

Here we look at the records surrounding the exploits of the infamous Rogue Trader Duke von Castellan and his recruitment by Inquisitor Covenant.

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DUKE VON CASTELLAN

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A ROGUE TRADER

From an early age, it was clear that the young scion of the von Castellan mercantile family on Xarsis Plethis was going to be a troublesome son. Dubbed precocious by some of his tutors, and a spoilt brat by others, the young Cleander von Castellan was an intelligent but wayward child. Wilful and impulsive, the heir to the von Castellan trade licence was reckless and had an unhealthy fondness for wagers on games of chance. As he grew to manhood, his father would often have

to settle his son's gambling debts and he was a constant source of embarrassment to his family's good name.

In desperation, his father enrolled his wayward son in the Imperial Naval Academy at Bakka, where he learned to pilot a starship and fought in several battles. But the regimented lifestyle of the Imperial Navy was not for Cleander and, after only two years, he was dishonourably discharged, following an incident involving an admiral's daughter and a crashed fighter. Cleander von Castellan returned to Xarsis Plethis, and once again took up his old ways, gambling and cavorting with his disreputable drinking companions.

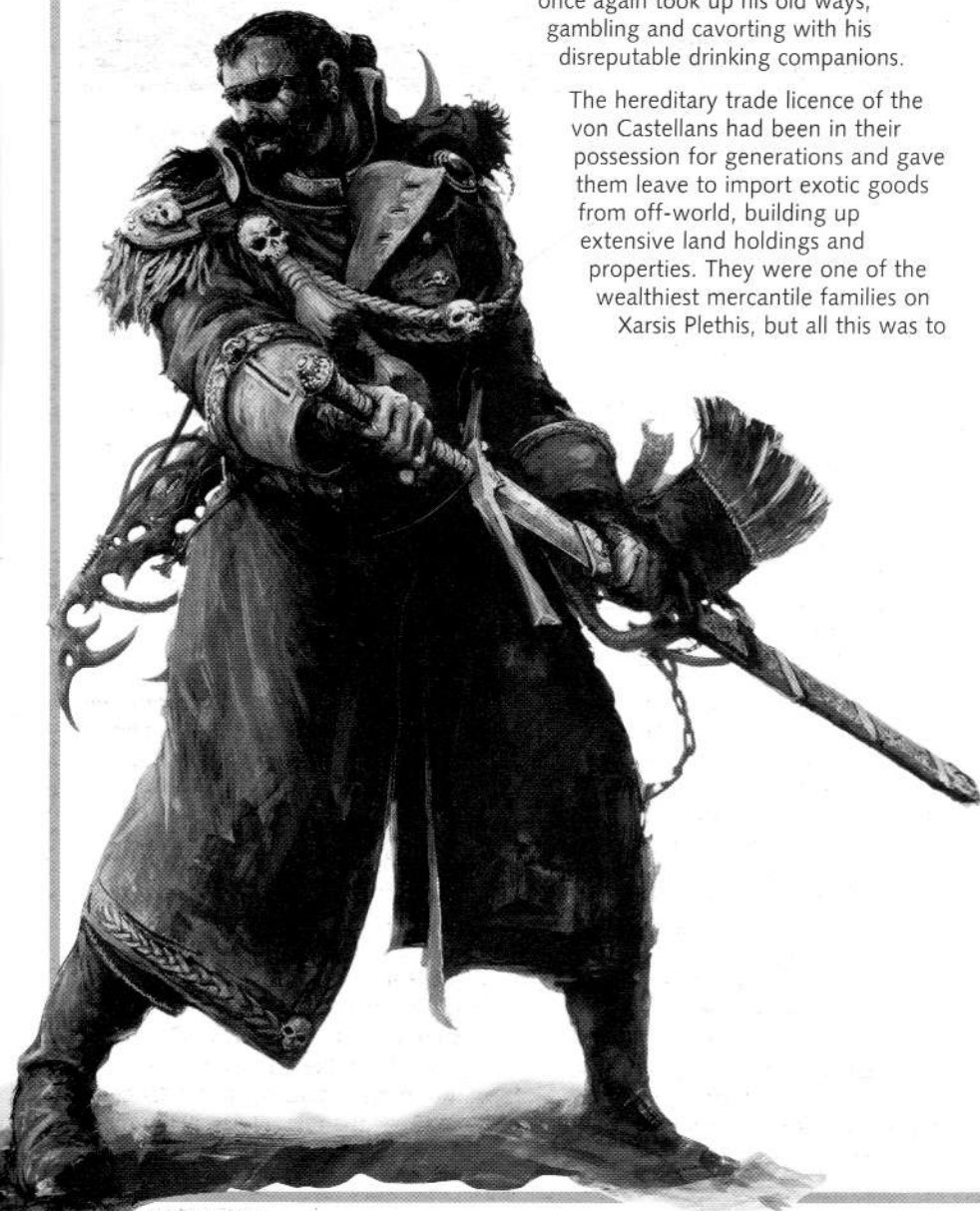
The hereditary trade licence of the von Castellans had been in their possession for generations and gave them leave to import exotic goods from off-world, building up extensive land holdings and properties. They were one of the wealthiest mercantile families on Xarsis Plethis, but all this was to

