

## Clan Skyre

The founding of Clan Skyre can be traced back to the origins of the Hrud when they first achieved sentience as a race. It all started when a Prospector Fleet of the Demiurg discovered the presence of an as yet unknown ore within the underground cavern of a moon of a planet at the centre of the galaxy. A Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel was sent down to investigate the occurrence of the ore. The Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel drilled a hole through the rocky surface of the moon, just big enough for it to descend into its confines. Starlight descended through the hole, onto the centre of that immensely large cavern. The Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel discovered huge deposits of Warpstones beneath the ground of the cavern. The Demiurg had encountered Warpstones prior, through their endless travels through space, and have found purposes for them as fuel for their gigantic Commerce Vessels, among other things. As such, the finding of these huge deposits of Warpstones was an unmissable prospect to be seized upon by the Prospector Fleet. Mining crafts were sent down in due course to gather the Warpstones for the purposes of the Brotherhood. The mining crafts drilled through the surface of the underground cavern where the deposits were largest and most abundant. In this way, the Warpstones were exposed to the surface. As they were raw Warpstones in their most unrefined and purest form, these deposits were highly radioactive and would have produced mutations among the Demiurg were they not within the protective confines of their crafts.

The Demiurg were not the only lifeforms within the underground cavern however; the Hrud in their presentient forms were highly similar to the rodents of Holy Terra. They populated the cavern in their millions, living off all manner of things, including their own carcasses. The reason their population continued to grow was due to the fact their females produced about twenty pups in a single litter. These presentient Hrud lived pretty much like beasts, and were largely ignorant of the huge amounts of Warpstones that lay beneath their paws. However, the actions of the Demiurg in extracting the Warpstones left them exposed on the surface of the cavern. The rodent-like lifeforms in their constant roaming came into contact with the Warpstones on the surface, drawn by the bright light emitted in its raw form. Some even brought back pieces of Warpstones to their dens. Thus, in this way, the raw mutagenic essence within the Warpstones came to be exposed to the population of the rodent-like lifeforms at large. All sorts of physical deformities erupted within the lifeforms; however, some were fortunate enough to experience the mutations at the genetic level that would give rise to sentience within them. Slowly, the lifeforms grew to become aware of their immediate surroundings, and the conditions of their existence. Their growth of awareness led them to experiment with the objects around them, imitating the use of tools as it was with prehistoric man. The use of tools prompted the evolution of bipedal movement among the lifeforms, to free the use of their upper limbs to wield all manner of tools. By reaching a bipedal form, these lifeforms were that much closer to achieving full-blown sentience. Soon, they became aware of the presence of other lifeforms besides their kind. They marvelled at the shiny surfaces of the mining crafts, at the deliberate, mechanical movements of the craft as they excavated the Warpstone deposits. What caught their attention most however, was that big hole right at the centre of the roof of the cavern, from which the only source of light poured in. Through that single patch of sky, they watched entranced, by the multitude of stars that dot the spaces between and the infinite worlds that lay beyond. To them, it presented the existence of a larger world, beyond the confines of the cavern they were born in.

The arising of sentience within the population of the lifeforms reached a critical mass. Most were now capable of bipedal movement, standing upright on their hindlimbs. The ends of their forelimbs developed into nimble digits, capable of much dexterity, able to wield simple tools with what can be called "hands". The Demiurg were largely ignorant of these developments in the native lifeforms of the cavern, concerned only with the speedy gathering of the Warpstone ore deposits. Only one thought resonated within the entire chattering mass of rodent-like lifeforms, and that was that their only recourse and escape from the dungeon that was the cavern was through force of arms, overwhelming the Demiurg occupants of those shiny vessels and seizing them for their own. So it came to be that the lifeforms, through force of numbers, wielding all manner of crude weaponry in the form of sticks and stones they could scavenge, rose against the Demiurg, and overthrew them, killing them in an event that was to be known as the Great Uprising. Although caught off-guard and vastly outnumbered, the Demiurg provided a stout resistance. When every single last one of them had succumbed, the lifeforms became divided; where once they shared unity of goal, now having achieved that goal, all that were left were the spoils of war, and the lifeforms selfishly took whatever they could for their own. The lifeforms banded together into tribes that were based on familial ties, sharing origins within the same brood. These tribes degenerated into warfare and conflict, in a bid to seize the most of the spoils. In an era of warfare, where only the strongest are recognised, the leaders of the individual tribes were more often than not Blackfurs, that referred to themselves almost exclusively as Warlords. This gave birth to a new era, the Age of Warlords, where the rules of war were established by the actions of the most successful Warlords. These Warlords came to dictate the hierarchy within all the Tribes, with the Warlords at the top. The Warlords chose the strongest, most outstanding Blackfurs among the lot to be their Blackguard, the elite bodyguard regiment of the Warlords. The rest of the Blackfurs were delegated as Blackfangs, and were divided among the Greyfur packs to lead them in war. Thus, the social order within the Tribes was determined by divisions in physical strength, and as Blackfurs are generally physically stronger than their Greyfur kin, the Blackfurs held superior status to the Greyfurs. This state of affairs was known by all as the Great Tradition, and it is the standard of hierarchy by which all tribes abide and follow. Soon however the conditions among the Tribes calmed down to some degree, and the grounds within the cavern were divided into territories demarcated through some landmark or other, for instance, the presence of a Warpstone mine deposit.

Through this development, an idea occurred to the Warlord of one tribe, which happened to be one of the more successful tribes during the Age of Warlords, by the name of Skyre. He noticed the Demiurg had expressly arrived within this cavern to exploit its vast amounts of Warpstones. He deduced that the Warpstones by their nature, possessed incalculable power, which he vowed to tap into. While the rest of the tribes were engaged in petty territorial disputes, he seized the moment by gathering the cleverest, most talented of his Chieftains, charging them with manipulating the essence of the Warpstones, and through whatever experimental means, develop weapons of war based on the Warpstones, from which the Tribe could then rise to prominence and pacify the rest of their kind with their superior firepower. These Chieftains came to be known as Warplords, after the art of Warp-engineering. Before he could put into action his Great Plan however, Skyre had to present his idea before the Council of Warlords of his Tribe and gain their collective support and approval. His fellow Warlords were deeply impressed by his plan, and Skyre was hence given command of the entire Tribe's resources and placed Lord-Warlord of the Tribe in order to realise his Great Plan. Under the astute leadership of Skyre, the Tribe became the most organised and efficient among the chattering mass that characterised the lesser tribes. Through determined invasions, Warlord Skyre managed to secure and expand the existing Warpstone mines under their possession. The Warplords were thus free to experiment at will, using up their Warpstone stores with abandon, as they sought a means to tap into the power of the Warpstones. The Warplords made much progress in their search when certain Warplords decided to use the technology present within the mining crafts to "empower" their research. Through their experimentation, they came to establish the Warpstones into a variety of forms: Warpstone in its pure solidified state; Warpplasma when the Warpstone is superheated into a molten, volatile state; Warpwind when the Warpstone is decomposed leaving only its core essence and the fumes produced as a result; and Warpfire, when the volatile fumes of Warpwind is ignited through some external source. All of these various forms were harnessed into weapons of war, fuelled partially by the technology of the Demiurg that was put to good use by the Warplords. The main infantry of the Warlord Skyre's forces was comprised of units of Warplock Fusiliers, supported by devastating Warpflame Throwers and the noxious Warpwind Grenadiers. Units of Warpstone Shooters, troops that shot raw Warpstones directly into the bloodstream of their targets, acted in the role of snipers, taking out the leaders of the various tribes that challenged the advances of Warlord Skyre's forces. The lesser tribes had nothing to counter the Warp-based technology of Warlord Skyre's forces, rather they did not have any idea of handling and using the technology of the Demiurg crafts within their possessions. As such, slowly but surely, each tribe succumbed to the advances of the Warlord's forces, until every single tribe was forced to acknowledge Skyre and his Tribe as the foremost Tribe among their kind, during an event that was known as the First Great War.

There was one tribe however, that provided some form of resistance against the might of Warlord Skyre's forces. The Warlords of this particular tribe had gained a keen interest in the workings of Demiurg technology and fastidiously studied the mining crafts and the objects within. So it came to be that when the Warlord Skyre's forces advanced within the domains of that tribe, the warriors of the tribe were armed with the firearms they could scavenge from within the mining crafts, a whole assortment of Demiurg wargear from Ion Rifles to Photon Blasters. Thus, that tribe provided the fiercest resistance Warlord Skyre faced throughout the Great War. In fact, their act of resistance was so successful that it drew the backing of many lesser tribes, who saw them as their only hope of challenging the might of Warlord Skyre's forces. During their greatest moment of defiance, the Tribe grew to such proportions that it vastly outnumbered the forces of Warlord Skyre. However, ultimately their efforts proved useless as the firearms found within the mining crafts were insufficient to equip all the warriors of the tribe, and they had to surrender soon enough or face total obliteration. Their act of resistance was not entirely fruitless however, as by the end of the Great War, the tribe had grown to become the largest tribe within the cavern, as the hundreds of lesser tribes eventually merged into one. Even with the Great War over and Warlord Skyre victorious, the lesser tribes continued to remain as one instead of going their separate ways, drawn together by the charismatic aspirations of the original tribe. This tribe came to be known as Tribe Rictus, or the Tribe of the Heavens, so called for their greatest dream was to leave the cavern that is their birthplace in a grand starship and sail the places between the stars, a dream that happened to be the driving motivation of their interest in the technology of the Demiurg.

Skyre changed several things immediately upon gaining complete dominance among the tribes. First of all, to distinguish his Tribe from the lesser, weaker tribes, he declared that his Tribe from then onwards be known as Clan Skyre, after his chosen name, and from that time onwards all Tribes that have reached a similar level of status refer to themselves as a Clan rather than a Tribe. The Council of Warlords of Clan Skyre acknowledged Warlord Skyre as having single-handedly engineered the rise to prominence of their Tribe, and thus deferred to him as the supreme leader of the Clan, with the title of Overlord. As Overlord Skyre, he declared the domains of the immense cavern that was their birthplace and all the tribes within, the Underempire of Clan Skyre. With that said, he created the rank of Supreme Overlord of the Underempire for the Lord-Warlord of the Ruling Clan, which was him, currently. In order to instill purpose within their kind, a purpose not felt since the Great Uprising, and to prevent them from succumbing to infighting once again, he organised the First Great Council, with the executive powers he possessed in the position of Supreme Overlord, a gathering of the representatives of each major Tribe, which totalled eleven, inclusive of Clan Skyre. He declared that there will be a thirteenth seat within this council, occupied by the Great Horned One, the archetype that represents the foremost of their kind. This invisible seat was the means in which the Great Council would maintain an odd number of seats, so that all the representatives would recognise themselves as being equal before their

Great God. As their God, He would hold the most power, so the balance of powers would always be kept in check with the invisible seat, as none would be greater than the other, in theory at least. In practise, the Supreme Overlord would have the last say in the Council, as he had the backing of the Ruling Clan behind him, making him essentially the most influential individual in all of Hrudom. The formation of the first Great Council, and the many after it, came henceforth to be known as the Council of Thirteen.

The seats and the great table of the Great Council were established at the centre of the entire domain of the Underempire. It so happened the Starlight Cycle was in its mid-cycle, such that starlight fell into the middle of the cavern, shining directly upon the location of the Great Council. All the tribes were gathered around that one place, where the Great Council was being held at the heart of the Underempire. During the Great Council, Overlord Skyre declared that the true intention of the formation of the Council was to revive the purpose their kind once shared as one, which was to escape their existence trapped within the confines of this great cavern, through the use of the mining crafts of the Demiurg. This was the Great Dream, the First Desire, the First Impulse, that was shared universally by all of their race. He revealed that his chosen name, Skyre, was directly inspired from the patch of sky observable from the hole at the centre of the roof of the cavern, from which soft starlight descended into a spot at the centre of the cavern. His entire name was dedicated to the promise held within that patch of sky, of a greater world beyond the suffocating confines of the cavern they seemed condemned forever to dwell in. To this end, he revealed that the probings of his own Clan's best Warp-Engineers into the workings of the mining crafts had proven fruitless, and as to how to control them for their own ends, that remained a mystery to be discovered. He progressed from there, declaring that if the best of his Warplords could not discover the means of controlling the mining crafts, there was little the other tribes could possibly progress in that department. (Clan Rictus occupied one of the seats in the Great Council, having been acknowledged as the second militarily strongest tribe by the other tribes, as proven during the events of the Great War. They too, despite their efforts into studying the mechanics of the mining crafts, could not deduce how they worked.) He then suggested the building of the Tower of Heaven, a vast tower built right at the centre of the cavern, upon the very ground which they now stood, made from the rocks and gravel that formed the composition of the ground beneath them, that will reach the hole at the roof of the cavern at its height. None among the Council challenged him, and all deferred to the wisdom of his words. As such, effort was made towards this end, with each tribe contributing the manpower needed to lay the foundations of the Tower of Heaven. Within the timespan of a couple of starlight cycles, the foundations of the Tower of Heaven had been laid and progress had reached such a point that half of its proposed height had been reached.

It was some time during this point, that another Tribe rose to the prominence of a Clan, rather than through strength of arms as Clan Skyre had done but through its grip of influence over the lesser tribes. This Tribe was to be known as Clan Skaven. Skaven was used with various connotations to mean "select" or "chosen" within their tongue. Such was this view that the Skavens had of themselves that they sought to undermine the power and influence that Clan Skyre enjoyed, and replace them as the foremost Clan amongst their kind. That was their ambition, and the social order of Clan Skaven proved to possess the most Machiavellian tendencies among the tribes. Theirs was an order based on ruthlessness and will to power, fuelled in large part by the actions of the Greyfurs within the Clan. It appears the Blackfurs of Clan Skaven were especially large and aggressive, so much so that the Greyfurs within the Clan had to resort to much backstabbing and manipulation to reach positions of equal standing among their darker kindred. Likewise, through much deceit and cunning had they spread their influence and established control over a large number of tribes. The Chieftains of Clan Skaven were known as Seers, for a large part of their rise to power was through the deception of their reputed ability to harness the Warpstones through mystic, secret means they had declared they possessed. In truth, there was much doubt regarding their mystical abilities, but as of yet, they had managed to convince a large part of the tribes that they had found a way of escaping the Underempire and the labour of creating Skyre's fatuitous Tower of Heaven. But first, they declared, much preparations had to be made if their method was to succeed. Their first act was to secure many Warpstone mines, from which their Grey Seers, what they called the elder Seers of their Clan, would congregate and work their magicks within. All this while, the Tower of Heaven progressed ever upwards, and was nearing the pinnacle of its height, reaching the hole at the roof of the cavern and jutting into the space beyond.

Actually, the crafty Seers of Clan Skaven had deduced the true nature of the Warpstones as the solidified substance of the Immaterium. From there, their own calculations had suggested that the Warpstones could be used to open a portal into the Immaterium, from which travel to other planets became possible. Even now, the Grey Seers were capable of making miniature Warpportals from which they could observe other realms while remaining safely detached within the Underempire, studying the nature of the Human population residing within these worlds. From these viewing portals, the Grey Seers bore witness to worlds where the harsh suns of their systems scorch the ground bare, suns whose glaring brightness proved anathema to the eyesight of the nocturnal Hrud. It was thus decided that when the Warpportals were opened, each would directly lead to the under sections of the cities of the new worlds the tribes were to inhabit, where they would be away from the harsh light of the suns of those worlds.

A large part of the supposed "mysticism" of the Seers of Clan Skaven stemmed from their own innate ingenuity and cunning, a result of the utterly ruthless nature of their social order, where only the strongest and smartest reached positions of power. Such a social order encouraged an extreme form of natural selection to take place, and as a result,

the Seers of Clan Skaven in their attempts at obtaining status within their Clan, were forced to develop the cunning and willpower needed to manoeuvre themselves within the social politics of the Clan. Having reached the highest positions possible as the Grey Seers of the Clan, the Grey Seers abandon their old ways of backstabbing and manipulation, instead consolidating their positions from ambitious Seers vying to rise in status through joint alliances of mutual cooperation with other Grey Seers. From there, they convened amongst themselves, conducting all sorts of plans to further strengthen the influence of their Clan among the other tribes. One of these plans was dubbed "The Great Migration", manipulating the burning desires within every single individual among the collective Tribes to leave the confines of their birthplace and explode out into the great unknown in one massive migration. From there, the tendrils of their influence over the other tribes would solidify, forever making them indebted to Clan Skaven.

The Grey Seers' knowledge of the true nature of the Warpstones was leaked out however, and their attempts at transforming the Warpstone mines into dimensional portals inspired the Chieftains of Tribe Rictus into thinking that perhaps, the mining crafts were not navigated through physical means, but rather required a sort of psychic symbiosis with the navigational systems of the craft. The knowledge that the arising of sentience within them was a direct result of their exposure to raw Warpstones was ingrained in them at the primal level of the psyche; indeed many of them had unconsciously carried out the process of the arrival of sentience within them as a race, when they in the innate inquisitive nature of their rodent-like species, had brought back with them small pieces of Warpstones into their dens. As such, the Chieftains of Tribe Rictus experimented with having various subjects ingest varying amounts of raw Warpstones to induce psychic powers within the subjects. As raw Warpstones is poisonous to the bodies of living organisms, the Chieftains of Tribe Rictus only succeeded after numerous dead subjects, having managed to find the right amount that would induce psychic abilities while still being under the lethal dosage of Warpstones. These psychic navigators came to occupy a position of power within the Tribe, for the Tribe is entirely dependent on their ability to control the mining crafts. Tribe Rictus withheld the secrets within their possession from the other tribes of the Underempire, and especially from Clan Skyre, for it was their one means of achieving their dream and they would not allow it to be lost and jeopardised by the meddling of Clan Skyre or any of the lesser tribes. Towards the ends of accomplishing their dream, they salvaged as many of the mining crafts that had come to be abandoned by the other tribes, having come to be seen at large as no longer necessary with the erection of the Tower of Heaven. Having done all they could to secure their dream, all that was left was to await patiently till a wandering starship would so happen to pass by within the vicinity of the Underempire. Little did they know, such an occurrence was soon to take place...

It was at about this time that the Demiurg Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel that had continued through space in prospect of other ore deposits after deploying the mining crafts, had returned, to check on the conditions of the mining crafts and to collect the harvested Warpstone ore. It returned to find the hole it had created at the centre of the roof of the cavern blocked by a huge, tower-like construct, hindering it from descending within its depths. In order to remove the obstruction, it sent a death beam blast that tore off about a quarter of the top portion of the Tower of Heaven, and sent it toppling down into the bottom of the cavern, killing hundreds of Hrud in the process. As they descended back into the cavern in an attempt to recall the mining crafts, its sensors indicated that the cavern was teeming with activity. Millions of diminutive lifeforms scurried about the grounds of the cavern, and among them the remains of the mining crafts can be seen jutting up from the seething mass as shiny objects amidst a sea of darkness, due to their reflective surfaces. As the mining crafts were not responding to the signals of recall sent by the bridge of the Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel, the Demiurg deduced that the worst had happened, that the occupants of the mining crafts had succumbed to the as yet unknown lifeforms that populated the subterranean cavern of this moon.

Meanwhile, the intrusion of the Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel and the toppling of the Tower of Heaven had led to other developments below, within the domains of the Underempire. Tribe Rictus knew the arrival of the Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel presented the only chance of accomplishing their dream of obtaining a starship of their own. They boarded the mining crafts within their possessions in their hundreds of thousands, squirming and wriggling into every possible space as they made room for the rest of their kin. As if meant to be by their Great God Himself, the skeletal structure of the Hrud is filled with numerous joints and appendages, a flexibility that allowed them to easily squeeze a thousand of themselves into the confines of a single mining craft. In this way, the million strong Tribe Rictus managed to board the hundreds or so of mining crafts. The psychic navigators of the Tribe powered up the mining crafts and directed them ever upwards, towards the great starship that covered the sky. The bridge of the Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel, although stunned by the sudden arrival of the mining crafts, had decided that indeed, some Demiurg had survived, and in the commotion of the moment, had failed to respond to the recall signal sent by the bridge. The mining crafts were thus allowed to dock within the Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel, and they came in their hundreds, an unexpectedly large number by the estimations of the command bridge. Unbeknownst to them, the mining crafts were infested with the rodent-like lifeforms, and they poured forth in their hundreds of thousands, overrunning the defences at the docking bay of the Commerce Vessel. Soon, Tribe Rictus had gained entry into the lower levels of the Vessel and were still advancing at a quick, progressive rate like a seemingly unstoppable tide. In what came to be known as the Great Invasion, the second war between the Demiurg and the Hrud was fought. The Demiurgs referred to the rodent-like lifeforms that infested their Vessel as "Hrud", which in their tongue meant vermin or pest. The word came to be used self-referentially by the population of Clan Rictus, as a definitive noun that meant the individual or one. From there, the usage of the word "Hrud" spread from Clan Rictus to the rest of the tribes of the Underempire, and

came to be used formally as the term of reference for themselves as a race.

Meanwhile, the Grey Seers, through their cunning and intellect, had succeeded in opening the first of the Warpportals, by freeing the essence of Chaos solidified within each and every Warpstone. The tribes began the Great Migration, selecting a Warpportal specifically for the use of their tribe only, so that they would not be forced into territorial disputes with another tribe within the new world they arrived in. Overlord Skyre was rendered helpless against the events of the Great Migration, being unable to stop the actions of hundreds of tribes as they left en masse. He contented himself with the knowledge that although the power of Clan Skyre had been much diminished, they still remained the foremost power amongst their kind, and at the very least the dream of exodus from their birthplace on the moon at the centre of the galaxy was achieved by the majority of their race. Acknowledging that the events of the Great Migration were beyond his power to stop, the Overlord proceeded to solidify his hold over the lesser tribes that had remained, securing each and every Warpstone mine within the Underempire for the use of the Clan in producing their weapons of war. Thus, Clan Skyre remained the foremost power within all Hrudom, until they were ousted from that lofty seat by the actions of Clan Eshin during the Great Skirmishes. The remains of the Tower of Heaven, at once representative of Clan Skyre at the height of their power and the greatest accomplishment achieved by their race as a whole, became the Sky Warren, an intricate network of tunnels and dens that formed the home of Clan Skyre. At the base of the Tower of Heaven are the burrow holes from which the forces of Clan Skyre could pour forth at will, to face all who would challenge the supreme authority of Clan Skyre within the domains of the Underempire.

