

WARHAMMER QUEST

BLACKSTONE FORTRESS



ESCALATION

THE ONGOING BATTLE FOR THE BLACKSTONE FORTRESS

PRODUCED BY GAMES WORKSHOP IN NOTTINGHAM

With thanks to the Denizens of Precipice for their playtesting services

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INTRODUCTION

The taint of Chaos grows within the Blackstone Fortress. Obsidius Mallex has risen, and his heretical forces have created a hideous citadel inside their tessellating prison. As they gain control over more of the fortress' apocalyptic weapons systems, Precipice – and perhaps the entire galaxy – are faced with imminent destruction.

Escalation is an expansion for Warhammer Quest: Blackstone Fortress that adds a new quest, in which the explorers seek to destabilise an area of the Blackstone Fortress that has been corrupted by the forces of Chaos. By establishing malefic fanes to the Dark Gods deep within the Blackstone Fortress, Obsidius Mallex has created a vast, warp-tainted region of the structure in which the corridors and chambers no longer rearrange themselves constantly. To complete their quest, the explorers must locate each of Mallex's shrines and destroy or disable them, allowing the fortress to scatter the Chaos Lord's forces throughout its halls. However, first they must find these shrines, a task that will not be easy – especially as time is working against them. With Mallex's forces taking over ever more of the Blackstone Fortress' weapon systems, the threat to the explorers'

base of Precipice will grow with every passing expedition.

The Escalation expansion represents the next chapter in the ongoing Blackstone Fortress saga. It includes a complete new quest, with a new structure. The explorers will have to navigate and map the stable routes locked down by the forces of Chaos, defeating the multitudinous hostiles that are infesting the fortress amidst rising levels of threat and danger. This expansion includes an Exploration booklet for the explorers to use, which will guide them through the Chaos-held areas of the Blackstone Fortress, as well as a map for the explorers to fill out as they discover new chambers and access routes. Explorers will also be able to venture outside of the stabilised areas of the fortress, trusting to luck and the will of the fortress itself to take them to their destination.

The expansion also includes a new way to explore the Blackstone Fortress, as well as deadly new enemies in the form of the Cultist Firebrand and his deranged Chaos Cultist followers, civilians converted to the cause of the Dark Gods and fanatically dedicated to seeing their will enacted through the warlord Obsidius Mallex. You will also find complete rules for using the contents of the expansion as part of your other games of Blackstone Fortress in the future.

The quest for the Black Shrines is a new quest that you can choose to play instead of starting a different quest. We recommend completing the quest for the hidden vault before starting the quest for the Black Shrines, as doing so will give you a good knowledge of the game, and the narrative running through it, before starting this new quest.



The new arrivals at Precipice join the existing roster of brave individuals who venture inside the Blackstone Fortress, and are added to the list of models referred to in the rules as 'explorers'.

COMPONENTS

Blackstone Fortress: Escalation includes a variety of components, including four new explorers. These explorers bring with them new spacecraft, resources and ability markers. The remainder of the components listed below will be used by the explorers in different situations as they seek to conquer the Citadel of Mallex.

Explorer Citadel Miniatures

- Neyam Shai Murad
- Daedalus
- Gotfret de Montbard
- Aradia Madellan

Retinue Citadel Miniatures

- X-101

Hostile Citadel Miniatures

- Cultist Firebrand
- 7 Chaos Cultists

Cards

- 4 explorer character cards
- 1 retinue character card
- 4 initiative cards
- 3 hostile reference cards
- 32 resource cards
- 12 chamber cards
- 4 Black Shrine cards
- 4 encounter cards
- 4 mortis cards

Booklets

- 24-page Escalation booklet
- 40-page Exploration booklet
- 8-page Datasheets booklet
- 1 assembly guide

Other Components

- 1 Throne of Mallex envelope
- 4 stasis chambers

Counters and Markers

- 4 double-sided menace counters and 1 menace tracker
- 2 designated target markers
- 1 shieldwall marker
- 1 tectonic destabilisation marker
- 1 holographic replica marker
- 1 void shield marker
- 4 psychic crystal markers
- 6 illusion markers
- 4 bloodrage markers
- 1 firestorm marker
- 4 wound counters



Menace counter

Boards and Tiles

- 1 double-sided *Ultimatum* spacecraft
- 1 double-sided *Seeker Omicron-Zeta* spacecraft
- 2 double-sided chambers
- 1 vortex location tile
- 6 double-sided location tiles



Ultimatum and Seeker Omicron-Zeta spacecraft



Designated target marker



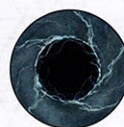
Firestorm marker



Holographic replica marker



Shieldwall marker



Void shield marker



Tectonic destabilisation marker



Bloodrage marker



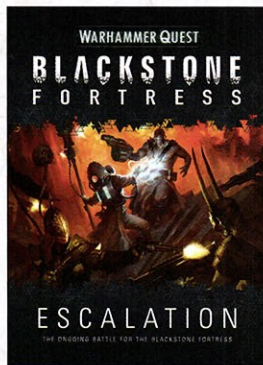
Psychic crystal marker



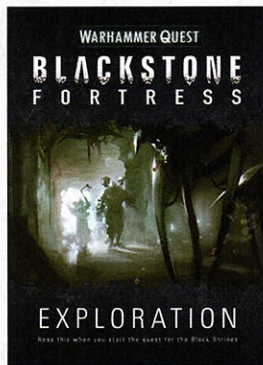
Illusion marker



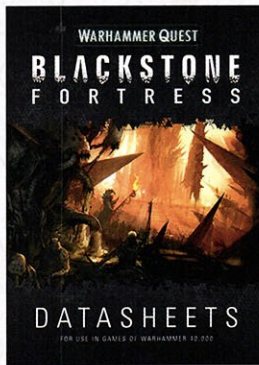
Wound counter



Escalation booklet



Exploration booklet



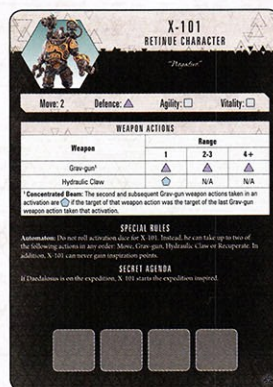
Datasheets booklet



Throne of Mallex envelope



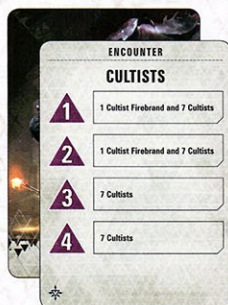
Explorer character card



Retinue character card



Hostile reference card



Encounter card



Resource card



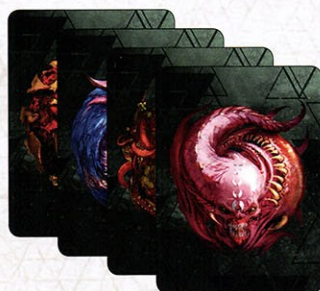
Chamber card



Mortis card



Initiative card



Black Shrine cards



Stasis chamber

THE QUEST FOR THE BLACK SHRINES

In order to bring an end to Obsidius Mallex's plans, the explorers must seek out shrines dedicated to each of the Ruinous Powers, and take artefacts from these that will grant them access to Mallex's throne room. The rules below describe how to take up this quest into these corrupted regions of the Blackstone Fortress.

STARTING THE QUEST FOR THE BLACK SHRINES

The quest for the Black Shrines is a standalone quest that can be attempted if the explorers are not currently on another quest, such as the quest for the hidden vault. Before starting an expedition, the explorers can choose to undertake the quest for the Black Shrines. If they do so, follow the rules presented here to set up an expedition for this quest. Once the explorers have started this quest, they may not start another until it has been completed. The quest for the Black Shrines uses some new rules and some existing rules from those presented for the quest for the hidden vault on pages 11-13 of the Rules booklet.