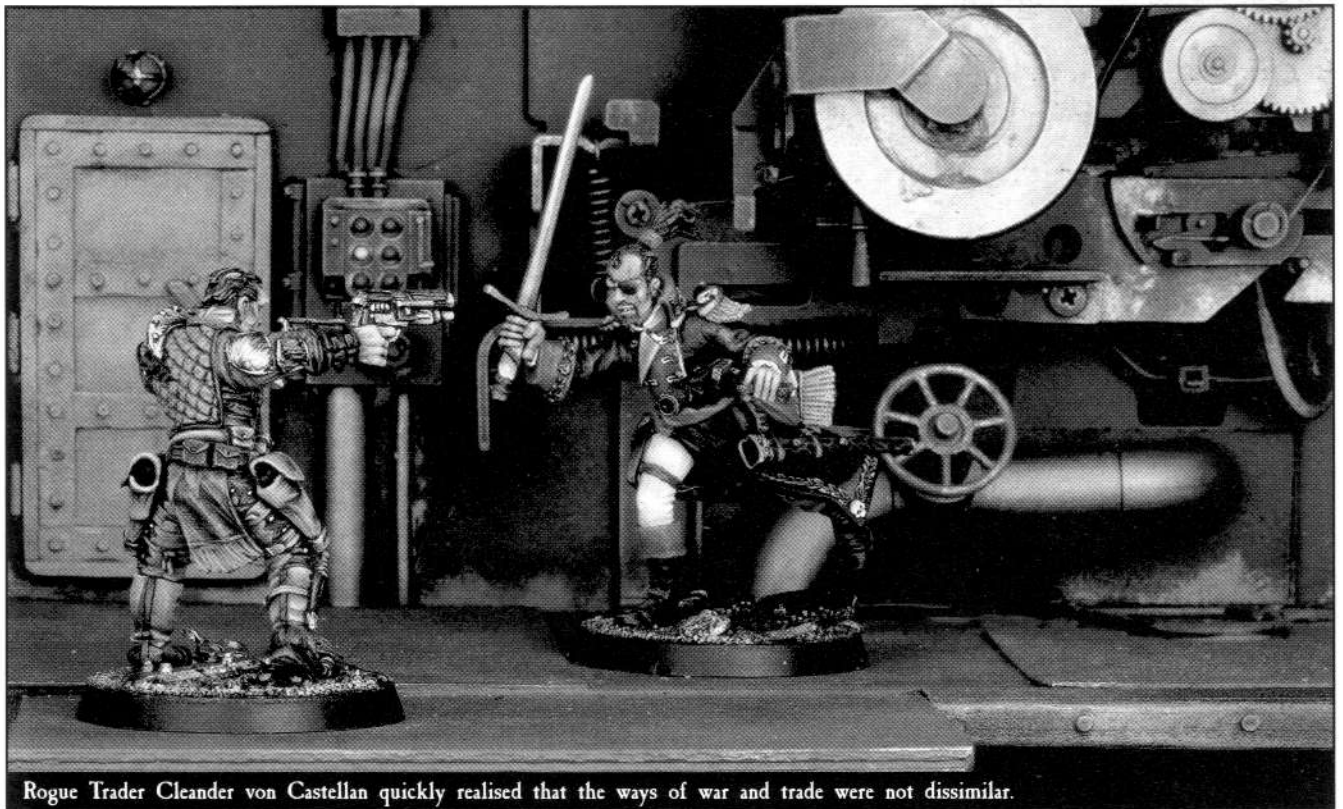
change when Cleander's father and older brother were killed in a bizarre hunting accident. While shooting in the mountains, their cyber-mastiffs mysteriously malfunctioned and tore the von Castellan patriarch and his heir to shreds. Thus Cleander became Duke of the von Castellan commercial empire and immediately set about squandering the family fortune in ill-advised business ventures and the capital city's gambling dens. Within the space of a year, Cleander was forced to sell more and more of his family's estates and properties to settle his debts. Yet the young von Castellan continued in his ruinous ways.