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### **Clan Moulder**

Within Hrud society, the Greyfurs have always lived in an oppressive state, being dominated by the whims of their stronger and more aggressive kin. It so happened that in one particular Tribe, certain Blackfurs of high status started dabbling in the mutagenic effects of Warpstones upon living organisms. Despite the seeming moral implications of such an act, using Warpstones to induce forced mutations in other lifeforms is not much of a taboo within Hrud society. After all, the direct cause of their genesis as a sentient species is entirely due to exposure to raw Warpstones. The dark experiments of these Blackfurs went largely unnoticed, until an increasing number of disappearances were reported among the Greyfurs. These Blackfurs of like mind banded together into a coven, christening themselves as Moulders, after the act of biological moulding. These Moulders, as they called themselves, deemed the Greyfurs lesser by birth, and thus felt it entirely excusable to experiment exclusively on Greyfurs.

When the Greyfurs finally learnt of the horrific, abominable acts perpetrated by these "Moulders" against their fellow Greyfurs, they were incensed. Open revolt erupted within the entire Tribe as Greyfurs banded together against their former masters. The Greyfurs, carried with the momentum of the times, saw it as the perfect opportunity to overthrow the authority of the Blackfurs and upturn the dominance so unjustly imposed over them through the hierarchical order within the Tribe. This turn of events was known as the Great Revolt. The Greyfurs, taking strength in their numbers, were worked up in an incensed fervour. Though stronger and more adapted to war, the Blackfurs were vastly outnumbered by at least 5-to-1. The Greyfurs proved to be an unstoppable tide that the Blackfurs were helpless to stem, and they quickly lost control of the situation within the Tribe.

In their desperation, they turned to the Moulders for help, striking a bargain that they may lawfully conduct any manner of experiments as to their whims if only they would restore the authority of the Blackfurs. This dark deal was known to both parties as the Great Pact. The Moulders, scheming and working for their own selfish ends, simply viewed the situation as the perfect means to test their creations. Advancing forth from deep within the subterranean dungeons of the Moulders came shambling huge creatures three times the height of even the largest Blackfurs, and running alongside them, tiny pups that have been twisted into slaving beasts stronger than a Greyfur. The Moulders named their creations collectively as Rats, a humiliating term in their language that roughly translates to "born slave". These Vermin beasts overwhelmed the Greyfurs entirely, as each resistance met was slowly worn down by the waves after waves of mindless beasts. The Greyfurs in their desperation, discovered that the Rats, mindless as they were, were controlled by various Packmasters, who drove them forth through fear of pain. The Greyfurs then prioritised their efforts in taking down the Packmasters, hoping with the collapse of the command structure, the Vermin beasts would lose their will to fight, or even turn against their erstwhile masters. But ultimately it was not to be, for the Packmasters were formidable opponents on their own, and were able to expertly exercised control over the Vermin beasts, forming them around into a living shield.

In the face of inevitable defeat, the remaining Greyfurs were subdued by the Moulders and forced to work as slaves in their laboratories within their dungeons. Once in a while, a Greyfur slave would be selected and dragged into the deepest depths of the dungeons, never to be seen again. No one knows what exactly happens within, but the agonising cries surely reflect the committing of unspeakable horrors. Fear is instilled within the hearts of the Greyfurs, for no one wishes to suffer such a fate, and it is this fear that keeps them in line, repressing any desire for rebellion or freedom. Having settled their end of the bargain, the Moulders demanded that the Tribe be renamed after them. Thus, from that

day onwards, Clan Moulder was born.

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### Clan Pestilens

The Tribe that was to become Clan Pestilens was one of the hundreds of tribes that left the Underempire during the Great Migration. The Warportal they chose for their exodus landed them in the Underhive of the Hive World Necromunda. The Underhive is the lowest level within Hive City, home to the dregs of society, where they dredge out an existence under the laws of the survival of the fittest. It is filled with innumerable lawless gangs that engage in constant warfare over territorial disputes and over the scarce resources of food and other necessities within the Underhive. When the Hrud of that particular tribe first encountered the native gangs within the Underhive, they were largely treated as a nuisance, as mutated rat-men of their like were not unheard of within the polluted confines of the Underhive. But the Tribe soon prove to be vastly different in organisation and strategy from mere mutated rat-men; their first motive was to embark on a campaign of acquisition, securing whatever the Tribe needed to ensure its self-sufficiency within the domains of the Underhive. The Tribe proved to be a threat of a level distinct from mere rat-men and the house-gangs of the Underhive soon had to make a decision regarding their stance of hospitality towards the Tribe. A great convention was held between the Great Families of the Underhive, to determine the standing of the Tribe within their territories. It was decided that although the Tribe had not committed any hostility so far since their arrival, they took up a large amount of space within the already tight confines of the Underhive. Together with the already scarce resources present in the Underhive, the food supplies would be tremendously strained if the Tribe was to resort to scavenging from the Great Families for their own sustenance. They declared the Tribe a pestilence upon the lands that needed to be cleansed, and proceeded in a joint alliance to exterminate them from the Underhive.

In the ensuing wars, the Tribe came to be referred mockingly as Tribe Pestilence, a name adopted by the Great Families for they saw the Tribe as akin to a disease that plagued the lands. Against the combined might of the joint forces of the Great Families, the Tribe was steadily repelled back in defeat after defeat, finally leading to their Great Sealing, in which the entire Tribe was forced into the lowest levels of the Underhive, where the toxic sewage that ran through there would almost certainly mean their demise. The lowest level of the Underhive was like the sewers of the Underhive; any means of escape was through portholes that were constantly watched by the armed guards of the Great Families. The Tribe was effectively sealed off within the sewers of the Underhive, and left to rot there till they died. Toxic runoff from the industries within the Lowerhive is carried down to the lowest levels of the Hive City through pipes, before being left to drain away at the depths of the Underhive. The Tribe was left exposed to the toxic runoff at the lowest level of the Underhive, and soon festering sores and open wounds appeared on the bodies of the Hrud. At around the same time a virulent disease started spreading among the inhabitants of the Tribe, leaving their flesh in various states of necrosis. One by one the members of the Tribe succumbed to the disease, which they named Pestilens, a word that was actually a corruption of pestilence in the Hrud tongue.

Faced with starvation and the inevitability of death, many of the members of the Tribe had degenerated into a crazed mental state. In their desperation, the leaders of the Tribe turned towards their deity, the Great Horned One, to deliver them in their dire hour of need. What happened next is treated with much confusion, and the truth of the matter is left to much debate. All present acknowledged the witnessing of a blast of blazing light that appeared to descend into the corridors and passageways of the sewers. The blast was of such ferocity that it knocked down every single one of the Hrud that bore witness to this spectacle, except one. When the great flash of light finally receded, a single Blackfur stood standing. His name is Varmin and he proclaimed himself the One Prophet of the Horned One. He stood declaring in a fiery oratory, of the messages he had received from the Great Horned One Himself. He declared that the blessings of the Great Horned One had descended amongst their Tribe, and had turned what had been a disease into a weapon to be used against their enemies. From now onwards, they were to go forth to battle in the name of the Great Horned One, and were his direct emissaries in the theatre of war. He then proclaimed the Tribe as Clan Pestilens, for they were a tribe no longer having been blessed by the divine light of their Deity. Although many admit that they had thought most of what Varmin said was in a spirit of disillusionment brought about by the flash of light, from then onwards, the Hrud of the Tribe appeared to become immune to the attacks of the disease that continued to run rampant among them. The Hrud of the Tribe, most having degenerated into crazed, desperate mobs, seized onto this opportunity of revival with a zealous fervour. From now onwards they are the emissaries of the Horned One, zealously spreading His messages to all who would behold them. Those who would reject His divine message of deliverance would face the wrath of the Clan in battle. The disease that had plagued them would now both be their proof of divine selection and the gift of divine punishment they would deliver unto their enemies.

Their first act as the renewed Clan Pestilens was to regain their standing within the Underhive. It was actually within the incentive of the rabid hordes that constituted the Tribe to swarm all out in a fanatical rampage against the Great Families, but the Plague Prophet Varmin, recognised as the overall leader of the Clan, knew better than to risk all in what would ultimately be a failed gamble. If they could not match the collective forces of the Great Families previously, they could not hope to do so now. He allowed the rabid hordes to settle their battle lust by overrunning the armed guards

stationed over the portholes that were the main exits out of the dungeon that was the sewers of the Underhive. He then organised the few remaining Greyfurs that were as yet untouched by the ravages of the plague into Scavenger squads, sent to scavenge whatever arms they could from the Great Families to aid in the conflicts to come.

The Plague Prophet Varmin marked out the Blackfurs of the Clan from the rest, holding them as special in the eyes of the Great Horned One. They were tasked foremost with carrying out the spreading of the plague among the ranks of the enemy and they took to their task zealously. In honour of their efforts, they were named Plague Zealots. Serving directly beneath the Plague Prophet are the most powerful Blackfurs in the Clan, the Plaguelords. Varmin himself was considered a Plaguelord, the Arch-Plaguelord in fact, being the foremost of his kind. The Plaguelords maintained order within the ranks of the seething hordes through their trusted lieutenants, the Plague Apostles. These are chosen from the strongest of the Plague Zealots and are usually tasked to a group of them, to lead them in the battles ahead. These Plague Apostles were usually handpicked by the Plaguelords; it was not uncommon to see a Plaguelord followed by a retinue of his most trusted lieutenants in battle. The Greyfurs were not to be neglected however, as the Plague Prophet Varmin recognised them as integral to the Clan as well, substantiating the forces of the Clan with bulk of numbers. The rabid hordes of Greyfurs were organised into masses of Plague Monks, spurred on by the feverish oratories of the Plague Abbots. While the Blackfurs were marked out for their ferocious temperament and by a more virulent strain of the disease that plagued their bodies, the Greyfurs, with their increased intellect, were gifted the power to tap into the Warp. Only a select few Greyfurs had the strength and willpower to withstand the perils of the Warp, and these were the Plague Seers of the Clan. They were capable of wielding the magic of the Great Horned One and sent devastating waves of plague and pestilence upon the enemies of the Clan. They were also charged with the studying of the Warpportals, so that the Clan could further their divine work into other worlds.

The Great Families were thrown into disarray by the sudden advances of Clan Pestilens, but were slowly recovering. In the meanwhile, the plague masses of Clan Pestilens took the initiative and brought war and pestilence to the first of the Great Families. This was no longer the Tribe they initially faced, the one they mockingly referred to as Tribe Pestilence. The rabid hordes advanced without care for the firearms being poured into their ranks. Their diseased hides held all sorts of scabby outgrowths that formed a layer of protection against the shots fired from the firearms. Squads of Scavengers returned fire with the firearms they could scavenge, taking down whatever that was on sight, providing some relief for the advancing Plague Monks and Zealots. When the hordes of Plague Monks and Zealots finally clashed with the guards in the melee, the guards were completely overwhelmed, either taken down due to the plague or in the flurry of the melee. Having taken down the defences of one of the Great Families, Clan Pestilens could only expect retaliation from the joint forces of the remaining Great Families. As such, they had to move with haste. Plague Prophet Varmin set his sights on reaching the Warpportal that led back to the Underempire. They would escape this world while they still had the chance. Quickly, the plague masses moved under the direction of the Plague Prophet, squirming their way through the Warpportal and back into the safety of the Underempire.

It was to much relief to the Plague Prophet Varmin and the rest of his Clan, for indeed, they had faced death and only escaped it under the slightest twist of fate. They paraded in the fashion of victors, having been sent to the jaws of death, only to escape and emerge stronger. Plague Prophet Varmin led the Clan immediately to the Sky Warren to seek an audience with Overlord Skyre, then the most powerful individual in the Underempire, and indeed all of Hrudom. As they made their way to the centre of the cavern, the remaining tribes of the Underempire avoided them like the plague, afraid of the foul stench about them and the great cloud of flies that followed in their wake. Overlord Skyre did indeed receive his request and politely acceded, with the one exception that the meeting be made at a distance of ten metres apart. In their meeting, Plague Prophet Varmin requested that his Clan gain a permanent seat in the Council of Thirteen, in acknowledgment of them as the Hand of the Horned One, Chosen Vassals of their Deity in this realm. He described in vivid detail the event he called the Great Miracle, in which the blazing flash of light descended upon their Tribe and gifted him with visions from the Great Horned One Himself, ultimately turning the plague that ate away at the existence of the Tribe into a weapon to be used against the enemies of the Hrud. He then declared the plague that still festered over the main body of the Clan as living proof of their ascendancy. Overlord Skyre and his Council of Warlords received this strange news with a quiet calm. After much deliberation, the Overlord declared that the Tribe had seen horrors and wonders in equal measure during their time away from the Underempire. Their experience and subsequent transformation left them indeed worthy of the title Clan. As to their request of a permanent seat on the Council of Thirteen, surely the Great Horned One's very own Chosen Clan would be most deserving of such an honour.

Before Varmin left the presence of Overlord Skyre, he told him of the Great Vision he received during that flash of light. He saw a time when the clans and tribes of all Hrudom will unite under one banner. They will then rise against the sentient species of the galaxy and wage a holy war of ascension in honour of their Great God. Their God will hear of the wars fought in His name and accede to the prayers of the Hrud. He will then manifest Himself into this war, descending into the One who will bear His form on this plane. When The Manifestation takes place, the end of times will be at hand. This is the Great Prophecy of the One Prophet of the Horned One.

Thus, Varmin and his Clan came and left with every single one of their desires fulfilled. They were free to pursue the next phase of Varmin's plans for the Clan. While they await the coming of the Great Horned One, Varmin will pave the

way for the fulfillment of the Great Prophecy by engaging in a perpetual holy war against the sentient species of the galaxy. Varmin had his Plague Seers learn every secret of the Warpportals from the Grey Seers, demanding their right as the Chosen Clan of the Great Horned One. When the Plague Seers returned laden full with the knowledge of the Warpportals, the Plague Prophet Varmin began his Great Infestation, a plan to bring the glory of the Hrud to many countless worlds. The sentient species of the universe will be left trembling in awe at the sight of the festering legions of Clan Pestilens. He proceeded to lead his Clan from one world to the next, infesting the worlds of Man and Orks, even reaching to distant Tau. Once a world is infested, the Clan would imbed itself into the sewers of the land, employing their Scavengers to scavenge sustenance from the surface world, all the while remaining hidden in the dark. Then when night falls, the Plague Prophet will rouse the plague masses with burning oratories, lifting their spirits up and setting their battle lust on fire. They will rise from the sewers like a great, unstoppable tide, sweeping all in its path. They move as one mass, yet without direction, simply leaning on the whims of the crowd. Then when dawn breaks forth, the zealous fervour that so imbued the plague masses will die down, and they will settle forth to wait out the day within the sewers that they take for home. And so passes a day on the Infested Worlds of Clan Pestilens. Should their existence be threatened on a particular world, when for instance, a world's population rises up in arms to flush out the Hrud infestation, the Plague Seers will simply reactivate the Warpportals and the entire Clan will relocate on to another planet. In this way, the Hrud' reputation for being able to go unnoticed and then slipping out of view in plain sight, has spread among the populations of the Infested Worlds.

Clan Pestilens see themselves as living a life dedicated to the service of their Deity, by engaging in a perpetual holy war against the enemies of the Hrud. The multitude of worlds they infest is also a means in which they ensure the survival of their Clan. Should it become impossible to continue living a scavenging existence on one planet, they would simply warp to another one. In this way, although their existence is constantly fraught with danger with their lives at risk, the survival of the Clan is at least assured. Although their policy of aggression against other races is viewed as highly extremist by the standards of other Migratory Tribes who tend to keep to themselves in their own struggles for survival, the Plague Prophet argues that such a circumstance of existence is impossible for their Clan due to the plague from which afflicts them. The plague is at once both blessing and curse and guarantees that no matter the race or civilisation, they would always be ostracised and be unable to reconcile their differences with the host race. Thus, Clan Pestilens is at once the most aggressive of the Clans and Tribes of all Hrudom, who tend towards policies of secrecy and self-sufficiency in their associations with other races. It is this policy of aggression that has made Clan Pestilens the Hrud Clan that has the most contact with other sentient species. As such, the species of other worlds have come to associate Hrud behaviour and traits with those displayed by Clan Pestilens. In this way, Clan Pestilens has attained a certain status as the "front" of the Hrud race. Indeed, it has been said that it is this policy of aggression that guarantees the permanence of their seat on the Council of Thirteen, more than their claim to be the Chosen Hand of the Horned One.

~End~

### Clan Eshin

During the Great Migration, the process of exodus in which the Hrud Tribes left the Underempire, the original birthplace of the Hrud, in their untold hundreds, the Tribe that would rise to become Clan Eshin was one such tribe. Through the Warpportals generated by the Grey Seers of Clan Skaven, the Tribe made their great exodus from their homeworld, eventually finding themselves in the sewers of Grand Cathay.

Cathay was a Medieval World of the Imperium, living in a feudalistic society centred around the mastering of the martial arts, and even more esoteric arts, such as the manipulation of an etheric substance they call Ki. Greater still was their mastery over the ways of subterfuge and stealth, such that whenever the Tribe sent their scavengers to forage for food and sustenance on the surface cities, they would fail in their attempts, coming back empty-handed, or in the worst of scenarios, ended up slain, by the ever watchful Night Sentinels maintained by the feudal lords as a necessary precaution against possible schemes of assassination by rival lords.

For some unknown reason, the Warpportal that led back to the Underempire failed and collapsed, leaving the Hrud stranded on Cathay. The social situation within the Tribe soon degraded into infighting as kin fought against kin for the scarce supplies of food. Some Blackfurs, in their desperation, resorted to cannibalism, preying upon the weaker Greyfurs. The Greyfurs were forced out of the sewers and onto the surface, to escape the predations of their stronger kin. This event was known as the Great Exile by the Greyfurs. Being faced with a dilemma of which they found no escape, having been forced out of the underground by their stronger kin and having no place among the Humans on the surface, the Greyfurs were forced to adapt in the face of circumstances, resorting to acts of stealth to outwit the ever-vigilant Night Sentinels, and to conceal their presence from the rest of the Human populace of Cathay. Their existence was eventually made known among the Humans however, as small as they are, their huge numbers left little places where they could stay hidden for long periods at a time. Eventually, faced with having to continuously be on the roam for shelter and food, the knowledge of the Greyfurs' existence and their scavenging of the supplies of the Humans were made known at large to the populace. They were treated as pests, with large rewards granted for their bounty. Many took to the job of their extermination, forcing the Greyfurs to face the doom of their inevitable extinction.



Fate had other plans in store for the Greyfurs however, and the fugitive Greyfurs chanced upon a Sensei, whom they revered by the name of Master Eshin. Master Eshin took pity on the plight of the Greyfurs, and the Greyfurs came to seek refuge within his domain, where they remained safe from facing total extermination, at least for the time being. Master Eshin knew he could not protect them forever within his domain. Soon the Greyfurs he has taken in would have to face the harsh reality of their existence. With this grim knowledge, he trained them in the arts of the Night Sentinels, hoping that through mastering the ways of stealth, they would develop the necessary skills to adapt to life within the great cities of Cathay. Master Eshin was one of the Eight Immortals of Grand Cathay. The Eight Immortals were beings of such immense mastery over Ki that they have managed to extend their lifespans many times over. Throughout his ageless life, Master Eshin had come to learn all the skills of warfare, knowledge accumulated over the centuries, knowledge only known to the foremost warrior masters within Grand Cathay. Master Eshin even knew the ultimate secrets of the Night Sentinels, and that was their mastery over Ki to conceal their movements, becoming almost invisible to the untrained eye. This most secret of skills was known as the Shadowmeld, which he imparted to his Greyfur disciples. Hrud are not as adept at manipulating Ki, an etheric substance that the Cathayan warriors tap into through psychic means, as Humans are. Rather, they had not gained mastery yet during their relatively short stay within Grand Cathay, thus they were not able to connect with the flow of Ki to the extent of their potential. Thus it was only a matter of time. It would be many long starlight cycles before the Greyfurs finally mastered the Shadowmeld. Some of his Greyfur disciples, however, showed a surprising amount of affinity with manipulating the energies of Ki. So adept were they that he dubbed them as Sorcerers. To these Sorcerers, he taught them the secrets of Ki manipulation, allowing them to affect the flow of Ki within themselves and their surroundings. These individuals came to be viewed with a certain mystique by the other Greyfurs, who marvelled at them and their wondrous skills. The Sorcerers thus came to hold a position of seniority amongst their kind, and were the forerunners of the Ruling Council, the select group of individuals who determined the overall movements of the Greyfurs as a whole.

The Greyfurs that used to be the Smiths of the Tribe were brought aside and were instead taught the crafting techniques of the Swordsmiths, Master Eshin foreseeing the need for his disciples to have a means of equipping themselves to survive the many threats they would soon face. These Greyfurs dubbed themselves Bladesmiths, after the Nightblades they painstakingly crafted after the Ninjato of the Night Sentinels. Having learnt all they could from Master Eshin, there was one last token the Greyfurs needed from their benefactor. The Greyfurs knew their exile was only temporary. Nor would they abandon themselves to the nights of Grand Cathay, forever wandering the streets in a life of secrecy and stealth. No, such a life would not be for them. In their hearts they swore never to suffer the humiliation of the Great Exile again. What laid ahead was a journey towards redemption, climbing up from the great abyss they had fallen into, so that once again, they can stand in the light. And for that, they needed a weapon of immense power, from which they could draw strength for the struggles that laid ahead. What they vied for most was their Master's skills, the power of one of the Eight Immortals. By the calculations of the Sorcerers that comprised the Ruling Council, it was possible for them to seal their Master's soul to his skull, from which the bearer of the skull could allow the possession of his soul by Master Eshin. Towards this end, the Greyfurs turned against him in their numbers, taking his skull as a trophy. They are now the Nightbound, bound to dwell eternally within the shadows of the Night, condemned to live in secrecy and stealth, in order to survive. So are they also eternally bound to their duty of laying the foundations of Clan Eshin, raising their fallen Tribe from the ashes, and they shall stop at nothing, as they ruthlessly pursued whatever was necessary in their path of ascension.

The first step the leaders of the Nightbound decided upon was the reclamation of the sewer network that was their former home before the Great Exile. Towards this end, they lived an existence of stealth and concealment, ever-vigilant of the bounty hunters and Night Sentinels, as they made necessary the preparations of their plans in reclaiming their former home. When all was made ready, the Nightbound descended back into the depths of the sewers, in the knowledge that they could not hope to overcome the Blackfurs in a direct confrontation. Instead, they employed the best of their assassins, having honed their skills through their constant struggle for survival on the surface, to silence each and every one of the leaders that comprised the social hierarchy of the Blackfurs. The greatest of the Assassins would adorn the skull of their late Master, allowing his soul to possess him. In this way, the skills and powers of the late Immortal lives on, through the Greyfur disciples he took on in pity. Imbued with the powers of their dead Master, the selected Assassin will be tasked with taking down the key leaders in the social hierarchy of the Blackfurs. Following the example of the Lead Assassin, the Runner Assassins quickly traced down the leaders of the Blackfurs, and taking them by surprise, cut off their heads, which they retrieved and placed before the Ruling Council of the Nightbound. Having undermined the command structure of the Blackfurs, the Blackfurs collapsed into infighting, turning against each other in a bid for dominance. The opportunistic Nightbound seized the moment, exploiting the confusion of the Blackfurs in their infighting, and by engaging in a war of skirmishes to minimise their casualties, the Nightbound gradually wrested dominion of the sewers from the Blackfurs. This was not the end of the agenda of the Nightbound, for they hunted the remaining Blackfurs in a merciless campaign, down to the last Hrud. These ruthless and vengeful traits came to characterise the Nightbound's outlook towards life.