SETTING UP AN EXPEDITION FOR THE QUEST FOR THE BLACK SHRINES

Set up the expedition as described in the Rules booklet, but with the following changes:

- During step 3, when setting up the Precipice board, slot the menace tracker onto the bottom of the board as shown below. Then add any menace counters currently in the databank with their effect side face up.



- Do not follow the instructions for creating the exploration deck. Instead, take all of your Blackstone Fortress exploration cards (and any eligible exploration cards you wish to include from other expansions), shuffle them and place them face down in the space for them on the Precipice board.
- During step 4, take the encounter cards from Blackstone Fortress and find the cards for the Traitor Guardsmen, Negavolt Cultists, Ur-Ghuls, Spindle Drones, Chaos Beastmen and Rogue Psykers. You can then add any eligible encounter cards from other expansions you own, as described in that expansion. Then, add the Cultists encounter cards from this expansion. Shuffle these cards to make a new encounter deck, and then place the deck to the left of the combat track.
- Take the Cultist Firebrand and Cultists hostile reference cards and add them to the other hostile reference cards to the right of the combat track.
- During step 10, place the Exploration booklet with the other reference booklets.
- During step 12, the leader reads aloud the following text instead: *'The maglev transport chamber lurches into motion, taking the explorers into the heart of Obsidius Mallex's dread citadel within the fortress. Their objective is to defeat the reborn Chaos Lord and break his hold over the area, but first they must locate and destroy the four Black Shrines spreading corruption throughout the mega-structure. They must not delay, though, for with every moment more weapon systems are brought online, bringing Precipice closer to the edge of destruction...'*

EXPLORATION ROUNDS

An exploration round as part of the quest for the Black Shrines is split into the following steps, instead of those listed on page 11 of the Rules booklet.

1. Resolve chamber/passage
2. Recovery step
3. Leader step

The recovery and leader steps are carried out as described on page 11 of the Rules booklet. The resolve chamber/passage step is resolved using the map, as described overleaf and in the Exploration booklet.

EVENT PHASE

Blackstone Fortress: Escalation uses a different event table to the one found in Blackstone Fortress. When making an event roll, players should use the new event table found on page 24.

THE BLACK SHRINES

The Black Shrines take the form of four combat encounters, each with their own unique rules and theme. If the explorers enter one of the Black Shrines during an expedition, it will require additional rules to set up. The maps and rules for each of these shrines can be found on pages 30-37 of the Exploration booklet. Each of the Black Shrines has an event table, which is used instead of the one found on page 24, as well as a set of rules that will affect how the combat is fought. Make sure to read all of the rules for a Black Shrine carefully before you start the combat, as they will often change how hostiles or explorers are set up for that combat.

The instructions for each Black Shrine will tell you what the explorers need to do to conquer that shrine, and the rewards they receive for doing so. If all of the explorers are taken out of action before this happens, the expedition ends in failure as normal and no rewards are received.

ENDING AN EXPEDITION

Instead of the rules for ending an expedition found on page 11 of the Rules booklet, an expedition comes to an end if any of the following occur:

- At the end of a combat, all of the explorers are out of action.
- An explorer dies in the recovery step.
- After resolving a chamber, all of the players agree to end the expedition.
- The explorers conquer one of the Black Shrines, as described above.

When an expedition ends, the explorers return to Precipice as normal.

ONE-OFF EXPEDITIONS

If you wish to play a one-off expedition using the contents of this expansion, add the encounter cards for the Chaos Cultists and Cultist Firebrand to the Blackstone Fortress encounter card deck used for one-off games. You can find more instructions for how to use the cards from this expansion in future games on page 9.



New types of heretical enemies abound within the darkened chambers of the Blackstone Fortress. These are added to the list of models referred to in the rules as 'hostiles'.

NAVIGATING THE CITADEL

The quest for the Black Shrines will take the explorers deep into the area of the Blackstone Fortress known as the Citadel of Mallex. To successfully navigate the citadel and find the Black Shrines, the explorers will have to move through a number of chambers and passages, charting their progress on the exploration map as they go.

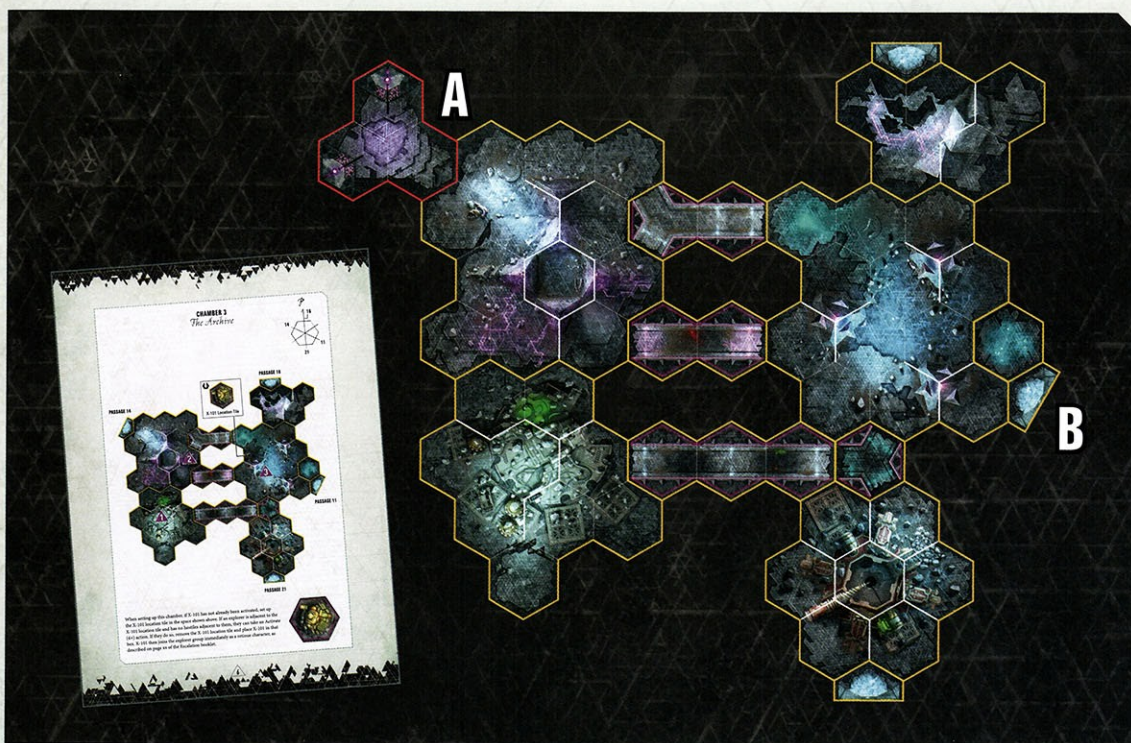
On the back of the Exploration booklet can be found an incomplete map of the Citadel of Mallex. Each hex on the exploration map represents a chamber. Two chambers are known to the explorers at the outset of the quest – the Gateway (the first chamber they will arrive at) and the Throne of Mallex.

Many of the chambers in the Citadel of Mallex have been stabilised by the forces of Chaos; travel between these stabilised chambers is straightforward, with passages connecting each of them. These connecting passages are often filled with nefarious traps and unique challenges.

Other chambers on the exploration map are outside of the Citadel of Mallex, forming areas known as Blackstone Labyrinths. Certain passages will lead explorers through one or more of these chambers, often leaving the explorers unsure of their final location when they return to the citadel.

The map provided for each chamber shows several portals, each of which leads to a passage. When the explorers begin a new chamber, set up the maglev transport replacing the portal specified. This transport then shuts down temporarily. To resolve the chamber, the explorers will need to leave the chamber through any of the other portals available.

