and descend on holesteaders, gangers and settlements with indiscriminating fury. More worrying perhaps are the Crusades. Lead by members of the priesthood crusades are no simple gatherings of the faithful bent on violence they are purposeful and powerful. The purpose of a Crusade is to kill, destroy and burn but with purpose. A crusade is usually raised for a reason, such as to cleanse a particular area, or destroy a den of witches and mutants. On occasion though a Crusade goes beyond its purpose and begins roaming the Underhive burning all they find until their numbers dwindle and the flame of that Crusade flickers out.

Redemptor Priests are the heart of the Redemption. Full members of the ruling Priesthood of the Redemption they command fear and awe from their followers. Skilled warriors and orators the presence of a Redemptor Priest is enough to fuel fires of violent hatred that can lay waste to settlements and bond together the followers of the Redemption into a cohesive crusade bent on cleansing the Underhive of sin and corruption.

Deacons are those members of the Priesthood who attend to the secular affairs of the Redemption: Gathering the faithful to the words of Priests, maintaining the network of supporters and hideouts that allow the Redemption to exist. They are the glue that holds the Redemption together, and ready to be lead to purity by the Redemptor Priests. Utterly loyal the deacons have access to the best weapons the priesthood can supply.

Devotees are followers of the Redemptionist creed. They may be drawn from any walks of life. From iron workers to



vermin hunters, these men and women make up the vast majority of followers of the redemptionist creed. Made up of those of many ages and dispositions devotees have been touched by the need to repent and redeem themselves by making war on the impure and corrupt. Drawn to the words of a Priest or gathered together by their shared fury, devotees make up the violent masses of the Redemption.

Zealots are crazed fanatics who are consumed by righteous hatred. Redemptionists believe that zealots have been touched by holy fury that has raised them up to become scared avatars of hatred that exist only to bring purification and death.

PLACES IN THE UNDERHIVE

ENTERTAINMENTS OF THE UNDERHIVE

Although gambling is illegal on Necromunda this is not true in the Underhive where the rules of Lord Helmawr bare little judgment. Gambling is rife in the Underhive and many a fortune has been won and lost on the toss of the dice. At heart gambling dens are intent on fleecing the unwary of all they have, so caution must be exercised at all times.

Pit-fighting arenas are rough places where the toughest and meanest muthas in the Underhive fight it out.

Mercenary Square is the place where individual warriors offer their fighting services to the local gangs. Hired Guns, as they are called, are mercenary adventurers who fight for money and little else. They are essentially loners who wander the Underhive selling their services at settlements like Dust Falls, Two Tunnels and Angel Town. Hired guns don't belong to the gang they fight with and they don't usually help the gang except by fighting. This means that hired guns don't count as members of the gang for purposes of collecting income or for deducting cost of living expenses.

SMALL INDUSTRIES

Within each Settlement there are usually a number of workshops, all grouped together to form an area of business where scrap and other odds and ends are turned into useful items, and where weapons are repaired and equipment can be checked over.

Necromunda is renowned for its forges, and the weapons and equipment produced within its many Spires are favoured by the Imperial guard among others. Although technological process is almost non-existent within the Imperium there are still those that are willing to experiment with new or forbidden processes and technologies Unfortunately, on Necromunda such practitioners are shunned and driven out of the Hive proper down into the depths of the Underhive. These individuals are called Weaponsmiths. Half-crazed, but nether-the-less brilliant individuals who will try just about anything once and who love to get their hands dirty Weaponsmiths constantly try to outdo their competitors to the extent where whatever a gang needs, there will be someone prepared to have a go.

THE GUILDERS

The Guild Office is a place that most gangs visit very begrudgingly. It is where you must go if you have business with the Guilders. It is usually located in the centre of a Settlement near the Town Square, the place where deviant Scum are hung from the gallows or lose their heads at the block!

THE HIVE CITY

Necromunda is very similar to many other hive worlds of the Imperium. It is a planet devoid of any remnant of its original natural beauty, its surface reduced to a wasteland of win-blown ash and accumulated industrial waste. Throughout



this wasteland lie the hive cities which give such planets their distinctive character and their collective name of hive worlds.

The hives are grouped into dusters comprising up to a dozen or so individual hives all linked by a network of over-ground travel tubas and subterranean passages. These clusters are scattered over the cloud-strewn surface of the planet. From the top of any hive it is possible to see the tips of distant hive clusters projecting from the seas of poison mists like far-flung islands.

Hive clusters are connected together by roads across the wastes and transportation tubes supported on pylons and suspended from cables. With its forest of towering hives interconnected in a network of tubes, the landscape resembles a petrified forest entangled in the web of some enormous spider. Indeed, the spider and the spider's web are very powerful symbols to the inhabitants of Necromunda.

The hives are the result of thousands of years of constant demolition and rebuilding. The original cities of Necromunda lie beneath the hives, many hundreds of yards below the current surface of the planet's ash wastes. Dark, forbidding ruins, often crushed by the weight of the hives above them, these old cities preserve the layered history of Necromunda. It is a popular tale that the lowest layers of some hives are built from the original transport barges which brought humanity to Necromunda all those millennia ago.

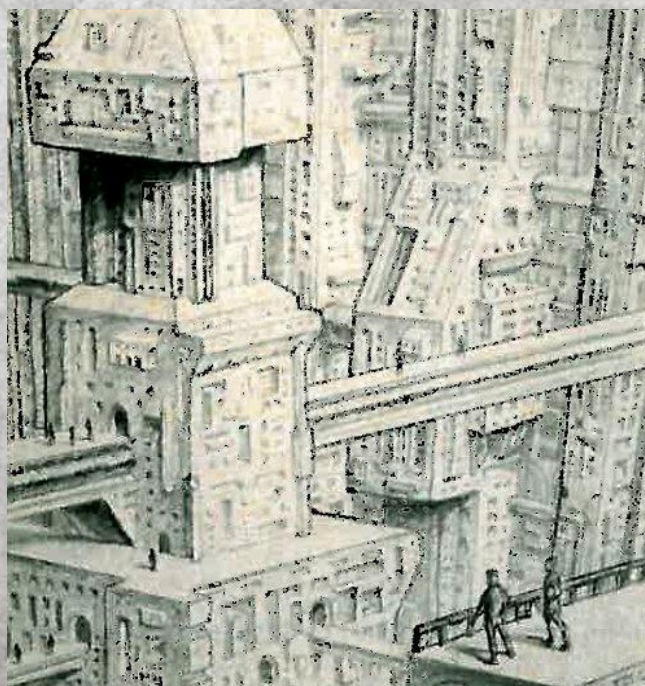
Each hive takes the form of many huge spires which rise from the base of the city. From a distance, a hive resembles a mass of stalagmites rising from the cloud strewn wastes. Each hive covers an approximately circular area some fifty



to a hundred miles in diameter. The tops of the spires can rise to a dozen or more miles above the ground surface, piercing the festering clouds that surround the lower levels of the hive. The spires usually merge into each other at their bases, and smaller spires will sometimes grow out and upwards from just above the base, branching like a cactus and forming multiple spires.

The spires are only the top part of the hive, comprising the upper hab zones with factory layers on or above the current ground surface. The older and partially ruined factory and hab layers still exist, although they are buried beneath the ash wastes. Though they are hidden, factories and habs are rarely abandoned until they are utterly derelict or polluted beyond use even by Necromundan standards.

The hive-cities of Necromunda retain the ancient names of the cities and settlements from which they grew. Each spire within a hive is also known by a local name. There are approximately a thousand hive clusters on Necromunda.



SCUM CITY

THE BEGINNINGS

No one's quite sure when Scum City came into existence, nor the infamous Under-Spire it surrounds. Several generations ago, a small company of Guilders came across some major crossroads where new domes were being uncovered and riches found. This would be the site of the future Scum City. They set up camp, erecting structures and hiring nearby gangs for protection. Rather than attempting to toll the roads as would be expected from guilders, they began cutting deals with the traders and merchants going along those roads. Soon enough more people came, eager to make their fortune as well. It began as a motley clump of buildings, but quickly grew with the influx of people over the years. The Guilders that had originally founded Scum City hired more gangs to act as Watchmen over the newly formed and rapidly expanding community, consolidating their hold over it.

As space became limited in the confined town the troupe of Guilders quickly ordered that the walls to adjacent sections of the hive be knocked down to make more room. It became apparent though that even this would not be enough, so they decided to build upwards instead. The original buildings had been made so close together that subsequent buildings could simply be constructed on top without anything but additional reinforcing being added to the ground-level buildings. This practice continued over the years, with the ceilings and floors of the domes above being knocked out to make room for the next level of structures. This conglomeration of buildings bore a marked resemblance to a hive city in form and appearance, and was dubbed the Under-Hive.

The outward spread did not abate however. With the space outside unfilled by large permanent structures, shanty buildings and lean-to's began popping up everywhere. Soon there was another, larger town growing around the Under-Spire, less impressive but certainly more populated. This town of makeshift structures became home to the worst and most depraved people in the Underhive, and was a haven from the authorities for them.

STRUCTURE

Scum City is one of the largest single shanty towns in the Underhive, second only to Shanty Town itself. Embedded deep beneath the earth, it is a nest of dealers and traders, fortune hunters and privateers, and gangsters and criminals. Scum City itself is just an overall name for the place; there are three major distinctions within the town. The Under-Spire lies at the center of the mini-metropolis, stretching upwards through several other levels. Radiating from this is Scum City itself, containing Mark Street, Slave Square and other such memorable sites. Beyond that is an endless shanty town as far as the eye can see, known as a good number of names but generally referred to as the Scums or something similar.

Major trade routes go in every direction from Scum City, constantly bringing in both business and people. Traders



find ample credits along Mark Street, so named because of the con-artists frequently trolling the bazaar for easy marks. The street twists around the Under-Spire, completely encircling it along its meandering course. Hired guns and even entire gangs are known to sell their services along the busy street, making it an exposition of wares and sell-swords. Employers can always find eager fighters and treasure hunters, and the sounds of Slave Square constantly advertising the prices of captured outlaws and pit slaves fills the surrounding area.

The town is a hub of all of the trading activity in the area and it reaps an enormous profit. Officially, the records of the Arbites name the place a 'trade town,' the majority of its income comes in from trade deals. However, the reality is quite different. Scum City is a major supplier and dealer of nearly every illegal variety of drug, slime, fungi and mold. They buy and sell everything from Stinger Mold to Slaughter and Kalma, and are the first to deal in any new psych-altering substance found in the constantly mutating Underhive. The business is extremely dangerous but incredibly lucrative, and new dealers are made every day in the Scum's. But anyone that makes a deal within the town's limits and doesn't give a bite of it to the owners are liable to turn up dead the next day.

POWER AND AUTHORITY

The town is controlled completely by the descendants of the original founders of Scum City and the Under-Spire. They remain locked away in the depths of the Under-Spire, known only as The Syndicate. They employ a veritable army of Watchmen that report only to them, and they use them ruthlessly to maintain power. The people see The Syndicate's 'Watchmen' as nothing more than legalized gangs, and think of them as Mobsters rather than Watchmen, there to further The Syndicate's interests rather than to protect them. Within Scum City, their power is absolute. Their so called Watchmen see to that with merciless enthusiasm.

The members of the Syndicate themselves have long arms, and it is only by their constant bribes and threats that not a single Precinct has yet been founded in Scum City. They use their roaming gangs of thugs to lean on anyone within their domain that performs business without giving them a cut, and use hired assassins to eliminate any potential outside threats. Open firefights are overlooked within the city when Watchmen are involved, and these are frequent when outside groups try to wrest power from The Syndicate. It has even been rumored that The Syndicate have bribed the Watchmen of other towns to eliminate rivals outside Scum City. Inside the giant town, a vast network of spies and informants, generally just normal people reporting infringements to The Syndicate, keep the Watchmen busy with an ample list of targets for 'persuasion'

Because of the lack of real Watchmen and Enforcers the shantytown that spreads from the mini-metropolis like blighted land is a haven for outlaws and mutants. The Syndicate tolerates them because of the number of scavvy gangsters willing to pay an arm and a leg for Kalma, sometimes literally! Certain mutants are also immune to the more toxic environments in the Underhive, providing perfect workers for harvesting some of the more poisonous substances. Scavvies often deal in drugs themselves and are more than willing to give a cut to The Syndicate for the chance to deal on such an open market. One of the strangest paradoxes within Scum City is the number of outlaws and escapee pit slaves living within the territory of the Scums, with a slave market for the buying and selling of those very same categories of people within the inner-city. To keep the drug traffic moving into the city, The Syndicate banned all Bounty Hunters from Scum City long ago. The Syndicate pays a high price for the head of any Bounty Hunter caught within the city, ensuring that even though most disreputable criminals can deal in relative safety in their domain.