Having regained their lost homes, the Nightbound were thus in a position of relative safety to contemplate the movements of the Tribe on the whole, as they plotted their way towards their ultimate goal of becoming the strongest

Clan in all Hrudom. Their first act as Tribe Nightbound was to restart the Warpportal that brought them to the world of Cathay in the first place, through the mystic means of the Sorcerers to manipulate the essence of Warpstone within the Warpportal, as both substance, the Warp and Ki, have close relations, some even disputing them to be a different reference for the same thing. Upon reentering the Underempire, Tribe Nightbound went about on a campaign of stealth that was very much akin to the circumstances of their existence during their struggles on the surface of Cathay, living a life of concealment from the eyes of their kindred Tribes. Their second act was to locate the Warpstone mines scattered over the domains of the Underempire. They would then seek to reclaim these mines from the control of Clan Skyre, then the most powerful Clan in all Hrudom. Clan Skyre rose to prominence through their monopoly of the Warpstone mines. Through the ingenuity of their Warplords, master engineers of Warpstone technology, they manipulated the essence of the Warpstones into various weapons of war, and through the power of these weapons, Clan Skyre remained unchallenged by the other Tribes who could not hope to face Clan Skyre in a direct confrontation. Thus, Tribe Nightbound saw Clan Skyre as the main obstacle posed to the Tribe in their quest for total dominance, and sought to undermine their power base by attacking them at its source. The first few mines were reclaimed without much difficulty, as the vigilance of Clan Skyre had waned during their periods of unchallenged dominance.

Soon, however, it fell to the attention of the Overlord of Clan Skyre, and he proceeded to fortify the rest of the mines still in their possession. The fortified mines proved resilient to the advances of Tribe Nightbound; much like it was with the other Tribes of the Underempire, the raw firepower possessed by Clan Skyre presented an impregnable fortress even to the battle-hardened veterans of Tribe Nightbound. The Warlords of Clan Skyre, motivated by fear and ambition in equal measure, sent out their forces to secure the lost mines forcibly taken from them by the agents of Tribe Nightbound. The troops of Clan Skyre, the mainstay of which were Fusiliers, devastating ranged infantry supported by the ranks of the elite Warpflame Throwers and Warpwind Grenadiers, were sent against the forces of Tribe Nightbound. In open, direct conflict, the stealth of the Nightbound was ineffectual as the forces of Clan Skyre could easily pick them off from a distance. Furthermore, the style of warfare that was ingrained into the warriors of Tribe Nightbound was geared towards the terrain and circumstances of the grand cities of Cathay. As such, they were ill-suited to navigate the jagged, rough terrain that formed the landscape of the Underempire. The Nightbound was not to be thwarted in their schemes however. To cope with this situation, the best of the agents of the Nightbound were hand-picked to form a group that were trained and geared towards warfare within the lightless domains of the Underempire. The Night Runners were thus born. As such, two distinct classes of warriors were formalised within the social hierarchy of Tribe Nightbound, the Gutter Runners, so named from their origins within the sewers of the grand cities of Cathay, and the Night Runners, so named after the eternal nights of the Underempire. It was during this event, faced with a need to evolve against a strong foe, that the Night Runners finally mastered the Shadowmeld, a skill well-suited to the rough terrain of the Underempire. As such, mastery of the Shadowmeld came to be seen as the skill of qualification that separates the Gutter Runners from the Night Runners. Even then, the Night Runners were barely able to halt the advances of Clan Skyre, eventually reaching a stalemate between both forces. The Warlords of Clan Skyre decided they were content with their present amount of Warpstone mines, and to commit too much of their attention to their war with the Nightbound might jeopardise their positions with the other Tribes that populate the Underempire. Thus, Tribe Nightbound was left to its own devices for the time being, free to formulate whatever schemes of domination within their Warren.

Clan Skyre however, was known still to engage in skirmishes within the Warpstone mines possessed by Tribe Nightbound, as a means of keeping the actions of the Tribe in check. Within these short engagements, the Night Runners saw them as opportunities to perfect their techniques. The Ruling Council of the Nightbound however viewed otherwise, seeing the conditions of their current circumstance as a repeat of the situation during their time in Cathay, having to resort to a covert existence, forever hiding in the shadows. They swore never to allow the Tribe to suffer the humiliation of the Great Exile again, and sought a means to undo this state of affairs governing their existence. The Night Runners were thus motivated to experiment with the Warpstones in their possession under the guidance of the Sorcerers of the Tribe, in order to develop Warpstone weapons capable of countering those of Clan Skyre, in their war of ascension against them. They had their Bladesmiths fashioned blades made of pure Warpstone, to suit their style of warfare of close confrontation. The Night Runners were known too to wear protective amulets made entirely of Warpstone, in their superstitious belief in the Warpstone's supernatural powers. Most important of the tools of war developed by Tribe Nightbound during their experimentation with Warpstones was the Warptunnel Orb. The Warptunnel Orb is basically a self-contained Warpportal, allowing instantaneous teleportation to any point, anywhere, as long as the bearer has the location strongly visualised in his mind. However, due to the instability caused by projecting a teleportation field too big within the dynamics of such a small orb, the Warptunnel Orb is capable of transporting only the bearer himself. As such, only the most skillful and adept of the Night Runners are called upon to bear the Warptunnel Orbs. These are the Warp Runners, and they are the elite of the elite within the forces of Tribe Nightbound.

Having found a means to break the stalemate between the two forces, the Ruling Council of Tribe Nightbound employed the Warp Runners to hunt down the ruling caste of Warlords of Clan Skyre. Once again, the Lead Assassin was tasked with the bearing of Master Eshin's skull, and possessed with his prodigious skills, led the way in the assault. Through this way, Clan Skyre was brought to its knees in submission, having to acknowledge the superiority of Tribe

Nightbound. Tribe Nightbound, after fulfilling their duty of raising the Tribe to its position as the absolute power in all Hrudom, abandoned the title of Nightbound, instead, declaring themselves Clan Eshin, after their benefactor. It was during this time that the Ruling Council started calling themselves the Council of the Night, in remembrance of the dark nights of the Great Exile. The entire Clan took up residence within the Sky Warren, now abandoned by Overlord Skyre who was fleeing for his life, and renamed it the Night Warren. This was not the end of the struggles of Clan Eshin in maintaining its status as the most powerful Clan in all Hrudom however. The Overlord of Clan Skyre, Skyre, managed to escape death despite being hunted by the Lead Assassin himself. In a titanic clash, the Overlord and his retinue fought with the Lead Assassin. Only through the slightest of luck did Skyre escape with his life. He and those of his retinue that were still alive fled away from the Sky Warren, seeking refuge with the Lesser Tribes. In a gathering with the Warlords of the Lesser Tribes, Overlord Skyre managed to convince them that Clan Eshin could easily deal them the same blow, thus removing them from their positions of authority within their respective Tribes. The Warlords of the Lesser Tribes, convinced by Skyre's fiery, if desperate, oratory, banded together in a single Great Kinship, and in their alliance, sought to overthrow the supremacy of Clan Eshin.

In the ensuing battles, known as the Second Great War, even Clan Eshin could not hope to match the combined arms and numbers of all the Lesser Tribes within the Underempire. Overlord Skyre saw this as an opportunity to regain the standing of his Clan and attempted to sway the Warlords into bringing their forces full bear upon Clan Eshin, hopefully wiping them out in the process. However, for once things did not happen the way Skyre planned. The Warlords differed in opinion, seeing the value of the Runner Assassins if they could be employed in their own agendas. The Great Treaty was signed between Clan Eshin and the Great Kinship, which stated that the Lesser Tribes would recognise Clan Eshin's status as the most powerful Clan in all Hrudom, if the Lesser Tribes of the Underempire were free to employ the assassins of Clan Eshin in their own dealings. Clan Eshin readily agreed to the signing of the Great Treaty, for indeed, the Clan saw it as an opportunity to maintain their hold over the Lesser Tribes. The Lesser Tribes in their own struggles for supremacy between each other, would be reliant on the assassins of Clan Eshin to regulate their war. Thus, Clan Eshin would be able to control the outcome of these battles through determining the employment of their assassins to the Tribe of their choosing, preferably the underdog. In this manner, none of the Lesser Tribes would be able to reach such a position of power as to threaten Clan Eshin's standing, through the Council of the Night's manoeuvring and manipulation of the politics of the Lesser Tribes. The petty squabbles between the Lesser Tribes came to be viewed as the Night Wars, for the employ of the Night Runners of Clan Eshin was common in their squabbles. The rise to dominance of Clan Eshin ultimately led to the birth of a new era, known as the Age of Assassins, for the dark hand of the Runner Assassins of Clan Eshin was prevalent throughout the politics of that era. Among the Lesser Tribes of the Underempire, the Runner Assassins of Clan Eshin have come to be feared as the long arm of the law, with the Council of the Night as its judges.

In the meanwhile, with Overlord Skyre still alive after the Second Great War, Clan Skyre was able to maintain its prominence within the politics of the Underempire, being recognised at least as the second foremost power within all Hrudom, next to Clan Eshin. This state of events has remained this way for several starlight cycles, at least for the time being...

**~End~**

## **Clan Skaven**

### **The Birth of the Skaven**

All Hrud tribes begin with their Queen. There so happens to be one Queen, called the Black Queen, for all her Blackfur offsprings are especially large and aggressive, and for the fact that her fur is black.

The event that triggered the Great Uprising, the First War against the Demiurgs, was due to the arising of sentience on a massive scale within their species, and upon observing the conditions of their existence within the cavern that was their birthplace, the thought of venturing into the great unknown that lay beyond the roof of the cavern possessed the whole of their race, instilling in them the desire to seize the mining crafts of the Demiurg for their own. Once in possession of the mining crafts, they would be able to escape the confines of their birthplace and explore the myriad of worlds that lie beyond. Thus the Hrud set about, sharing a single desire, to take the mining crafts by force, rising against the Demiurg in a war that was known as the Great Uprising.

During the Great Uprising, the Blackfurs of the Black Queen were at the front of the fighting, in fact being the key leaders in the First War against the Demiurg. The Demiurg had the technology and the firearms, but they were caught unawares and the Hrud had overwhelming numbers. Still the technology of the Demiurg was not to be underestimated. The Demiurg was quick to respond to the sudden attack and mounted their defences within their mining crafts. Demiurg guards manned the exits of the crafts, equipped with Ion Rifles, while the Navigators used the great excavator-arms of the mining crafts to crush any Hrud who came within reach. The mining lasers of the mining craft were turned against the Hrud, vaporising them in a shower of steam and blood. The metallic shell of the mining crafts were impervious to

the attacks of the Hrud, but the offsprings of the Black Queen were up to the task. Even among these strongest of Blackfurs, there were those whose raw power was a notch above the rest. These were the first Warlords, the Warchiefs of the Black Queen. With their tremendous strength, they tore apart the steel doors of the mining crafts and proceeded to crush the inhabitants within. The Blackfurs of the Black Queen were thus instrumental in the Great Uprising, without which victory would not have been so assured for the Hrud.

The event of the Great Uprising was especially significant for it was the first act of their race as a whole, a symbolic rise out of the primordial darkness they had dwelled in before the light of sentience descended upon them. When the last of the Demiurgs were killed, the entire race of Hrud degraded into infighting, as the Hrud became splintered into tribes and squabbled among themselves for the spoils of war. Even then the legend of the Warchiefs remained, and none of the other tribes would dare provoke the offsprings of the Black Queen willingly. Such was the mystique the Warchiefs enjoyed that soon conceit grew in them, and the offsprings of the Black Queen, both Grey and Black alike, referred to themselves as Skaven, "Chosen" in the tongue of the Hrud. Thus, Tribe Skaven was born.

### **The Age of Warlords**

In the Age of Warlords, Tribe Skaven was one of the foremost powers of that era, unrivalled in might with the exception of a few major tribes. The Tribe that Warlord Skyre belonged to was considered one of the few powers that could contend with Tribe Skaven, but even then only with the joint alliance of a lesser tribe. So for a time, Tribe Skaven was the most powerful force in all Hrudom. The Blackfurs of the Black Queen were physically stronger and more aggressive than the average Blackfur, which was the key reason for the strength of the Tribe. They had by far the largest territory and the greatest spoils of that age. While the leaders of the lesser tribes called themselves Warlords, the strongest Blackfurs of Tribe Skaven referred to themselves as Warchiefs, after the first generation of Blackfurs that led the assault on the Demiurg during the Great Uprising. Due to the aggressive nature of the Warchiefs, Tribe Skaven was known to enter into unnecessary fights with border tribes over the slightest disagreements. It took very little to provoke the Warchiefs into war, even at the later half of the Age of Warlords, when some semblance of peace was restored. When the Warchiefs no longer had an excuse to go to war with rival tribes, they fought among themselves, dividing up the Tribe into sections and entering into mock warfare with each other. This led to a highly precarious situation for the Tribe, for they were at their most vulnerable to forces external to the Tribe. During this time of internal strife, the Warlord Skyre grasped his opportunity, with the temporary lapse in organisation of Tribe Skaven, to move on their territories and seized them for his own. It was at this time that Warlord Skyre was putting his Great Plan into action, delving into the workings of the Warpstones and tapping into their latent power to develop weapons of war from which the Tribe could then dominate the rest of the Hrud tribes. Warlord Skyre slowly and deliberately carved up the lands of Tribe Skaven, seizing those areas with the highest concentration of Warpstone deposits.

This development did not go unnoticed however by Tribe Skaven. Warchief Gorisnak saw the dangers to the survival of the Tribe if Warlord Skyre's actions were left unchecked. He then broke from tradition by challenging the rival Warchiefs to a duel of single combat. One by one, Gorisnak broke each and every Warchief that accepted his challenge, slowly uniting the separate sections of the Tribe and ending the civil strife that left the Tribe vulnerable to the lesser tribes. By defeating every other Warchief and uniting the Tribe as one, Gorisnak became the first Skavenlord, undisputed and unchallenged leader of all of Tribe Skaven. Once having risen to the rank of Skavenlord, Gorisnak began his campaign of retaliation against Warlord Skyre, proceeding to reclaim the lost territories of the Tribe. However, he was too late; Warlord Skyre had succeeded with his Great Plan, and having put that into action, had turned his entire Tribe into an unstoppable war machine, equipped with bizarre Warpstone technology. Skavenlord Gorisnak, believing in the superiority of his troops, sent them forth to crush Skyre's forces. Warlord Skyre saw this as the perfect opportunity to test the newly developed Warpstone technology.

As the mass of Blackfurs charged towards the frontline of Skyre's forces, the troops of Skyre's Tribe, wielding their bizarre Warpstone weapons, opened fire. Vicious explosions of Warpplasma rocked through the lines of the charging Blackfurs, sending them into a screeching halt. Those that did manage to survive the explosions were incapacitated by the Warpplasma acid. The forces of Tribe Skaven were bombarded mercilessly with Warpplasma and could not proceed anywhere close to the frontline of Skyre's forces. Those that did manage somehow to get close enough were engulfed in gouts of pink Warpfire and were burnt to a crisp. Gorisnak in his desperation, thought to outmanoeuvre the slower and clumsier troops of Warlord Skyre, in the wielding of their heavy Warpstone weapons, by attacking his flanks. Together with his most trusted Chiefs, Gorisnak led the assault directly, in a pincer attack at the sides of Skyre's army. However, Skyre was well-prepared for such a manoeuvre, and commanded his Warpwind Grenadiers to lob their Warpwind Grenades in an arc around the flanks of his army. The Warpwind Grenades exploded and unleashed their noxious fumes into the air. The entire area surrounding Skyre's forces was filled with this noxious gas. The forces of Tribe Skaven, encountering this pink cloud that stretched beyond as far as they could see, saw no way around it except to proceed through the cloud. The first through quickly expended their lives as they breathed in the noxious fumes. Seeing this, the Blackfurs were greatly discouraged and refused to enter the cloud. In his frustration, Gorisnak bellowed at the Blackfurs for their cowardice, and seeing as how even his most trusted Chiefs had quelled, the great Skavenlord entered the pink clouds of noxious gas alone.

Somehow, he came through them unscathed, with much of his life force intact. Seeing the looks of surprise upon Skyre's forces, Gorisnak charged through them, slaughtering his way through as he sought to bring Warlord Skyre himself to single combat. Once in the melee, Skyre's Warpstone weapons of war were ineffectual and could not be used to stop Gorisnak. In this manner, Gorisnak was able to fight his way through into the centre of Skyre's army and face the Warlord himself, with his retinue of Blackguard. It is a testament to the raw power possessed by Gorisnak that, surrounded by enemies on all sides at the very heart of Skyre's army, he did not succumb and simply waded a path of blood through. It has been said that there has never been a stronger Warchief born to the Black Queen after Gorisnak. At the centre of Skyre's army, Warlord Skyre and his Blackguard met and clashed with Skavenlord Gorisnak in a titanic struggle. The strongest Blackfur ever was face to face with the Blackfur that would become the most powerful individual in all Hrudom, the Supreme Overlord of the Underempire. The strength of the Skaven was flowing through Gorisnak, and his blows were strong enough to rip apart a Blackfur from head to toe. One by one, each of Skyre's elite Blackguard fell to the blades of Gorisnak until only Skyre was left. The two struggled, the skill of Warlord Skyre being a match for the brute force of Gorisnak. None of his death-dealing blows were able to touch the Warlord, as he skillfully parried away each attempt at his life. Gorisnak grew more frustrated and started aiming his blows at the jugular, in an attempt to end the battle quick, a necessity in light of how he was deep within the heart of the enemy's army. Warlord Skyre knew that the battle was drawing near its end. With Gorisnak's attacks becoming more predictable, Skyre no longer had to parry with his blade but could dodge instead, freeing his blade to be used on the offence. Timing his movements with that of Gorisnak, Gorisnak made the fatal mistake of committing too much to a single strike, causing him to break his stance and miss Skyre. Skyre steadily dodged this last attack, and seizing this golden moment when Gorisnak would be slow to recover, slit a deep cut across the chest of Gorisnak. Skyre stepped back in relief and exhaustion; the battle was won. That was no ordinary blade, no ordinary cut. It was a Weeping Blade, a blade soaked in the corrosive venom of the Hell Vipers that roam the land on their bellies. In a matter of seconds, the poison would work its way throughout the body of Gorisnak, incapacitating him before finally killing him. In this way, the first Skavenlord of Tribe Skaven lost his life. The news of Gorisnak's demise quickly scattered the remaining forces of Tribe Skaven. This major defeat was the first ever suffered by Tribe Skaven and it destroyed the mystique of the Blackfurs of the Black Queen. No longer were they seen as invincible or untouchable by the lesser tribes. The body of Gorisnak, in honour of his strength and bravery, was buried by Skyre at the centre of the cavern of the Underempire, where the table for the Great Council was to be placed in the future.

### **The Rise of the Grey**

In the wake of Gorisnak's death, with the mystique of the Blackfurs shattered, the Greyfurs of Tribe Skaven started their own agenda of recovery, attempting to seize the exalted position of Skavenlord for their own. All along in order to survive alongside their more aggressive brethren, the Greyfurs of Tribe Skaven had developed methods of manipulation and deceit in their climb up the social ladder. In a world where power and aggression are all and everything, the weaker, passive Greyfurs had no means of achieving equal standing with the Blackfurs. However, the cunning and willpower of the Greyfurs would not simply allow this. By marketing their values to the Blackfurs and proving their worth, certain determined individuals have managed to break into a realm dominated by their darker kindred. Due to the Machiavellian setting in which the Greyfurs are brought up in, they are ruthless, manipulative individuals, reputed for their increased intellectual capacity in comparison to the Greyfurs of the lesser tribes. The Greyfurs of Tribe Skaven are regarded as more intelligent because the increased aggression of the Blackfurs forces the Greyfurs to live in a tremendously harsh setting which promotes the succession of only the smartest and most cunning.

The chiefs of the Greyfurs, realising the fate of their race was twined inevitably with the Warpstones, sought to seize power before the other tribes by uncovering the secrets of the Warpstones first. Towards this end, they expended their energies towards studying the Warpstones and began secret experiments with them. It was at this point of time that the chiefs of the Greyfurs started referring to themselves as Seers, after their study of the Warpstones. The oldest of the Seers were referred to as Grey Seers, and they are among the wisest beings in all Hrudom. The Grey Seers convened among themselves and decided on the path of ascension that all would-be Grey Seers would walk from then onwards. The Grey Skavens, as the Greyfurs of Tribe Skaven called themselves, would be the starting ground for all future Grey Seers. From there, any who would vie for power and status would have to rise up among the mass of Grey Skavens, and through means of deceit and manipulation, prove their worth to the Grey Seers and thus be inducted into the circle of Seers. Once a Seer, they would be taught the secrets of the Warpstones, while the highest secrets would be withheld from them, for those are only accessible to the Grey Seers.

In actuality, the Seers are simply a means in which to further bring apart the exalted Grey Seers from the lowly Grey Skavens. While the Grey Skavens have to contend with each other in their constant backstabbing and manipulation, the Seers have to contend with the Grey Seers as they attempt to replace existing Grey Seers, either through assassination or political manoeuvring. Therefore, it is not unheard of for senior Grey Seers to be demoted to Seers, but oftentimes this action is checked by existing alliances between the Grey Seers themselves. The Grey Seers see themselves as too important and being occupied with the higher matters of the Tribe to be concerned with petty disputes of seniority or the contention of the Seers beneath them. Therefore they cease with their backstabbing and manipulation, and instead

consolidate their positions against ambitious Seers by committing into joint alliances of mutual cooperation with other Grey Seers. The Grey Seers are as such a tightly knit group with little divisions between them. These first Grey Seers who came into allegiance with each other became the Grey Council, the highest social order among the Greyfurs, and only individuals of high intellectual capacity are allowed into this elite circle. They are the Grey Council, the gathering of the wisest and smartest Grey Seers within the Tribe.