When explorers have completed a chamber, the leader can find the card for that chamber in the chamber deck provided and add it to the databank. When starting a new expedition, the explorers can pick one of the chambers in the databank and discard a total number of clues equal to the number specified on that chamber card. If they do so, they can begin the expedition from that chamber instead of from the Access Route. When the explorers choose to start from a chamber, pick one of the portals on that chamber's card and proceed as if the explorers had just exited that chamber through the chosen portal.



In this example, the explorers have entered Chamber 3, The Archive, from passage 14. Portal A specifies that it is the entry point from passage 14, and so is replaced with the maglev transport chamber. The explorers are set up in this maglev transport chamber. After exploring the chamber, the explorers exit through portal B. This specifies that the explorers should turn to passage 11 to continue their expedition.

AFTER THE QUEST

The dread forces of Chaos are spread throughout the Blackstone Fortress, and even if the Citadel of Mallex were to be brought low, filthy traitors and cultists would continue to roam the fortress' labyrinthine corridors. Detailed below is a guide for using the contents of this expansion in other games of Blackstone Fortress.

All of the cards from the Escalation expansion are marked with a ✨, allowing them to be added to and removed from your existing Blackstone Fortress card decks with ease, enabling full customisation of your Blackstone Fortress adventures.

The Miniatures and Encounter Cards

You can add the miniatures from this expansion to the Blackstone Fortress game for other quests you may embark upon in the future. To do so, when setting up an expedition for that quest, or during one-off games, simply add the Cultist encounter cards to your encounter deck. This means that there is a chance that the Cultist Firebrand and Cultists will appear while playing through other quests – this also allows you to replay ones you have already completed with a new element, as well as ensuring a new challenge for one-off expeditions.

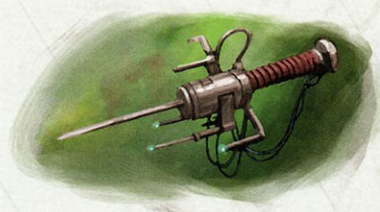
Combat and Challenge Encounters

If you wish, when playing through one-off games, when you draw a combat encounter card, you can instead substitute in a chamber map from the Exploration booklet. If you wish to do this, roll the Blackstone dice and consult the One-off Combat Encounters table opposite, re-rolling the result if you have already used that chamber during this game. Each result also specifies which portal should be replaced with the maglev transport chamber containing the explorers, based on the passage number attached to that portal.

If you wish, you can also use the same system when a challenge encounter card is drawn. If you wish to do this, roll the Blackstone dice and consult the One-off Challenge Encounters table opposite, re-rolling the result if you already used that passage earlier in the expedition. Each result specifies a passage from the Exploration booklet that can be used in place of the challenge on the card drawn. Explorers should ignore the instructions at the end of the passage, and instead draw the next card of the exploration deck.

ONE-OFF COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

ROLL	CHAMBER	PORTAL
1-2	Chamber 1 – The Mustering Ground	Passage 21
3-4	Chamber 2 – The Armoury	Passage 29
5-6	Chamber 4 – The Spoils	Passage 19
7-8	Chamber 5 – The Profane Sanctum	Passage 12
9-10	Chamber 6 – The Oubliette	Passage 5
11-12	Chamber 7 – The Gateway	Passage 23
13-14	Chamber 8 – The Screaming Halls	Passage 13
15-16	Chamber 9 – The Barracks	Passage 27
17-18	Chamber 10 – The Catacombs	Passage 24
19-20	Chamber 12 – The Asylum	Passage 16



ONE-OFF CHALLENGE ENCOUNTERS

ROLL	PASSAGE
1-2	Passage 1 – Sniper in the Shadows
3-4	Passage 3 – Biopsychic Ooze
5-6	Passage 4 – Murder Hole
7-8	Passage 5 – Halls of Vanity
9-10	Passage 7 – Rage Resonator
11-12	Passage 8 – Cultist Onslaught
13-14	Passage 10 – Bladed Cache
15-16	Passage 11 – Path of Fate
17-18	Passage 15 – Mutagenic Miasma
19-20	Passage 18 – Destabilising Storm

NEW RULES

Blackstone Fortress: Escalation contains a host of new features, introducing retinue characters, random hex selection and a menace level tracker that represents the growing threat to Precipice during the quest for the Black Shrines. The rules for how to use these features in your games are found below and opposite.

RETINUE CHARACTERS

X-101 is a retinue character. The explorers will not have access to X-101 at the start of the quest for the Black Shrines, but may find him in the course of their expeditions. Once discovered, X-101 can join the explorer group.

When starting a new expedition, one retinue character can be chosen to accompany the explorers. A retinue character is treated as an explorer in all regards with the following exceptions:

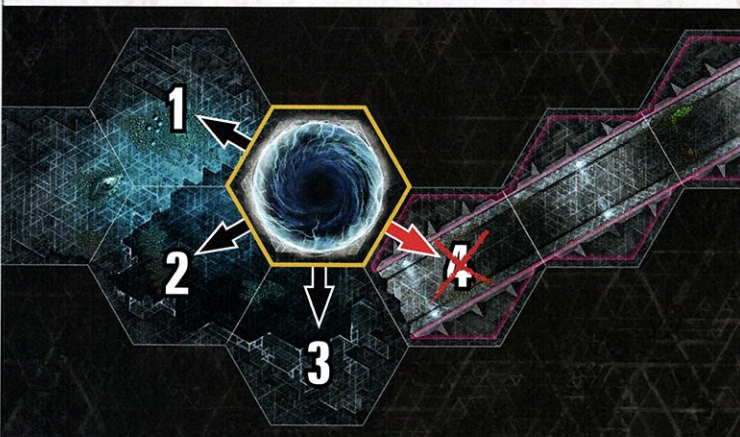
- A retinue character does not have an initiative card, and is always controlled by whoever is the current leader. Retinue characters are activated immediately after the leader's own explorer.
- A retinue character can never use destiny dice.
- Retinue characters do not use activation dice. Instead, their character card will tell you how many actions (and what actions) that character can take each time it is activated. A stunned retinue character takes one fewer action in a turn in which it stands back up. Retinue characters suffer wounds and grievous wounds, and are taken out of action in the same manner as explorers.
- A retinue character can never have discovery or resource cards. If a rule or ability would cause a retinue character to receive a discovery card, the leader receives that discovery card instead.
- Retinue characters can never receive any cards that are given as rewards. If a reward would be given to a retinue character (because, for example, they slew a specific enemy or a achieved a certain goal), that reward is instead given to the leader.

RANDOMISED DIRECTIONS

If a rule instructs you to move a miniature or resolve an effect in a randomised direction, allocate each hex adjacent to the miniature or origin hex a number, working clockwise as shown below. Then roll an activation dice; the numbered hex that corresponds to the result is the destination hex. If there are not six eligible hexes (because the starting hex is close to the edge of a chamber tile, for example), then each eligible hex should be allocated a number and an activation dice rolled as usual, re-rolling any numbers that were not assigned to an eligible hex.



In the example above, the vortex must move 1 hex in a randomised direction. Each adjacent hex is allocated a number, and an activation dice is rolled. The result is 3, so the vortex moves into hex 3.



In the example above, the vortex can only move into hexes 1, 2 or 3. It cannot move into hex 4 because it would pass through a wall hexside.

MENACE LEVEL

The menace level represents the Chaos forces within the Blackstone Fortress gaining more control over the structure's weapons, and the threat to Precipice growing as a result. In game terms, this reduces the resource cards available at each spacecraft in the trading step, and increases the likelihood of hostile reinforcements arriving during a combat. Note that there will be opportunities for the explorers to decrease the threat level over the course of their expeditions.