This level of organized crime has not gone unnoticed by the powers that be, mainly the Guilders and Arbites. However, neither is in a position to do anything about it. The Merchant Guild is very unhappy about The Syndicate situation and the fact that as Guilders The Syndicate have overstepped their bounds seriously. But any sort of public ban on doing business with them would be an admission of guilt by the entire Guild, something that they cannot afford. Instead they settle themselves with a private boycott within the Merchant Guild of Necromunda: any Guilder or Trader currently in the employ of the Guild who does business with The Syndicate will have all goods and funds seized immediately and shall join them in exile.

As for the Arbites, without any stepping stone into Scum City they find themselves with their hands tied. They cannot stop the lawlessness within the town from beyond its boundaries, and can't establish a precinct inside Scum City because of powers beyond their control. Furthermore, every attempt to infiltrate The Syndicate has met with dismal failure, every agent dying without reporting anything of

use. To add insult to injury, there has never been a single successful assassination within the history of Scum City on The Syndicate, despite the few attempts made each year. All who have tried have never surfaced again, either dying in the attempt, or barely escaping with their lives and taking on new identities. Some rumor that there have even been complete success's, whereupon the assassin murders the entire Syndicate and replaces them without anyone noticing. No one really knows though.

Scum City has become an infamous part of the Underhive, being known throughout Bottom Hive as not only the best place for Wildsnake, but as the hive's largest black market where anything and everything can be bought. In addition to the renown of the town, The Syndicate has earned its name amongst legends. They have never been seen within living memory and are both the oldest and largest criminal organization to have ever survived this long. No one has ever ousted them from their position of power, and they remain completely behind closed doors with nothing to indicate that they even exist anymore. Yet existent they are irrefutably remain, proven time and again by the attacks on their rivals that can be traced back to no other source.

FIGHTING IN THE DARKNESS

Even in the darkest depths of the Underhive, where sunlight is nothing but a memory to some and little more than a myth to others, the inhabitants still try and live their lives as if they were ruled by the rising and setting of the sun. They spend their 'days' under the constant dull glow of powered lighting whenever they can find sufficient energy, or by torchlight and the flickering light of fires. Later they hike to set aside a few hours when the lights can be dimmed, or sometimes even switched off completely, in order to allow them to get some much-needed, though probably somewhat restless, sleep. And strangely enough, this period of rest, known as 'Lights Out', coincides almost exactly with the rising and setting of the sun in the world outside.

And just as the people still seem to be affected by the movements of the sun, so too do some of the inhabitants appear to be affected by the phases of the various moons which orbit their planet. Wild beasts and monsters crawl out from their dark hiding places in order to hunt for easy prey, strange ghost-like figures are seen out of the corner of the eye, only to vanish as soon as they are noticed

It goes without saying that even when it's pitch black and you can barely see past the end of your lasgun, the average Underhive gang fighter is always ready to fight. Over the years the gangs have learnt that the darkness can not only be a dangerous enemy, but also a valuable ally, and they have devised various new weapons and items of equipment to help them deal with what they call 'blind fighting'. And of course, if they can't see the enemy, presumably their enemy can't see them - or can they?

SLUDGE HARBOUR

30

The settlement of Sludge Harbour is on the edge of a vast (vast!) septic tank system which is fed effluent from up-hive. It is believed that Sludge Harbour was originally a farming settlement. The effluent from the septic tanks ensured a relatively fertile farming environment and fairly bountiful fungus harvests. Even today tiny farms and small holdings still make limited use of this 'natural' resource. As the farming communities grew larger, Guilder Caravans began to detour from older established routes to trade. The Caravans attracted outlaws and so the settlement grew more centralized for mutual defence and a small town sprang up where Sludge Harbour now sits though no one knows when the settlement was formally named. The settlement truly became an established trade hub when a local trader came up with the idea of providing safe transport for the caravans by ferrying them across the sludge, safe from outlaws. Extensive rebuilding of the 'seafront' area of town yielded workable dockyards and ferry-barges were constructed fairly easily, the Enforcers moved in and built the first Precinct House (now burned out rubble from a particularly nasty gas explosion) and then the second Precinct House (with better gas venting) as a bastion against outlaw predation. Similar seafront refurbishments were undertaken at other coastal settlements (amongst them, Port Stink, Slurry Docks and Slime Cove) and ferry-routes were established. These days, caravans that make it through to Sludge Harbour unmolested may feel relatively safe until they set off from the other side of the Sludge Sea.

GEOGRAPHY

Hazards: Due to the nature of the "sea", the atmosphere near the coastline is somewhat...robust. Although the locals are largely used to the smell, occasional methane pockets can pose quite a hazard. Testament to this is the wreckage of the first Precinct House the Enforcers built. Ignoring local advice, the precinct house was built strictly according to the standard template. Fortified and sealed against attack, the methane build-up was inevitable and the subsequent blast was severe when one of the prisoners, in a moment of relaxation, lit a cigarette. With this rather stark demonstration of the validity of local knowledge, the second precinct house was constructed with certain improvements to the template allowing for much better ventilation. Methane pockets are not strictly a coastal feature and can extend as much as two miles from shore depending on the season and prevailing wind currents. This makes shootouts a decided risky prospect in enclosed areas though many gangers seem to be too brave (or stupid) to allow such a consideration to influence their more violent behaviors.

Housing: The largest single building in the settlement is the Precinct House on the outskirts of the town. The traders market and the Guilders offices are right next to the dockyards to make best use of the slave pens. Between them and the precinct house is the normal mix of housing, rotgut

dives and workshops that might be found anywhere in the underhive, all well ventilated of course. **Landscape:** Unsurprisingly, the main landscape feature is the Sludge Sea itself. The ferry docks, at first makeshift and temporary, have been re-made and repaired many times over the years. The settlements maintain a small boatyard for ferry repair and construction in the middle of the docks. The Guilder Tariff offices are moderate-sized but ostentatiously decorated (by comparison to the rest of the settlement) and situated adjacent to the docks and the traders market in order to keep tight reign on market prices and ferry fares. The traders market is much the same as such markets all across the underhive with traders offering booze, trinkets and any services a person could think to ask for.

THE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Law: The law in Sludge Harbour is currently kept solely by the Enforcers. There have been watchmen in the past, drawn from the local ganger populace, but the enforcers refuse to trust any of today's local gangers any further than they could spit, (mostly due to the increased frequency of caravan raids) so all law enforcement duties are performed by a precinct which finds itself stretched incredibly thin. (This in turn leaves more opportunities for unscrupulous gangs to take up caravan raiding.)

There have been no attempts to point out this vicious circle by the local populace who rather depend on the nearby Outlaw trading post to sell most products of the salvage diving which nearly everyone in town has a quiet interest in.

Civilian Life: Life here is much the same as elsewhere in the Underhive for the average Joe, those that aren't employed in the various bars and workshops find employment on the ferries in some capacity or another or work the farm holdings to feed the settlement. Despite the dangers involved, there is a thriving cottage industry of salvage diving in an attempt to get rich off the artifacts from sunken caravan ferries and other trinkets lost overboard. Most people have friends or family who work on the caravan ferries and many such trinkets are 'accidentally' lost overboard at pre-arranged points to be retrieved later. These items will typically be sold at the nearby Outlaw trading post of Slayth End to avoid repercussions from irate guilders.

Gangers and Outlaws: Gangs from all the major houses are active in Sludge Harbour. Many of them find employment as caravan guards and there is always work to be found in the ferry support industries to keep them going when no caravans are hiring. The caravans do represent the ultimate temptation for the cred-strapped gangs and more than one gang desperate for cash has needed to make a swift relocation to Slayth End after finding a caravan that was just too weakly guarded to ignore.

Some few miles along the coast from Sludge Harbour is the Outlaw Trading Post of Slayth End. With its largely floating population the only permanent feature is the market itself which is fed from the proceeds of caravan raids and salva-

ge diving from Sludge Harbour. Consequently, the local outlaws maintain quiet but cordial relations with their neighbours and confine their activities to caravans and gangs, leaving the settlement in peace.



ALEVAN TOWN

32



HISTORY

Alevan Town lies at a level on the ever-shifting and undefined boundary between hive city and the underhive. It is a large settlement that served as a waypoint for settlers moving down to the underhive and the rare successful settler moving up into Hive City. Many guilders settled here and made their fortunes selling supplies to those hopeful masses heading down into the underhive in search of riches. The marketplaces here were always filled with climbing cables, algae farming equipment, portable generators, and anything else a green hiver would need to start a new life bellow. Much of this equipment was purchased from successful settlers moving into Hive City who were eager to rid themselves of goods they would no longer need. While these successful settlers were rare, a guilder could buy their equipment for fraction of the cost they would re-sell it to the next downward settlers that came along.

No one is sure why Alevan Town attracted so many new settlers. Unlike settlements like Dust Falls, there isn't an obvious gateway or downward shaft that serves the lower levels.

One theory is that it is simply a case of increased momentum. Long ago, one guilder set up shop and did well for himself, so more guilders settled into the area. Reputation of the area grew and a settlement was born.

Other theories pay heed to the fact that the settlement is close to Van Saar territory in Hive City. It may have been a large production site that fell into disrepair and was abandoned. Residents of the underhive moved in to salvage and the guilders weren't too far behind them. Proponents of this theory point to the settlement's name. Alevan Town may be named after Aleax Van Saar, a famous nobleman of house Van Saar.

Whether or not Alevan Town actually owned by house Van Saar at some time has become a very contentious point. No matter what, its proximity to that noble house's territory always made high quality equipment and weapons cheap and plentiful. This fact alone may have attracted so many green hivers to this area.

"THE TURN OVER"

Whether it's inhabitants considered Alevan town at the bottom of Hive City or the top of the Underhive, it was undoubtedly an Underhive settlement. Gangs were numerous and well-armed. Underhive "organizations" used the settlement as a entry point to smuggle illegal goods up from the underhive. Gambling dens and fighting pits are common and profitable to their owners.

This all began to change with what residents call "The Turn Over."

When Abaddon started the Thirteenth Black Crusade, Imperial Guard Units from Necromunda and other planets in the sub sector were called up in the defense of Cadia. This proved very lucrative for House Van Saar and it's many weapons contracts. As the war effort gained momentum, so did House Van Saar's production facilities. Soon, all of House Van Saar's factories and workshops were working at full capacity.

This proved very bad for Alevan Town. Since gainful employment was so easy to find in the Van Saar workshops of Hive City, fewer settlers were moving down into the underhive in search of fortune. In fact, word soon spread to the underhive that there was money to be made in Hive City and a steady stream of underhivers began to move upward through Alevan Town. For the first time in Alevan Town's history, more settlers were moving up from the underhive than were moving down.

This grossly upset the economy of Alevan Town. Merchants soon had more equipment than they had green settlers who would pay their prices. It wasn't long, however, that the guilders figured a way to change this downturn into an opportunity.

Sensing House Van Saar's need to expand its production facilities, the guilders began to "reclaim" decrepit areas around Alevan and turn them over to House Van Saar. Guilders claimed that Van Saar originally owned this land and they were more than entitled to it. If house Van Saar would simply pay the guilders' reclamation fee, they could build more production facilities in these previous "uninhabitable" areas.

There areas that the guilders reclaim aren't necessarily uninhabitable or even uninhabited. Guilders simply move into a dome and remove by force any underhivers living there. They then strip the area down to the original structure as much as they can. After Van Saar pays a fee to the guilders, they move in and construct more munitions factories.

GANG LIFE IN MODERN ALEVAN TOWN

At first, the Turn-Over was a boon for gangs living around Alevan Town. Guilders needed the muscle in their "reclamation effort." In other words, guilders paid gangs to run underhivers off their land before wrecking crews moved in and disassembled their homes, tapped their water stills, and filled in their algae ponds. Guilders also employed gangs as security when members of house Van Saar would come to inspect their new acquisitions.

As the Turn-over has progressed, however, the guilders have made it clear that gangs have no place in the future of Alevan Town. The guilders will continue to turn the underhive into Hive City for as long as it is profitable. This means that all the power of the noble patriarchy and the rigid structure of Hive City are increasingly part of the settlement. Already half of the settlement's gambling dens have been shut down and pit fighting has been outlawed. Enforcers are increasingly replacing gangs in their role as the strong arm of the guilders or now, guilders tolerate gang presence because there aren't enough enforcers to do the dirty work. Many gangs, however, have found themselves quickly betrayed by employers who wanted to distance themselves from such unsavory Underhive associates. Guilders routinely claim ganger territory but won't persecute the gang unless they complain too loudly.