The Grey Council is responsible for which Grey Skaven becomes a Seer, and which existing Grey Seer is replaced with one of the Seers. The reason why they keep only a select number of Grey Seers is so that the social order of the Tribe would not be too top-heavy, and most importantly, so that there would not be sufficient Grey Seers outside of the Council to form a coven of their own and threaten the standing of the Grey Council as the sole leaders of the Greyfurs. They are responsible for all movements of personnel up and down the social ladder of the Greyfurs, and while the Grey Seers' main responsibility is the study and unlocking of the highest secrets of the Warpstones, the Grey Council's overriding concern is that of the Tribe's status and prominence among the lesser tribes. To them, the lesser tribes are meant to be exploited and only exist to substantiate the glory of the Skaven as the chosen of the Hrud. In their dealings and meetings, they congregate to formalise plans from which they could further the extent of their Tribe's influence over the lesser tribes.

All about this time, Warlord Skyre was midway through his campaign of conquest, quelling the lesser tribes into submission with his superior firepower. The mystique of the Warpstones grew during those troubling times, as a source of incalculable power as proven by the superiority of Skyre's forces. The Grey Council seized this opportunity by sending their agents among the lesser tribes, spreading misinformation and lies of the mysticism and abilities of the Grey Seers of Tribe Skaven. Rumours abound of their mystic powers of control over the Warpstones, harnessing the essence within through secret means. Although not altogether believed in, during those times of hopelessness, it was a beacon of light for many of the lesser tribes who had suffered defeat at the hands of Skyre, and in this way Tribe Skaven gained the backing of many hundreds of tribes. As the first Great War drew to a close, the Grey Seers busied themselves with the studying of the Warpstones, while their agents continued spreading their tendrils of lies and misinformation among the defeated populace. Finally, with the defeat of Tribe Rictus, the last and only real major power, besides Tribe Skaven, to face off against Skyre's Warpstone-empowered forces, the event known as the Great War came to an end. It was the time of the reign of the Supreme Overlord of the Underempire, backed by Clan Skyre, the greatest power in all Hrudom. Skyre created the divisions between Tribes and Clans as one of his first acts as Supreme Overlord. From then onwards, the major Tribes which have risen to prominence in strength, wealth, power or size would regard themselves as Clans. Clans, while being essentially Tribes, have the influence and power to dominate the sociopolitical workings of Hrud society at large. Thus, Tribe Skaven became known as Clan Skaven with the aftermath of the Great War, and being all along one of the foremost powers throughout the Hrud's turbulent history, was given a seat in the first Great Council, as one of the twelve representatives of the Hrud before the Great Horned One. This marked the beginning of the Age of Trade, a period of time of much technological exchange and mutual cooperation between the Tribes. It can be said to be the first era of peace enjoyed by the Hrud since their genesis as a species.

Even with all these great developments and movements occurring outside of the Clan, the Grey Council have not forgotten their sacred duty of raising their Clan from the ashes of defeat, remembering those times long gone when the mystique of their Tribe left them unchallenged and lauded as the strongest among all the tribes of the Hrud. Such a return was their greatest desire, but first they had to seize power amongst their own kind. The seat of Skavenlord had long since been neglected after the demise of Gorisnak, and the Tribe had splintered into various factions of Warchiefs. There was little unity left within the Tribe except for the recognition that they all came from the same brood, being the only offspring of the Black Queen. This circumstance could not be left as it is if the Tribe was to maintain its status as a Clan, and more importantly, the plans of the Grey Council could not reach fruition if they had not the entire backing of the Clan behind them. Also, a representative had yet to be selected among the Clan to occupy the seat in the first Great Council. It was at about this time, faced with such pressing matters, that a Grey Seer by the name of Skittar deduced the ultimate nature of the Warpstones as the solidified substance of the Immaterium. The Immaterium was defined by Skittar as the billions of untold realities yet to be fulfilled or realised. Within each Warpstone is a drop of manifest reality, thus the incredible power contained within even a single Warpstone. The raw mutagenic essence of Chaos is solidified as Warpstone, and nearly all manner of things could be achieved with Warpstone as implements. By freeing the essence of Chaos within the core of the Warpstones, Skittar was able to break through the fabric of reality and reach into other worlds beyond their own. These Warpportals Orbs were viewing points from which Skittar and his fellow Grey Seers could study the populations of other worlds, which were mainly Human worlds. From there, Skittar and the Grey Council concocted a great plan, dubbed by them "The Great Migration", a plan to transform the Warpstone mines into Warpportals from which the tribes of the Underempire could travel to the worlds beyond. Understanding that it was the deepest wish of nearly every single individual among the Hrud collective to escape the confines of their birthplace and venture into the great unknown, Skittar's Great Migration was such a plan that would enable their desires to be achieved while at the same time indebting them to Clan Skaven for all time. The Great Dream as it was known, or the First Desire, the hidden intention that underlaid all movements and decisions of the sociopolitical workings of the collective Hrud Tribes, was never forgotten to the Hrud at any point throughout time, and it was this desire the insidious Grey Seers of Clan Skaven so wish to manipulate and control.

First, in the order of Skittar's plan, was to reunite their Clan under a single leadership. With his fellow Grey Seers deferring to him as the mastermind of "The Great Migration", all Skittar needed was the backing of the Warchiefs to become Skavenlord of the Clan. He gathered the Warchiefs in a huge meeting, and laid bare the secret workings and plans of the Grey Council. The complexity of "The Great Migration" extended into the indeterminate reaches of time, and was such that by the Great Debt of the Migratory Tribes as they were henceforth called, Clan Skaven would forever hold a special place of recognition among the scattered tribes of their race, as well as within the Underempire. Within the Council of Thirteen, they would be the voice of hundreds of tribes, possibly thousands. During times of war, the Great Debt between Clan Skaven and the Migratory Tribes would allow the Warchiefs to field armies consisting of troops from other tribes. With so many tribes answering the call to war whenever the security of Clan Skaven is threatened, there was no longer a need to maintain their own army and Clan Skaven could simply rely on the tribes that were in their debt to fight their wars for them, with the Hrud of the other tribes dying in place of their Clan's instead. But of course the bloodthirst of the Black Skavens of the Black Queen would not be able to resist the prospect of battle, and ultimately, the Warchiefs would have to lead their own battles. The entire scheme of "The Great Migration" would ensure a place of power and influence permanently for Clan Skaven within the domain of the Underempire, while at the same time diminishing greatly the power and esteem of the Ruling Clan at that time, Clan Skyre.

Ultimately, Skittar hoped to replace Clan Skyre as the foremost power within Hrudom and once again become the strongest Clan of their race, as it was during the times of the Great Uprising. Upon accomplishing that, they would lead their race in a new age of conquest against the races of Man, Orks and Tau. The sentient races of the galaxy would come to recognise the race of the Hrud as a substantial threat not to be overlooked, one that will shake and challenge their foundations at the end. "The Great Migration" was the first step within this Greater Scheme, laying the foundations for the eventual invasions of these worlds by first seeding them with the presence of the Migratory Tribes. Once Clan Skaven has finally seized power as the strongest Clan in all Hrudom, plans could be made underway to spread the influence of the Hrud into these lands. The young race of the Hrud would be acknowledged by the standing races of the galaxy in their climb towards ascendancy or face the might of the Hrud in the field of battle. That was Skittar's ultimate intention, which he shared with the Warchiefs gathered in that fateful meeting, hoping to stir their ambition and want for power. The Warchiefs received all this with much fervour and enthusiasm. They had grown tired of all the infighting while, all this time, rival tribes grew in power. On top of that, with the humiliation of losing their mystique as the offsprings of the Black Queen and their decline from that lofty position as the strongest Tribe in all Hrudom, have left them dissatisfied and disillusioned. They had indeed so wished to regain their position as the chosen of their kind, living up to the name which they had selected for themselves, and for that they needed a plan in this new age where the strongest were no longer dictated by brute force or military strength. Thus, they decided to leave the workings of this Great Scheme to the minds of their more intelligent kin and only interfered whenever they saw necessary. To this end, they championed the cause of Skittar's and collectively recognised him as the new Skavenlord of Clan Skaven. Thus, the second Skavenlord of Clan Skaven was born.

This marked the rising of the Greyfurs within the Clan as a prominent force within the sociopolitical workings of the Clan. No longer were they trodden upon by their darker brethren and had to take to their whims and dictates. Now they were faced as equals, a position they never used to enjoy as the offsprings of the Black Queen, for besides giving birth to larger, more aggressive Blackfurs, the Black Queen produce more Blackfurs than the Queens of other tribes, such that the ratio of Greyfurs to Blackfurs is three is to one. Thus, the Greyfurs never had the security of numbers against their larger kindred and had to resort to subtle manoeuvrings of cunning in order to survive. This resulted in a large part of their increased intelligence compared to the Greyfurs of other tribes. Now, with the rise of Skittar as the Second Skavenlord, a position of leadership universally recognised by the Warchiefs despite being a Greyfur, it heralded a new era of freedom and liberation for the Greyfurs of Clan Skaven as a whole.

## **The Great Migration**

At the first Great Council, Skavenlord Skittar was present before the representatives of Clan Skyre, Clan Moulder, Clan Rictus, Tribe Verminkin, Tribe Whitempest, Tribe Blackstorm, Tribe Fester, Tribe Chittin, Tribe Scrye and Tribe Skaar. These were the members for the first Council of Thirteen, a total of 11 tribes together with the Greater Verminlord of all Verminkin, Verminlord representative of all Verminlords, and the seat of the Great Horned One, Deity and Ruler of the entire Hrud race. There, once again, the question of the Great Dream was answered by Supreme Overlord Skyre, as the acting voice of the Great Horned One in that first council. Overlord Skyre wanted a return to the times during the Great Uprising when their race shared one common purpose, and that was to escape the suffocating confines of the cavern they were born in and explode out into the greater worlds observable through that patch of sky at the roof of the cavern. And this would be achieved through whatever means possible. In his high, authoritative voice, Skyre addressed the representatives assembled before him, initiating the start of the council. "Remember, remember what motivated us to attack the occupants of those shiny vessels, in the hopes that we could seize them for our own? It was the belief that we could somehow control them and use them to ascend into the space beyond that hole at the roof of the cavern, forever leaving this dark existence behind us as we explode out into the great unknown. But yet it seems, even with the obtaining of these shiny vessels, the task of escaping our birthplace would not be so easily achieved. I am sure as it is

with you, your attempts at understanding and ultimately mastering these vessels have proven fruitless and in vain. If the greatest of my Warplords are unable to discover the workings of these vessels, I am confident enough to declare that none from within the Clans and Tribes gathered here would be able to progress much in that department. It would be best to leave the plan we initially had a side, for the vessels seem beyond our grasp of comprehension at this very moment. Thus I suggest instead, of the construction of a great tower, one that would reach the roof of the cavern at its height, and jut out into the space beyond. May I suggest the construction of The Tower of Heaven, made from the very rocks and gravel that form the composition of the ground beneath us. It would be the answer to the Great Dream, the key to our constant desire to leave this wretched cavern and escape into what is promised in that distant patch of sky, that there may indeed be a greater world beyond the one we know of."

This was Skyre's answer to the Great Dream, the construction of a huge tower that would span the entire height of the cavern, reaching into that hole at the roof of the cavern and jutting into the space beyond. That would be how Skyre attempted to reach into the realm of the other worlds that lie beyond our own. This was the new propaganda spread by the agents of the Grey Seers among the tribes already within their clutches and to those yet to be caught in their tendrils. Ultimately, the Grey Seers threw down Skyre's Tower of Heaven as fatuous and naive. Worlds could not be reached by the simple piling of gravel upon gravel. If that would be possible, they would not be stuck here in the first place. Their only course of hope if the Great Dream was ever to be achieved was to trust in the intellect and magicks of the Grey Seers, hoping that all goes well and they could proceed with their plan and finally begin the Great Migration. Every tribe that committed to the Great Migration entered with a resolve that they were severing their collective voice from the Council of Thirteen and had to depend on a medium from which to communicate their ideas and wishes to the Great Council. This burden would fall upon the shoulders of Clan Skaven, and the Grey Council would ensure that the wishes and demands of the Migratory Tribes would be heard through them. In return, for their favour of fulfilling the Great Dream, and to pay off the Great Debt incurred with the Great Migration, the armies of the Migratory Tribes were at the disposal of Clan Skaven, and could be recalled in the event of war.

As the Grey Seers worked within the Warpstone mines in their attempts at converting them into Warpportals, the Tower of Heaven progressed ever upwards, reaching into the space beyond the roof of the cavern. It was only a matter of time before its completion, and at the same time, the Grey Seers had nearly succeeded with transforming the Warpstone mines into dimensional portals that could reach other worlds. They had only wait for some significant event or other that would turn the attention of Skyre away from them and thus begin the process of the Great Migration. This significant event came about when the Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel of the Demiurg returned to reclaim the mining crafts they had left behind to harvest the Warpstones. The Vessel announced its return by blasting off a quarter of the near-completed Tower, to allow it room to descend into the confines of the cavern. With Supreme Overlord Skyre momentarily distracted by this turn of events, there was no agent or force that could stop the Grey Council from enacting their plan. They proceeded with it thus, initiating the start of the Great Migration with the activation of the Warpportals. A total of more than a thousand tribes left the Underempire that day, in one massive wave as they broke away from the control of Clan Skyre and founded a new life on another world. Although Skyre was helpless to stop the process of the Great Migration, he proceeded to quickly take hold of the remaining Warpstone mines and extended the territories of the Clan into the areas left by the Migratory Tribes.

Clan Skaven was charged with high treason for concealing such a massive plan from the eyes of the Council, and Overlord Skyre intended to remove their seat and have them replaced by a lesser tribe within the Council of Thirteen. However Skavenlord Skittar was shrewd enough to warn that by removing Clan Skaven from the Council of Thirteen, they were in effect sealing off the voices of the thousand-strong Migratory Tribes and risked forever losing their connections to the Underempire. Could Skyre risk such an event? After all, Clan Skaven oversaw the Warpportals from which the Migratory Tribes still maintained their links to the rest of Hrudom. With that move thwarted, Skyre as Supreme Overlord, resorted to placing sanctions over the movements of Clan Skaven, limiting their influence over the remaining tribes, such that an event as massive as the Great Migration could not transpire again. Despite having a large part of their influence and power stripped from them, Clan Skyre was still the foremost power in all Hrudom, and they would not be ousted so easily from their position of strength without a more forward approach. Thus, such a case remained, and although the Great Migration had greatly rewarded Clan Skaven with much success, it was not without its repercussions. With much of their power and influence over the lesser tribes removed from them, it seemed the next step in Skittar's Great Scheme was to go to war against Clan Skyre, a manoeuvre that would result in the scenario of Clan Skaven's total defeat, given the two Clan's current military strength. Much had to be done now if the Clan was to hope to challenge Clan Skyre in direct confrontation and seize the title of the strongest Tribe in all Hrudom from them. As such, the Seers turned their accumulated knowledge of the Warpstones towards manufacturing their own potent weapons of war to match those of Clan Skyre.

### **The Age of Starlight**

With the exodus of Clan Rictus, and the event of the Great Migration, the Age of Trade was succeeded by the Age of Starlight. A second Great Council was immediately called to discuss the course of actions to be taken up in the light of recent events. In this second Council, the order of rank of the members is as follows: Clan Skyre, Clan Moulder, Clan



Rictus, Clan Verminkin, Clan Skaven, Tribe Whitempest, Tribe Blackstorm, Tribe Fester, Tribe Chittin, Tribe Rancour and a Warlord representative from the Lesser Tribes of the Underempire. Through Overlord Skyre's insistence, a law was passed forbidding anymore tribes from using the Warpportals to migrate to other worlds. This was one of the means in which Skyre limited the powers of Clan Skaven. However, the Warpportals of Clan Skaven were to remain active, as they were the one means of contact between the Migratory Tribes and the Underempire. No mention of the Great Dream was made at that second Council. At some level, the Great Dream had indeed been achieved by a large part of their race, yet somehow despite it all, it had become taboo. The Great Dream had become cursed by Skyre as the actions of Clan Skaven had diminished much of the influence and power of his Clan. Clan Skyre would never fully recover from this and Skyre sought Clan Skaven to pay for their losses. From then on the actions of the Grey Council were closely watched by the agents of Clan Skyre, and Skyre used the motive of the second Council to place many such strictures and embargoes upon Clan Skaven, reducing much of their sociopolitical influence. In addition, sanctions were placed over the trade of weapons between Clan Skaven and the other tribes, such that Clan Skaven even now is unable to field Warplock Fusils in its army. The Tower of Heaven was left neglected in its half-finished construction, but it became occupied by Clan Skyre as their Warren, from then on known as the Sky Warren. It was the only Warren to ever be constructed above ground, and due to its location right at the centre of the entire cavern, was the perfect base of operations from which Clan Skyre could maintain its dominion over the rest of the tribes within the Underempire.

Ultimately, the Age of Starlight was so called for it was a time marked by the ascension of their race into the deep depths of space and beyond. Much of the events of that age transpired in the worlds occupied by the tribes that had left the Underempire during the Great Migration. Most were successful in settling themselves into their world of adoption, while a rare few were completely obliterated while trying to survive the harshness of their new environment, or by their Human hosts, who were not so welcoming of their new neighbours. There were those too who had to turn back and return to the Underempire, as they found their situation within the new worlds unfavourable.

However, what marked the new age was the founding of Clan Rictus, after the event of the Great Invasion, in which the Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel of the Demiurg was seized in a ruthless war of attrition. In the aftermath of that war, Clan Rictus was in full position to accomplish their dream, which was to sail the spaces between the stars in a grand starship, but they had not forgotten their kindred tribes within the Underempire. They sent their delegates in the second Great Council at the end of the Age of Trade, and were officially recognised by the Supreme Overlord and the delegates gathered there as a Clan by the standards of size, technology and power. As the largest Tribe in all Hrudom, and possessing of technology to rival that of Clan Skyre, Tribe Rictus was henceforth known as Clan Rictus. In that second Great Council, the Skylord representative of Clan Rictus, High Skylord Rictar, made known his intention of mapping out the stars in the Clan's travels through space, and from there discover the locations of the scattered Migratory Tribes in the worlds they encountered. The Clan would then act as a medium of communication between the Migratory Tribes and the Underempire. Clan Rictus would be the means in which trade and information could be carried out between the Migratory Tribes and those of the Underempire. After visiting the world of every Migratory Tribe, the Clan would plot its way back to the Underempire and begin the cycle anew.

This series of cycles came to be known as the Great Cycle, as it was discovered that the time it took for Clan Rictus to visit every Migratory World was the time it took for thirteen thousand starlight cycles of the Underempire. At the end of every Great Cycle, a new Council would be held to determine the policies of the Underempire against the conditions of the Migratory Tribes. Clan Rictus would begin the Great Council with their report on the situations of the Migratory Tribes and the presence of any outstanding findings, while the Supreme Overlord of the Underempire, Overlord Skyre, would start the discussions with the actions to be taken by the Underempire as a whole against such reports. Thus, the movements of Clan Rictus came to determine the political motions within all Hrudom, which was especially significant as Clan Rictus became an unreplaceable entity within the Council of Thirteen. Even then, Clan Rictus was never recognised as one of the four Great Clans, as that title was only ever entitled to Clan Skyre, Clan Moulder, Clan Pestilens and Clan Eshin. Clan Skyre was the most powerful Clan before being superseded by Clan Eshin, while Clan Moulder is the wealthiest Clan, even wealthier than Clan Rictus; Clan Pestilens is the Chosen Hand of the Great Horned One, and thus these four are considered the Great Clans of the Hrud.

### **The Chosen One**

All this while, Skitter had other plans in the works, plans that remained hidden from even his closest associates in the Grey Council. In secret, he was rearing a child, a Blackfur pup whom he named Morskittar, or Great Skittar, after his own name. It was an offspring of his own blood, by his secret mating with the Black Queen. Normally a Greyfur would not be allowed to mate with the Black Queen, as that was a right reserved only to the Blackfur Warchiefs, in order that the fabled strength of the Black Skavens would be passed on through the generations. Skittar, with the influence he wielded as the Skavenlord of the Clan, managed to gain access to the Queen's Chamber, and in secret, bonded with the Black Queen. There, in the next batch of pups produced by the Black Queen, Skittar chose the Hrud that would succeed him, the Blackfur pup that was the largest of the lot. Even as a pup he stood out among the other Blackfurs by merit of his greater size. As the largest Blackfur pup in the litter, he quelled the infighting of the Blackfur pups and established himself as the leader of the pack, commanding through a mixture of fear and respect. Interestingly enough, even the

Greyfur pups obeyed Morskittar, and without the slightest need for aggression on his part, almost as if willingly. This is a phenomenon only attributed to Whitefurs, which Morskittar clearly is not. His most unique feature however, is the twin horns that protruded from the crown of his head. Although they called their God the Great Horned Hrud, growth of horns in Hrud is a phenomenon that is only recorded in manifested Prophets, the Verminlords, and it both disturbed and puzzled Skittar greatly.

Morskittar would carry on the legacy of his father and become the third Skavenlord of Clan Skaven. What was so promising of Morskittar was that he is a Blackfur, yet trained under the tutelage of the most intelligent Greyfur of that generation, and thus possessed the intellect of a Greyfur at the same time. In Morskittar's time, he would carry out the remaining half of the Great Scheme, fulfilling the plans that had been already put in place before his birth. Skittar would pave the way during his generation, creating the circumstances that would allow the rise of their Clan as the strongest in all Hrudom. Morskittar would accomplish the final leg of the Great Scheme, turning the banner of their race as one against the standing races of the Galaxy, and lead them in a path of ascendancy towards complete dominion over all races. He is the chosen one, born to the chosen Tribe of the Hrud, the Skavens of the Black Queen.

### **The Great Downfall of Skyre**

The Grey Council tasked their Seers with maintaining a vigilant watch over the doings of the Migratory Tribes in the new worlds through the Warpportal Orbs. Thus, when the Warpportal of the tribe that would rise to become Clan Eshin malfunctioned, it was all the workings of the Grey Council of Clan Skaven. This tribe had been so chosen by the Grey Council for they knew that the world they were in was a martial world of many arcane mysteries and dark secrets. By exiling them within the world of Grand Cathay, they had hoped that the tribe would learn of these secrets and return to the Underempire with deadly powers to rival the Warpstone technology of Clan Skyre. The tribe would then be a great aid in the downfall of Clan Skyre. In the worst possible scenario, the tribe would be annihilated by those very deadly powers that they had so wished to harness. As such, the Grey Council placed many trusted Seers to the tasks of overseeing the progress of this particular tribe, and were quick to reactivate the Warpportal that led to Cathay should the tribe's existence be threatened. It so happened that the tribe succeeded in surviving the harsh conditions of existence in Cathay, and had been reborn as Tribe Nightbound. They had consecrated themselves to the vow of redeeming themselves from the humiliation they had suffered by raising their Tribe into the strongest Clan in all Hrudom. When the Grey Council learnt of this change within the Tribe, they knew the Tribe was ready to return to the Underempire, and that the engineering of their plan had succeeded. Although it was made to them as if the Sorcerers of the Tribe were responsible for the restarting of the Warpportal, in reality it was the Grey Council that had enabled it. Their return marked the beginning of the downfall of Clan Skyre.

