

ALIEN INTELLIGENCE

The Blackstone Fortress attracts many explorers, be they humans looking for plunder, or aliens with their own esoteric agendas. Quite why the Jokaero are investigating the fortress is a mystery, but one of their number has gone missing. Your team must rescue him.



The Jokaero are one of the more mysterious races of the 41st Millennium. Simian-like creatures in appearance, they give the impression of being unassuming and nonthreatening, yet that is far from the truth. As masters of technology and artifice, they are able to craft some of the most potent weapons the galaxy has ever seen, from powerful force fields and warp-capable starships to miniature digital weapons that could easily pass for fancy jewellery. Many foolish warriors have thought a Jokaero easy prey, only to be blasted apart when the diminutive creature points in their general direction.

This article enables you to use a Jokaero Weaponsmith as a retinue character in your games of Blackstone Fortress. Be warned, though, you have to find it first, and you really don't want to disturb its tinkering ...

'Can't you hurry it up?' yelled Gotfret as he smashed another cultist aside with his crusader shield. Ahead of him the corridor was swarming with heretics, every one of them pushing and shoving to get their filthy hands on him. He lashed out with his power sword, severing both arms of an onrushing cultist. The warrior scrabbled uselessly at the Crusader's silver armour, painting it red with his own gore before being trampled underfoot by the onrushing horde.

'I do not understand what it is doing,' replied Daedalus, who was watching the Jokaero Weaponsmith keenly, his bionic eye trying to record everything the diminutive alien was doing. Its nimble fingers danced across the control panels of the ancient terminal, pulling out wires and circuits and rebuilding them with ferocious speed. A smattering of autogun rounds ricocheted off the terminal, causing the Jokaero to pause. Looking back over its shoulder, the simian creature pointed past Gotfret at the charging cultists. One of them detonated as if struck by a missile. The Jokaero returned to its project unfazed.

RETINUE CHARACTERS

WHAT ARE RETINUE CHARACTERS?

Retinue characters represent characters who, while not being the central protagonists of the Blackstone Fortress story, still play a part. These individuals may be hired – or otherwise persuaded – to accompany the explorers into the fortress. In the game, they can be fielded in addition to a full party of four on an expedition into the Blackstone Fortress. As they are less inclined to act on their own initiative, they are not controlled by one player but by whichever player is the leader that turn, moving and fighting as directed by that player. Incredibly useful for any party of explorers, retinue characters have their own unique weapons and sometimes unique actions, lending their strength to the group and allowing the explorers to overcome obstacles they would otherwise find impossible.

Retinue characters were introduced in the Blackstone Fortress: Escalation expansion. The first, a combat servitor designated X-101, was discovered in the fortress itself, and once rescued, gave the explorers a powerful asset – an unquestioningly loyal companion they could bring on their expeditions to fight against the minions of Mallex. This article introduces a new retinue character for you to use, including background that explains how the character came to the fortress, a reference card for the character, and rules for how you can win the character to your cause – a necessary step, as most of them will not be waiting around gathering dust like X-101!

Adding More Retinue Characters

Precipice is populated by a diverse collection of individuals. Representatives of many different facets of Imperial life have found their way to the station, along with members of dozens of different alien races. This has allowed us to pick some great Warhammer 40,000 miniatures and present them as retinue characters so that you can use more models in your games of Blackstone Fortress.

Of course, these followers won't just cheerfully join your crusades into one of the most mysterious and dangerous locations in the known galaxy for no reason! To recruit these fighters to your cause, you must first succeed in a unique quest. Completing this quest not only allows you to pick these characters for future expeditions, but also tells the story of why they are on the Blackstone Fortress and how your explorers came across them.

Retinue Character Rules

To use these retinue characters, follow the rules below.

When starting a new expedition, one retinue character can be chosen to accompany the explorers. Some retinue characters have conditions which must be met to recruit them; the explorers must achieve these before that character can be picked 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 achieved a certain goal), that reward is instead given to the leader.