Weapons and equipment are as still as cheap and plentiful as they always have been, and there is still money to be made from places other than just filling guild contracts. The workers moving down to construct the new factories are possible valuable contacts for fencing goods up to Hive City. The new factories need a lot of power, so power cable tapping has become very common and lucrative.

Also, there are plenty of disillusioned juves willing to join gangs. Often when a youth sees his home destroyed by the greed of the guilders, he'll seek out a gang to replace his sense of community. It's also an outlet for these violent, angry youth to hopefully enact revenge on those that ruined their lives.

MARTYR TOWN

34

Our humble settlement, buried deep within the Underhive, has attracted little attention over the years. Its origins are largely lost to the depths of time. Little is known, save that a man once brought his family down from Uphive in the hope of finding a more peaceful life, during the Guilder Tax riots over three centuries ago. Discovering a rich vein of workable ore, the man set up shop and plied his trade. In time more, like-minded, settlers arrived, others who wished to escape the violence of the Upperhive and a community was established.

Why the name? No-one's to sure. There are lots of theories and rumours. Some reckon that the original settler was a significant character Uphive, someone of real importance and that his rejection of House and the Guilder enforced laws led the Guilders to have him hunted down and murdered. However, there is little to support this theory, given that everything about the settlers past is now lost to time. Regardless, the town was a peaceful one, and undeserved of the title. That was until two months ago.

DESTRUCTION & DEATH

The Hive Quake was massive. It lasted for two full days and brought Martyr Town to its knees. Even now the survivors have yet to count the cost but it will doubtless take many years of re-building before Martyr Town will truly have recovered. Evidence of the destruction lay everywhere. Homes were destroyed, with many of the occupants being buried alive. There was little any person could do to aid another and as the dust cleared people began to clamber across the wreckage in search of loved ones and property. As the survivors worked through the wreckage one citizen, her eyes streaming with tears from the ash and dust, gave a cry as she saw that the Quake had caused more than just wanton destruction.

Revealed before the humble citizens was an impressive sight, one which few will ever behold. Two clicks to the South of the Town, where previously there had been nothing more than impassible permacrete, lay ancient ruins of an unidentifiable type. Surely, these ancient edifices dated back to the first Settlers of the Hive, possibly even the builders themselves. Multiple structures rose from the earth, each one archaic and coated in the dust of ages. Immediately the inhabitants set about exploring the ruins though many others urged them to wait. Rashly, I myself, joined my fellow citizens and entered the decayed structures. I was lucky to escape with my life.

DISCOVERY

Of the manner of danger I encountered within those ruins I shall not speak. Suffice to say that I will not return to that place of my volition, nor face its dread guardians again.

We traversed the ruins for several hours, trudging through dust and ash and stagnant ponds of waste and detritus.



There was little which had not decayed and few items of worth but, eager with curiosity, we plunged ever onwards into the fading light.

I would guess that we had travelled no more than four and a half clicks before coming upon the Dome. It was vast and a sight unlike any I have ever witnessed before or since. Stretching before us lay a Dome constructed entirely of glass plates bordered by metal support rings in hexagonal patterns. But it was not this phenomena that most interested us.

Through the transparent surface of the Dome wall could be seen lush greenery the likes of which I have only ever heard tales of. Such tales speak of jungle worlds inhabited by all manner of greenery and life though I have never seen proof that such places exist. Towering organic structures (which I have since learnt are known as trees off world) stretched to the summit of the Dome. The entire bowl of its roof was filled with lush greenery and life.

Above the summit, through breakages in the wall, flew creatures on wings of leather and feathers, vying for dominance of the air.

Inside could be heard the rush of water, as from a full Water-Still but 100 times the volume. Quickly we approached the crumbling but erect entrance and, like fools, we entered. The

air was moist, warm and charged. Breathing was difficult because of the humidity. Fighting our way through the greenery, we rapidly became separated. I had taken but a few steps but already I was disorientated and had lost the path. The direction from which I had come eluded me. Cries from all directions dictated the agony of those who had travelled with me. Desperately I searched for my fellow citizens and soon enough I saw them. As I have said I will write no more of the terrors which assailed me that day. I only pray that such creatures never leave the confines of the lush territory for the inhabitants of Martyr Town would surely be slain to their last. There were other things to which my eyes bore witness though. By chance, through my blind panic, I discovered an artificial waterfall of immense size and, though I did not reflect upon it at the time, it later occurred to me that the technology involved in the construction of a fresh water irrigation system of such size would be advanced indeed.

Other questions have since been posed; how is it possible that such an abundance of plant life can exist in the depths of the Underhive, without light or heat? Of what material must the Dome be constructed in order to withstand the wear of millennia and the weight of an entire Hive? What other technological marvels lie, undisturbed, within its colourless walls.

It is this which has changed our town for ever.

DEVILS HOPE

Now they have come in droves. The Gangs. They have come in search of treasure, of the technologies from a distant, dark age. Such things are worth much to those off world. And following them come the Scum and the Bounty Hunters, all eager for a share of the spoils. Many a Gang, armed and armoured, has

entered that dread place in search of riches and an end to the misery of life in the Underhive. Of those which enter, not all return. Survivors have come back, bleeding and shaking, muttering incoherently of the Terrors in the Dark. Yet still they go. And some have returned laden with riches. Bearing Archeotech of unknown but ancient origin. Tales of such finds often speak louder than warnings of danger and so yet more come. The settlement could not long bear the weight of the new arrivals. The Watering Holes filled within weeks and so the Gangs, seeking a more permanent form of accommodation, moved to the Ruins. There, in relative safety, they have set up rough camps and dwellings throughout the ancient edifices. Like a vibro-blade through tar, the Gangs of each House have carved up the land and formed their territories. They will fight like devils to protect their rights of entry into the Dome, and the sound of gunfire is often heard from the Ruins, day and night. Not surprising, then, that it has coined the name Devils Hope.

THE DOME

Many tales now come from the Dome. Tales of death, of discovery and of mystery. Gangs which have crossed each others path while navigating the Jungle have engaged in savage firefights. Such conflict is made all the more dangerous by the nature of the wildlife which grows so freely within the Dome. Vicious insects, the size of a mans head, attack all who approach with crushing mandibles, poisonous stings and a variety of other, deadly defences. Carnivorous plant life traps the unwary and slowly digests the still living victim. The very scenery is deadly as the rapidly changing environment can mean that gentle streams quickly become rivers, sections of the Dome roofing collapse and fall on those beneath and black tar pits absorb all those who stumble into them. Amidst the jungle scenery lies the ancient structures of those who built the Dome. The towering buildings, gantries and other structures would doubtless resemble much of the rest of the Underhive were it not for the massively overgrown plant life with which they are now covered. Further into its depths lie those dread guardians, massively mutated beasts I cannot bring myself to write more. Beyond them lie the riches, the fresh falls and the source of the technology which maintains the Dome. It is this which the Gangs and miscreants who enter the Dome search for. But the Dome is massive, stretching well over 10 clicks in its diameter and within its maze like structures and canopies it is all too easy to lose ones way. I should know.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE RATS

It is not only those with a legitimate claim to the Domes secrets that have come to Martyr Town, though this is disturbing enough.

The Ratskin Clans appear to have been attracted to the Dome and its surrounding ruins. They claim that these are the constructs of the Hive Spirits and that the Dome is a place blessed by the spirits which they worship.

They further claim that the creatures which inhabit the Dome are the Guardians of the Hive Spirits, manifest in a way which is not seen elsewhere in the Hive and it is for this reason that they attack the intruders, for only those worthy before the eyes of their Hive Gods may proceed into the depths of the Dome and learn its secrets.

While it does appear to be true that the Ratskins do not suffer the same ills as the other Gangs in the dense undergrowth, little else is known of their encounters within the Dome.

Certainly progress has not been easy for the Ratskins. They are rejected by the Hivers and rightly so. Backward and violent, they are not welcome within our town, though we would be hard pressed to resist them if it came to force. Instead they make their dwellings in unknown locations, hidden from view to all those save their own people. So much

the better, for the Ratskins are of a violent creed and, now more than ever, are willing to fight to protect their religious interests in the Dome.

A CHANGE OF THE WAY

So now a variety of parties descend upon our settlement, each with their own interests and motives. Already disorder is rife as rival Gangs break into open conflict in our streets. Bandits and thieves are a common sight. The Town Watch cannot cope. Bribery is prevalent and much is overlooked. The law is becoming one of the gun and for the first time in its history there are many who would call for the presence of the Enforcers. They do not call to loudly though, for there are those who have made a considerable profit in recent months through black-market sales and other nefarious activities and such people would not appreciate the arrival of Lord Helmawrs Enforcers. Doubtless I put myself at risk in scribing these words, for an assassin can lurk around many a corner and I would not be the first to die with a blade in my back, my body left for the rats. Alas, such is the way of life in recent times. Therefore be warned traveller and newcomer, Martyr Town is not the haven of peace that it once was.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Martyr Town itself is comprised of three quarters. There was a fourth but it was largely raised to the ground during the Quake and the process of rebuilding has not yet begun, indeed many now wonder if it will.

The first Quarter is the Guilder Quarter. It is the smallest of the three but contains the main Trading Post for the town. It is now by far the busiest and lies to the South East entrance to the Town. The entrance is newly built and faces Devils Hope, better to access those who may profit from ventures into the Dome. Many tents and camps now surround this entrance and the area immediately surrounding the entrance to the Quarter has become a veritable Shanty town. It is in the Guilder Quarter that new comers may find shelter, of a sort. It houses the Watering Holes and Inns and is the best place to be if your only desire is a glass of Wildsnake and the company of like-minded individuals.

The next Quarter, to the South West, is the industry quarter. It is built atop an ancient slag pile and the excavation tunnels delve several kilometres into the ore.

The Quarter is raised above the others and its piston driven machines and smelting works can be heard long into the night. Surprisingly it is the one place which received the

least damage as a result of the Quake. Probably because it is constructed atop a great heap of iron. Recently an explosion in the mines caused a lift shaft to plummet and several miners fell to their deaths. Some noted that Doe Marcen, an outspoken individual with much to say about the corruption of officials, was working that day and is believed to be a victim of the accident. I would not risk drawing any inference from this however, especially not if you work the mines. The Quarter of the Town Council now consists largely of rubble. Formerly the Quarter consisted of the Watch Station, the Town Hall and several other administration buildings but none of these now stand. The Council have taken up residence in the Guilder Quarter as a temporary solution, much to the satisfaction of the Guilders who are increasingly able to turn the Councils hand on matters which effect them most directly. Though this is, of course, pure hearsay.

The final quarter is that of the Resi Quarter. Here the inhabitants of Martyr Town live out their daily existence and make peace with their neighbours. The occasional slime hole is scattered throughout the quarter but most foodstuffs are brought from Uphive and so there is little need for organic produce. The small dome dwellings here are humble affairs. Few of the inhabitants own vehicles. Indeed many have never had the need to leave Martyr Town, and know little of the rest of the Hive.

This lack of understanding often draws the citizens of Martyr Town into conflict with the outsiders and many a brawl has broken out in the local watering holes. Many such brawls are ended only by the crack of gunfire and it is a rare thing that the citizens of Martyr Town are left standing when the smoke clears. In response to this, fear of the outsiders has grown and many former inhabitants have migrated now, leaving the town in search of a quieter life. So as the population of the town is swollen by the arrival of Gangs and Scum and thugs, so it is diminished by the departure of those to whose taste the town no longer appeals.

In short Martyr Town is becoming a sinful place, where greed and violence are commonplace and oppression reigns. However, there is, perhaps, a bright spark amidst the ash.

None could deny that Martyr Town is booming. Its watering holes and Inns are full. Massive amounts of trade now occur on a daily basis. Though it may not be legitimate there are those who would point out that there is little in the underhive which could be truly described as lawful. One thing is certain: if it is riches, excitement, danger or simply to disappear amidst the crowds, you are seeking Martyr Town is the place to be.

THE CHASM

It is well known that the farther down one travels from the Hive the colder it becomes. A lesser known fact is that the further outwards one travels from the collective warmth of the Hive the colder it gets also. In roughly a NW direction from Dust Falls the huge domes and caverns so far out that they are no longer truly part of the hive are so bitterly cold that the darkest holes of the sump seem warm and welcoming by comparison. This region is known to its inhabitants as The Chasms.