Meanwhile, Clan Skaven waited patiently within the shadows, watching the progress of this Tribe Nightbound that had come to challenge the might of Skyre's forces. What followed was the Great Skirmishes, a series of battles fought over the Warpstone mines in the possession of Clan Skyre, resulting ultimately in a stalemate between both forces. However, this stalemate was broken when Tribe Nightbound learnt to fashion the Warpstones into tools of war that suited their own ends, with the knowledge possessed by the Bladesmiths and Sorcerers, acquired from their stay in Cathay. Most important of these tools was the Warptunnel Orb, and it is this particular device that proved the downfall of Supreme Overlord Skyre and his Clan. Employing the best of their assassins, the Warp Runners, Clan Eshin as they now called themselves, hunted down the key leaders of Clan Skyre in a ruthless agenda. However, the Supreme Overlord managed to escape with his life under the barest of luck. He managed to convince the Warlords of the Lesser Tribes of the substantial threat the assassins of Clan Eshin posed to their own standings within their tribes and roused them to war. Thus the Second Great War was fought, between Clan Eshin and the Great Kinship, the combined might of all the Lesser Tribes. Clan Eshin lost the Great War, but ultimately, it ended to the benefit of Clan Eshin, for although it was Clan Eshin's defeat officially, the signing of the Great Treaty between Clan Eshin and the Great Kinship meant that the Runner Assassins of Clan Eshin would be employed by the Warlords in their petty wars. The Warlords of the Lesser Tribes saw the Runner Assassins as being used by them in their own agendas, but in actuality, the Runner Assassins were being used by the Council of the Night as a means of regulating the flow of power among the Lesser Tribes. The downfall of Clan Skyre and the rise of Clan Eshin marked the end of the Age of Starlight and the beginning of the Age of Assassins, a dark time noted for the numerous Night Wars fought among the Lesser Tribes in their bid for power and dominance.

### **The Great Clan War**

All this while Morskittar studied under the tutelage of Skavenlord Skittar, observing the events of the world transpire before him, in the acceptance and knowledge that one day, he would have to transcend beyond all the great works done till this day and outdo them. As Morskittar grew and matured, Skavenlord Skittar knew that his time was drawing to a close and he must make haste his preparations for his only son, by his will and decision, to ascend to his position of authority as Skavenlord of the Clan. As Clan Pestilens furthered the work of their race into the worlds of Man, Ork and Tau, they were closely compatible with the Great Scheme and thus Clan Skaven had little need to interfere with their policies. Only Clan Skyre and Clan Eshin had ever made aims upon the Throne, the supreme position as the strongest

Clan in all Hrudom, and thus these two must be dealt with closely. The only other remaining power to have any right of contention was Clan Moulder, and despite being one of the Great Clans, was largely content with their great wealth and asked for nothing more. Thus, Skittar attempted to initiate the downfall of Clan Eshin by first rousing the latent discontent within Clan Moulder, and once setting their ambition on fire, provoked Clan Moulder into fighting against Clan Eshin. Ultimately, Skittar hoped that the winner of the war would be so severely depleted in numbers and armament that it would be an easy victory for Clan Skaven when they marched in to seize the Throne for themselves. Thus, Skittar as Skavenlord organised a series of meetings with the Master Packlord of Clan Moulder, Master Packlord Griffkin, within the Hell Warren, home of Clan Moulder.

During those meetings, Skittar poisoned Griffkin's ears with lies, stating that it was a popular rumour among the Lesser Tribes that Clan Moulder was the weakest of the Great Clans, having achieved nothing outstanding or particular since their rise to the status of a Great Clan. He further roused his spirit, stating that was he simply to be content on hiring out his Vermin beasts to fight the wars of other tribes while his Clan remained passive and disassociated from the affairs of the Underempire? Griffkin countered that the wealth of the Clan allows them such a privileged position while the lesser tribes have to struggle for their rights. Skittar argued back that what use is so much wealth if not to fuel the machine of war? Such were the arguments that went back and forth between the two. Slowly, Skavenlord Skittar could see his arguments affecting the Master Packlord. He further poisoned him, suggesting that the Clan would only ever be seen as weak if they did not interfere at any point within the greater workings of the Underempire. Would Griffkin be content if the other Great Clans took all the glory? It was time for Clan Moulder to rise and claim their fair share of rights over the Throne of all Hrudom.

With that said, the last of the meetings concluded between Clan Moulder and Clan Skaven. On that very day itself, Clan Moulder issued a declaration of war towards Clan Eshin, announcing their claim over the Throne. Master Packlord Griffkin proudly proclaimed that on this very day forth, the Age of Assassins was no more, and that it was the time of the Age of Beasts. Clan Eshin responded by accepting the challenge, sending their best general, Nightlord Queek, to lead the army itself. Every tribe within the Underempire ceased with their petty activities and all eyes fell on these two warrior clans as they marched to battle. Despite being defeated by Clan Eshin, Clan Skyre still had much of their troops and armaments, due to the fact that only the leaders of the Clan were assassinated by the Warp Runners of Clan Eshin. However, the bulk of the Clan were now left wandering the lands of the Underempire, while Clan Eshin had taken residence in their previous home, the Sky Warren, and renamed it the Night Warren. The Tower of Heaven was of high strategic importance as it contained the seats of the Council of Thirteen. Thus, control of the Tower of Heaven would be of great political and strategic importance as the Great Council would be held within your very own grounds. For this insult, Clan Skyre sought revenge by aiding Clan Moulder in their war effort with supplies of their own troops and armaments. As per the deal, Clan Skyre would aid Clan Moulder in becoming the strongest Clan in all Hrudom, while in exchange Clan Skyre would have their home back. In effect, it was a battle fought between Clan Eshin and a joint alliance between Clan Moulder and Clan Skyre. The situation looked bleak for Clan Eshin as they were outnumbered in this coming battle. However, they had the trump of the Warp Runners, who could easily attack the forces of Clan Moulder at their linchpin, which were the Hrud Packmasters that kept the Vermin beasts under control. If the Packmasters were to fall, the Vermin beasts were likely to turn against their own masters, a situation which would fare well in Clan Eshin's favour.

The joint alliance of Clan Moulder and Clan Skyre marched out from the depths of the Hell Warren, while the Runner Assassins of Clan Eshin issued forth from the Night Warren. They clashed midway between both Warrens, within the Starlit Field, the very place that which the starlight that seeped through the roof of the cavern shone upon. A massive battle was fought under the stars, one that shook the foundations of the Underempire, as three of the Great Clans engaged in war. Knowing full well of Clan Eshin's plan to take down the Packmasters and Packlords of the army, Master Packlord Griffkin ordered the Packmasters to whip the Vermin beast packs into a tight circle around themselves, forming a living shield. Meanwhile, Clan Moulder would stay their ground while the forces of Clan Skyre would attack Clan Eshin from range. This set-up proved nigh impenetrable to Clan Eshin, having their trump checked and their moves countered. Nightlord Queek, being one of the commanders delegated to lead the army by the Council of the Night, decided to outwit the Master Packlord by sending his Warp Runners among the forces of Clan Skyre instead. This was an unprecedented move, for it was thought that the Warp Runners were only ever employed to assassinate key targets within the opposing army. Chaos and confusion reigned over the forces of Clan Skyre, as the Warp Runners suddenly appeared among them and took to attacking the heavy Infantry. While the Warp Runners distracted the Fusiliers of Clan Skyre from firing, the rest of the forces of Clan Eshin could proceed untouched towards the forces of Clan Moulder. Master Packlord Griffkin, seeing this change of events, ordered the Packmasters to charge full steam and engage the mainstay of Clan Eshin, while the Slavemasters were to send their Pawslaves against the Warp Runners and relieve the forces of Clan Skyre. The superior skill of the Warp Runners was to be countered with the massive bodies of expendable slaves. Once the Warp Runners were defeated and scattered away, the forces of Clan Skyre could then aid Clan Moulder in dealing with the bulk of Clan Eshin's forces.

Nightlord Queek saw that it was a hopeless war with the odds stacked greatly against Clan Eshin. In order to win, he would have to resort to underhanded means to dampen the morale and sap the strength of the opposing force. He

decided to turn the charge of the Runner Assassins into a feint, withdrawing them back towards the Night Warren. The forces of Clan Moulder seeing them withdraw, thought it a sign of weakness and charged heedlessly onwards, hoping to slaughter the fleeing troops from behind. However, Nightlord Queek was only withdrawing the troops from the Starlit Field, back into the darkness of the Inner Domains of the Underempire, where the Runner Assassins would have the advantage of fighting under the cover of darkness. As the forces of Clan Moulder left the Starlit Field into the darkness of the Inner Domains, the sorcerous magics of the Sorcerers summoned a cloud of dense shadows to envelop the Runner Assassins, shielding them from the eyes of Clan Moulder. The true power of the Runner Assassins lay in their ability to strike at the enemy while their backs were turned, catching them unawares and dealing the deathblow before they could react. Out in the open of the Starlit Field, this would be impossible, but within the shadows, the Runner Assassins would be able to employ their stealth techniques. The forces of Clan Moulder stood by in confusion as the Runner Assassins apparently vanished into thin air. Taking advantage of their momentary confusion, the Night Runners dashed out from cover and attacked the Packmasters while their backs were turned. By the time it took for the Packmasters to retaliate, the Night Runners had vanished back into the enveloping darkness. In this way, Clan Eshin attempted to thin the numbers of Clan Moulder, for they had not the raw muscle to face the Vermin beasts in direct combat. The Packmasters were not to be outwitted however. Summoning to the fore the Dire Beasts, the Packmasters used the heightened sense of smell of the Vermin beasts to track down the locations of the oncoming Night Runners. With the Dire Beasts on full alert, several attacks of the Night Runners were thwarted with some difficulty, and as such, the two forces were drawn into a stalemate.

Meanwhile, the forces of Clan Skyre had managed to chase away the Warp Runners with the aid of the Pawslaves and were proceeding onwards to help with the main bulk of the fighting. Master Packlord Griffkin saw the means to their predicament by attempting to flush out the Runner Assassins by having the Fusiliers of Clan Skyre fire their weapons into the shadows in which the Runner Assassins were taking cover. This was summarily done, but the forces of Clan Eshin were not to be outdone so easily. Bolts of pure Ki energy were shot back in retaliation at the forces of Clan Skyre, no doubt the magics of the Sorcerers again. This exchange of shots became a drawn-out firefight, with neither side giving ground. Ultimately, the Sorcerers could not keep up their fusillade of Ki attacks while maintaining the cloud of shadows that enveloped them at the same time. Thus, the darkness was scattered, the spell of the Sorcerers was dispelled and undone. Now out in the open in full view of the enemy, the forces of Clan Eshin were forced into direct confrontation with the combined forces of Clan Moulder and Clan Skyre. Nightlord Queek, knowing full well the Council of the Night would not accept the terms of surrender, saw no way around this most desperate of situations except by engaging Clan Moulder full on and hoping against hope that they will prove victorious. Thus, both sides tore at the other in the melee, Vermin beast against Runner Assassin in a vicious dance of death. Ultimately, the numbers and brute strength of Clan Moulder won the day, but it was a victory won with much sacrifice. Nightlord Queek hastily called for a truce between both forces, lest the forces of Clan Eshin were completely obliterated. He offered their utter surrender and stated that the Council of the Night would accede to the demands of Clan Moulder as long as they were let to live. Master Packlord Griffkin was well pleased with this gesture and promised that the lives of all that remained among the forces of Clan Eshin would be spared. In exchange, Clan Moulder would be recognised as the strongest of the Great Clans, and thus of all Hrudom. In addition, Clan Eshin would be forced to evacuate the Tower of Heaven and return it to its rightful owner, Clan Skyre.

### **The Age of Beasts**

Thus, the event of the Great Clan War led to the transition of the Age of Assassins to that of the Age of Beasts, a time characterised by constant warfare between the tribes. The Age of Beasts was so called for Clan Moulder saw a need to replenish the countless Vermin beasts that it lost during the war with Clan Eshin. To do so, it would have to use its wealth to acquire great amounts of Warpstones. In order to regain their lost wealth which was a major component of their status as a Great Clan, they would have to sell the use of their Vermin beasts towards the lesser tribes in their petty wars, extensively. Exploiting its newly gained position as the strongest Clan in all Hrudom, Clan Moulder used its political influence to stir the Warlords of the Lesser Tribes into fighting among themselves, thus creating demand for their Vermin beast packs in the resulting wars. In this way, Clan Moulder was slowly able to recover much of its wealth.

### **The Claiming of the Throne**

Meanwhile, it seemed all went according to the plans of Skittar. Now all that was left was for the armies of Clan Skaven to move on Clan Moulder before they could replenish their Vermin beast packs. Unbeknownst to the Great Clans within the Underempire, Clan Skaven had used the commotion of the war between the Great Clans to secretly warp in large amounts of Greyfur packs and Blackfangs from the Migratory Tribes. The Blackscars of Tribe Skaar, previously one of the Council Tribes before it took to migrating to another world, were specially requisitioned for the coming war with Clan Moulder. Tribe Skaar was an especially warlike tribe among the lesser tribes and their constant warfare had made their Blackfangs into a seasoned breed of tough warriors. Such is the prowess of these warriors in battle that they have earned themselves a name to distinguish themselves from the Blackfangs of other tribes. They were so called due to the innumerable scars etched across their bodies from their constant waging of warfare. Tribe Scrye, another Council Tribe before migrating away from the Underempire, sent their Scribes, Prophets who possessed powers of prophetic vision and

foresight to aid and advise the Warchiefs in the coming war. In addition, the experimentation of the Seers of Clan Skaven had given rise to various weapons of war that were either based or made of Warpstone. These weapons had yet to be tested in the field of battle, and in the coming war they would make their debut.

Thus, Clan Skaven marshalled its forces and readied for war. The largest army ever, one to rival the mustering of Clan Rictus, was assembled before Skavenlord Skittar. By his calculations, Clan Moulder had no way of standing up to such a large host in its current state. It would be an easy victory. Without forewarning, the greatest host ever assembled by any Warlord marched off from the depths of the Skaven Warren towards the Hell Warren of Clan Moulder. The lesser tribes of the Underempire had to make way for the coming of this great host or risked being trampled under foot. Certain tribes however moved ahead of the great host and warned Griffkin of the treachery of the Skavens. Hearing this, Griffkin made haste, sending his envoys to the major tribes and clans of the Underempire, requesting their aid in facing Skittar's army. A special envoy was sent to the Overlord of the Great Kinship, in the hopes that Griffkin could earn the backing of the Lesser Tribes in this coming ordeal. With the combined might of the Lesser Tribes on his side during the coming war, the chance of victory would be all the more certain.

The Hell Warren has a defence network of burrow tunnels that form the outer perimeters of the Hell Warren. Using these burrow tunnels, Griffkin forestalled the forces of Clan Skaven with his Vermin beast packs, ambushing parts of the large host, then retreating before a sufficient defence could be mounted against them. In the meantime, the Overlord of the Great Kinship acceded to the request for aid of Clan Moulder, and promptly mobilised the Lesser Tribes for war. As the great host drew ever closer, the frequency of ambushes of the Vermin beasts increased, desperately forestalling time for the combined armies of the Great Kinship to arrive. When the great host of Clan Skaven finally arrived at the Hell Warren, the Vermin beasts of Clan Moulder were there to greet them. Griffkin knew he could not win against such overwhelming numbers and sought to hold them off until help could arrive. Skavenlord Skittar was not foolhardy to engage the Vermin beasts in close combat. Rather, he would shoot them down from the safety of range. The Greyfur packs, armed with their Warplock Fusils, were brought to the fore, and made bear their weapons on the Vermin beasts. A wave of Warpplasma shots blazed through the ranks of the Vermin beasts. Against this onslaught, the already thin numbers of Vermin beasts were further diminished. Master Packlord Griffkin had his Blackfangs return fire with their own Warplock Fusils, and as the Greyfurs were momentarily distracted, sent forth the Vermin beasts to engage the bulk of Skittar's forces in the melee. Seeing this, the Blackscars of Tribe Skaar were brought to the fore, together with the Black Skavens of Clan Skaven. Vicious fighting broke out at the frontline of Skittar's forces as the Vermin beasts clashed with the Blackscars and Black Skavens. However, even the brute might of the already diminished Vermin beasts could not face such overwhelming numbers. Slowly, the forces of Clan Skaven were gaining the upper hand. Meanwhile, the division of the Blackfangs of Clan Moulder that were armed for close combat advanced upon the Greyfur packs, hoping to tie them up in the melee where they would be most vulnerable. This was successfully achieved, and for a time the forces of Clan Moulder held back the great host of Clan Skaven.

Knowing the desperate situation faced by Clan Moulder even now, Verminkin III, Overlord of the Great Kinship had sent a relief force far in advance of the coming great host assembled to aid Clan Moulder. The coming war would be equivalent to the Third Great War to be fought among the Hrud, one involving the participation of all the Clans and Tribes of the Underempire. With the coming of the relief force formed from the Lesser Tribes, Griffkin withdrew his Vermin beast packs, while the Master Moulders tended to the healing of the wounds suffered by the Vermin beasts with their Warprestore Orbs. The relief force was led by Great Stormlord Blackstorm and his Stormlords. The mercenary tribe was hired by the Great Kinship in the coming endeavour, and they were sent as an advance guard to relieve the forces of Clan Moulder against Clan Skaven. Relieving the wounded Vermin beast packs, Great Stormlord Blackstorm led his Storm Runners against the Blackscars and Black Skavens of Clan Skaven, clashing with them in the melee. The fighting was fast and brutal, and with the Great Stormlord himself leading the side of Clan Moulder, the Blackscars and Black Skavens were summarily defeated. In response to this, the thirteen Warchiefs of Clan Skaven were sent forth by Skittar to face the Great Stormlord in single combat, as only the power of a Warchief could hope to best one of their kind. The Great Stormlord Blackstorm was a renegade Warchief from the days of the Age of Warlords. As Gorisnak attempted to unite the Warchiefs and become the supreme leader of the Tribe, Blackstorm challenged Gorisnak to a duel, a gamble with the winner becoming the first Skavenlord of the Tribe. Having lost to Gorisnak, Blackstorm left the Clan to pursue his own agenda, founding Tribe Blackstorm in the process. Now, he was to face his own kin once again, the Black Skavens, and this time in the theatre of war. Blackstorm was not alone however as he always goes to war with his personal guard of six Stormlords. Those six Stormlords were the very same Warchiefs that left with Blackstorm when he went renegade. As such, the two sides were roughly matched, Blackstorm himself being able to handle three of the Warchiefs at the same time. But however, the numbers were uneven and eventually Blackstorm was pushed back.

Blackstorm and his Storm Runners were sent as a relief force due to the great speed of the Storm Runners. Accompanying them were the War Skiffs of Clan Verminkin, current Dominant Tribe within the Great Kinship, and thus the Overlord's Clan itself. It was a vehicle never before seen by the eyes of Skittar and indeed the rest of the Skavens, for the Warchiefs had stopped participating in the petty conflicts of the lesser tribes with the rise of their second Skavenlord, Skittar. As such, they were ignorant of the developments and advancements of warfare that had occurred within the rest of the Underempire, as they had isolated themselves, to keep secret their works, during the time spent

plotting for the fulfillment of the Great Scheme. As Blackstorm and his Storm Runners retreated, the War Skiffs powered up their Wardrives under the orders of Verminkin III himself, for he had come in advance with the relief force upon his own personal War Skiff, the Blazing Crimson, to oversee the actions of the relief force, leaving the mobilisation of the assembled armies of the Lesser Tribes to his Regent, Warlord Verdecure. The War Skiffs proceeded to zip around the battlefield at breakneck speeds, showering shots of Warpplasma into the ranks of Skittar's host. The army of the Skavens was sent reeling in confusion, for it proved to be impossible to even aim at such fast moving targets. Furthermore, the War Skiffs held massive, powerful Warpplasma Cannons which shot multiple shots of Warpplasma in a single salvo. It would seem the great host of Skittar would be halted at this point and place. All was not lost for Clan Skaven though, for Skittar had a trump up his sleeve. He issued an order to the Chiefs, to use the Warfire Jetpacks and board the War Skiffs. The Warfire Jetpacks are an innovation of the Seers of Clan Skaven, created by the Skavensmiths. They use Warpstone as fuel to fire up a Jetpack that allows short jumps, crossing intervening terrain by lifting its bearer off the ground. The distance it can travel in a single jump is highly unpredictable however, as the technology is still new and experimental. Equipped with the Warfire Jetpacks, groups of Black Skaven led by their Chiefs attempted to chase down the speeding War Skiffs. Skillfully manoeuvring to the positions of the War Skiffs, the Black Skavens boarded the War Skiffs and mercilessly slaughtered the Wardrivers and the Greyfurs onboard. Seeing his beloved War Skiffs so brutally countered, Verminkin III departed on the Blazing Crimson, to see to the quick departure of the assembled host of the Lesser Tribes. The Skavens will pay dearly for their arrogance.

Midway on his flight back to the Vermin Warren, Verminkin III met the combined host of the Lesser Tribes as they were marching to the place of conflict, led by his Regent, Warlord Verdecure. Reporting to Verminkin III of the total assembly of the Tribes and Hrud, Regent Verdecure came aboard the Overlord's personal Skiff, and together the two rode ahead of the vast army of the Great Kinship. Meanwhile, the massive host of Clan Skaven was slowly closing in on the remaining forces of Clan Moulder, with the relief force barely withstanding the legions of Blackfangs. The War Skiffs continued their bombardment of the Greyfur Fusiliers, pinning them down and preventing them from firing at the Vermin beasts. Meanwhile, the Vermin beasts, renewed and repaired by the Master Moulders, had returned to the fray once more, engaging the Blackscars and the Black Skavens in a vicious melee. Griffkin knew he only had to hold on not much longer. Soon, the combined host of the Great Kinship would arrive and final victory would be at hand. The treachery of the Skavens would be paid back twofold to them.