Each time the explorers return to Precipice after an expedition undertaken as part of the quest for the Black Shrines, the leader should add a menace counter to the menace tracker below the Precipice board. When the game

is packed away at the end of a gaming session, any menace counters should be added to the databank. When setting up an expedition, set up any menace counters in the databank on the menace tracker. If you are required to add a menace counter to the menace tracker and there are no spaces remaining, the forces of Chaos have succeeded in destroying Precipice with overwhelming firepower, and the current quest ends in failure. The explorers must start that quest from the beginning, or can pick another quest to embark on.

Menace counters are added to the track from level 1 to level 4. The effects they have are specified on each counter and are cumulative, as illustrated below.

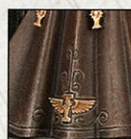
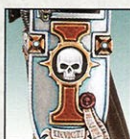


For example, the explorers return to Precipice after their third expedition undertaken as part of the quest for the Black Shrines, and the menace level increases by 1, to level 3. This means that during the subsequent trading step, when setting up spacecraft, the number of resource cards available at each spacecraft is reduced by two, and during the next expedition, the explorers must subtract 3 (to a minimum of 1) from reinforcement rolls made for hostile groups in each turn of combat.

THE EXPLORERS

More and more intrepid individuals are drawn to the Western Reaches with every passing day, travelling in spite of – or perhaps because of – increasingly sinister rumours concerning the Blackstone Fortress. Those who survive the long and perilous journey to Precipice are met with a war zone, and must join in the fight or be faced with annihilation.

ULTIMATUM



Aradia Madellan
Primaris Psyker



Gotfred de Montbard
Crusader



Neyam Shai Murad
Rogue Trader

"Know your enemies, know your allies and know yourself. That way you will not be blind in the midst of battle."

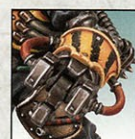
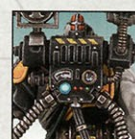
- Neyam Shai Murad

SEEKER OMICRON-Z



Daedalus
Technoarcheologist

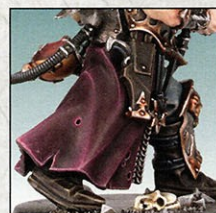
RETINUE CHARACTER



X-101
Servitor

THE HOSTILES

As the followers of the Dark Gods within the Blackstone Fortress gain ever more control over the colossal structure, so too do their numbers continue to grow. Fresh Chaos forces are brought aboard the fortress by dread vessels, or are transported directly into its maddening halls by arcane technology or profane rituals.



Cultist Firebrand



Cultist Champion with stubcarbine, chainsword and grenades



Cultist with grenade launcher

Cultist with heavy stubber and grenades



Cultists with autoguns and grenades

CHAOS RISING

Entombed within the Blackstone Fortress are all manner of things thought lost. The last traces of long-dead species, fragments of apocalyptic technologies and the bodies of fearless and foolish explorers lie scattered throughout the twisting corridors. Yet not all of these things remain hidden in the darkness forever.

Obsidius Mallex, the tyrannical lord of the Servants of the Abyss, had been cut down by the explorers of Precipice. Upon his death many of his heretical followers sought to assert dominance over the warband. They delved further into the Blackstone Fortress in an effort to unlock its awesome power, and continued to slaughter any enemies who crossed their path. The corpse of the Chaos Lord was left lying where it had fallen, untouched and unmourned – but it did not remain lifeless for long.

When his ship was first brought inside the Blackstone Fortress, Mallex was branded with an augmetic rune. From this rune he had felt the flow of an inexhaustible well of energy coursing through his veins. It changed him, altering his transhuman physiology, imbuing him with power even beyond that granted by the fell touch of Chaos.

This eldritch energy revived his battered and broken corpse. His broken flesh and bones were reknitted – rearranged like the chambers of the fortress to make him whole once more – and his gaping wounds were sealed closed. His mind too was revived, but his hatred and rage were now intermingled with strange visions. He saw fleeting glimpses of the distant reaches of space, of unseen dimensions in the past, present and future. Mallex could not fully understand these images, but he felt with growing awe that his senses had become intertwined with a vast and unfathomable sentience. In some small way he could see what the Blackstone Fortress saw, he could sense its impossible might, and could feel its untapped potential for destruction.

Mallex set about reuniting the followers of Chaos in the fortress

into a singular terrifying force. It was not only the Servants of the Abyss that were brought to heel under his merciless rule, for other heretical forces had found their way to the Blackstone Fortress. A traitor regiment of the Astra Militarum – the Grendish 82nd ‘Dread Harbingers’ – had traversed the interstellar void and found new routes of ingress into the shifting chambers. Rogue Psykers and Chaos Space Marines, guided by Mallex, also managed to enact profane rituals, opening warp rifts to draw to their side droves of fanatical Chaos Cultists from distant worlds under the shadow of the Great Rift. At their lord’s command, these forces set out to find the stable nodes within the fortress: the strongholds and secret chambers. Mallex had watched the denizens of Precipice unlock new sections of the labyrinthine structure, learning much from their successes and seeing the limits of their ambitions.

– ROGUE TRADER NEYAM SHAI MURAD WARRANT OF TRADE J405-8H77Q DATALOG ENTRY: 38-9-203

MISSION: Western Reaches – Blackstone Fortress

STATUS: Last docked at Mespoint. Nearing destination. Intel acceptable; military capability optimal.

NOTES: Problematic contradictions in Imperial information regarding Blackstone Fortress location. Non-Imperium sources little better. Improvisation required to achieve adequate route mapping. Steady increase in Chaos presence. Cause for concern.

PERSONAL: I must admit I had my doubts, but the rumours regarding the Blackstone Fortress are proving true. It seems the heretics have also caught wind of this and are moving with great haste into the uncharted void where the fortress is located. There will soon be much bloodshed. Emperor give me guidance.





THE CITADEL OF MALLEX

As Mallex explored his prison further, he learnt that the enigmatic substance from which the Blackstone Fortress was constructed had many curious properties. In its natural state it was inert, but it could be attuned to repel or enhance the fell energies of the warp. Through horrific blood sacrifices, arcane rites and manifold acts of degradation he was able to bring entire sections of the fortress under the influence of Chaos. Multiple chambers that had once transformed and translocated constantly were bound together, locked into place by profane magics. Jagged spars of blackstone dripped with blood, foul effluvia seeped through ancient vents, and darkened corridors were illuminated by warpfire. These Chaos-tainted sections were then melded together to form a single, nightmarish citadel within the fortress, many times larger than any of the individual strongholds held by the Servants of the Abyss, and far more dangerous to any foolish enough to enter them.

Though the Citadel of Mallex extends through only a fraction of the Blackstone Fortress, it is still a sprawling complex, a nightmarish locus from which the influence of the warp continues to spread. By perpetuating this corruption, the Chaos Lord seeks to bend ever more of the fortress to his will so that he may harness its unfathomable destructive capabilities. Already he has unlocked a small portion of the ancient weapons systems that line the interior and exterior of the monolithic space station, and has found ways to draw upon the energies powering the fortress' arcane technologies – yet this is but a taste of the power he seeks.

Throughout his citadel, Mallex has established four ritual chambers where his servants invoke the dark blessings of the Chaos Gods. The profane rites performed in these chambers serve to corrupt their surroundings in unique ways: the Shrine of Wrath amplifies the fortress' defence and weapons systems; the

Shrine of Fate weaves the already labyrinthine passages into new mind-bending configurations; the Shrine of Decay exudes an aura of doom that erodes the body and soul of any who draw near; while the Shrine of Excess intensifies feelings of avarice and jealousy in those who seek out the fortress' treasures. These four chambers serve to anchor the citadel in place, keeping it stable while Mallex conducts another dread ritual – one that is awakening long-slumbering sections of the Blackstone Fortress and bringing its full oblitative capabilities online.