Who knows how far these enormous caves stretch or the what depths the deepest of them descend? Maybe the natives, the ratskins of the area, have such knowledge but they are protective of this land and will not share their secrets with outsiders. A friendly drink (or two) with a native guide once revealed a fascinating story of large caverns where cold white powder falls from the smog and collects on the ground in large drifts but I have never witnessed such a spectacle.

The only civilised settlement in the Chasms is Dropoff Point, commonly referred to as 'The Drop.' A small town built into a spit of land rising out of the chasms, it is a spectacular location. On one side there are the myriad of passageways, domes, rubble and tunnels that make up the regular Underhive and on the other there is a vast space, empty, save the hazy shapes of peaks in the distance. From stories told amongst the settlers here and some of the friendlier tribes I have discovered that Chasms were discovered between 500 and 600 standard years ago by an outlaw gang of Orlocks fleeing the justice of Imperial law. I can only imagine the pitiful state they must have been in when the natives rescued them from their plight. The gang settled in an easily defensible location and soon began trade with their saviours, using the spoils of their raids to pay for much needed food and the white, giant rat hides that characterise the species in this area. Over the next 300 years The Drop developed a reputation as a safe and above all distant haven from the law.

It was the archeotech rush that both alienated the natives and led to widespread knowledge of the Chasms. The Orlocks had often noticed many items and locations within the Chasms that appeared to be of ancient and imperial origin. Their native guides always warned them away from such areas, claiming that they were sacred and to disturb them would anger the spirits. Out of respect the gangers obeyed but more and more people were visiting or settling in The Drop every year and word got around that a man could make it all the way to the spire with a lucky find in the Chasms. During this period the population of The Drop swelled to at least 10 times its current levels. Thousands

ventured into the Chasms and thousands died in the hazardous conditions. The few that returned with anything of value found that their profits were taken from them by the guild. Enraged by this betrayal of trust and the desecration of their holy places the local ratskin tribes gathered in council to decide what could be done. And so there came a day when thousands descended into the chasms and none came out. A messenger was sent to the Drop to inform the people there that they may continue their lives in peace

but if they should even venture into the Chasms again they would

not leave them alive. Such was the impact of this on those who remained that this state of affairs continues to this day. Only the brave or the desperate enter the chasms and only the strongest make it back out.



LIFE FORMS IN NEROMUNDA

DECIMATED ENVIRONMENT

Necromunda is a planet totally decimated by industry. Once a vibrant world of ocean and forest, centuries of human habitation have left the surface a scorched desert of ash and the sky a swirling cloud of toxic fumes. The planet is covered almost completely by a thick veil of clouds which have choked out most of the planet's life. Still, some of the original inhabitants survived, albeit in a dramatically different form, having made their way into the hives and mutated over thousands of years. While the surface of the planet is unable to support most life, the dank gloom of the Underhive allows many creatures to thrive.

Most life on Necromunda is monitored closely by the ruling houses, who authorize regular sweeps through the hive cities and spyres to remove pests. This means the Hive City and the Spyre are nearly devoid of plant and animal life, save for the few domesticated animals and the occasional garden dome. The Underhive, however, is far too massive and dangerous to sweep thoroughly, so creatures of all kinds make their home in the wastes between settlements. To Underhivers, most creatures are little more than annoyances. Some creatures, however, stir fear into the hearts of settlers and there are stories of truly nightmarish creatures living out in the darkness.

HIVE WORLD VERMIN

The creatures of Necromunda's Underhive serve a number of important roles. Ratskin's are quite dependant on giant rats for food and clothing, while Scavvies make use of various fungi and spores. Some creatures are worth their weight in creds, while others are so dangerous and legendary, few have ever seen them and lived to tell about it. Of course, all of these creatures are regarded by most Necromundans as food, no matter how dangerous or slimy they may be.

GIANT SPIDERS

Many forms of mutant spider grow to great size in the Underhive. They are so common they have become traditionally associated with Necromunda and the most famous Imperial Guard regiment recruited on Necromunda is known as the Spiders. Giant spiders can be found throughout the Underhive, from the gantries and vents of dome ceilings to the rubble-choked tunnels running beneath the floor. Wolf spiders have long legs and chase down their prey before killing it with oversized mandibles. Orb spiders weave thick, funnel-shaped webs and hide at the end. Many unfortunate fugitives in the Underhive have run into these web-funnels in the darkness only to be paralyzed and slowly drained dry by the spider. Their gruesome cadavers hang from decaying cob-webs in the deeper parts of the Underhive.

GIGANTIC SPIDERS

In the deepest recesses of the wastes truly monstrous spiders lurk in the eternal night. Gigantic spiders can measure several meters across with massive jaws and malignant intelligence to match. They are aggressive and extremely territorial so creatures blundering into their vicinity seldom escape unharmed. Despite the dangers, hunters seek out gigantic spiders for their meat and venom, both of which command a high price in the Settlements.

TITAN SPIDER

At the bottom of the Underhive, the ground opens into a massive canyon, stretching down miles to a sea of pollutants and chemicals known as the Sump. It is within this abyss that the most terrifying and gruesome of all creatures dwell. The largest and most dangerous are the Titan Spiders of Necromunda. These massive creatures are said to be dozens of meters across, creatures that can dwarf even an entire settlement.

Raft Spiders are the silent giants of the Sump, territorial and hostile spiders that skate on the surface of the chemical sea. While hunting Raft spiders is among the most dangerous propositions on Necromunda, the rewards are well worth it. Food, medicine and clothing can all be made from the creature, though its most prized possession is its eyes, the chemical composition of which creates an impossibly hard mineral. One of these eyes alone is worth enough to send a hunter above the wall a very wealthy man, if he can get to the wall with it.

Edge Spiders hide in the shadows of the Abyss, waiting for anything to fall into the crevasse and quickly devouring it. The lack of food in the depths will sometimes force edge spiders from the Abyss and into lower settlements, where they fatten themselves on whatever gets in their way. They are rumoured to carry the dreaded zombie plague and infest entire settlements with zombies, which they will then eat again, in a gruesome cycle of life.

MILLIASAUR

Milliasaurs are hideously mutated centipedes which can reach up to two meters in length. They normally live in the darkened recesses and sump-holes that abound in the Underhive. Here they lurk in the moist darkness, waiting for an unsuspecting creature to venture nearby. When their prey is close enough, the milliasaur will dart from cover and sink its poisonous fangs into its prey. The milliasaur's poison is quick-acting and will reduce all but the largest creatures to a helpless state in a matter of minutes, allowing the milliasaur to drag its unresisting victim back to its lair and feast at its leisure.

CARRION BAT

Large bats live in the tunnels of the Underhive, where they hang in seething colonies. If disturbed, they flutter down the tunnels in a single squealing swarm. Carrion bats have ferocious piranha-like jaws, but they live by scavenging meat from the kills made by larger creatures. The bats are drawn by the scent of fresh blood and will steal a few mouthfuls of flesh before the rats arrive to pick a carcass clean. Underhivers are afraid of carrion bats because their bite carries diseases caught from their scrofulous diet, including the dreaded zombie plague.

RIPPER JACKS

Ripper Jacks are dangerous bat-like creatures that inhabit abandoned domes. They hang upside down from the roofs, swooping down on unsuspecting creatures. Ripper Jacks attack by enveloping the head of their prey with their leathery wings, biting and gouging at their victim's eyes, face and neck while maintaining a vice grip. Unless the Ripper Jack is speedily removed, its victim will quickly suffocate or bleed to death.

THE SHAMBLER

The Shambler is a gigantic vegetative organism, which began life as a harmless tree, but sucked up some very dubious chemicals from the Sump and mutated developing a malign form of intelligence. It has emerged from the Sump driven by the need for nutrition.

GIANT RATS

The Underhive has a surplus of disused and decayed tunnels ideal for rats. There are many different species and their individual physiology can vary immensely. Giant rats can grow to as much as 4 feet long, though stories tell of some specimens whose teeth alone measure almost a foot. The rats are infamous for the speed of their natural reaction, giving them an almost supernatural ability to dodge attacks.

SLUDGE JELLIES

Sludge Jellies are venomous stinging jellyfish that live in the pools of industrial waste which are common across the Underhive. While most of these creatures are only a meter across or less, Sludge Jellies in desolate pools can be very large indeed, though no attempt has succeeded in measuring them. Jellies are balloon-shaped, slimy creatures with many thick tendrils. They instinctively sense disturbances near their liquid dwelling and will float to the surface and catch anyone at the edge of the pool. The Jelly's tendrils paralyze the victim and drag them down into their pools to be digested later.

FACE-EATER

Face-Eaters are among the most unpleasant vermin in the Underhive. Not a native to Necromunda, it is speculated that the Face-Eater was originally imported from an Imperial deathworld in an attempt to keep the population of deviant scum and vermin to a minimum. The Face-Eaters, however, quickly became established in the ventilation systems of the entire Hive and became a problem everywhere. Large eradication campaigns routinely sweep through the hive, ensuring that Face-Eaters are left only in the Underhive, where the harsh conditions keep their numbers in check. Anyone foolish enough to approach a Face-Eater will have to be extremely agile as the creature uses a powerful muscle spasm to propel itself at its victim's face. If the face-eater lands on target, it wraps itself around its victim's head, attaching with several hooked claws. Powerful enzymes then go to work digesting the soft tissues of the victim's face. Once attached, it is almost impossible to detach a face-eater without causing severe damage to the victim.

LASHWORMS

Some areas of the Underhive are infested with lashworms, strange creatures thought to have arrived on Necromunda in spore form among textile cargo. The Lashworm begins life in a larval form during which it is more similar to a fungus. During its adolescence, the fungus breaks down and the creature emerges from its adolescence undeniably animal. Lashworms live in crevices where they wait, tightly coiled, until a victim approaches. Any vibration will 'trigger' the lashworm to attack, which it does by whipping out its long, flexible tail and slashing a morsel of flesh off its victim. The lashworm's tail coils around its catch and pulls it back into its lair to digest. Their speed and instinctive attack make them hard to spot and almost impossible to kill.

ICROCTIC SLIME

Icroctic Slime is a transparent green blob the size of a man's fist. This slime is the single most illicit and forbidden substance in the Underhive. Just to possess a living Icroctic slime is a crime punishable by death in most settlements. The Icroctic hangs from girders or ceilings, dropping on unsuspecting victims' heads and attempting to absorb itself into the victim's skull. On its way, the slime feeds a massive dose of stimulants into the victim, giving them a euphoric feeling and a super human strength unmatched by other drugs.

SHADOW SLIME

Structurally similar to Icroctic slime, shadow slime is more hostile, hiding in the shadows where its dark color leaves it all but invisible. When mistaken for a patch of oil or stone, the slime attacks by sticking itself to its prey and dissolving clothing or armor. The composition of Shadow Slime is uniquely acidic and can dissolve flesh and bone in minutes, absorbing the nutrients and growing. When wounded, the slime explodes into cloud of acid that can seriously wound those nearby. More dangerous than that, however, is the slime's ability to reproduce with startling speed. The profile below is that for a small Shadow Slime, though they are known to be as large as men in some areas.

CROAK HOUND

Croak Hounds are a stable and common life form on many hive worlds, where they roam in packs. They make their way from the Ash Wastes into the Underhive in search of food. Croakers are very aggressive and can be as large as a man, all claws and teeth. When hunting, the croakers give off a loud growl for which they are named, that is thought to coordinate several creatures attacking at once.

BLOOD FLY

Blood Flies breed in the large pools of effluent that litter the Underhive. Easily the size of a man's fist, the flies have an excruciating bite with which they subdue their victims to feed. For most Underhivers, who are rugged by nature, these flies are little more than an annoyance. However, large groups of Blood Flies have been known to swarm, injuring or even killing gang fighters who let their guard down.

SPITWORM

Spitworms are prevalent in the Underhive where they hide under debris and wait for their prey to pass. When within range, the worm spits a highly noxious liquid at its victim. The venom of the spitworm is dangerous, but not fatal. However, if the victim is not quick to remove the venom, it can cause blindness and dizziness, that will render the victim helpless, allowing the worms to feed.

NECROMUNDAN GAS FUNGUS

There are hundreds of fungi in the Underhive. Most are harmless, some are eaten by Scavvies and mutants, and poisons or drugs can be distilled from others. Fungi tend to grow in large clusters consisting of many different varieties. Gas fungi protect themselves from interference by releasing a cloud of toxins which have a variable effect on humans.