SIDEQUEST

An expedition to recruit a retinue character can be undertaken as a one-off expedition before, after, or even during another quest. If you begin this expedition whilst on another quest (such as the quest for the hidden vault or the quest for the Black Shrines), do not treat this expedition as part of the quest you are currently undertaking – that quest is placed on hold, using the following rules:

- During this expedition, discovery cards cannot be drawn for any reason.
- There is no Legacy or Trading step when the explorers return to Precipice.
- No cards, counters or tokens are drawn, placed or added to the databank to affect the amount of time the explorers have to finish the quest that is currently on hold. Menace counters and legacy cards are good examples of this. Those cards, counters and tokens that have already been drawn, placed or added to the databank are, however, still in use – the forces of Chaos are relentless, after all. This means, for example, that the cumulative penalties from the menace tracker will still affect this expedition during combats.
- Cards and equipment that would go in an explorer's stasis chamber at the end of a session's play remain in use and affect explorers as normal.
- Once the explorers have completed this expedition, these rules cease to apply and the explorers can continue once again with their quest.

Running Out of Time: The Search action, and equivalent actions that discard discovery markers (such as Daedalus' Omniscan ability), cannot be used in a quest to recruit retinue characters.

THE TINKERER

One of the earliest ships to arrive at Precipice was a vessel crewed by the simian-like xenos called the Jokaero. This vessel was alien in design, seemingly formed of open lattices which could shift and flex to allow it to traverse the void. The ship's passengers rarely left their strange vessel, but were content to open its bulkheads to the denizens of Precipice. Though they appeared to ignore any attempt to communicate with them, Jokaero were keen to trade with those who had visited the Blackstone Fortress, whether they had discovered precious archeotech or apparently worthless gewgaws. Despite the best efforts of Precipice's data traders, none could determine whether this trade was the Jokaero's only motivation for having travelled to the station, or even if they had come there intentionally.

Regardless, the shaggy, bipedal aliens quickly became a vital part of Precipice's ecosystem. With sufficient raw materials, they could create, enhance or replicate almost any device,

though they seemed to work upon whatever took their fancy. Their skills extended to the medical – aboard their vessel, an injured explorer could have almost any injury healed, so long as they could pay the creatures' price. The extraordinary vessel was dubbed Sawbone Station by those who had the requirement, and the resources, to call upon its services.

No inhabitant of Precipice could claim to know any of the aliens in any personal capacity, but those who traded with them regularly recognised individuals amongst the Jokaero group that seemed to specialise in – or simply prefer – specific technologies or treatments. One of the red-furred creatures, who had been the first to set foot outside Sawbone Station, became known for the elaborate weaponry it crafted. Those explorers fortunate enough to bear weapons enhanced by the creature's ingenuity dubbed it the Tinkerer – an ironic moniker, given the whole species' predilection for working upon whatever technology was within their reach.





THE TINKERER
JOKAERO WEAPONSMITH, RETIRED CHARACTER (INSPIRED)

"I don't know what you did to my weapon, but it worked!" - James Bond

Move: 4 Defence: ☐ Agility: ☒ Vitality: ☐ Size: Small

WEAPON ACTIONS

Weapon	Range
1	2-3
4+	

Jokaero Digital Weapons See Below

SPECIAL RULES

Inconceivable Customisation: The first time during their activation that an explorer takes a weapon action whilst they are in the same hex as the Tinkerer, roll a ☒ before taking that weapon action. If the result is a critical success you can reroll any failed action dice for that weapon action.

A Creature of Pure Science: Do not roll activation dice for the Tinkerer. Instead, it can take up to three of the following actions, in any order and combination: Move, Recuperate, Defence Cycle, Inconceivable Tinkering or Jokaero Digital Weapons. In addition, the Tinkerer can never gain inspiration points.

Defence Cycle: This action can be taken once per activation phase. If this action is taken the Tinkerer's Defence value ☒ until the next time it is activated.

Inconceivable Tinkering: The Tinkerer can take this action if it is adjacent to or in the same hex as an explorer. Increase the value of a single activation dice on that explorer's character card activation track by 2 (to a maximum of 6).