The Abominations, huge, monstrous freaks, created from torturous experimenting with the joining of separate mutated Greyfur parts through Warpstones into bizarre monstrosities, that even dwarf the power of the Skaven's Warchiefs, lumbered forth, crashing into the tide of Blackfurs and Blackscars recklessly, pulverising them into bloody pulp with their great fists, appearing nigh-invincible. Even after being shot through with deadly and vicious Warpplasma rounds, they faltered not, showing incredible toughness, the likes most unnatural, as it is with the origins of these creatures. Their size belied their speed, and they move with such alacrity as to be deceptive, the only seeming weakness in how they blundered forth with an apparent inherent clumsiness from their make and composition. Soaking up the targets and garnering the attention from the frightened Greyfur Warplock Fusiliers of the great Skaven force, the Abominations absorbed the shots and blows for the rest of the Vermin beasts, the Vermin Packs and Dire Beasts, to close in unharmed and tear into the melee. It would seem the turning point is now, the strength of the Vermin beasts prevailing for once. But even with the overwhelming brute force of the Abominations, they were ultimately no match against the ranged fusillade of the Warplock Fusiliers, pouring forth their fire en masse. Faced with such considerable firepower, the Abominations were ultimately forced to give ground, something they tried to shrug off with their sheer toughness, of which several succumbed to eventually.

At last, the assembled host of the Great Kinship arrived at the scene of the battle. The host of the Great Kinship immediately rushed to engage the bulk of Clan Skaven's army, and fierce fighting ensued between the two great hosts. Many rounds of Warpplasma were exchanged, with none giving ground. The tribes assembled on both sides numbered in the thousands; this was a war of massive proportions, and had the participation of nearly every single Tribe and Clan in all of Hrudom. This would clearly be the Third Great War of the Hrud, by far the largest yet, not since the First Great War a thousand starlight cycles ago. It seemed both sides' forces were equally matched. The air was so thick with Warpplasma rounds, it was unthinkable to even attempt to engage in close assault. A No Man's Land was established between the two sides, and all who stepped within that zone faced the surety of death. However, it was the Skavens and their secret Warp technology that eventually broke the stalemate. Black Skavens equipped with Warfire Jetpacks crossed the No Man's Land in a single jump, engaging with the Warplock Fusiliers and tying them up in the melee. This freed the other elements of the Skaven host to move across the No Man's Land, and for a time they proceeded untouched. However, soon the overwhelming numbers of the Great Kinship proved impossible to contain, and the Black Skavens had to retreat or face certain death. Firing resumed in short order, and the host of Clan Skaven was shot down as they crossed the No Man's Land.

However, there were a surprisingly large number that survived within the zone. In fact, they appeared completely unfazed by the fusillade of Warpplasma shots. The Warpplasma balls simply exploded harmlessly around them, as if an invisible barrier protected them from the shots. In fact, it was another of the secret technology of the Skavens, developed by the Seers of the Clan. It was the Warpbarrier Orb, a Warpstone orb that generates an immense shield of

Warp energy around its bearer. The Seers of Clan Skaven are the ones to bear them, and acting as shields, protected the Grey Skavens who were being sent to the fore by the orders of Skittar, under the counsel of the Scribes, who foresaw that this was the turning point of the battle. The Grey Skavens carried an immense gun that required at least two of the Skavens to carry. It was another of the technologies the Seers of Clan Skaven had secretly engineered, and was seeing its first ever use on the practical field of war. The immense guns were carried forward by the Grey Skavens, who proceeded behind the Seers while they maintained the barriers of protective Warp energy. All the while, the Greyfurs of the Great Kinship kept up with their fusillade, but the Warpbarriers seemed impervious to all that the Greyfurs threw at them. Finally, the Grey Skavens came within range to fire their massive guns.

At first nothing happened. Then all of a sudden, rifts and tears in the very fabric of reality started appearing before the assembled host of the Great Kinship. Pink Chaos energy was leaking from these holes, and as they expanded, they engulfed the Greyfurs and pulled them screaming into the Warp, where they met an untimely demise, being devoured by Daemons and such like. This indeed proved the turning point for Clan Skaven, for the soldiers of the Great Kinship, terrified of suffering the fate of being torn apart by a miniature Warphole, started fleeing in panic. The Warphole Launchers of the engineering of the Seers and the forging of the Skavensmiths proved to be exceedingly well worth their cost of production, although some did malfunction, as the Warphole generators within the Launchers destabilised and manifested a Warphole upon its carriers, killing them in the process.

Seeing the desperation of their circumstances, Master Packlord Griffkin and Overlord Verminkin III formulated a desperate plan. They would board the personally modified Skiff of the Overlord, the Blazing Crimson, and dash into the heart of the Skaven army and bring Skittar down in personal combat. There, they would pluck out the heart of Clan Skaven by killing its leader, and cause the entire host of the Skavens to crumble. All this was to be done while the thirteen Warchiefs of Clan Skaven were busy leading the troops at the perimeters of the great host and thus would not be able to reach their Skavenlord in time. However, to the great alarm of the Warlords, Skittar was able to match their combined skill and strength. A mere Greyfur besting two of the greatest Blackfurs! It was unheard of! Skittar was able to do so not for any merit of personal or physical strength, but because in his hands he wielded a great weapon, a secret weapon of his own: the Warpfang. With this great weapon, Skittar fought a fierce battle with the two Warlords, for his very survival, for even with such an immensely powerful weapon, a Greyfur is hopelessly outmatched by even a single Blackfur in single combat, and here present before him were two of the most exceptional of their kind! Imbued with eldritch powers, such was the power of the blade that it forced the two Warlords back. With the Warchiefs proceeding even now back into the heart of the Skaven host in defence of their Lord, Griffkin and Verminkin III knew instinctively that it was over. The Great War was lost. They quickly boarded the Blazing Crimson, lest the Warchiefs arrived and they were further detained, and in the worst case became trapped. As they sped away aboard the Skiff, they thought they would be able to reach the safety of their lines. However, Fate did not take so kindly to Verminkin III. Skittar, focussing at the fleeing back of Verminkin III, slashed a perfectly aimed blow with the Warpfang. The slash created a gash in the fabric of reality, and travelling through that gash, tore its way through the very Immaterium and manifested on the back of Verminkin III. The Warp energies within the blade travelled with the slash, and suffusing Verminkin III, tore his mind asunder. In this way, the third Lord-Warlord of Clan Verminkin perished. With their last gamble failed and the Overlord of the Great Kinship dead, the Third Great War was won by Clan Skaven. Although the conflict was of massive proportions, the casualties were minimal on both sides.

## **The Great Unification**

Having ousted Clan Moulder from the Throne of all Hrudom, it would appear Clan Skaven now held that title as the strongest Clan in all Hrudom. It would seem the way was paved for Morskittar's Great Ascent, but Morskittar was still too young at the moment to become Skavenlord of the Clan, and much still had to be done to reunite the different Hrud tribes under one banner. Thus, the next phase of the Great Scheme would be "The Great Unification", a slow, arduous process of eliminating the political enmity that existed between the various tribes and clans, and uniting them under the leadership of Clan Skaven. Skittar held a Great Council, the Twentieth Great Council, as his first action as the new Supreme Overlord of the Underempire. Now having seized the Throne, all that was left was to rekindle the sullied ties and heal the embitterment between the two sides in the war. Once having attained the backing of all the Great Clans and Lesser Tribes, "The Great Unification" would be achieved. The order of rank of the representatives of that Council are as follows: Clan Skaven, Clan Rictus, Clan Skyre, Clan Eshin, Clan Verminkin, Clan Moulder, Tribe Mors, Tribe Whitempest, Tribe Blackstorm, Tribe Fester and Tribe Rancour. In that Great Council, Skittar, as the newly established Supreme Overlord of the Underempire, began the dialogues of the Council by first proclaiming that the short-lived Age of Beasts had been superseded by the Age of Skavens. "Long live the Age of Skavens!" His next course of actions was to compliment Verminkin IV on his great War Skiffs. "Never before have I seen vessels that flew so fast and so elegantly!" Deeply impressed by the War Skiffs, Skavenlord Skittar requested rather politely that the skimmer technology be handed to them in a trade of fair terms. "Would a tonne of Warpstone ore be of agreeable terms with you? I heard you need plenty for the fuel of those war crafts." In this way, Skittar attempted to establish the unification of the Hrud through diplomacy and cordiality.

In order to maintain its position as the Dominant Tribe within the Great Kinship, the Warlords of Clan Verminkin had

quickly chosen a new Lord-Warlord from among them, within a short span of time, unanimously deciding on the Regent of the previous Lord-Warlord, Verdecur, now known as Verminkin IV. Verminkin IV was one of the losers of this most recent Third War, and necessarily, he would harbour resentment towards Skittar and the Skavens. By beginning with such a move as to address the defeated party on the impressiveness of his War Skiffs was a boldly played manoeuvre on the part of Skittar. After all, flattery works to some level. But indeed the interest was there, for indeed the War Skiffs had impressed him deeply, and he was secretly ashamed that the isolation of the Clan from the rest of Hrudom, as they were occupied with the Great Scheme, had left them so ill-informed of such a powerful technology. In any case, the outcome of the war was secured, so the technology of the War Skiffs would only prove necessary in the event of a future war. If the desire for the skimmer technology so overcame him though, he would manoeuvre the dialogues back to that point with Verminkin IV, and hopefully establish some level of accord between the two Clans. Befriending the Overlord of the Great Kinship would severely reduce his enemies among the Lesser Tribes, and that would be that much less trouble to work with.

Skittar ultimately knew however, that such measures had limits to their effectiveness and would not work for all parties, for rancour and ill will is the nature of the politics of the Underempire. Ignoring the weaker Council Tribes in that Thirteenth Council, Skittar sought to gain an alliance instead with Clan Eshin. With the power of their assassins, should there be discontent and ambitious Warlords coveting the Throne, the Skavenlord could silence them with the omnipresent Warp Runners. They would be the means in which Clan Skaven would become an omniscient force within the politics of the Underempire. Nothing would escape their notice. The Clans and Tribes of the Underempire would come to dread their very shadows, and that would be how Skittar would keep them in line, through the power of fear. The political enemies that he will inevitably make will be kept at bay, frightened into impotence for fear of facing the Shadow Arm of the Law. Clan Eshin would be Clan Skaven's political police force, the hand that delivers judgement upon the treacherous and scheming. This would be most ideal, and thus Skittar gave highest priority for Clan Eshin to be the first major power to be inducted into the Skavens. Nightlord Queek had been replaced on the Council, no longer the Council Representative of Clan Eshin. This was expected, given his defeat of the forces of Clan Eshin during the Great Clan War. Queek had lost some standing within the Council of the Night as a result. In his place was Warp Runner Sneik. It was rare to see a Warp Runner representing the Clan, for only the most senior members of the Council of the Night had that privilege. It showed to Skittar that Sneik was no ordinary Warp Runner, and it would be of great benefit to Skittar's side should he come to befriend this enigma.

The Council dialogues had now gone into discussions of the spoils of war to be gained by the winners in the Third Great War, and the amount of reparations the losers were to pay. Skittar would be sure to play his cards right in this dialogue, finding an open opportunity to speak to the Council Representative of Clan Eshin. This came when the two sides in the Third Great War could not come to terms with the cost of reparations to be compensated by the losers. Naturally, the losers wanted to pay less, while the winners wanted more. Seizing the motive, Skittar voiced out his opinion, that the two sides leave the decisions of the aftermath of this most recent war to the neutral parties that did not participate in either side, which naturally fell onto Clan Eshin and Clan Skyre. "Since the involved parties are unable to come to a firm agreement with each other, would it not be best if we let the neutral parties in the affair arbitrate the matter? Shall Clan Eshin do us the honours?" In this manner, Skittar attempted to gain a level of trust with the representative of Clan Eshin. By placing with him the power to decide such an important matter, Skittar was giving weight to the voice of Clan Eshin. The Council Representative, Warp Runner Sneik was most pleased with this gesture, for the action of Skittar gave rise to the opportunity for Sneik to exert and extend the influence of Clan Eshin. By his decisions, new political ties will be forged, and enemies made. After much deliberation, Sneik carefully stated his verdict. "Seeing as how the casualties on both sides were minimal, the cost of reparations should likewise be minimal too, logically speaking..." With this, it seemed obvious that Sneik would side with the losers, being chiefly Clan Moulder, the major loser in the war, and Clan Verminkin. Clan Eshin could not possibly have known that Skittar engineered their loss in the Great Clan War, by provoking Clan Moulder to do battle with Clan Eshin and seize the Throne. Thus, Skittar was still confident that he could forge a secret alliance with Clan Eshin, that it was in the face of statistics that the Council Representative had no choice but to present the facts as such.

With this statement by Clan Eshin, the blow had not come down hard on Clan Moulder, at least as hard as Griffkin feared it would be. He rested easy, somewhat, with the knowledge that the wealth of his Clan, the source of their power as a Great Clan, was left largely unscathed. He could then focus his attentions in gathering the Council to his side, and through subtle manoeuvring, force the opinion that Clan Skaven was unworthy to hold the Throne. With enough voices sharing that opinion, it would be then possible to force, through collective pressure, the Skavenlord to give up his claim on the Throne. Needless to say, Griffkin was extremely bitter about losing the war. His rule was too short-lived, and the feeling of being backstabbed stung. Having gained confidence that at the very least Clan Eshin was on the side of Clan Moulder and Clan Verminkin, all he had left to do was gain the support of Clan Rictus. Clan Skyre in all possibilities will choose to side with the side that Clan Eshin was not on, so he could not count on their support. In any case, it would be the voice of four Clans to two. The Council Tribes could easily be swayed, so they were of little consequence. Only the voice of the major players, the Clans of Hrudom would matter.

As the representative of Clan Eshin finished his speech regarding the verdict on the aftermath of the Third Great War,



Griffkin made his move. "Speaking of which, now that the verdict has been decided, regarding the reparations, would not the matter of the claim on the Throne would be of most pressing consideration? It would seem that Clan Skaven has taken the liberty of installing itself as the new Ruling Clan, without the consent of the Council, simply on merit of this most recent war. Yes, indeed you were the winners of this conflict, but there were others on your side that were involved as well. You are not the only victor in that war, so I do not see the strength of your claim to be the new Great Power." A murmur of agreement broke out among the Council members. Seeing this, Griffkin gained confidence, and with renewed momentum continued his assault. "As a large part of the fighting was done by forces not directly from Clan Skaven, having little relationship except through some supposed Great Debt that is not even officially recognised by the Great Council, it would seem your claim over the Throne isn't too strong. Perhaps one of the tribes that came along with you be given that right? We could do a census and calculate the losses suffered by each individual participant in the war..."

"Preposterous! A Lesser Tribe becoming the Ruling Clan and taking leadership of the Underempire? And indeed the whole of Hrudom? Have you gone mad? Besides, they are Migratory Tribes that I had involved in this conflict, by personal request. It would be strange indeed for one of the Migratory Tribes which do not even reside in the Underempire to take the helm of Its leadership."

"Such an arrangement of having that Migratory Tribe warped back in full order could easily be settled. After all, who could refuse this most exalted position of Supreme Overlord of the Underempire, and Ruling Clan of all Hrudom?" Interestingly, it was Clan Rictus who voiced out this latest argument.

This voicing out of Clan Rictus was most unexpected, and had certainly been the decisive moment in this Council dialogue, which could be said to be ultimately the purpose of this Twentieth Great Council. With that said, it was clear on which of the two sides the six Clan Representatives stood. "Four against two, counting Clan Skyre's obvious embitterment towards Clan Eshin for the Great Skirmishes," Skittar mentally counted. Skittar was under tremendous pressure now. If he was to relinquish the Throne from the grasp of the Skavens, so dearly won by them, all their efforts would be for nought, and the Great Scheme would come tumbling down like a pack of cards. This was a case of circumstance that could not happen no matter the cost. He must defend his Clan's position, with all the wit, every single ounce of eloquence and political tact he could muster. Desperately, he must act.

"Hmm, indeed? Has the Great Debt between Clan Skaven and the Migratory Tribes not been recognised at any level by the Council of Thirteen? If my powers of memory serve me well, at a much earlier Council, the Lord-Warlord of Clan Skyre, our dear beloved Overlord Skyre himself, was forced to admit to our key significance in the matter of the Great Migration. We were the core perpetrators in that most treasonous matter, yet we are indispensable as well. It was agreed, however forcibly, that without our presence in the Great Council, the voice of nearly half of the whole of Hrudom would be lost forever to the far reaches of space. We alone hold access to the Warpportals, that fact, and the power we hold as the Voice of the Migratory Tribes cannot be denied. At some level, the Council of Thirteen has come to acknowledge this, "Great Debt", this firm bond between us and the Migratory Tribes, even if not officially admitted to. Surely, Overlord Skyre remembered that incident dearly, the decisions he made when he was once our most august Supreme Overlord." Skittar hoped that by tactfully reminding Skyre of the grandeur and prestige he once held as the Supreme Overlord, the sting of the incident of the Great Migration, and the central part Clan Skaven played in that matter, would not hurt so earnestly. "...Well, yes indeed. Now that you put it that way, this "Great Debt", this relationship has been established by the Great Council, unwittingly on our part, when we tried to address the matter by absolving your position from the Council of Thirteen, a move which we admit was most unwise and not thoroughly thought through on our part. Besides, we cannot doubt the strength and intimacy of this unique bond which your Clan shares with the Migratory Tribes."

So indeed, it was four against two. Skittar had cleverly secured the alliance of Clan Skyre in this affair. Now, what if it became five against four? "Indeed, this Great Debt that the Migratory Tribes have so incurred with Clan Skaven, can be easily confirmed with not just one Representative, but three others as well! The invitation of the Great Migration has been offered to Tribe Whitempest, Tribe Fester, and Tribe Rancour, prior, and it was clearly written in that deal, that should they so accept the conditions of the Great Migration, they were to be forever indebted to Clan Skaven, in honour of Clan Skaven's most integral part in fulfilling the Great Dream for their respective Tribes. Furthermore, they were relinquishing their voice from the politics of the Underempire, and Clan Skaven was to remain their only viable link to the Underempire, thus effectively they were surrendering their rights to Clan Skaven. Such is the nature of the agreement that is the Great Debt. Its strength can be attested by the testimony of Prophetlord Psyre, Smithlord Skolk, and the Lord-Warlord of Tribe Rancour, Warlord Rancur, for such is the weight of the matter of the Great Migration, that the invitation was delivered directly to the Lord-Warlords of the respective Tribes themselves. And yet, can we doubt the service that Clan Skaven has provided to the thousand-strong Migratory Tribes through the Great Debt? We have done what was once just a mere dream, delivering them from the confines of this iron cage of night we call the Underempire. That is a privilege no other Clan or Tribe can claim to possess. Even Clan Rictus has achieved the Great Dream on their own power and for their sake alone. We alone have been so selfless, for indeed what manner of possession or acquirement could so outshine the Great Dream, for is It not the longing that we all harbour collectively,

deep within our hearts? This Great Dream, is no mere desire or longing. It is an instinct, inbred into our very soul."

So moving was Skittar's speech that the three Council Representatives that were being so addressed stood up and applauded with much approval and consent. That gesture alone was enough testimony. Indeed, it has become four against five, but three of the five are Council Tribes. Would that be enough to tip the scales? By the dictates of the Council of Thirteen, all the Representatives were equal before the Thirteenth Seat, the Great Horned One Himself, who held supreme authority within that great table. But in reality, the flow of power shifted according to the economical and military standing of the Clans and Tribes of the Council Representatives. There was one voice however, who belonged to no Clan or Tribe, a power unto itself, that could easily tilt this most precarious situation to either side. That voice was held by the Greater Verminlord, indeed the most powerful individual of Hrudom, next to the Supreme Overlord.

All of a sudden, Jaelanak, Greater Verminlord of all Verminkin, rose to Its full height, a towering 13 feet. In Its high, androgynous voice, It spoke, an ethereal thunder that rolled over the assembled Clans and Tribes, and filled the spaces of the Underempire, to the very corners. "So it would seem that it is the time of the Age of Skavens, the time of the rule of Skittar and his Clan. Five stand against four now, the voice of Clan Skaven, Clan Skyre, Tribe Whitempest, Tribe Fester and Tribe Rancour, united against the voices of Clan Moulder, Clan Verminkin, Clan Eshin and Clan Rictus. But they shall never ascend to be the dominant political power within the Underempire, and all of Hrudom, at least not on My watch. For the eyes of the Great Horned One sees all, and as His physical representative, I am duty bound to uphold His Law. I have seen the treachery of the Skavens, their scheming and their plots, and what they plan to do. Indeed, you think all that is done in shadow and secrecy escapes the eyes of the righteous, and your dark dealings shall come to fruition as none have the knowledge to oppose you openly, but I know of your dark acts, and your perpetrations. Thus, I stand, alone if I must, that the Dark Clan of the Skavens shall not stand to be the Ruling Clan that will come to decide and steer the course of the fate of the rest of Hrudom. I call for a vote to be taken by each member of the Council of Thirteen, and know that My vote equals two, for I am the Great Horned One's very own mortal Representative in the affairs of this world, as you have acknowledged by your own insistence."

"Recess! I call for a Recess!" In desperation, Skittar called for a temporary cessation of discussions. The Recess can only be called once during a Great Council, and was only used, usually, should the Council dragged on too long for the comfort of the Representatives. Now Skittar was using it to recollect himself and consider his moves, for a vote would most certainly mean the ceding of his Clan's claim on the Throne. The fact that the Greater Verminlord held such influence, and that It alone counted for two votes...the thought was too unbearable to contemplate. But to which Clan would he yield the Throne to in such a circumstance...and then a brainwave occurred to Skittar. If he could somehow strike a deal with one of the Clans with the time he had during the Recess, he could then install a puppet Clan from which outwardly would appear to hold authority, but in truth, the puppet Clan would be steered by Skittar from behind the shadows. The Skavens would be the ones in control, with Clan Eshin as their police force, and the puppet regime maintaining a veneer of stability, hiding their true deception. In this way, he could outwit the Greater Verminlord, and the Great Scheme could still reach fruition. The Clan who would enter into such a dark agreement with Clan Skaven could not be Clan Eshin, for that Clan is destined to be the Shadow Hand of the Law of the new regime. Nay, it had to be Clan Skyre. In secret, Skittar met with Skyre in his King's Chamber, the resting quarters that are delegated specially to each Council Representative.

### **The Dark Hand of the Puppeteer**

"My dear Skyre, our once most lauded Supreme Overlord. It would not be sufficient praise to call you the mastermind of our entire civilisation, for indeed it is you who created the positions of Ruling Clan and Supreme Overlord, positions I am now facing the dreadful prospect of losing. It would seem my term would be even more short-lived than Griffkin's, lasting only as long as a single Great Council. How was it, may I ask, like to be in that supreme position of power? Do you still lust for it, hunger to stand in that exalted position of the Throne, having everything before you happen on a mere whim or fancy? Overseeing the rise and fall of the Ages as if it was a simple play, a puppet show put up for your mere amusement, that at the end of it, the ceasing of the drama and suspense, you would know that it is but a passing wind, strong and free-willed, but ultimately harmless?"