BRINK OF ANNIHILATION

With the weapons systems of the Blackstone Fortress becoming increasingly active, the denizens of Precipice no longer have the option of avoiding the growing Chaos presence. Where their outpost was once a port of trade for intrepid explorers, it is now a staging point – a solitary bastion on the front lines of a new and terrible war zone.

When the first explorers discovered the Blackstone Fortress and established their outpost in its shadow, the colossal structure had been inert and impassive. Aside from the apertures through which they entered its interior, the vast exterior facets showed no signs of activity, and were as still as the surface of a lifeless moon. But since the establishment of the Citadel of Mallex, the inpouring warp energies have caused a portion of the fortress' terrifying armaments to awaken. Jagged spires stab outwards from the shadowy surface, and from them crackling rivulets of cerulean lightning arc out to incinerate anything that draws near. Giant irises yawn open on formerly smooth sections of the facade,

delivering devastating pulses of energy before sealing closed without a trace. These attacks are erratic and directionless, and according to accounts from the Gothic War, represent but the smallest fraction of the fortress' offensive capabilities – but they are still an undeniable threat to the denizens of Precipice. Multiple vessels have been damaged or even destroyed as they travelled between their docking station and the fortress' apertures, while others have been blasted into oblivion as they tried to flee towards the debris nebula. Precipice itself has also been buffeted by eldritch energies, and those vessels docked there have been forced to devote increasing amounts of energy to their defences in order to survive.

With every passing day the attacks intensify and become more focused. It is clear to all aboard Precipice that as the Servants of the Abyss continue to solidify their hold within the fortress, so too do they gain more control of its destructive capabilities. If left unchecked they will soon be able to focus the devastating power of the fortress upon Precipice. Should the heretics eradicate the outpost, no one will be left to stop them from spreading their foul taint throughout the entirety of the ancient mega-structure. To prevent such a powerful asset falling under Chaos control, and for the sake of their own lives, the denizens of Precipice have no choice but to venture inside the Citadel of Mallex and wipe out their foe.



ENEMY TERRITORY

The search for unfathomable riches and ancient knowledge is no longer the sole force driving explorers to enter the Blackstone Fortress. Regardless of their original motivations for journeying to the desolate region of space in which the fortress is located, all are now locked in a battle for survival against the agents of Chaos. Many explorers have taken what wealth they have claimed and attempted to leave. Few have evaded the fortress' bombardments to reach the debris nebula, and of these, fewer still have made it back to charted space alive. Yet despite the dangers, new explorers have continued to arrive at the Blackstone Fortress, drawn either by outdated rumours of an untouched tomb of treasures, or striving desperately to intercept the Chaos forces that have been seen flocking towards the region and stop them from harnessing a weapon of apocalyptic power.

What expeditions there are that still set out from Precipice are now akin to covert military operations. Explorers and data traders pool their resources, seeking ways to enter the Citadel of Mallex without drawing too much attention to themselves. Once inside they find ways to deal as much damage as they can to their overwhelming foe and extract themselves before they are annihilated. This is no easy feat, for the chambers within the complex have been reshaped to create choke points and ambush sites, where heretical soldiers lie in wait for their prey. In other places, vast hallways have been opened up to ensure that there is nowhere to hide for any would-be intruders. The Servants of the Abyss have gathered not only their own forces within the citadel, but have also corralled other hostile creatures and constructs that roam the labyrinthine halls of the Blackstone Fortress. Slaving beasts are funnelled through fractal hallways to sniff out their victims, and Spindle Drones move in unending patrols, their abstruse directives causing them to defend even the Chaos-warped sections of the fortress.

The one thing in the explorers' favour is that, unlike so much of the Blackstone Fortress' interior, the citadel is not difficult to locate. The pathways of tessellating chambers from the Stygian Aperture that once led to seemingly random points within the fortress now inevitably take the explorers to the citadel. Whether this has been brought about through the warping effects of Chaos or by the unfathomable sentence of the fortress itself, none aboard Precipice can determine. Thus far, one chamber has been identified as the end point of these pathways; However, data traders believe that with more information they may be able to map other routes that lead to different parts of the complex.



Once inside the citadel, explorers must be constantly alert, for in every shadow the Servants of the Abyss or one their many thralls could be encountered. The corruption that pervades the citadel has transformed the Blackstone Fortress' latent defences, augmenting the booby traps and eradication systems with sorcerous warp energies. Passageways thrum with electricity or bristle with shifting blades, flensing incautious explorers, stripping them of their souls or reducing them to a state of babbling insanity. Certain portals open into portions of the fortress not yet bound by Chaos, forcing explorers to make their way through a labyrinth of shifting chambers and returning them to some distant and well-defended point within the citadel. It is madness to enter such an environment, and yet for the denizens of Precipice the only hope of survival is to find some way of destabilising this profane complex.

– ROGUE TRADER NEYAM SHAI MURAD WARRANT OF TRADE J405-8H77Q DATALOG ENTRY: 38–9–315

MISSION: Western Reaches – Blackstone Fortress

STATUS: Docked at Precipice. Intel and military capability minimal.

NOTES: Blackstone Fortress in state of semi-activation. Internal sections under Chaos control [specifics unknown]. Base of operations [non-Imperial space station: Precipice] under bombardment. Diplomacy options non-existent. Limited military forces available: myself; crew of *Ultimatum*; attaches; various denizens of Precipice [numbers and loyalties as-yet undetermined]; one fellow Rogue Trader. Situation dire.

PERSONAL: I have caught myself thinking that I have encountered worse circumstances before and emerged victorious, but my datalogs suggest that this may not be true. My predecessor warned against such false hope – the reality of the situation with which you are faced is all that matters. I may die here, but Emperor willing it will not be in vain. The task at hand, when stripped of its enormity, is straightforward – the enemy must be eliminated. They have a citadel within the fortress, anchored amongst the impermanent chambers by some form of heretical sorcery. If the anchor points can be destabilised, the citadel may be reabsorbed into the fortress' shifting interior. This plan was put forwards by a Tech-Priest with knowledge of Blackstone Fortresses. I do not know if he can be trusted, but no other course of action presents itself.

THE STAGING POST

As a base of military operations, Precipice is limited by what its denizens have either brought with them, built from scrap or found within the Blackstone Fortress. Even so, its inhabitants constitute some of the hardest and most resourceful individuals in the galaxy, and what animosities they have for each other are temporarily set aside in the name of survival.

SAWBONE STATION

Though many individual vessels have their own medical capabilities, the most potent by far are those aboard the Jokaero lattice ship that is permanently docked at the station. The simian Jokaero who crew this vessel have no form of verbal communication, but their innate fascination with technology has seen them establish a system whereby the other denizens of Precipice are allowed to board their ship and use its facilities – for a small fee in archeotech.