Jokaero Digital Weapons: This weapon action can be taken once per activation phase. When this action is taken, the leader can choose to use one, two or three of the Tinkerer's remaining actions to take this weapon action. The number of actions used determines which action dice is used to make the attack roll as shown below:

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐



THE TINKERER
JOKAERO WEAPONSMITH, RETIRED CHARACTER

"That's got to give that lady, it's a priceless treasure!" - James Bond

Move: 3 Defence: ☐ Agility: ☒ Vitality: ☐ Size: Small

WEAPON ACTIONS

Weapon	Range
1	2-3
4+	

Jokaero Digital Weapons See Below

SPECIAL RULES

Inconceivable Customisation: The first time during their activation that an explorer takes a weapon action whilst they are in the same hex as the Tinkerer, roll a ☒ before taking that weapon action. If the result is a critical success you can reroll any failed action dice for that weapon action.

A Creature of Pure Science: Do not roll activation dice for the Tinkerer. Instead, it can take up to three of the following actions, in any order and combination: Move, Recuperate, Defence Cycle, Inconceivable Tinkering or Jokaero Digital Weapons. In addition, the Tinkerer can never gain inspiration points.

Defence Cycle: This action can be taken once per activation phase. If this action is taken the Tinkerer's Defence value ☒ until the next time it is activated.

Inconceivable Tinkering: The Tinkerer can take this action if it is adjacent to or in the same hex as an explorer. Increase the value of a single activation dice on that explorer's character card activation track by 1 (to a maximum of 6).

Jokaero Digital Weapons: This weapon action can be taken once per activation phase. When this action is taken, the leader can choose to use one, two or three of the Tinkerer's remaining actions to take this weapon action. The number of actions used determines which action dice is used to make the attack roll as shown below:

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐

SECRET AGENDA

A resource card of value 2 or more is discarded.

STRONGHOLD

THE TINKERER'S INVENTION

A member of the race of aliens known as the Jokaero has gone missing. Its fellows aboard Sawbone Station have refused to dispense any further medical aid, and the explorers have deduced that the Jokaero will continue to withhold their services until the Tinkerer is returned to them safely. The group manage to track the creature amidst the nightmare halls of the Blackstone Fortress, but when they eventually reach its location, they find it tinkering with a man-high piece of barely recognisable technology. Finding it impossible to convince the creature to leave, the explorers resolve to defend it until the bizarre-looking contraption it is working on is completed – perhaps it will be prepared to return to safety with them once its work is done.



ACCESS ROUTE

This expedition is one combat, set up as shown here. Place the Tinkerer's miniature in the hex marked T. Deploy the explorers in the hexes marked E.

HOSTILE GROUPS

- 1 4 Spindle Drones (SD)
- 2 4 Negavolt Cultists (NC)
- 3 4 Ur-Ghuls (UG)
- 4 4 Chaos Beastmen (CB)

STRONGHOLD RULES

The Great Work: Place a wound counter next to the Tinkerer at the end of the event phase to keep track of its progress.

Starting from the end of the second turn, before the event phase, roll the Blackstone dice, adding 2 to the result for each wound counter that is next to the Tinkerer. If the result is 21 or better, the Tinkerer completes its invention.

Busy Tinkering: The Tinkerer makes no actions in this combat, and is not treated as an explorer by hostiles - it is busy assembling its latest invention and stays out of the way.

No End To Their Numbers: When a hostile is slain, immediately deploy it adjacent to a portal and as close as possible to another hostile from their group that is already on the battlefield. If there are no hostiles from their group on the battlefield (because they have all been slain), deploy the hostile adjacent to a portal and as close as possible to an explorer. Note that this is not the same as a reinforcement roll, so the hostile takes no further action unless the hostile group of which it is a part activates later that phase as normal.

Driven to a Frenzy: Treat all Hold and Sneak results on any hostile behaviour table as Charge.

EVENT TABLE

ROLL	EVENT
1	All Is Dust: If any discovery markers are still on the battlefield, the leader must discard one of them. If there are no discovery markers, each explorer loses 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	Furious Tinkering: Place 3 additional wound counters next to the Tinkerer.
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, and then make a vitality roll for them. 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.

VICTORY

If all explorers are out of action, or if the Tinkerer completes its invention, the combat ends in the following event phase. If when the combat ends, all the explorers are out of action, this stronghold is failed and must be attempted again. If any explorers are not out of action and the Tinkerer has completed its invention, the stronghold is conquered and the Tinkerer can be picked as a retinue character in future expeditions.