BRAIN LEAF

The Brain Leaf is a most extraordinary plant as it seems to possess a form of intelligence, albeit of a fairly low, instinctive level. The plant grows an inconspicuous grey-green color, surrounded by a cluster of vines.

The Brain Leaf's vines are plain and smooth, stretching out from the central cluster and ending in a single leaf. Each leaf is a macro-cell including a rasping hook, enveloped by a bundle of nerve cells. If a creature moves close enough, the plant's leaf sticks the victim and injects the nerve cells into the host. Once inside, the fibers replicate and spread at an alarming rate, taking over the host's own nervous system.

Although the plant lacks the intelligence to control its host completely, it is able to use its victims in a sensible and rational way. Most are used as compost, though the Brain Leaf can also inject its host with seedlings that detach from the parent vine, growing into mature plants within the warmth and protection of the host.

RUBBER MOSS

There are many types of lichens covering the ruined domes. By far the most annoying of them is Rubber moss, which is known to carpet entire domes. Though the moss is not directly dangerous, it has a very effective defense mechanism. Blooms of Rubber Moss are thick, incredibly reactive and highly unstable.

SPINE CRYSTALS

Though Spine crystals are actually more akin to minerals than plants, the speed of their growth makes them seem almost alive. Normally, spine crystals grow at the edges of effluent pools or discharge outlets, where the pollutants have been accumulating for a long time. It is impossible to hide amongst crystals, which are razor sharp and will inflict thousands of tiny cuts and scratches which will soon become festering sores due to the crystal's toxic make-up.

WIRE WEED

Many derelict industrial plants and functioning authority establishments on Necromunda are defended by belts of bio-wire. Bio-wire is a genetically altered cross between plant and mineral, originally developed from a deathworld xenomorph. Spores from the established Bio-Wire patches can drift into the ventilation systems, leaving dense clumps of this dangerous wire in many uninhabited parts of the Underhive. To Underhive dwellers, this is known as Wire Weed.

Bio-Wire was originally grown as a form of military defense, a sort of living barded wire. The wire is very tough and regenerates quickly. Its sharp thorns can pierce armour and

lacerate exposed flesh to the bone. To make things even worse, Wire Weed secretes an acidic sap which reduces those entangled to bone in mere hours.

DUST SPORE

The dust spore is a generic fungus that grows all over the Underhive. The pods of this spore can easily be larger than a man, and spill clouds of spores which drift through vents and domes until settling and growing new pods.

PLAGUE SPORES

Among the most dangerous fungi in the Underhive is the Plague Spore. The Spore pod is usually black or dark green and covered with a sickly viscous slime. When approached, the pod releases its spores, which are highly poisonous and can cause death in minutes. The victim succumbs to the spores and falls to the ground, host for new growth.

FIRE SPORE

The Fire spore is encased in a large, leathery pod, dark brown or black in color and distinguishable by its fiery red and orange stripes. This is a critical feature to notice, as the spores within are so volatile they will explode if exposed to heat or energy; weapons fire for example. This explosion will trigger nearby fire spores to explode as well.



THE FIST

A TOXIC RUIN

Set into a ragged hole in the side of the hive, a place long abandoned by the other Clan Houses, the savage House of Chains has made its home. Only the rugged physiology of a Goliath could hope to prosper here, so exposed is it to the toxic atmosphere of the hive world. Any normal hiver taking a lungful of the polluted air of the Fist would soon be rasping their last as their organs blistered and burst.

A powerhouse of heavy industry and smelting, the hammering forges of the Fist ring out across the wastes, drowning out even the constant drone of the hive's great storm turbines. Each propeller is the size of a city and is used to direct the worst of the ashen gales away from the hive shell. Most of the high-grade alloys used in Hive Primus' thousands of Clan manufactoria come from the Fist, and it's a measure of the work of the Goliaths that Guilds and Great Houses alike pay well for the Clan's hammer-stamped metals.

Of course, the Fist was not always the industrial hellhole it is today – not so long ago it was a completely different kind of hellhole. After a stricken orbital shuttle crashed into the area where the Fist would one day stand, it was abandoned for many centuries. Considered too toxic and badly damaged to be of use, nearby domes were sealed off and servitor work crews were directed to leave its fate to the elements. It was not until the early years of M38, and the emergence of the Goliaths, that it was to see human habitation again.

So the story goes, a Goliath Alpha by the name of Rakarn Fist, escaped the slaver's noose by climbing out onto the shell of Hive Primus, scaling the great hive and seeking shelter in the ruin. Wounded and bleeding, Rakarn was set upon by an army of hairless rats, some the size of Phyr Cats. Fashioning armour and weapons from the scrap around him, Rakarn waged war on them, clearing out the ruin, and laying claim to it for his people.

In memory of his deeds – or perhaps just because it amuses the local Goliaths – in each great cycle, a Goliath is chosen to recreate the deeds of Rakarn. The fighter is hurled naked into a fighting pit filled with starving rats... and cheered on by their clan mates as they punch, kick and bite their way to victory.

HOUSE OF PAIN

It's not without good cause that Clan Goliath is known as the House of Chains. Hundreds of thousands of slaves infest the Fist, toiling at all those tasks the Goliaths themselves are either ill-suited to or consider beneath them – be it sweeping the boiling floors of the great factories, running the medicae habs or cleaning the intricate workings of a renderizer.

To keep this slave population from choking to death on the thick atmosphere of the Fist, something only Goliath lungs can truly endure, most slaves are shackled to their workstations by long, snaking breathing tubes. Groups of slaves might even be linked to the same tube network, making it easy for a Goliath to lead them about by simply hauling the rebreather unit on their back, the slaves trailing along behind like giant rats on a leash. This system also makes it easy for the Goliaths to chastise a slave that might be slacking on the job – there's nothing more motivating than having your air ration cut to up a production quota.

The Goliaths are not especially cruel masters, however, and some say they lack the imagination to be truly sadistic toward their drudges – like some of the Great Houses are known to be. This, of course, doesn't extend to the Goliath's love of pit fighting, and it's almost inevitable that a slave owned by the House of Chains will at some point end up in the pits – and in the Fist, that means a trip to the House of Pain.

One of the largest arenas in Hive Primus, the House of Pain is a smoke-shrouded colosseum that echoes daily to the sound of roaring Goliath crowds and the screams of its combatants. It is a great honour for a Goliath to have fought in the House of Pain, and legends like Attilus the Axe made their name there, while even Over-tyrant Varran Gor has painted its iron floor crimson with his chain blades.

Ajex Gorgoth, the Alpha of the Fist, wisely keeps the House of Pain packed, lest his Goliath workers grow bored after a full cycle at the forge, and all manner of fighters and creatures grace the arena each evening shift. Some are mundane matches between poorly trained pit slaves or arguments like chrono-gladiators – the crowd wagering if the gladiator will fell their opponent before the bomb strapped to their chest goes off. Others are more exotic, and House Escher supplies Ajex with countless horrors found out in the wastes, the depths of the underhive or born in their labs – all for the pleasure of the crowds.

THE WORLD FORGE

Vast amounts of ore pour into the Fist from the Orlock mines surrounding Hive Primus, raw materials brought in as far afield as the Spoil to feed the Goliath smelters. It's said that land-trains approaching Hive Primus from the west can pick out the glow of the Fist on the side of the great city even through the toxic gloom of Necromunda's putrid atmosphere. As they draw closer, the sounds of its hydraulic metal hammers ring out as they churn out a ceaseless supply of finished ingots.

More than once, another Clan House has thought to capture the hugely valuable factories of the Fist and use their ma-



manufacturing capabilities for themselves. Even though Lord Helmawr is swift to punish open warfare between the Clan Houses, he encourages limited exchanges in the interests of pushing up production quotas and trimming dead meat from the population.

In recent times House Escher, on behalf of the Noble House of Ulandi tried to poison the population of the Fist, introducing a new strain of Lungscald into the settlement's ventilators. The result almost wiped out the slave population of the Fist, countless drudges bursting in crimson showers as their rebreathers pumped the chem into them. Though not a single Goliath perished, some did comment on the air having an odd smell that morning.

Far more worrying for Ajax Gorgoth and the other Alphas, was the Ogryn Slave uprising of Nine '89. Organised around a 'charismatic' Ogryn pit fighter named Sparky III (not to be confused with any of the other Sparkys to have led Ogryn uprisings), the great brutes rampaged through the Fist for three long cycles. Goliaths, slaves and visiting Guilders all felt their wrath. It might have gone on longer, or threatened the rest of the hive, had Sparky III not led his people to freedom down the wrong tunnel – causing the entire uprising to charge off the edge of the Fist and plummet to their doom down the outside of the hive!

INHABITANTS OF THE PLANET

OUTLANDERS

In the howling anarchy between settlements in the Underhive there lurk the very worst of Necromunda's outlaws, the Outlanders. While hivers are driven away from the settlements for transgressions against the Downhive code and become outlaws, Outlanders are barred from entry to the settlements for belonging to groups which simply do not accept the Downhive codes because of their creed or their birthright. Four groups of Outlanders predominate in the Underhive of Hive Primus, though in other hives their influence is less overwhelming. These groups are feared and hated by the hardworking settlers struggling to eke a living in the wastes. There are the dispossessed Ratskin warriors who form bands of Ratskin Renegades eager to bring suffering upon the hivers who have invaded their homes and defiled their sacred places. The fanatical followers of the cult of Redemption come downside to pursue their insane Redemptionists Crusades, hunting mutants and deviants with maniac zeal. Scrofulous bands of degenerate and mutated Scavvies lurk at the edges of civilisation waiting their chance to loot and pillage. Worst of all there are the machine-beasts, the Spyrers, nobles from the Spire who venture into the Underhive to undergo their rites of passage before they ascend to their place in the aristocracy.

Outlanders cannot build the intricate web of contact and allies that other gangs rely on to make a living in the Underhive; they stand or fall alone. To survive and prosper Outlanders must fight dangerous, desperate battles to seize weapons, equipment and food from gangs and settlers. Every defeat brings them a little closer to starvation and death. The weak and the badly led will never succeed. The Underhive will swallow them up, and their bones will mix with those of thousands of others who came below seeking a new beginning but found only death.

PIT SLAVES

Pit Slaves are gang fighters or hivers who have been captured by hive gangs or Guild sanctioned Watchmen and sold to the Guilders. They are little more than property in the Guilder's hands, doomed to work in the mines, fighting pits or on the pack trails for the rest of their lives. Most Pit Slaves are outlaws, thieves and renegades who have finally been brought to justice, but others are simply unlucky individuals who were captured and had nobody who would pay their ransom. The Guilders usually 'modify' slaves for their new lives with crude implants and basic bionics - blades and saws for fighting or drills and hammers for work in mines and forges. Plugs and connection points mark their flesh and they are pierced with steel rods and metal plates to strengthen their bodies. If a slave proves useful to the Guilders, their implants are progressively upgraded so that hardened pit fighters become inhuman caricatures of the warriors they once were. The toughest and most determined Pit

Slaves escape their incarceration. They may escape in ones or twos or in mass break-outs of dozens if a mine collapses or a caravan is attacked. The vast and chaotic wastes of the Underhive provide ample hiding places for these).

The Pit Slave Chief is a natural leader, the one who the others look for direction and purpose. Usually the Chief is the one who led the freedom, who planned their escape and who has kept the Slaves together through their wanderings ever since. Pit Slave Chiefs have to work hard to keep their position among the cut-throats and backstabbers they lead, a favoured method being to accumulate as many bionic implants and armour upgrades as possible.

Technos are charged with the upkeep and maintenance of Pit Slaves, whether it be as simple as oiling gears and tightening chains or as complex as transplanting new bionic limbs. Most Technos are members of House Van Saar who have been captured in the constant interhouse skirmishing and enslaved by the Guilders. When a gang of Pit Slaves makes a break for it, a wise Chief will ensure that they take Techno with them to make repairs and keep the gang going.

Pit Slaves make up the rest of the gang, scarred half-men with bitter memories of the normal life they used to enjoy. Outsiders often note that the more cybernetic parts a Slave is grafted to, the more their humanity seems to be leached away. The most heavily modified Slaves can shut down for hours at a time, sitting motionless and staring into space. Nonetheless, Pit Slaves make frightening opponents in combat, hard-bitten and careless of their own wounds as they rend apart opponents with industrial-sized buzz saws or drills.