DATA TRADERS

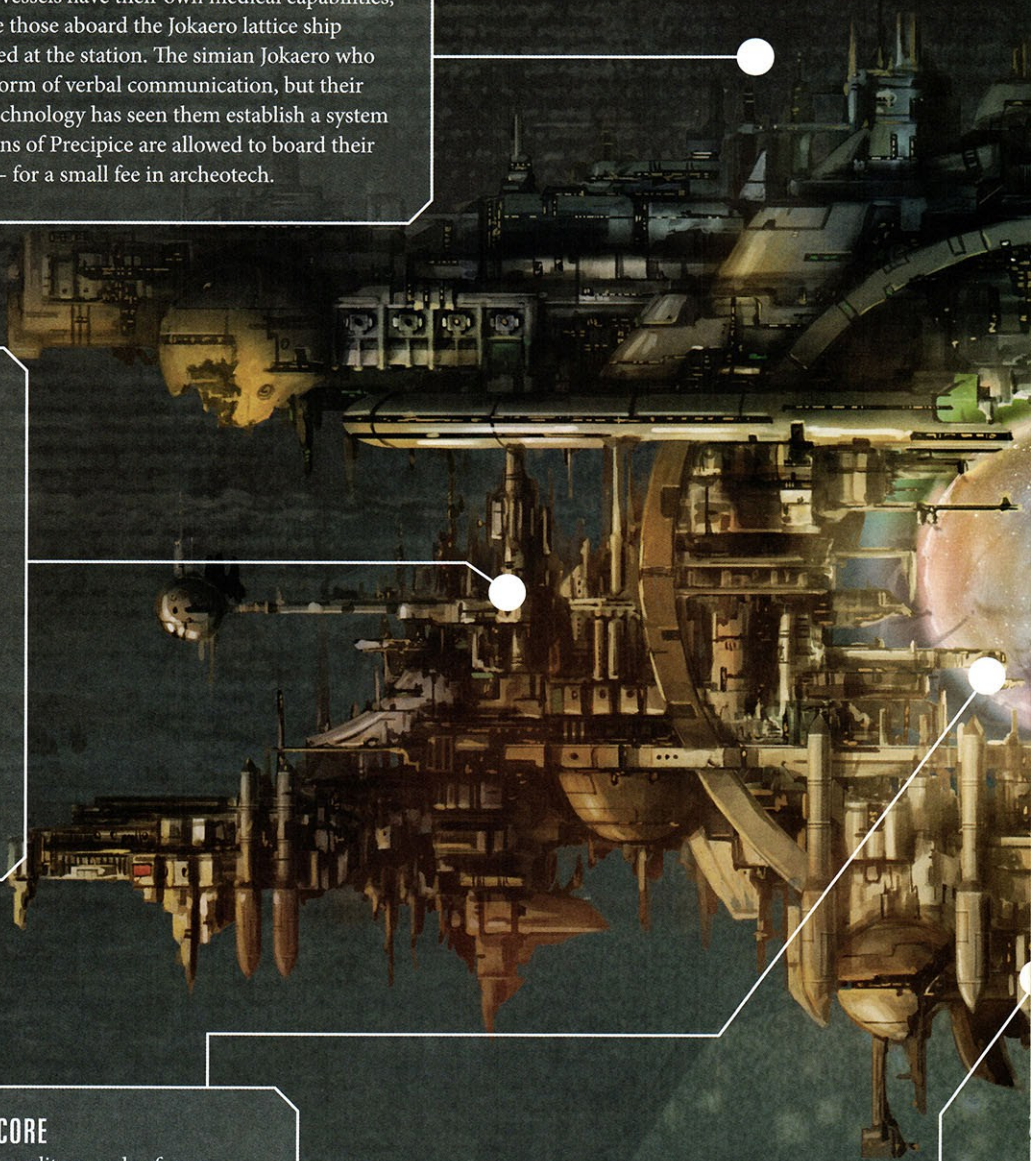
Fastidious and largely without scruples, the data traders aboard Precipice deal in information about the fortress itself. They gather fragmented scraps of knowledge gleaned by different exploration parties, study the ancient artefacts extracted from the fortress and harvest the esoteric logs of the ancient vessels floating lifelessly in the debris nebula – then they sell their findings on to those who can afford their fees. With the threat of annihilation increasing steadily, many of the data traders have seen fit to raise their standard rates.

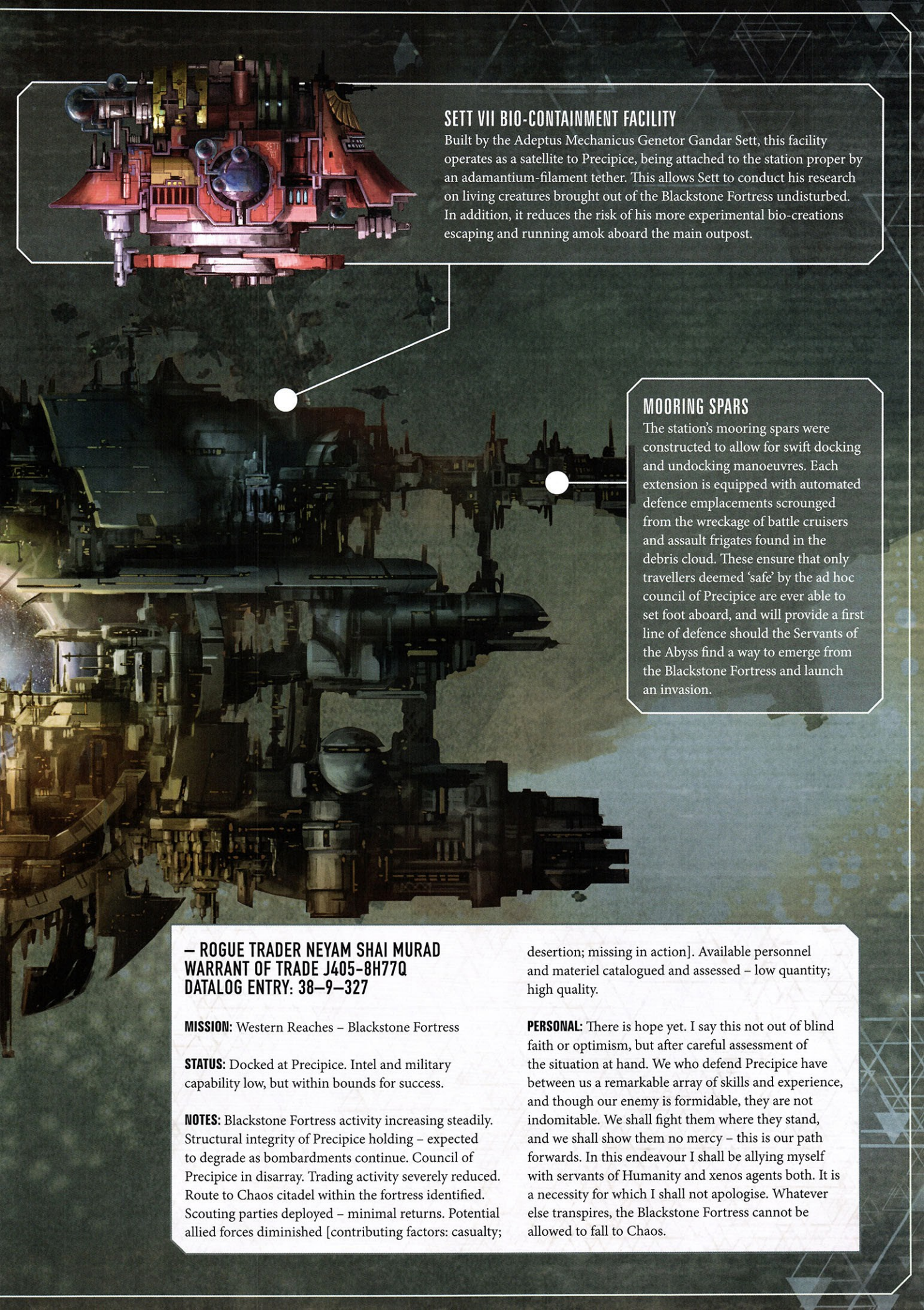
WARP-ENTANGLEMENT CORE

The station is anchored to a solitary node of warp-entangled space, preventing it from being drawn in by the Blackstone Fortress' massive gravity well. The stabilisation fields that surround this node are of a xenos design unfamiliar to even the most well-researched data trader, and details regarding who constructed this foundation are almost as mutable as the chambers within the fortress. But one thing is known for certain – if the fortress' bombardments destabilise this core, the backlash of empyric energy will annihilate Precipice and all on board.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

The ad hoc council of Precipice comprises the most powerful, influential and wealthy individuals aboard the station. It is they who ensure the uneasy peace between the disparate explorers in this ungoverned region of space, using threats of violence and exile to maintain stability. Their meeting rooms are said to contain self-destruct triggers that will detonate the entire station in the event the council chambers are attacked.