"As amused as I am by your...antics, pray do tell, to what do I hold the honour of your presence?" Skyre drawled, seemingly unimpressed by this flattering speech.

Undeterred, Skittar pressed on, "Have you considered much of your options ever since the Great Downfall, Skyre? Surely you see an opportunity for the rise of your Clan once again?"

"And by that, do you mean?" Skittar could see the interest emerging in Skyre's face.

"I mean of course this most recent affair, the most pressing case which I face now. In all likelihood, I would be forced to hand over the Throne to another of the Council Clans, but the question is, to whom? Clan Moulder? They were the major loser in the Third Great War, they are too far reduced in strength to be considered for the position of Ruling Clan.

This was an emergency Great Council that I enacted with the authority I held as Supreme Overlord, a temporary position it seems. As such, Clan Pestilens was unable to participate as one of the Council Representatives, given their preoccupation with the Great Infestation. They would not be considered a candidate for the Throne. No, It would fall to either Clan Eshin, or you. Who do you think the Council will choose?"

"Hmm...that is uncertain, if given what you said is to be true, then it could go either way...although it would appear the Council favours Clan Eshin currently, with how the sides are set up against each other."

"Indeed, indeed, you have seen it exactly as I have seen it. This could be said to be the very opportunity for your Clan to revive itself ever since the Great Downfall, and would you miss this chance without even a gamble? There is an almost surefire method of securing approval of your Clan's claim on the Throne from all the Council Representatives, but it is not without a price. If I were to relinquish my hold over the position of Supreme Overlord and Ruling Clan of all Hrudom voluntarily, then I may attempt to offer the Throne to a Representative of my choosing. The Representative simply has to concur, and we will have a new Supreme Overlord for a new Age. Of course, you will realise by now that the Representative I have chosen is none other than you, Overlord Skyre. Once again, you will hold absolute authority as the Supreme Overlord of the Clans, and indeed all Hrudom. However, I will not hand over the Throne without a fight. Which is why I have expressly come to confer with you, for I wish for a grand alliance between our two Clans to emerge from this entire affair. I will willingly bestow you the Throne, but in return, we shall forge a secret alliance between our two Clans. With the combined power of our two Clans, your rule shall be much more stable. You can expect to have my firm support in all matters of the Council, in addition to the influence I already hold over the Council Tribes, as you have seen and witnessed in this latest Council. Furthermore, even if you were to be chosen legitimately by the Council to be the next Ruling Clan, you are far too weak at present, with many of your subordinates who held power killed during the Great Skirmishes. You would do well to have a committed supporter in the form of an alliance with one of the Council Clans in your future endeavours. What do you say to that, O soon-to-be Supreme Overlord?" Skittar was careful not to address his true intentions of using Skyre to maintain a facade of control, but in actuality, they were to be the puppet and the Skavens the puppeteer. Would Skyre fall for it though?

"My my my...such an offer...it would seem all wisdom to simply accept the power that is being presented to me, what could only appear as absolute, unchallenged...but is this simply to be an illusion, a deception to cover my eyes to some greater vice? After all, I suspect, and as the Greater Verminlord has confirmed, it would seem Clan Skaven has played a much more vital role in the recent affairs of the Underempire than what is apparent. This is a case that is less simple than it would appear to be. Pray, what do you get out of this deal?" Skyre has not after all become Supreme Overlord on brawn alone. A person of great inner strength and personality, he has the foresight and wisdom to not fall blindly into his desire for want of power, and take the bait of the Skavens unwittingly.

"You are wise, Overlord Skyre, for you realise all good things have a price in this world. I expect out of this alliance, that I would have full autonomous control within the Underempire. I shall have your consent in the activities of my Clan whatever they may be, and should I arouse opposition from conflicting parties, I can expect your voice in full support of my dealings. Do not worry, you will not regret your decision to join with me, if you would do so that is." Realising that Skyre was not to be deceived so easily, Skittar was forced to reveal more than he wanted to on the matter. Without a doubt, if he had played otherwise, Skyre's suspicions would only increase, and thus the likelihood of his plan failing.

"A highly tempting offer, but it would appear you would use me as a puppet, while you hold true control...Having autonomous control within the Underempire means you are effectively sealed off from my leadership, but I expect that to be of little consequence if you are to be my ally. Very well, I shall give due consideration to your offer. Know this, the Great Clan of Skyre shall not be made used of!"

Skyre's proud speech impressed Skittar greatly. Surely this is an alliance of unchallenged might! With strong support from such a formidable Supreme Overlord in the Skavens' future undertakings, Skittar could only expect the smooth fruition of the Great Scheme, and the complete dominance of the Skavens in the far future.

With that last statement, Skittar realised there was nothing he could do to further persuade the Overlord. It was now all left to the hands of Fate. Taking his leave, he made his next stop before the cessation of the Recess towards the King's Chamber of the mysterious Warp Runner Sneik. It was there that the true course of the Great Scheme would be decided.

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"Good evening, fellow Council Representative. I have urgent matters to discuss with you, pertaining to your role in the new coming Age. If you would allow me in..."

"...we can begin discussions on this most serious issue." Skittar made sure the door was firmly locked before proceeding. Nothing to be said in this chamber was to get out.

"Good evening, Skavenlord Skittar. What is this pressing matter you have come to address me about?"

"Before that, I would like to ask how is it that a Warp Runner comes to occupy a seat that is more suited to a Nightlord?"

"I will not disclose such information willingly, at least without a clear reason to."

"And a clear reason you will have, soon. As you know, the decision of the claim on the Throne is to be decided soon, at the end of this Recess. I have already made plans to have that claim transferred to a most trusted source, delivering us all from the need of a vote. And I trust your seconding of my choice for the new Ruling Clan, after all that has been said in this chamber."

"And why should I not instead place my trust and counsel with this new Supreme Overlord?" queried Sneik.

"That is because the new Ruling Clan would merely be a puppet to the real power behind the scenes."

"And you have come to me..."

"In order to secure that power."

"Hmm...and to what gain does Clan Eshin benefit from this dark dealing? You would use our power over the shadows, I am sure you know how much you are asking?"

"You have caught on quick, my fellow Council Representative, or should I say Lead Assassin Sneik?" A look of surprise enveloped Sneik's face. "Do not be surprised. It took me a while to deduce that the seat as important as the Council Representative would only be attended to by someone as important as you...all the more you have to hear what I have to say." With the Lead Assassin's own hand in this darkest of dealings, the Skavens would gain a powerful card, a power that cannot be denied by any in the tangled workings of the Underempire.

"As you know, your Clan has been much diminished ever since the Great Clan War fought a few Starlight Cycles ago. It has left your Clan severely depleted of numbers, and thus your Clan would benefit most from an alliance with a strong clan. Which would be us, Clan Skaven, as I am so kindly offering to you right now, but even us, the winner in this most recent war, would require political support in order for things to move in favour of our side. Do not forget that it was all due to Clan Moulder that your Clan is in its current state." Skittar could see Sneik clenched up in hatred at the very mention of their tragic loss.

"Besides, your Clan has yet to fulfill its duty as bound by the Great Debt. I shall let you know now that it was us who saved your lives back in Grand Cathay. It was our Seers that reactivated the Warpportal, for without so doing would mean certain doom to your Tribe then. I insist that you remember the Great Debt, and I shall consider it repaid as long as I have your full cooperation as my trusted aide, my own personal Assassin."

Sneik knew he was right. The Warpportals proved far too complex to be reactivated even by their Sorcerers, and they simply accepted they had done it on their own merit without knowing better. It is interesting too to note, that a clan of assassins would hold such high regard for integrity and honour. Understanding that it is a mere personal sacrifice for the greater good of his Clan, as it will undoubtedly strengthen his Clan's influence with this newfound alliance, Sneik bowed low before Skavenlord Skittar. "It would be my personal honour to be so duty-bound in your service."

"Keep this secret from your fellows and superiors in the Council of the Night. It would do no good and only add complications should they learn of this, but you shall be my hand in forcing the opinion of the Council in acting in favour of the Skavens. You may however reveal to them our secret allegiance that was forged in this very chamber today. Let us join the power of the Skavens with that of Eshin!"

"Clan Skyre shall be a mere puppet in the coming of this new Age. You will see great things happening, Lead Assassin Sneik, things that will change the course of events within the Underempire, and indeed the whole of Hrudom. You have to remember, if support is not given to my move to pass on the claim of the Throne to a Representative of my choice, Clan Moulder and other supporters on his side may easily shift opinion to voting as a means to elect a new Supreme Overlord, which will be to our undoing!"

At that point, a voice sounded from the Council Chamber, alerting all to the end of the Recess.

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"So now, it has come back to the business of the claim on the Throne. Shall we have our voting session now?" Griffkin was keen to see to the end of the rulership of the Skavens.

"I will relinquish my position as Supreme Overlord of all Hrudom should the Great Treaty that was signed between Clan Eshin and the Great Kinship be opened to Clan Skaven," bursts Skittar, before any other actions could be taken. "In addition, I choose Clan Skyre as the new Ruling Clan, and Overlord Skyre as the new Supreme Overlord of the Underempire."

"What better a choice than the very first Supreme Overlord, Overlord Skyre, and the Ruling Clan of Clan Skyre?" quipped Warp Runner Sneik.

"If none object, then I am open to accept the offer for my Clan being the Ruling Clan, as long as all are in accord to the terms of agreement that shall be established between Clan Skaven and Clan Eshin...after all, Clan Skaven has indeed relinquish the great boon of the Throne. As Clan Moulder is a major loser in the recent war, and Clan Pestilens away in this emergency Great Council, none of the Great Clans but mine is free to take up the burden of the Throne. I think all is set in order."

"All that has been said is true and sounds well...indeed, this might be the best arrangement for the coming age, which shall be called..." the Greater Verminlord remarked.

"I think we shall keep it as it is for now, that is, the Age of Beasts." said Overlord Skyre.

### **The Dark Age of Skavens**

With Clan Moulder suffering huge losses in the recent Third War, while Clan Skyre having most of its key leaders assassinated in the Great Skirmishes, the succession of the Great Clans and their hold over the Throne had been overthrown. Now it was the time of the Skavens, the Dark Age of Skavens. It was called the Dark Age because it was the time of the rule of the Skavens despite Skyre and his Clan possessing the front and status of Supreme Overlord and Ruling Clan, when in truth, it was the Skavens who held power. They led from the shadows, the Shadow Hand of Clan Eshin, their police force, an omnipresent entity within the Underempire. Chiefly however, it was called the Dark Age for it was the darkest time ever in the Hrud's turbulent history. The power of the Skavens was so absolute that none could oppose them openly, and they behaved as lords among their serfs, taking whatever they wanted, and doing as they pleased. Should any object to them, they would be sure to face swift death in the form of Skittar's most trusted servant, the Lead Assassin himself, Sneik.

~End~

### **Clan Rictus**

#### **The Tribe of the Heavens**

The Tribe that came to be called Clan Rictus was a reasonably large and successful tribe during the Age of Warlords. As with many tribes of its stature, it had numerous Demiurg crafts in its possession, scavenged or gained from their fighting with other tribes. Unlike the other tribes however, the Warlords of the Tribe had not given up on securing the Great Dream through the Demiurg crafts, and while the spoils of war of other tribes were left neglected, the technology of the Demiurg was studied intensively by their Chieftains. They alone among all tribes saw further in the fulfillment of the Great Dream than any other, harbouring in their hearts a desire to embark on a journey through the stars. In their memory, they dimly recalled the entrance of a great, big ship, from when starlight first poured into the cavern. And it was this ship that they planned to seize, freeing themselves to a life spent perpetually sailing between the stars. Thus, they decided to call themselves Tribe Rictus, or Tribe of the Heavens.

Though they did not learn to operate the mining crafts, they discovered the utility of the weaponry within the Demiurg crafts. This was highly crucial, as Warlord Skyre had begun his Great Plan of subduing the Hrud tribes into submission. While each and every of the Hrud tribes fell to the power and might of Warlord Skyre's Warpstone weapons, Tribe Rictus was the one tribe that could fight them on equal footing, by equipping their warriors with Demiurg weaponry. Warlord Skyre's forces faced the strongest resistance here, in fact being the only true resistance faced throughout the Great War. The lesser tribes watched on as the battle waged between the two sides. The Demiurg weaponry proved to be the equal to Skyre's Warpstone technology, as Skyre's forces were matched in both range and firepower. As a testament to the success of Tribe Rictus, the Tribe grew in size as many lesser tribes, seeing the effectiveness of Tribe Rictus' forces, joined Tribe Rictus in droves, bringing with them their own Demiurg wargear. The fighting was fierce and hard, and Warlord Skyre was taken aback by the great resistance he faced with so many tribes backing up Tribe Rictus. Entering the fray with his elite Council of Warlords, the tide was turned with much effort, through tactically outmanoeuvring the less experienced enemy troops. Despite the size of Tribe Rictus, the warriors of the Tribe had yet to

be accustomed with the utility of the Demiurg weaponry, while Skyre's forces were trained veterans of their numerous encounters during this First Great War. This, together with the disproportionate amount of warrior to weapon ratio, were thought to be the reasons why Tribe Rictus lost the war.

It was not entirely to their loss however, as the charismatic display of their resistance during the Great War had attracted those lesser tribes to join the main body of the Tribe, sharing the original Tribe's aspirations of leaving their birthplace in a starship. The Warlords congregated and decided to focus all efforts on understanding how the mining crafts work, and employed their Chieftains to secure all abandoned mining crafts for the use of the newborn Clan. They made no headway though, despite their efforts, until they were invited by the Seers of Clan Skaven to join a proposition they called, "The Great Migration", essentially a plan that centred around the Grey Seer's proposed mastery over the Warpstones to change them into portals from which travel to other worlds can be made possible. In this way, they were to achieve the Great Dream, or either build Skyre's Tower of Heaven. That was their offer. Though they had other plans, there was one sharp and quick-witted Chieftain among them, by the name of Ricttar, that made the notice on this supposed "powers" of control of the Grey Seers over the Warpstones, and what they were supposed to be. He questioned the Seer representatives before him, asking in detail, the "magick of the Grey Seers". To this, one of the Seer representatives divulged that they had discovered the true nature of the Warpstones to be the solidified substance of the Warp, the very medium from which psychics tap into.

Understanding this, Ricttar had a brainwave. Dismissing the Seer representative, he convened in secret with his fellow Warlords and Chieftains, informing them that with this information from the Seer, it might be possible to gain psychic abilities through ingesting the Warpstones. When questioned as to the use of such knowledge, Ricttar replied that he had the brainwave that perhaps, the mining crafts were not piloted through physical means, but by a psychic symbiosis with the systems of the craft. Sensing that he might be onto something, the Warlords of the Clan requested the Prophets of the Clan to attempt to merge their psychic gestalt with the systems of the crafts. To their pleasure, it worked; the crafts finally reacted to their promptings, and with this realisation, the Clan committed itself to a vow of secrecy, so that none may know of their plans and jeopardise them. Greyfurs were selected over Blackfurs to become Star Navigators for their psychic propensity, and although it took several overdoses of Warpstone ingestion to discover the amount needed to induce psychic ability while remaining under the lethal dosage, the sacrifice was considered worth it, since there were too many mining crafts for all their Prophets to pilot.

All that was left was to wait for the coming of a great starship, that their mining crafts could ascend to and board, and then, infested with Hrud, be made their own. In the meantime, the Prophets had become known as Starlords, for they were regarded with a certain status as they alone held the crucial role of piloting the starship that was in time to come. The Star Navigators came under their authority, and such was the prestige they held, that they came to be referred to as an inner tribe within the greater tribe, with the name Tribe of the Star.

## **The Great Invasion**

And then it began. The entrance of the Demiurg Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel shook the entire Hrud civilisation in its foundations. It came with a loud crash, the Demiurg blasted a death beam through the top of the Tower of Heaven, cutting it by a quarter. Toppling to the ground and causing numerous casualties, the whole of Hrudom was in upheaval. Seizing the confusion, the Star Navigators, under command of the Starlords, initiated the ascension of the mining crafts, as whole Hrud packs squeezed into the confines of the crafts due to merit of their bendable bodies. Rising upwards towards the great shell of the Commerce Vessel, it was hoped that the Demiurg would be duped enough to allow them entry. This ruse went through, as the Demiurgs aboard the vessel thought them indeed to be their crew. They rose in their hundreds, each landing into the landing dock of the Commerce Vessel. Once aboard, the Hrud initiated a surprise attack on their unwary hosts. The Demiurg had still not realised that they had allowed Hrud to come onboard, and went off to greet what they had believed to be their fellow Demiurg, when unsuspectingly, the Hrud poured forth from the mining crafts, and utilising the energy weapons of the Demiurg's own, proceeded to deliver death onto them. The Demiurgs, caught unawares by Clan Rictus, were at first sent reeling, even against the poor eyesight of the Hrud in environments of bright lights. But soon, the stubborn and stout Demiurgs mounted a counter-offensive; it takes more to shock these grim and hardy folk into yield than even a surprise assault from an unsuspecting source. They were however disadvantaged; the Demiurgs at the landing dock were unequipped for battle, given the fact they were expecting the arrival of their own crew, and perhaps it is to be admonished somewhat for the lack of prudence on their part. The Hrud of Clan Rictus soon invaded the lower sections of the Commerce Vessel, but were stymied by fierce counter-resistance from the Demiurg. The grim folk of the De'sha Brotherhood retaliated with resolute efficiency, that only the relentless and unyielding Demiurg could be capable of.

Thus the tables were swiftly turned, if there ever could be described as such in relation to the slow and stout Demiurg. Fierce fighting broke out within the lower sectors of the vessel, and the Demiurgs and the Hrud soon realised how evenly matched the setup was. Although greatly outnumbered, the Demiurgs were prevented from being overwhelmed from being better equipped and trained, and especially due to the tight enclosed confines the fighting mostly took place in, within the many corridors and sections of the Commerce Vessel, naturally disallowing the superior number of Hrud

from completely overrunning their positions. Besides, the true weapons of the Demiurg, the war machines, could not be brought to bear against an enemy within their own vessel.

For the Hrud, they made up their lack by their numbers, an overwhelming tide that matched the Demiurg's resolution with pure quantity. A battle between quantity and quality took place. But the Hrud were not all without their own recourse, a quality of their own most deceptive and insidious. Ricttar, most resourceful and intelligent among Clan Rictus, concocted a plan in view of the resilience of the Demiurg. Bringing together a band of Blackfurs and Greyfurs to support his plan, he led the way into the ducts of the Commerce Vessel, gaining entry into the upper levels which so far have proved impossible to obtain, due to the fierce resistance of the Demiurgs. But it was more than just a breach of entry past the frontline and into the flanks of the enemy's position. No, Ricttar thought much, much further. Travelling up to the very top of the Commerce Vessel with his sneak attack band, they went to the very heart of the Commerce Vessel by sneaking through the ducts and bypassing the main fighting, and right into the bridge. There, Ricttar's clever scheme proved most fruitful; as he had devised and expected, the bridge was little defended, and the captain and his flight crew were completely unwary of their intrusion. Taking hostage of the captain and his flight crew, Ricttar demanded a cessation of arms by the Demiurgs through the ship's communications system. With even their captain's life at stake, the Demiurgs had no choice but to proceed with the cease-fire.

Seeing his plan come to fruition, Ricttar announced over the intercom, "This invasion is over! Unfortunately, we have come to take over this ship for ourselves, and the idea of sharing it with another race of beings that call us Hrud, or "Pests" and "Vermin", is most repulsive to us. Kill them all and devour them in fire!" Thus, the Great Invasion was completed, and the Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel seized, through which the Great Dream of Clan Rictus was achieved.

### **The Great Sundering**

Upon securing the Commerce Vessel as their own, Clan Rictus sent their primary delegate, Ricttar, to the emergency Great Council meeting in the event of the arrival of the Demiurg Stronghold Class Commerce Vessel, and the enactment of the Great Migration by Clan Skaven. Supreme Overlord Skyre was exceptionally displeased with the actions of Clan Skaven, and imposed great trade and economical restrictions and sanctions on Clan Skaven, hoping to reduce their influence. Tighter controls were placed over Clan Skaven, to prevent an event of this proportion from ever happening again. As a further punishment, Clan Skaven was ordered to monitor the Warpportals, for they were the remaining connection to the scattered Migratory Tribes. In the meantime, Ricttar offered to form a means of communication to the scattered tribes, plying through the stars in search for them onboard the great Commerce Vessel, which came to be known as the Starlight Voyager, and reestablish the ties and connections between the Underempire and the Migratory Tribes. For this purpose, it was established that at the end of every thirteen thousand starlight cycles, the Starlight Voyager will return, and deliver a report on its findings and the progress of the scattered tribes. Thus, every thirteen thousand starlight cycles, a Great Council will be enacted, with the Supreme Overlord and the Greater Verminlord acting as presiding authorities. Thus, the Hrud of Clan Rictus followed on towards their dream, the First Desire which they had achieved on their own account, unlike the Migratory Tribes who owe a Great Debt to Clan Skaven.

The Hrud that followed Ricttar into the bridge of the Starlight Voyager, and ultimately killed the captain and his crew, distinguished themselves as the ruling caste within the Clan, calling themselves the Tribe of the Sky. This coterie of Greyfurs and Blackfurs, decided to call themselves Skylords, and they deferred to Ricttar as the High Skylord of Clan Rictus. This band of Greyfurs and Blackfurs were in fact close associates of Ricttar, being already in notable positions of power within the conglomerate divisions of tribes within the clan structure. This proved an accepted arrangement of hierarchy within the Clan, at least at first, but there soon brewed discontent between the Tribes, of the Star, the Sky, and of the Soil; which the mass of the Hrud of Clan Rictus and the bulk of their society came to be called. The Tribe of the Soil served the function of a worker caste within the clan structure, attending to the maintenance and smooth functioning of the Starlight Voyager, and was composed of both Blackfurs and Greyfurs. They seethed with a certain discontent in regards to the settlement of only a privileged few who lived like lords far above them within the bridge. While it is imagined they did nothing in the way productive towards the purposes of the Clan, except perhaps to direct affairs, which even then in some sense was met with dissatisfaction from the rest, for why should they live like lords while the rest of their kind worked and strived for the proper functioning of the vessel in which they reside, and even been likened to the lowest of substance, soil? In that regard, perceptive Ricttar showed some level of observation of this latent discontent. He provided a firm reminder to all who challenged the authority of the Skylords with a notice that they rightfully earned their positions from the very fact that without them, the Great Invasion would never have been won.