BIKER GANGS

The Underhive is a very strange place, with a bizarre mix of extremely advanced technology, primitive crossbows, and stone-age clubs. None of this technology was invented, all was imported from the rest of the Imperium. There are almost no means of transportation in the Underhive besides walking on foot (or being carried by your slaves). However, some unhinged individuals adapt old civilian bikes, or create new motorcycles from spare scrap metal.

Only a few of the Underhivers have the technical expertise to maintain these bikes, and fewer still are crazy enough, or stupid enough to ride these bikes. Any gang type from any house may use bikes (except for Ratskins and Scavies). Only Heavies may ride bikes because they are the only ones with the mechanical expertise. There are some who are even crazier. These speed-crazed outcasts of House gangs band together, forming gangs of Outlaw Bikers. These outlaws live nomadic lives, wandering from one outlaw trading post to the next, looting and pillaging on the way.

ASH NOMADS

Outside the hives of Necromunda only the tough and resilient survive. The constantly shifting factory wastes, the sudden appearances of toxic sludge seas, and acid rain storms all compete to claim the unwary. Yet out of this inhospitable terrain come the Ash Wastes Nomads.

House Catallus was once a proud house among the elite of Necromunda. Unrivaled by all save the ruling house of Lord Helmawr itself, until it was torn apart by internal power struggles that ultimately brought them low and cast out into the wastelands. It was supposed to be a death sentence, but their resiliency was underestimated and they have not only survived, but have thrived to the point where they must be reckoned with if one is to travel, trade, and sometimes even communicate across this toxic desert. Guilders acknowledge that if they need to make any movement across the Ash Wastes that the Nomads are a force to be reckoned with.

The land that the Ash Wastes Nomads now occupy was once fertile plains, but millennia upon millennia of industrial wastes being dumped indiscriminately have in turn eaten away at every natural resource to the point where there is nothing but shifting dunes of toxic wastes left. On occasion thick mucus-like sludge rises to the surface to form slick-lakes, or short rivers or streams only to disappear back beneath the wastes - often leaving behind a crust like surface which is not to be trusted. Sink holes abound ever ready to reach out and take those that wander too close. And yet the Nomads, and even some hive dwellers if they were to ever see it, would call the landscape beautiful. The abundance and variety of wastes allows for a wide variety of colors and textures, Sulphur Yellow, Cobalt Blue, Mauve, Citric Green, intertwined compounded resins that resemble a diseased tree (if any Necromundan outside of the ruling elite even know what one looks like), rock outcroppings, and much more. And yet the Ash Wastes Nomads must never let down their guard for the same things that create such beauty, can become equally deadly. An Ash Storm can whip up seemingly out of nowhere to strip an unguarded man to the bone and his bones into a handful of dust in minutes, or the very ground they walk upon swallow one up without a trace. Despite all this there are algae, fungi, bacteria, and even mutated animals that have survived alongside the humans.

If the natural obstacles are not enough there are Guilder war parties (sanctioned by Lord Helmawr himself) and even Imperial Fists Space Marine patrols (ever on guard for the infiltration of xenos) that view anything not living within the massive hive walls as rogue and a threat. Thus the Ash Wastes Nomads must vie against even their fellow humans for survival.

And yet the Ash Wastes Nomads wander this waste land and conduct trade among all the hives of Necromunda. The distances between such cities can be anywhere from a hundred to several thousand kilometers. They are the curriers, traders, and guards of things that cross the ash deserts. Things that someone can either not afford a more secure route, or would prefer to keep secret. Still other Nomads conduct raids on the same Guilder caravans, and even upon the hives themselves. There is nothing that escapes their attention. Even with the sanctioned war parties of Lord Helmawr the Guilders know that if they need to cross the wastes - they will have to deal with the tenacious Ash Wastes Nomads - if they are to succeed with any regularity.

WYRD GATHERING

To escape the witch-hunts of the Redemptionist Crusade, Wyrds have only a few stark choices. They can go into hiding, eking out an existence in the very depths of the Underhive or in the wasteland outside. Alternatively, they can associate with gangs or outlaws, trading their usefulness for protection.





Occasionally however a charismatic Wyrd, a Mentor, forms a gathering of Wylds who will work together and look out for one another. These Gatherings move from place to place in the wastes, hoping to stay one step ahead of Imperial Agents and Redemptionists that hunt them relentlessly. Inevitably they have to fight to survive, and in this respect, they are the same as all the other Outlanders, despite their special powers.

Mentor is the term given to the founder and leader of a Wyrd Gathering. Mentors are very charismatic and wise in the ways of the Underhive: they make good leaders for Wylds who otherwise tend to be solitary people. While they are normally no more powerful than most Wylds, Mentors tend to have developed more a more precise control over their powers and are considered to be very dangerous. They are the hated enemies of the Redemptionist Crusade.

Wylds are fully awakened psychics who have developed control over the use of their mental powers. Fleeing from the authorities, they make themselves a hidden sanctuary in the Underhives or the wastes. They tend to be a highly strung and solitary people, forever trying to keep one step ahead of the witch-hunters. Joining a Wyrd gathering or becoming a Hired Gun gives purpose and protection to these unfortunates and they are then able to stand up to their persecutors and fight back.

NECROMUNDA'S ORKS

It is an undisputed fact that Orks sometimes attack (or even inadvertently crash on) Necromunda, and their assaults on the massive Hive Cities have been fairly well documented by the Administratum. The authorities, however, do their utmost to hide the fact that when the Waaagh moves on, there are always a few greenskins left behind.

These Orks wander in the ash wastes looking for food until they stumble upon a rogue gang of Orks who will let them join, or a storm drives them inside one of the Hive Cities. It is remarkably easy to get in, in small numbers, a fact which could spell doom for the Necromundans if the Orks ever noticed!

Inside the hive, life is still hard for the average Ork. Though they spend a great deal of time fighting, they also spend a large part of their day hunting for squigs (which seem to turn up anywhere that Orks go), rats and anything else lurking in the Underhive which they can eat. This list does not include hive-dwelling humans because all Orks have a strange belief that they will turn into 'Bugeyes' (Tyrants) if they eat men from the hives. Since Orks use their teeth as currency, getting money is no problem for them. Unfortunately, for Orks, everybody else on Necromunda is hostile to them, so they couldn't buy things if they could find human



traders willing to accept teeth as payment anyway. Perhaps, eventually, there will be enough Orks in the hives to set up their own society and deal amongst themselves, but this is highly unlikely due to the constant purging by the Adeptus Arbites whenever the infestation gets too bad. The only way that Orks can spend their teeth is if they can recruit new members from those Orks found wandering in the wastes.

VAMPIRE CULTS

The perils of the Underhive are many, ranging from natural hazards like acid rain and hive quakes to the more deadly fauna like Ripperjacks. A careless traveller will also encounter danger in the form of Ratskins on the warpath, escaped Pit Slaves, sinister Wyrd Gatherings and, of course, the everyday dangers of rival gangs having a falling out and settling it with their guns. However, there are few other encounters that are more terrifying and sinister than the bloodsucking Vampyres of the night. Considered by many to be nothing more than ancient fables from distant Terra with which to frighten children, Vampyres, the creatures of legend are all too real. Only a very select few are aware of these creatures that are thought to be in league with Chaos and the threat that they pose to mankind cannot be underestimated. They

gather around them others of their kind, as well as weak-minded mortals that they have bent to their will and are the perfect infiltrators of human society.

Vampyres are, more or less, immortal and capable of regenerating horrific injuries, even to the extent of coming back from the dead. Various methods of dealing with them have been suggested over the centuries by the handful of people that have true understanding of them. Anything goes from praying to the Emperor to decapitation. Experience shows that methods along the lines of the latter are usually more effective than the former, except of course for the Redemption, in which case they are more than likely to do both. Once a Vampyre has been neutralised in this way (it is virtually impossible to kill them forever), then all of the human thralls who were bound to it's will will regain their minds once more. Such is the threat these creatures pose to the Hives of Necromunda that word has reached the dark offices of the Inquisition who, in their vigilance, have dispatched an undercover team of highly skilled operatives to investigate this phenomenon.

Of all the Vampyres known by name to the suspicious few, one figure remains shrouded in terror above all others, said by some to be the father of the Vampyre cults, a deadly individual more feared than even a rogue Spyrer. Several times



hunters and zealots have returned to civilisation, claiming victory over this foe, but none of these, despite their shredded clothing and being bathed in blood, have ever been able to produce a trophy of their dead enemy. Injuries have been inflicted on Red Jakob which would have easily slain a mere mortal, but still the Father of Blood-drinkers exists, and plays a deadly game of cat and mouse with the hunters who, more often than not, become the hunted.

SQUAT MINER GANGS

The worlds of the Imperium are home to a bizarre and varied degree of mutations. A distinct minority have bred true, such as the diminutive Ratlings and the large brutish Ogryns and are tolerated to a certain degree, as genuine abhuman races. Another of these abhuman races that is considerably less well known are the Squats - a short, stocky, muscular and bad-tempered people. Exposure to highgravity mining planets over the millennia have mutated the original colonists into their present form and years of isolation have made these mutations permanent.

In the Wastelands, the slag heaps, rad zones, ruins and the like, freelance miners set up operations and scrape a living out of the unforgiving landscape, looking for that one big sluice. Some Miners come to the hive world Outlands voluntarily whilst some come into hide from the unforgiving eyes of the Imperium. In this circumstance I visualise as 'The Seven Dwarfs' meet the Bogart movie 'The Treasure of the Sierra Madres.' Aliens are not tolerated in the Imperium let alone in the hive cities, but the authorities are not too concerned about the politics of the near inhospitable Ash Wastes, provided it does not become nuisance. The main tool/weapon for these small elusive bands of Miners is the pick axe or mattock and a nasty one it is. Muskets, crossbows, and various types of pistols round out the basic arsenal. Though a few highly technological pieces of equipment and weapons may be found amongst these enigmatic wanderers.

The Prospector is a freelancer by choice and the senior member of the Mining gang that all others will run to for guidance and leadership. Not content to labour in the mines of other Lords of the Imperium, or on the payroll of a Roque Trader, a Prospector is out on his own, for his own gain. He is looking for the 'Big Suik' the claim which will cover him in the riches he craves, if he can avoid the many hazards of the Ash Wastes in the meantime. A Prospector must be as quick with his guns as he is with his wits, or others will find his pick axe, and his bleached bones in the toxic desert.

Squat Miners are the crew a Prospector needs to work the claim stake as efficiently as possible. It also helps to have a few extra guns about. Squat Miners come from all walks of Squat society and most are reluctant to talk about it.

A ganger would be advised not to talk to them about their business or he may be looking at the business end of a pick axe!

Slaggers are the Miner equivalent of Juves. Squat Miners muse be trained, and a Squat being hired by a Miners' Gang is in for some back-breaking work.

Slaggers are generally young Squats and do all of the bad jobs - loading and pushing ore carts, cleaning mining equipment, and the gunk out of the bottom of the shafts. Strangely, there never seems to be a shortage of off-world Squats, willing to do this work.

RATSKINS

Ratskins are something of an annoying enigma to the Imperium. In the early days or imperial colonisation surveys were carried out by the inquisition to determine whether they posed any threat to the Emperor's rule. Although far from being model disciples of the Imperial Cult, the Ratskins were judged to be harmless provided that their numbers were kept in check and the colonists quickly lost interest in their ragged tribesmen.

As the sprawling shadow of Industrial development spread across the planet, the Ratskins were forced to adapt to life as Hive dwellers - finally sealing in the depths of the Underhive, away from the prejudice of the Guilds. In their subterranean domain, the Ratskin life is often short and brutal. He is assailed by all manner of foes from crazed Redemptionists to more basic enemies such as starvation.

Most citizens of the Hive would prefer not to think about these strange, tribal Underhivers, but it now transpires that one unbalanced individual has made a detailed study of them. In their own tongue the Ratskin, call themselves Kuloq, literally - 'the people.' According to their mythology they are the descendants of Ku, 'the maker of the land and the sky.' When he had finished creating the world. Ku grew sad because there was no one with whom he could share the pleasures or his creation. For many years he wandered the new world in search of another living being, but he had created an empty, lifeless place and there were no companions to be found.

Finally, in despair, he lay down on the sterile earth and allowed his life to ebb away into the ground. As Ku's body disintegrated all manner of living things came into being. From the five fingers of his left hand grew the Palpala, 'the Nonborn', from whom the Kuloq believe themselves to be descended. Originally there may have been as many as sixty different Kuloq tribes living on Nccromunda. Now their numbers are dwindling and no more than a handful of tribes have survived. Of these only four are found in IHive Primus: the Kuloqa, the Dapakkani, the Nassaq and the Ulenni.