SETT VII BIO-CONTAINMENT FACILITY

Built by the Adeptus Mechanicus Genetor Gandar Sett, this facility operates as a satellite to Precipice, being attached to the station proper by an adamantium-filament tether. This allows Sett to conduct his research on living creatures brought out of the Blackstone Fortress undisturbed. In addition, it reduces the risk of his more experimental bio-creations escaping and running amok aboard the main outpost.

MOORING SPARS

The station's mooring spars were constructed to allow for swift docking and undocking manoeuvres. Each extension is equipped with automated defence emplacements scrounged from the wreckage of battle cruisers and assault frigates found in the debris cloud. These ensure that only travellers deemed 'safe' by the ad hoc council of Precipice are ever able to set foot aboard, and will provide a first line of defence should the Servants of the Abyss find a way to emerge from the Blackstone Fortress and launch an invasion.

— ROGUE TRADER NEYAM SHAI MURAD WARRANT OF TRADE J405-8H77Q DATALOG ENTRY: 38-9-327

MISSION: Western Reaches – Blackstone Fortress

STATUS: Docked at Precipice. Intel and military capability low, but within bounds for success.

NOTES: Blackstone Fortress activity increasing steadily. Structural integrity of Precipice holding – expected to degrade as bombardments continue. Council of Precipice in disarray. Trading activity severely reduced. Route to Chaos citadel within the fortress identified. Scouting parties deployed – minimal returns. Potential allied forces diminished [contributing factors: casualty;

desertion; missing in action]. Available personnel and materiel catalogued and assessed – low quantity; high quality.

PERSONAL: There is hope yet. I say this not out of blind faith or optimism, but after careful assessment of the situation at hand. We who defend Precipice have between us a remarkable array of skills and experience, and though our enemy is formidable, they are not indomitable. We shall fight them where they stand, and we shall show them no mercy – this is our path forwards. In this endeavour I shall be allying myself with servants of Humanity and xenos agents both. It is a necessity for which I shall not apologise. Whatever else transpires, the Blackstone Fortress cannot be allowed to fall to Chaos.

NEW ARRIVALS

Only the most hardy, skilled and determined explorers ever make it to Precipice. With hostile forces gathering within the fortress, the need for fearless individuals to venture forth is greater than ever. No longer can they simply plunder the shifting chambers for their own gain, for the shadow of Chaos looms large and a greater duty calls.

NEYAM SHAI MURAD

Having taken to the stars as an Arch-Militant in the employ of a Rogue Trader, Neyam Shai Murad's skill at arms is such that she inherited her master's Warrant of Trade. Since then she has continued travelling the fringes of Imperial space, conquering dozens of worlds through precise application of force. Her willingness to use every resource at her disposal sees her surrounded by myriad Imperial attaches, all of whom she treats as equals – provided they meet her exacting standards. Upon learning of the Blackstone Fortress, Murad charted a course to the Western Reaches, determined to obtain this most potent of weapons in the name of Humanity. She has now adapted her mission parameters, and seeks first and foremost to eradicate the Chaos presence within the fortress.

ARADIA MADELLAN

Like all Primaris Psykers, Aradia Madellan uses sanctioned psychic powers to battle the enemies of Mankind. Her abilities were honed through rigorous spiritual and mental training, conducted under the unflinching gaze of the Inquisition. With a thought she is able to instil her allies with unnatural vigour, and can deliver focused bolts of empyric energy into the ranks of the foe. Now serving as an attache to Neyam Shai Murad, it was Madellan's precognitive visions that guided her employer to the Blackstone Fortress. The Primaris Psyker has glimpsed a future in which the fortress has wrought untold destruction across the galaxy, and she seeks to ensure that it is the Imperium that directs this devastation, using the Blackstone Fortress as its ultimate weapon.

ROGUE TRADER



PRIMARIS PSYKER



GOTFRET DE MONTBARD

Gotfret de Montbard was part of an Imperial crusade to find the Blackstone Fortress. Hailing from the Ecclesiarchal order of the Cardinals Crimson, he fought alongside vast contingents of Astra Militarum and Adeptus Ministorum forces as they battled their way across the Segmentum Pacificus. The crusade was prophesied to bring a manifestation of the Emperor's wrath into being, an angel of flame that would deliver his burning fury – but they never reached the fortress. Beset by a seemingly endless tide of Chaos and xenos warbands, the Imperial forces were all but wiped out as they advanced. After marauding Ork Freebooterz brought down his Cardinal's last remaining frigate, Gotfret found himself the sole survivor of the once grand crusade – yet still he pressed on. Whether by luck or by fate he was picked up by the Rogue Trader Neyam Shai Murad, and in him she saw an ally possessed of as much grit and determination as herself. So it is that they travelled to Precipice together, albeit with disparate motives, and though Gotfret finds the lack of piety amongst the majority of the station's denizens utterly unconscionable, the presence of Pious Vorne has given him cause to believe that the prophecy he has followed is about to be fulfilled.

DAEDALOSUS

Technoarcheologists are charged with uncovering and analysing the technological relics of Humanity's dark past. Daedalusus is one such Tech-Priest who has scoured the frontiers of Imperial territory, picking through scrap worlds and ancient war zones in search of hidden wonders. In the wake of the Gothic War, he journeyed to countless contested planets, tracking down several sections of Blackstone Fortresses that had fragmented after Abaddon's withdrawal. The reams of data he collected have given him a near unmatched understanding of how the fortresses were once bent to the will of the Omnissiah – and, more disturbingly, how their obscure nature seems to fundamentally alter the workings of Imperial technology. Since the emergence of the new Blackstone Fortress, Daedalusus has been following the trail of archeotech that has been slowly filtering out of the Western Reaches. This has led him to Precipice, where his skill at sifting through piles of ancient detritus to identify the choicest pieces of archeotech has proven invaluable. But there is much in the fortress to trigger Daedalusus' warning subroutines, not least of all the bizarre robot – UR-025 – who claims to be of Adeptus Mechanicus construction.



CRUSADER



TECHNOARCHEOLOGIST

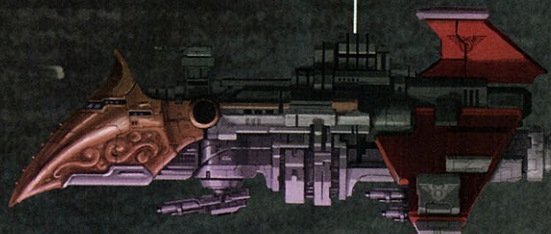
X-101

Servitors are created by the Tech-Priests of the Adeptus Mechanicus to be unquestioning thralls. Wrought from the flesh of mind-wiped humans, they are incapable of feeling pain or fear, and are utilised throughout the Imperium to undertake the most menial and dangerous of tasks. X-101 is one such Servitor, though its origins are a mystery to those who have discovered it. It has been outfitted for salvage duties with various industrial loading and hauling attachments, and has been inloaded with combat protocols, suggesting that it was purposely brought on board the Blackstone Fortress by a team of Imperial explorers. But whatever fate befell its original masters, X-101 is the only member of that exploration party to have survived. It has stood inert for an indeterminable number of centuries, sealed in an airless chamber within the Blackstone Fortress, its systems powered down while it awaited new instructions. But with the arrival of the denizens of Precipice, the Servitor's auto-subjugation routines have once more been activated, and X-101 has stirred into action. It loyally follows the explorers who delve further into the darkness, trudging into the thick of combat whenever it is instructed to do so.