His debts grew to astronomical proportions and, even worse, were owed to corrupt members of the local planetary law enforcement agencies. Soon his notes of credit were worthless and he at last realised the scale of his problems. The sale of virtually everything he owned in the world was just enough to pay what he owed and, with heavy heart, he made his way to settle the debt.

The course of Cleander von Castellan's life would have taken a very different turn had his route not taken him past the capital's shipyards. With a credit slate and the von Castellan trade licence in his pocket, he realised he had found a way to rebuild the family fortune and continue living in the manner to which he had become accustomed. Within the space of an hour, he had purchased a starship and begun his life as a Rogue Trader. If he gave any thought to the angry debtors he left behind, he did not show it.

Cleander von Castellan swiftly learned the ways of the Rogue Trader, becoming a shrewd merchant and skilled warrior. He was quick to realise that the ways of trade and war were not dissimilar and, as he travelled further, his talents in both grew. He was not above exploiting or double-crossing a business contact if the opportunity arose and as his wealth increased so too did his infamy. On Gororan III, a man matching von Castellan's description





Rogue Trader Cleander von Castellan quickly realised that the ways of war and trade were not dissimilar.

was said to have robbed the Gororan Trading Guild of nearly every credit slate it was charged with keeping. The Guilders of Drachus, a hive world in the Segmentum Tempestus, soon had cause to curse the name of von Castellan when it was discovered he was selling them foodstuffs they had previously shipped in, and that had since been stolen. As von Castellan's notoriety grew he was forced to journey further afield and his travels took him towards the southern rim.

He was the first human to discover the world of Cytheria, and the aliens that dwelled there. Their world was rich in mineral resources and Cleander was quick to realise the potential for profit. He set up exclusive trading rights with the Cytherians and began ruthlessly exploiting the naive aliens. Money flowed into von Castellan's coffers as he pushed still further into the galactic south. He was to discover three more non-Imperial worlds and establish exclusive business contracts with all of them, even going as far as to set himself up as a deity on one world, before journeying back to Xarsis Plethis. He knew that his debts were waiting for him and there were those who would wish him dead, but von Castellan was unconcerned. By now, he had accumulated more wealth than that of all the mercantile families on Xarsis Plethis combined, and if the

Duke's experiences as a Rogue Trader had taught him anything it was that if a man had money, confidence and a flair for the dramatic, he could get away with anything.

In the most decadent shuttle imaginable, its outer shell completely encased in gold and precious metals, he gatecrashed the Viscount de Martenique's Ball, a lavish occasion attended every year by the wealthiest mercantile families on Xarsis Plethis, and casually repaid all that he owed with interest. He bought back, at hugely inflated prices, all the lands and properties belonging to his family that he had been forced to sell and settled back into the life of leisure he had enjoyed before his adventures.

But life on his home planet was stale and dull to Cleander now. His spirit craved the thrill of exploration, the challenge of meeting new, exciting alien races and exploiting them. His tales of exotic adventure beyond the stars made him a popular figure amongst the wealthy elite of Xarsis Plethis, but it was unfortunate for von Castellan that his tales fell upon the ears of Inquisitor Covenant. The Inquisitor knew he could use the flamboyant Rogue Trader and confronted him, informing the Duke in no uncertain terms that he now worked for him. Failing to disclose the existence of alien worlds was a crime and, combined with his other illegal activities,

von Castellan knew he had finally been caught out. The Inquisitor promised he would cause the records of von Castellan's criminal past to disappear if he signed agreements pledging himself and his ship to Covenant.

The Duke knew better than to refuse an Imperial Inquisitor and, though he protested vociferously, signed the agreements. On several occasions, von Castellan has answered Covenant's call and his expertise in manipulating people has been invaluable in aiding the Inquisitor. He enthusiastically infiltrated the hedonistic priesthood of the Decagogue of Panetha Varn, discovering the Slaaneshi cult at its heart. His extremely thorough investigations proved pivotal in the traitor's unmasking. At other times, the Duke's skill at arms has been required, such as during the early fighting in the Donorian Sector against the K'Nib, where he lost his left eye.

Despite the time von Castellan has spent in the service of Covenant, he has little sense of honour or duty and only continues to serve him for fear that the Inquisitor will renege on their deal. Cleander von Castellan remains a powerful, if reluctant, ally of Covenant and his skill in the art of war and almost preternatural sense for danger have saved the Inquisitor's life on more than one occasion.