Kuloqa - The name KuJoqa is derived from the root word Kuloq. In the Kuloq language the -a suffix indicates a sense of importance or tradition, so an approximate tradition would be 'The True People' or perhaps 'The Original People.' Certainly, the Kuloq are the most traditional of all tribes. They believe that the maintenance of their ancestors' customs and religious practices is essential for the preservation of their people. One such custom is the young warrior's rite of passage into manhood. The brave must venture, alone and unarmed, into the depths of Underhive, where he must track and kill a giant rat. Once he has killed the beast, he must tear its heart out and eat it, raw and bloody, in order to gain its strength. The brave can then return triumphant to his tribe, wearing pelt of a rat around his head and shoulders. It is from this practice that the derogatory term 'Ratskin' originates. The Kuloqa are by far the most numerous of the Kuloq tribes and have the most contact with the Imperium, although relations have been far from cordial. After enduring decades of interference and abuses the tribe's high elders decreed that all dealings with the Imperial were forbidden and any who tainted themselves by associating with outsiders would be banished forever. Outcast Kuloqa or Tsi-na-kagaq ('Badskins') are highly prized as scouts by Hive gangs since their knowledge of the Underhive is second-to-none. It is not unknown for a Badskin with a grudge to lead a gang raiding party on his former tribal settlement.

The Dapakkani are the Children of Dapakk, the Kuloq god of hunting. In appearance they are almost identical to the Kuloqa tribe although they favour darker colours.

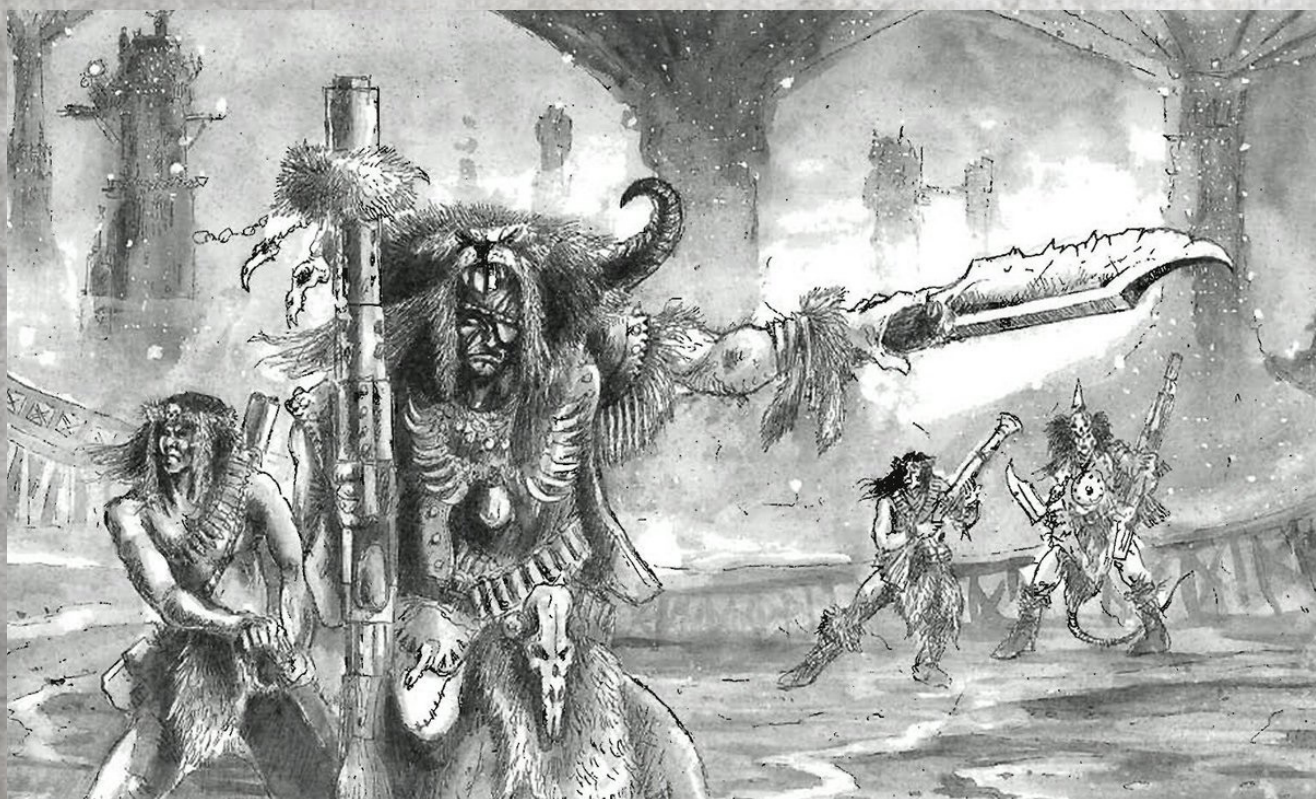
As their name implies, the Dapakkani are dedicated to the god of the hunt and pride themselves in their ability to track and kill anything that wanders through the Underhive whether it is a giant rat or a fully armed gang fighter. More than any other tribe the Dappakkani value marksmanship and do not settle disputes with a ritual knife combat as do other tribes, but with a shooting contest.

This bloodless solution reflects the Dappakkani creed which dictates that they may not kill one of their own unless he has been branded as 'badskin.' The Dappakkani's love of firearms is unparalleled, they have come to realise the value of understanding and maintaining these weapons and will take great risks in order to acquire imperial weapons technology. As a consequence, they are the most technologically competent of all the tribes and their shaman fulfil a role reminiscent of the Imperium's tech-priests, though on a much lower level of course. With their reputation as the finest hunters of the Underhive, Dapakkani's badskins have little difficulty in finding work as snipers and hitmen.

Nassaq means 'black' in the Kuloq language. Strangely this has no bearing on the colour of their clothes but is nonetheless appropriate given the particular demeanour of this tribe. The Nassaq are brutal, cold-blooded killers who live only for battle and take great delight in torturing their prisoners before offering them up as a sacrifice to their bloodthirsty gods. For

these savages a glorious death in battle is the only desirable end to a man's life. They believe that a warrior killed this way will have his spirit reborn into a new body so that he can wreak terrible vengeance upon his killer. To die any other way is to condemn the spirit to an eternity of shame, roaming the Underhive as a shadow. Unlike other tribes, Nassaq warriors do not favour the ratskin head dress, preferring to enter battle bare-chested. They shave their heads and cover themselves in war paint depicting stylised versions of their bestial gods, believing that this will increase their fighting prowess and terrify their enemies. Even more frightful than the warriors themselves are the Nassaq shaman who are able to commune with the dark spirits of the Underhive and blast their enemies with unholy power. It is the shaman who are responsible for the ritual torture and murder of all prisoners. Before a battle the shaman will paint his face with the blood of a freshly sacrificed victim, this is the mask of Brakar, the Kuloq god of war and vengeance. Death is the summary punishment for almost every crime according to Nassaq law so badskin mercenaries from this tribe are all but non-existent. By far the strangest of the surviving Kuloq tribes in Hive Primus, the Ulenni are also the least common and the most secretive. They chose to live only in the deepest and darkest regions of the Underhive, in those places, where Imperial settlers have yet to venture and when they can live out their lives in peace.

The Ulenni rarely venture out into the open. Their entire society is based in and around the collapsed domes and sump pits which litter the very bottom regions of the Underhive. Their spiritual philosophy advocates sinking to the lowest level of existence, indeed the name Ulenni literally means





'The Stones.' Unsurprisingly the Ulenni are much paler in complexion than the other Kuloq people, this is accentuated by their Ratskin hoods which are often taken from mutant albino rats that live around the sump. Life in the depths of the Underhive, is to say the least, harsh and treacherous. The Ulenni has adapted to these conditions and are physically rugged though still remarkable agile. In spite of their evil habitat, they are the most peaceful of all the Kuloq tribes and avoid conflict whenever possible. Nevertheless, their powerful, muscular bodies and natural resilience make them formidable opponents if their homes are threatened. Unfortunately their adaptability to harsh condition makes them highly prized as slaves, and Ulenni settlements are frequently raided by gangs looking to take prisoners, who will be sold off for large sums of money to work in the Guild mines.

RATSKIN RENEGADES

Ratskins are normally a shy, peaceful people who are inclined to avoid the noisy, raucous downhivers and their settlements. They need nothing from the settlers and stay hidden in small communities far from the hivers and their guns. If hivers start working near the Ratskins' settlements they will pack their gear and quietly slip away deeper into the wastes. Ratskins find the hivers strange and bewildering and would rather not have anything to do with them. Sadly, the

Ratskins' peaceable ways make them vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous Guilders or gangs. Outlaws may run riot and murder a whole Ratskin settlement, leaving a few embittered survivors thirsting for vengeance on all hivers. These fierce Ratskins turn their backs on their own people and become renegades, hunting and killing the hivers wherever they can to cleanse the Underhive of intruders. Other Ratskins go to the hivers' settlements out of curiosity or to look for work as trappers or guides and become corrupted by contact with the hivers. The Ratskins themselves dispossess these individuals and call them Badskins. Badskins spend all their money drinking and gambling until they finally get in trouble with the Watchmen and are driven out of the settlement for good. There can be no return home for Ratskins tainted by their contact with 'civilisation' so they drift from place to place until they can join a renegade band and be with their own people again.

BRAT GANGS

Although the noble households are outside the clan structure of Necromunda, they are not immune to the influence of the pervading tribal culture of the hive world. Like clans, noble households have their own ancient and bitter rivalries which sometimes explode into violence. The root causes are often more to do with honour, traditional enmity, and dynastic disputes than the mainly economic and territorial causes of gang warfare in the lower levels of the hive. The idle and decadent youth of the nobility emulate the young clan warriors by forming their own Brat gangs, which make it their business to look after the honour of their household. Many young nobles run with the Brats for a time before they succeed to holding office and can then continue to further the interests of their own household by more subtle means.

The Brats are always in the forefront of any new fashion or cult that sweeps through the upper levels of the hive. Young nobles are privileged, wealthy, inquisitive, rebellious and open to wider influences than are available in the lower levels of the hive. Brat gangs sport fantastic, elaborate costumes and hairstyles, and flout the conventions of hive life as openly as possible. In the upper hive layers Brats run together in packs but they do not limit their predations to their home territories. They frequently drop down the spires into the lower habs, where their wealth can be used to obtain any drug or weapon. Once in the lower habs, the Brat gangs terrorise the Techs and workers, safe in the knowledge that they can return to the upper habs whenever they want to.

TECH GANGS

Tech gangs and associations are more common than supposed. Techs often form collectives to protect themselves from exploitation by other groups. From passive protection and defence, such associations often mature into gangs

that are as aggressive, in their own fashion, as any other in the hives. Tech gangs have a pool of skills which means that they can often trade for materials from the factory levels. They deal in drugs, chemicals and weapons, trading these goods for interesting technological relics and rare raw materials scavenged from the undercities. Tech gangs are not noted for crude ferocity but they are widely respected for their expertise with weapons and equipment, and it is foolish indeed to cross a Tech gang without reason.

SCAVVIES

The shanties and derelict factories of the undercity are homes to the Scavvies, who scrape a living from scavenging materials and trading them with clans who can make a profit from recycling. In the old factories there are rich pickings to be found among the rubbish and abandoned machinery for those who are desperate enough to hunt there. The Scavvies trade what they find - machines, scrap, raw materials, even spook caches in return for food and weapons. The relationship is uneasy at best, because many Scavvies are diseased.

Scavvies develop sores and scabs on the skin due to delving among dangerous pollutants. This has earned the Scavvies the alternative name Scabbies, and like mutants they are often persecuted as subhuman beasts. Wherever they are found, Scavvies are driven from levels occupied by normal humans. Many Scavvies make a good living as spookhunters, prospecting for the precious lodes of raw narcotic spook. For the Scavvy gangs this is a valuable substance, worth many times its weight in real food and fresh water. A carefully guarded lode of spook can keep a gang in relative comfort for years, if they manage to avoid becoming addicts in the meantime. Naturally, much raw spook makes its way to the secret factories of Lord Helmawr. For this reason, if for no other, Scavvies are a necessary part of Necromunda's economy. Without them to find and mine the raw spook, one of Lord Helmawr's principle sources of income would vanish. Other Scavvy gangs specialise in preying on fugitives and patrols from the upper spires, and those who fall victim to them are lucky if they are slain outright. It is even said that Scavvies eat their prisoners. Such fresh meat supplements their normal diet which includes the verminous creatures of the undercity and the shanties.