SERVITOR



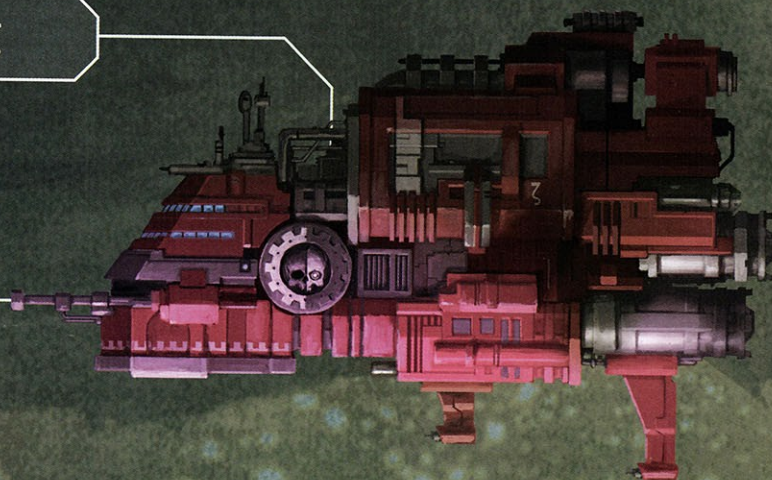
ULTIMATUM



The personal shuttle of Neyam Shai Murad, *Ultimum* is fitted with numerous weapon systems that make it a truly versatile combat vessel. There is no craft at Precipice better equipped for aggressive boarding and rapid withdrawal manoeuvres, and no better captain than Murad to carry them out.

SEEKER OMICRON-Z

Daedalusus requisitioned the survey freighter *Seeker Omicron-Zeta* when he first set out for the Gothic Sector. Its instruments are calibrated for data collection in and around Blackstone Fortresses, and its tech-receptacles are well stocked from previous excursions throughout the galaxy.



HERETIC CULTS

On overcrowded worlds throughout the galaxy, the numberless masses of Humanity toil in abject squalor. Oppressed by their merciless taskmasters, and under constant threat of annihilation by the enemies of the Imperium, it is small wonder that some seek salvation by turning to profane worship of the Dark Gods.

CHAOS CULTISTS

Cults of Chaos-worshipping fanatics form in the shadowy underbellies of countless Imperial worlds. Though the Inquisition works mercilessly to eradicate them, there is an endless supply of downtrodden individuals for whom the Dark Gods offer a twisted form of hope. Hushed rumours circulate through packed hab-blocks and manufactorum districts, telling of wondrous blessings that are bestowed upon the faithful. Raving demagogues share their prophetic visions, describing violent uprisings that will see the shackles of the underclasses shattered and the Imperial overlords brought to their knees. As a reward for their profane rituals, the most fervent cultists are gifted incredible mutations, their twisted flesh serving as proof to others that the Ruinous Powers have heard their prayers. Then, when the cults have grown sufficiently large, they turn upon the inhabitants of their worlds, using crude weaponry and vast numbers to overthrow military garrisons, butcher the populace and light blazing pyres in honour of their fell patrons.

After reducing their own worlds to ruin, heretic cults are often taken to new war zones by warbands of Chaos Space Marines or Traitor Guard regiments. While cultists see this as their promised redemption from oppression, in truth their lives mean nothing to their new masters. They are herded howling onto the front lines, soaking up incoming fire and dying in droves. They keep the enemy's guns busy as other Chaos forces attack, or simply overwhelm the foe with their sheer weight of numbers. In the Blackstone Fortress they serve much the same purpose. Their chanted prayers to the Dark Gods echo throughout the Citadel of Mallex, and these turn to fanatical war cries as the cultists charge forth to slaughter intruders.

CULTIST FIREBRANDS

Amongst the throngs of the heretic cults are those who are physical manifestations of burning hatred. Known as Cultist Firebrands, their bodies serve as reservoirs for the fell energies of the Dark Gods. Their muscles bulge and their frames grow thick in order to contain the warp-born power that courses through their veins, and with every bellowed word they ignite the seething passions of their fellow cultists, inspiring them to new heights of fanaticism and depraved violence.

As their cult continues its heretical worship, Cultist Firebrands must vent the Chaos energies that coalesce

within their bodies or risk being incinerated from within. Hellfire torches are plugged directly into their flesh, channelling this combustible warp power and allowing them to spew torrents of flames upon their enemies. Even so, the hulking bodies of Cultist Firebrands are perilously unstable, and when riddled with bullets or hacked apart may suddenly and horrifically erupt. Sprays of acidic blood, jets of boiling hot pus or gouts of scintillating warpfire burst from gaping wounds, while shards of shattered bone and hunks of burning flesh are sent flying by the gruesome explosion.



ESCALATION REFERENCE

This updated reference page replaces the one on the back of the Combat book. Use this one instead of the Combat book version when playing the quest for the Black Shrines.

BATTLEFIELD CREATION (Combat booklet, pg 6)

1. Set up battlefield
2. Deploy hostiles
3. Set up initiative deck

COMBAT TURN (Combat booklet, pg 7-15)

Destiny phase

Initiative phase:

1. Activation rolls
2. Initiative
3. Covering fire
4. Gambits

Activation phase

Event phase

REINFORCEMENTS (Combat booklet, pg 13)

ROLL	SMALL	LARGE	HUGE
1	6	4	2
2	4	2	1
3	2	1	-
4+	-	-	-

HEX LIMITS (Combat booklet, pg 6)

- 3 small hostiles
- 2 small & 1 large hostile
- 2 large hostiles
- 1 huge hostile
- Both Ratling Twins & 1 other explorer
- 2 explorers

Hostile sizes are on their reference card.

BASIC EXPLORER ACTIONS

(Combat booklet, pg 9)

Move (1+): Move a number of hexes up to the explorer's Move value.

Recuperate (1+): Make a vitality roll.

Search (4+): Draw a discovery card (explorer must be in a hex with a discovery marker and not adjacent to a hostile that is visible to them).

Summon (4+): Set up the maglev transport escape chamber next to a portal (explorer must be adjacent to the portal).

ESCALATION EVENT TABLE

ROLL	EVENT
1	All Is Dust: All explorers lose 1 inspiration point (to a minimum of 0).
2-3	Unfulfilled Destiny: Do not make a destiny roll at the start of the next turn.
4-6	Not Dead Yet: The leader must pick one hostile that was slain during the combat and has not returned to the battlefield, and then deploy them as close to an explorer as possible.
7-10	Changing Conditions: Draw an encounter card. If the card has a twist, it applies for the rest of the combat. If not, there is no effect.
11-14	Alarm Tripped: Until the end of the next turn, re-roll reinforcement rolls of 11-20 that do not cause hostiles to arrive.
15-17	Inspiration: The leader picks an explorer. That explorer receives 1 inspiration point.
18-19	Heroic Effort: The leader picks an explorer that is out of action. Deploy the explorer in the same hex as another explorer or as close to another explorer as possible. If no explorers are out of action, the leader picks an explorer. Make a vitality roll for that explorer.
20	Lucky Find: The leader picks an explorer. That explorer draws a discovery card.

BASIC HOSTILE ACTIONS

Advance: Move towards the closest explorer. Then attack the closest explorer that is in range of and visible to this hostile.

Aim: Attack the furthest explorer that is in range of and visible to this hostile. That attack ignores cover.

Charge: Move towards the closest explorer. Then attack an explorer that is adjacent and visible to this hostile. If there are no explorers adjacent and visible to this hostile, move towards the closest explorer a second time.

Fall Back: Double this hostile's Move value when they take this action. If this hostile can make a move that ends in a hex that is not visible to any explorers, they do so. If they cannot, they attack the closest explorer that is in range of and visible to this hostile.

Hold: Do nothing.

Onslaught: Attack the closest explorer that is in range of and visible to this hostile. Then attack the closest explorer that is in range of and visible to this hostile (this may be a different target if the first explorer is taken out of action or another explorer is equally close).

Sneak: Make a move that ends as close as possible to an explorer without entering a hex that is visible to any explorers.