UNDERCITY GANGS

These gangs are made up of the many types of scum that inevitably end up in the undercity of each hive. Such gangs are small, tightly knit and very territorial. They fall outside the clan system and are independent, ruthless, and resourceful. Undercity gangs soon learn that to survive they must raid the factory and hab levels above them. If a gang is successful, it may even carve out a territory in the higher levels. By taking over a single factory or part of a hab level, the gang

could begin its climb out of the Undercity. The Undercities are among the toughest environments on Necromunda and the undercity warriors are often regarded as the best fighters in the hives. Survival of the fittest is the rule and the survivors grow stronger and tougher. Many undercity gangs will only accept competent warriors into their ranks. A prospective recruit will be expected to prove his worth by scragging an enemy - tearing off an ear, a finger, part of a scalp or some other part of an opponent. The bloody trophies gained are worn as a sign of gang membership: a necklace of dried ears or fingers is sometimes favoured by undercity gangs. When such marks are combined with distinctive costumes, ritual scarring, insignia and tattoos, gang members present a collective identity to their rivals, friends and enemies.

MUTANT GANGS

Mutants are feared by everyone on Necromunda, from the highest administrator in Helmawr's court to the lowliest unskilled worker in the process vats. Most hive dwellers do not understand that mutation is an inevitable part of life on a planet as irredeemably polluted as Necromunda. Mutants are branded as evil, corrupted by their own wickedness and greed, and tainted by witchery of the foulest kind. As a result, mutants are persecuted and driven into the undercities. In the depths they fall victim to the undercity gangs and the scavvies. Most mutants do not survive for very long once they have been discovered. Those that manage to run and hide often band together in gangs of their own, usually in the most inaccessible and heavily polluted sections of the undercities. Once established, mutants interbreed and their offspring, often more mutated than their parents, replenish the gang. Over the course of generations new mutations arise in the gangs, some of which may even be survival traits. The bottom of the hives are unhealthy places, and any mutation which helps its owner to live is naturally passed on to his descendants.

PSYKER GANGS

On Necromunda, as elsewhere in the Imperium, psykers are persecuted and feared. Their witch-talents and unnatural ways make them dangerous: they are open gateways for darkness and wickedness. Folk tales of psykers confirm the worst: they can cause madness with a touch and summon daemons. In turn, many psykers, tormented beyond endurance, lash out at the persecutors, using their powers to destroy. The legends are merely proven by such actions.

Life is hard for psykers on Necromunda, as it is throughout the Imperium. Some fall prey to daemonic possession. More fall victim to the witch-hunting Venators and bounty-hunting gangs. The remainder may manage to escape detection or flee to the undercities. Everyone in the under-

cities has something to hide, so the secretive behaviour of psykers attracts little attention. The 'witches' form their own gangs for mutual protection, always making sure to recruit only their own kind, or true sympathisers. Most psyker-gangs include a few non-psykers, relatives or close friends who have chosen to share the psykers exile.

By far the most dangerous psyker gangs on Necromunda are the secret covens of the cult known as the Immortals.

ADEPTUS ARBITES

The Adeptus Arbites are also known as Imperial Judges, or commonly among the Inhabitants of Necromunda as Judges. Every hive on Necromunda is divided into precincts, each with its own fortified courthouse and a substantial number of Judges. Necromunda is a vital planet to the Imperium, but population pressures mean that it is in constant danger of devolving into anarchy and civil war. The Judges maintain a constant vigilance for signs of disloyalty and subversion from Spire to Underhive. Their duty is to uphold the law of the Imperium, and they are not subject to Lord Helmawr's authority. Indeed, he is the subject of their closest scrutiny. The Imperium is an organisation where rebellion and defiance of the Imperial will be classed as crimes against humanity.

The Judges are the grim and uncompromising reminder of the Imperium's presence on Necromunda. They cannot be bought off, threatened, corrupted or negotiated with. Indeed, the Adeptus Arbites goes to great lengths to ensure that those recruited into their ranks do not serve on their own home worlds nor anywhere within a dozen light years of home. They do not communicate with the citizenry unless absolutely necessary and only leave their precinct courts on official business.

Apart from the Judges, there is no single, all-encompassing official planetary law enforcement agency on Necromunda. The peace is kept by the Houses within their own territories. Certain kinds of lawlessness such as incessant feuding is tolerated by the Houses, but other crimes are dealt with by the Houses themselves. In the Underhive gangs related to the House which has been offended will deal with the offenders. The Judges are present on Necromunda to enforce Imperial laws which are to be upheld throughout the Imperium, rather than the local laws of Necromunda.

The most important work for the Judges on Necromunda include hunting for certain drugs and Archeotech devices which are under Imperial mandate, rounding up psykers and subversives intent on stirring up rebellion against the Imperium, escorting important Imperial officials and assisting the Imperial House in maintaining order when required. Individual Arbitrators, particularly grizzled veterans which have been hardened by years of dispensing justice, act as law

enforcers within some settlements in the Underhive. These are tough, no nonsense characters who command the local Watchmen and direct freelance bounty hunters in the constant battle against outlaws and Outlanders. They also monitor local loyalties and the activities of the Merchant guild to ensure that the Imperial codes of law are maintained even on the frontiers of anarchy. Other than individual Arbitrators the two most commonly encountered Arbites tactical units on Necromunda are the Arbites Patrol squads and the Arbites Shock troop squads. Patrol squads are the standard Jaw enforcement teams which can be seen patrolling hive levels around Imperial establishments and important areas of the Underhive. Shock troops can be called in to quell serious disturbances, such as mob riots, or to suppress unruly gangs and poorly equipped Deviant Scum.

SPYRER GANGS

Even in the living nightmare of the Underhive, the Spyrers are spoken of with a shudder. Parents scare small children into obedience with a mention of their name and grown men fall silent at tales of their attacks. To Underhive dwellers they are demons of the darkness, blood-soaked fiends who prey upon the warring gangs without compunction or pity.

These creatures are not devils or ghosts, as the Underhivers know all too well. They are the sons and daughters of the Noble Houses that rule Hive Primus and the whole of Necromunda from the fastness of the Spire. These siblings of noble blood are cast down into purgatory to prove themselves tough and resourceful enough to take their place amid the ruling families. In a hive containing so many billions of souls, only the most dynamic and merciless individuals can expect to rule, or indeed to survive. Spyrers are sent below the wall in teams. Once in the Underhive they can expect little help, no money and no resources: they have only the equipment they bring with them and their own native wits to help them survive. The only assistance they can expect to receive is the occasional appearance of the Noble House Matriarch or Patriarch that has sponsored the team, either or both of whom will occasionally venture into the Underhive to see at first hand how their charges are doing, and maybe lend them a hand against especially dangerous opponents.

Of course, a Spyrrer's hunting rig is no ordinary set of armour. Spyrers use ritualised combinations of weapons and armour that favour different combat styles. Each rig is meticulously crafted off-world, a wondrous device of half-forgotten technologies worth its own weight in credits. The rig is self-sustaining and self-repairing, with integral weaponry and, most importantly of all, built-in power boosters which activate as the wearer gradually masters the suit's functions. These power boosters make each Spyrrer evolve in a subtly different way, creating a diverse and powerful group of individuals in each hunt.

A Spyrer team can only cross back above the wall when it has achieved its stated objective, which might be to slay a half-dozen Underhive warriors or to survive in the wastes for a certain period of time or some similar vow. Their fighting suits record all that occurs in the depths and verifies their kills, so no duplicity is possible; the Spyres must succeed in their quest or die trying. In the Underhive itself they are hated and feared, but in the Spire they will be lionised on their return and the survivors of the team will take their place among the powerful ruling elite of Necromunda. In time they may become a Matriarch or Patriarch in their own right, and return to the Underhive to feel the thrill of the chase once again. Many hunting teams find it impossible to wait that long, and will be drawn back to the Underhive by an adrenalin-fuelled desire for blood and death that life in the Spire simply cannot fulfil.

The Orrus embodies the most brutal aspects of the Spyre Hunters. Its distinctively oversized powered arms and hulking shoulders betray the Orrus' fearsome combat style: that of crushing and battering its opponents to a bloody pulp. Ranks of armoured pistons power the arms and its blunt, claw-fingered hands, and each fist is backed by a rack of bolt launchers to blast apart opponents at a distance. Though the Orrus is the slowest of the Spyre Hunters it is also the most indomitable. Not only are the powered arms and shoulders heavily armoured but a force field protects the Spyrer as he lumbers forward.

Jakara weapons are the mono sword and mirror shield. The Jakara is the lightest of all the Spyre Hunters, emphasising agility and speed over heavy armour. The suit itself is armoured with flexible plates like snake scales which are overlaid with the tubes and cables that feed power to the Spyrer's limbs. The Jakara buckler is inset with energy absorbing devices that look like faceted jewels, each one of which can drain the force from a shot or blow and hurl it back at the attacker.

The Yeld is the most bizarre of the Spyre Hunters: a winged fiend with pinions of chameleonic metal and claws of laser energy. When not in use, the Yeld's wings sweep back to

form a pinioned cloak of steel and reveal the heavy forearm units bearing laser tubes that are its primary weapons. Its wings are jagged with edges sharp as razors so it can slice its victim as it swoops overhead. When stealth is needed, the Yeld's wings curl around it and mimic the hues surrounding its body, concealing the Spyrer from view until it takes flight again.

Malcadon are cunning and subtle in their hunting, trapping their victims in webs of iron-hard silk before tearing them apart with steely claws. Two bulbous spinarets for creating the web threads are mounted on the suit's arms and connect to the Malcadon's hunched back amidst a snake's nest of tubes. The rest of the elongated limbs and back of the Malcadon are covered with downward pointing spines and overlapping plates of armour. Its arms and legs are boosted by pistons and hydraulics which permit it to climb swiftly and leap great distances so that it can move quickly among the mass of broken pipes and struts which form the dark canopy of the Underhive.

Spyrer Matriarchs are feared throughout the Underhive as grim-faced reapers that slay from the shadows. The Matriarch wears a special 'chameleon cloak' that allows her to blend in with her surroundings. She will stalk her prey and then suddenly appear, her chainscythe in one hand, a deadly sharp monomolecular sword in the other. Matriarchs are hugely experienced fighters, and able to wield both weapons with deadly efficiency. Within moments their prey will be dead and the Matriarch will disappear back into the shadows.

Spyrer Patriarchs are equipped with the finest combat armour that credits can buy. The suit's heavily reinforced armour is capable of shrugging off all but the most powerful attacks, while its powerful servomotors allow the wearer to move and fight without hindrance. The suit has highly sophisticated in-built targeting systems that allow the wearer to detect and attack multiple targets simultaneously. However, most deadly of all are cybernetically controlled combat arms fixed to the suit's back that can lash out to attack any opponent that is near by.

BONUS: LIST OF WD ARTICLES

Here is complete list of articles directly about or useful for Necromunda from WD Nov 2017 to Apr 2021:

2017

- WD November 2017 – Necromunda Underhive & Painting Guide (Esher&Goliats)
- WD December 2017 - Raid on Khott's Folly Battle report

2018

- WD January 2018 - Claim the Spite Scenario
- WD February 2018 - Orlock panting guide & Gauntlet scenario
- WD March 2018- Genestealer Cults Rules & Blanchitsu scavies
- WD April 2018 – Chaos Cult rules
- WD May 2018 – Venators rules & Blanchitsu ash wastes
- WD August 2018 - Cawdor painting guide
- WD December 2018 – Delaque gang rules, Delaque Painting guide & Blanchitsu zombie outbreak

2019

- WD March 2019 - Sector Mechanicus conversions
- WD April 2019 - Underhive art & Big batrep (32 pages)
- WD May 2019 - Perpetual campaigns & House Patronage & Escape the Hive scenario
- WD August 2019 – Wyrd&Wonderful Golden Deamon work
- WD October 2019 - Assault on Precint-Fortress 17 mini campaign
- WD December 2019 - Zone Mortals expanded terrain rules & Protein Reclamator build guide

2020

- WD January 2020 - Industrial Bases guide
- WD April 2020 - Resurrection packages (Issue 453)
- WD August 2021 – Warcry Chaos Cultist conversions (issue 455)
- WD October 2020 - Dust Falls campaign
- WD November 2020 – Rules for Outlaw Brutes
- WD December 2020 - End Times Scenarios

2021

- WD February 2021 – Corpse Grinder Cults 'Eavy metal paints list
- WD April 2021 – Hanger-on's Scenarios