This notice did not go by closed ears, and the Hrud themselves possessed a certain civilised integrity that existed side by side with their Machievellian politics. Despite whatever appreciation it is felt in regards to this matter, still some of the Tribe of the Soil sought separation from the rest of the Clan. This came about at a most opportune time, according to the engineering of a group of Soillords, leaders of the Tribe of the Soil. In the bypassing of a certain star system, they hijacked the engines of the Starlight Voyager, a simple enough task given their own experience and role as the

maintainers of the engine systems of the vessel. Once done, the Starlords were forced to make a force-landing of the Starlight Voyager onto a planet within that system, that so happened to be the desert world of Tallarn. Seizing the opportunity, the Soillords who sought separation boarded the great Scavenger Class Mining Tanks of the Demiurg, and embarked with their splinter tribes, as each separate part of the original Tribe of the Soil that was led by an individual Soillord was called. The Soillords that sought separation decided to call themselves Tribe Mors, or Greater Tribe, after the fact that they were comprised of many lesser splinter tribes. They brought most of the equipment within the Starlight Voyager with them, in view of the need to survive in the harshness of this new world. Splitting off from the rest of Clan Rictus, with an accompaniment of personnel from the Tribe of the Star who also sought separation, the splinter tribes of Tribe Mors departed onboard the great Scavenger Class Mining Tanks, or as called by them, Sandcrawlers. These Soillords, now christening themselves Seer Chieftains, took to an oath, to meet in a great congregation every season, to determine the workings of the greater tribe. This event was called the Great Sundering by all involved, and that is how it is known till today.

## **The Great Revelation**

After the Great Sundering of Clan Rictus, the remaining Tribe of the Soil managed to reactivate the engines of the great Commerce Vessel, the Starlight Voyager, and with the remnant Starlords driving them off once again on their voyage, Clan Rictus continued their journey. However, it was realised that their course had been altered, because of the delays caused by the sabotaging of the engine systems. Given the rotation of the planet Tallarn upon their brief stay on the planet, they discovered that they had lost their bearings and needed to plot a new course. The Skylords decided on north, the galactic north, where the Ghouls Stars resided. Little did they know, an ancient race of amphibian masters and their reptilian subordinates resided there, in seven crown worlds. There, they made a startling discovery, a great finding.

They came upon Clan Pestilens in their voyage up north, among the deserted ruins of a world previously mastered and governed by the Slanni, as this ancient race is called. The progress of Clan Pestilens in their preoccupation with the Great Infestation had brought them up north, and it is this next race that Varmin of Clan Pestilens, Plague Prophet of the Chosen Clan of the Horned One, had planned for conquest. Ricttar was invited by Varmin to a certain ruins on the planet, where displayed before them, within the underground ruins, was a wall with ancient writings on them, and surprisingly enough, Ricttar found that he could read them. Varmin went on, speaking, "Curious isn't it? Why is it we can understand the writings on a ruined wall, so far from the heart of the galaxy which we were birthed from? If you would follow me as you read these words, you will realise a most suspicious truth. It appears we were a race of sentient beings even before the arrival of the Demiurg, and their unwitting awakening of our race. Yes, to put it more appropriately, we were awakened, and not evolved. The text on this wall reveals that, and the reason for its appearance at this specific location has to do with an ancient race, even before the Slanni; the Old Ones, they were called. The Ancestor Gods, ancestors of nearly every single biological race within this galaxy. They were ancestors not by blood or gene, but by their biological engineering and alteration of whole alien races, guiding them in subtle ways in their evolutionary process. The Slanni were their servant race, and acted as stewards in place of the Gods, chosen for their formidable psychic might, that even rivalled that of the Gods."

"There is more to this of course, than I have said, but I leave the revelation to a feast of your eyes, and the depictions of the text on this wall." Saying thus, Ricttar proceeded to read the text on the ruined wall. "Upon ancient times, the Old Ones were the sole custodians of the galaxy, travelling through advanced webway portals created with their mighty psychic powers, fashioned to be a means of swift transport across the galaxy. They had their stewards, the servant race of the Slanni, who have sought to preserve history through these writings, written in the ancient tongue of the Old Ones, of which all races can trace within their genetic memory, for the knowledge of it was embedded into their DNA. This text serves to chronicle the event of the rising of a race of beings at the centre of the galaxy; Hrud they were called. The Old Ones encountered this race of beings rather late in time, and they saw at once the potential of this race to surpass even their stewards, us, in psychic might. They sought to replace us with them as their stewards, but there was a certain contention. The prince of the Hrud, a Blackfur by the name of Morgor, declined this offer, for the sole reason of the nature of the division between the genders of their species. The females were born with white furs, and possessed intense psychic receptivity, but the males were born black, and had none of the psychic propensity shared by their sisters, but instead, were of massive and aggressive stature. Thus, recruiting the Hrud as a race of stewards would only require half of their species, which appeared unfavourable to Morgor. Morgor was of a special breed of Hrud, from the royal lineage of the White Queen, from which all Hrud can trace their ancestry from. Although despite being a Blackfur, his royal blood conferred with him the same level of psychic power as a Whitefur female. Thus Morgor was the ideal Hrud, possessing traits of both genders, the physical might of the male, and the psychical power of the female. In order to convince him otherwise, or perhaps out of pettiness, one of the Old Ones, Chotec the tempestuous Fire God summoned a Warpstorm with his psychic powers, over the world of Hrud. Seeing the destruction wrought across the lands from the Warpstorm, Morgor gathered the best of the Whitefurs, and channelled a massive defence against the onslaught of the Warpstorm. A battle of sheer psychic might ensued, with neither giving ground. But soon, the powers of this most exalted of races proved superior, and the world of Hrud was laid waste. In an attempt to preserve what remained of the Hrud, Morgor had no choice but to strike a bargain with the Old Ones, that they may call off the Warpstorm. This was summarily done, but at that point, the whole of Hrud had been ravaged. Left with no choice,



Morgor decided on a way out; he would warp to the moon of their world with the queen consorts, including the White Queen, and breed a new population within the confines of the moon, where they will be safe from the wrath of the Gods. But unsuspectingly, Morgor had been genetically altered by the Old One Sotek, imbuing his DNA with a rare genetic virus that warped the gene code of the resulting offsprings of Morgor and his consorts. Born to him was one black-furred female, the only Black Queen, and in addition, several of his offsprings had turned a shade of grey, uniquely enough, and came in both male and female genders. This decoloration was a process that would occur over the centuries, slowly turning black-furred Hrud more feminine and more psychically receptive. Eventually, the large majority of the Hrud became comprised of these Greyfurs. Unfortunately, the genetic virus caused the retardation of the new Hrud offsprings, dimming the light of sentience within them and returning their species to that of the form and state of animals. Having no means of combatting the biological technological superiority of the Old Ones, Morgor scried into the far future with his powers of prophecy and made a promise to his devolving people. What Morgor then did was the ultimate sacrifice. Ingesting the Warpstones found in the aftermath of the Warpstorm within the moon of their planet, he transmuted his essence into an exalted form that existed in the Warp, in order to protect his race in a way that a physical form could not. This was the gifting of the Whitefur Prophets, those females whose organs have atrophied and become androgynous, for they followed likewise in his path of ascension through the ingestion of Warpstones in order to manifest their true form. Likewise, it is done with Morgor, but unlike physical manifestations, Morgor attained his true form in the Warp, and it is said he will come back again, through manifesting his essence into a host whose DNA contained the correct proportion of Blackfur and Whitefur genes, thus allowing the assumption of Morgor into this host, gaining physical form again. It is said that he will come again in the form of a male Blackfur, who can be recognised by his propensity for psychic manifestations. This is the story of the Hrud and their Great Prophecy."

After reading this finished, Ricttar turned to Varmin, with a most curious look on his face. "The rest of Hrudom should learn about this." "Indeed, I do so agree with you, but solely from me. You might not have realised this, but the text implies something, that the one to become possessed by Mor Gor Hrud is not a specific or unique person. He simply has to possess the genetic template of the correct proportion of Whitefur and Blackfur genes, thus allowing the manifestation of our Great Deity. If you might not have known, I, being the Chosen Prophet of the Great Horned One, possess powers of my own, as we have been led to believe to be gifted to me by Him. But I have deduced that this was only possible because my gene code so happened to fit into that mould, and is close to the unique genetic proportion of the true heir of the Great Horned One. I do not believe for one that I am the Great Horned One's incarnation, for He specifically chose me as His messenger and One Prophet. However, I reveal this to you now, my great scheme, that of becoming one with Morgor and being His true successor. I thus wish to wage war on the Underempire, and seize all of Hrudom for myself, thus securing my position of power as the most powerful Clan in all of Hrudom, and in addition, to slay the true heir to Morgor and thus become the sole possessor of our Hrud God's powers." Thus saying, he departed, not before saying one last word before he went, "...It seems our race knew all along we belonged to the stars, in the origin of the First Desire within us..." Unsure of whether to bring this news to the Underempire or not, Ricttar left with many questions in his head. It was at this point the reign of Supreme Overlord Skyre once again, during what is officially recognised as the Age of Beasts, but was secretly known as the Dark Age of Skavens. Even as he pondered, the great beast of war that is Clan Pestilens was on the move, to bring war and pestilence to the Underempire and subdue it under its control.

### **The Fourth Great War**

The Great Infestation was halted, and the plague masses of Clan Pestilens were marshalled back into the Underempire. Conjuring Warpportals right within the midst of the Underempire, they came in a storm, pouring out in a vast avalanche of diseased flesh and fangs. War was swiftly brought onto the Underempire, and from a most insidious and unsuspecting deployment, reaching into the heart of the Underempire, with the clans and tribes of the Underempire caught unawares, never suspecting a war brought from their own xenophobic kin, one dedicated to spreading the parasitic influence of the Hrud to countless alien worlds. It was a single clan against the whole of the Underempire; where did Varmin get his confidence from? The armies of Clan Pestilens are comprised primarily of melee combatants, which would be simply outgunned by the Warplock Fusiliers of the clans and tribes of the Underempire, even if they could infect their bodies through the weapon of The Plague. Besides the element of surprise and numbers, Clan Pestilens had brought the scavenged technology of the races of whose worlds they have infested, thus possessing superior firepower in terms of technological advantage. In addition, Clan Pestilens had war machines, the Plaguestone Thrower and the Plague Skiff, each bearers of the deadly and dreaded Plague. The true power of Pestilens however, was to be revealed in the sequence of the coming war. And thus the Fourth Great War ignited within the maelstrom of the Underempire.

As a prelude to the battle, and almost as if an announcement of their intentions, the Plague Seers combined their powers with Plague Prophet Varmin, Arch-Plaguelord of Clan Pestilens, summoning foul winds and plague storms across the vast underground cavern of the Underempire. This was their true trump, to infect them with the very disease of which they bore with their bodies. It was hoped that they would effectively be able to bring them to heel, but it was hoped that the natural resistance to the Plague which they carry, that all Hrud share, being the same spiritual offsprings of Mor Gor Hrud, would spare them to some degree from the certain death of the Great Plague. Thus they made heated war, with the forces of the Underempire slowly marshalling in the face of this sudden attack. This war was fierce, and the

casualties suffered were to be the most extreme among all of the Great Wars fought since. Immediately at its entry, three tribes caught offguard were unwittingly subdued, but Arch-Plaguelord Varmin knew that this was immaterial; this war was not to be conquered by numbers but by quality; the heart of the Underempire was to be dug out and torn apart. Scheming Varmin, most astute of cunning minds, saw the Throne and Its downfall. With a sudden attack warping into the heart of the Underempire, they were in perfect opportunity to invade and infest the Ruling Clan of the Throne of all Hrudom at that point, Clan Skyre, occupying the great Tower of Heaven, with impetuous opportunity. The whole of Hrudom was in upheaval, unsure as to the actions of Varmin, their Chosen One Prophet. They were confused; why was one dedicated to bringing war to the enemies of the Hrud initiating a war against their own kind? Perhaps One Prophet Varmin had grown power-hungry for internal politics, and seeing how each of the Great Clans had their stay in power as the Ruling Clan, had sought likewise to bask in that power?

So Varmin, having held Clan Skyre hostage, went to the top of the Tower of Heaven and declared the history of their beginnings written so many millennia ago, and the eventual coming of their Great Deity and Saviour, Mor Gor Hrud. "My plan is for Him to come incarnated in me, and I will eliminate all powers that stand between me and that goal! Stand before me chosen portal of Morgor, for we shall do battle under the eternal starlit nights of our Underempire until a victor pushes through!" Hearing this great realisation concerning the fate of their race, the passions of this among the most ambitious of species were ignited. Who would not want to wield the power of their God as his own? So many false imposters, false prophets of self-proclaimed authenticity came forth, leading their own followers, those not ambitious enough but still wanting to rally under the power that will come to dominate the whole of Hrud politics. The confusion delighted Varmin, but he knew he could not hope to battle each and every single one of these multifarious upstarts. So he watched as they fought their petty wars as they so often did, except this time with common purpose, and when all was spent and over, Varmin spoke to them again, out from the top of the Tower of Heaven. "Let it be known, that you petty tribes and clans cannot hope to match the full might of the Great Infestation Clan Pestilens. With Clan Moulder a major loser, Clan Skyre hostaged, Clan Eshin in recuperation and Clan Rictus isolated from the workings of the Underempire, the answer to the future reign of the Underempire is obvious. Bow! Bow and pay homage to me, your Supreme Overlord and One Prophet of the Chosen One!" Varmin had failed to address one significant power, and it was not Clan Verminkin. Clan Skaven had still retained much of its considerable strength, and unlike the petty tribes, had not joined in this mockery of war and battle. But still Skittar waited, ruminated while lurking in the shadows, considering his moves, for now he had come to an even more pronounced realisation of the possibility that Morskittar was indeed to be the destined vessel of their Great Deity and Saviour, Mor Gor Hrud. He had every indicator, divine gift and trait, and even the perfect rearing. No, Clan Pestilens could not have their way, but it was to be seen whether this powerful clan could be subtly subdued without use of force, given they had the Ruling Clan, or the guise of it, the puppet clan held hostage. Responding in any way would immediately blow the cover and reveal the dark dealings in this darkest age of the Hrud.

But they were not to be the first to act. Skyre acted against everything Skittar wished, but then it might not have worked otherwise anyway. Overlord Skyre confessed to Plague Prophet Varmin, that the Ruling Clan of Clan Skyre was just a puppet clan to the true power, Clan Skaven. Holding Clan Skyre hostage would not get them what they want. Hearing the open treachery of Overlord Skyre, Second Skavenlord Skittar marshalled his forces, recalling great armed forces of Migratory Tribes, and while he waited for their arrival, in the meantime, he made preparations for the already formidable Clan Skaven's forces to mobilise for war. The whole of the Underempire became split between two sides, ones taking the side of Clan Pestilens, and others taking up the side of Clan Skaven. Meanwhile, it became obvious at this point that Clan Eshin was deeply allied with Clan Skaven, for the two were at their most cooperative and were at their most open in their defence of each other. It became clear of the treachery of the Skavens, and all saw at once its Dark Hand protruding out like an insidious claw. This caused many tribes in the Underempire to be repulsed by Clan Skaven, and as a sort of safety measure, knowing that it is Morskittar's life that Varmin wants, Skittar assigned the Lead Assassin Sneik to the task of the protection of the young master.

So the two sides waged terrible war and conflict, and Varmin, most meticulous and strategic of minds, a rival to Skyre and Skittar, among these triumvirate of the greatest minds in all Hrudom, saw victory to be won through dividing the power of the two central powers among the enemy's ranks, that of Clan Skaven and Clan Eshin. As long as these two central clans could not unite their forces, it was clear that they would fall, and Varmin could achieve Ascension. With the hatred of the tribes and clans of the Underempire already incited against Clan Skaven, it was effortless to incite and spur the hatred into a maddening frenzy that tore at the combined armies of the Skavens and Eshin, through the seasoned tongues and oratories of the Plague Abbots. It was thus and how Morskittar got separated from Skittar, but still in the care of the Lead Assassin Sneik, Morskittar spent his period of isolation and exile from his clan under the tutelage of the assassin, cultivating immense skill and many mystical arts. Seeing the battle torn from them with the great tide of the warriors of the tribes and clans of the Underempire separating them from their ally, Clan Skaven, the Council of the Night decided to retreat to the shadows. It was during this period of isolation that Morskittar was taught the shadow arts of the Nightbound, becoming the ultimate Hrud warrior, possessing potent psychic powers and physical prowess.

## **The Age of Plagues**

The Fourth Great War lasted the eras of two ages, from the Age of Beast, otherwise known as the Dark Age of Skavens, to what became known as the Age of Plagues. It was clear that Skittar had lost, but given his ambitions, he would never relinquish his say over the Throne. And Varmin's objective was the death of The One, so the war went on, despite the fact that the Skaven's side had obviously lost. However, it was not to be forgotten that the armed forces of the Migratory Tribes recalled earlier had finally come through with their preparations and joined the fray, warping in from the Warpportals. Seeing some hope in this, having their forces now bulked up to the point of dwarfing the opposition's, Skittar weathered the storm of plague winds, in the hopes that he could outgun the forces of Clan Pestilens from range. As long as he kept them at bay, they would never get at Morskittar, and the Great Scheme could reach fruition. Morskittar must live, he is The One, and he alone held the keys to the ascension of their race, their race's Great Ascension. Weathering the violent plague storms to stall for time would be inconceivably useless to even contemplate; he could only hope that Morskittar resided safe in the hands of Sneik. Right now, all he needed to do was draw the attention of Varmin to Clan Skaven's forces, and away from Clan Eshin.

Varmin brutally tested the limits of the Skavens, knowing their plan to put him at bay, he buffeted them with wild plague winds, encroaching slowly into their ground, inch by inch. Many died from infections and disease, even despite their natural resistance to the supernatural Plague. This most pestilential of age was called the Age of Plagues, for the constant assault of foul plague winds used as a weapon against the Skavens. All this time Varmin sought and hunted for the life of The One, any sign of him, in his belief that Skittar held possession of his whereabouts and location. It made sense to seize the life of Skittar and break him into telling him this truth. So all efforts were concentrated on attacking the Skavens and their Migratory Tribe allies. Skittar resisted, and wisely resorted to consulting with his Scribes, of future portents and the matter on how this war would turn out, and if all would go in the Skaven's favour. What of the fate of Morskittar, now that his being has been severed from the side of Skittar, and what of the actions to be taken at this point? To this, the Scribes were cryptic. They made notion to what could be told to be fact, that the strands of fate remained hazy and ever-shifting, and that it would be hard to predict concretely, but it appeared the strongest measure for their side now would be to resist as well as they could. As long as Varmin and Clan Pestilens did not have the whereabouts of Morskittar, the chance of The One manifesting before too long remained strong, and that would be their strongest resort. Thus Skittar betted all on that.

Meanwhile, Varmin was on a secret agenda, ingesting raw Warpstones in the hopes of inducing a prophetic manifestation, as it is with the Whitefur Prophets. When he succeeded, the whole of the Underempire trembled under the raw power of his true form. Marching off to war ahead of the forces that had gathered at his side, he swept aside the forces of Clan Skaven and their Migratory Tribe allies and came coming upon Skittar. Skittar stood in sheer spellbound terror, but he lifted up his Warpfang, for his will to survive was strong; the one who is arguably the most resourceful and intelligent of all Greyfurs had a tenacity surpassing the bravest and greatest of Warlords. But before even Varmin could strike, a bolt of Warplightning struck his side, blasting him off his feet. It was Jaelarnak, off to the aid of Skittar, most surprisingly. "You are not The One. We recognise Him," was all that Jaelarnak said. "If you wish to pass you must go through us, or Me."

It was said as a rumour that the Verminlords were beings of great mystery and many plans, and they foresaw deep into the future, and their plans thus went deep in manifold ways, threading off as strands into myriad patterns that go beyond description. They held a greater hold over the workings of Hrudom than belaid the eye, and indirectly manipulated the rest of Hrudom in subtle ways, slowly but surely shaping It into an ideal state of their liking. This might all sound fantastic and too far-fetched, but these are beings of untold power, who resided as gods amongst the Hrud, and in possession of power that can match the military might of a single Lesser Tribe. The chosen champion of the Verminlords, the Greater Verminlord Jaelarnak, stood a towering 13 feet over the felled body of Varmin in his Essence Form, unmoved and unyielding. Varmin attempted to get up, but at the slightest motion of his body as detected by Jaelarnak, another Warplightning bolt was sent flying towards him. Varmin was sent sprawling all over again, but this time he was quicker. With a speed belying his towering form of 15 feet, Varmin darted up with the reflexes of lightning, and bolted forth. From the sheer pressure created about his outreached fingertips from the speed of moving like a whiplash with his body, a bright light was emitted. Varmin crashed into Jaelarnak with that bright light, searing holes the size of his fingers into his body. He called it the Warplight Dash, using the speed and gathered Warp energy at the foretips of his fingers into a blade that cuts through anything. And given his greater physical size compared to a Whitefur Prophet like Jaelarnak, the damage even to a Verminlord was sizeable. Jaelarnak got up despite Its injuries, and Its fellow Verminlords motioned to help It in this fight, but Jaelarnak shook them off, saying It could manage just fine. Pointing a wiry finger at Varmin, Its left hand over the holes at Its side where blood was gushing out, It said "By our dictates, we refuse to acknowledge you as the manifestation of our Great Deity Mor Gor Hrud. Being Verminlords ourselves, we would naturally be able to identify Him, and it too clashes with reason to see a being chosen to be the One Prophet of the Chosen Hand of Pestilence being the very vessel for the manifesting of the Deity. So refute your claim over the Throne now, at our insistence!" Saying that, a single Warplightning bolt exploded from that same right finger, striking the very place where Varmin stood. Varmin disappeared in a flash, and in that flash of a few microseconds, exploded into view behind Jaelarnak, with his hand delivering the Warplight Dash. But he was deceived. In Jaelarnak's left hand covering Its wounds, the Warp energy needed for a Crimson Inferno, a heated psychic shockwave that explodes out in a radius of infernal destruction was silently gathered, and at the predicted movements of Varmin,

Jaelarnak punched the gathered compression of psychic energy into Varmin's chest, and the shockwaves rippled through his body, flinging him across the battlefield, rupturing his internal organs along the way.

Jaelarnak was victorious. It proceeded in a flash towards the fallen Varmin, and It stood, waiting to give the deathblow. "You have to cease to exist for the greater good of all Hrudom," bespoke Jaelarnak. "Nay, he shall live, for the Great Mor Gor loves all His children and sees talent and strength where it exists." A shadow as fast as a bolt suddenly appeared between the fallen Varmin and Jaelarnak. Stopping the killing hand of Jaelarnak with one finger, all stood in awe at the fact a mere 8 feet Blackfur warrior could stop the blow of a fully manifested Prophet! He appeared to be no ordinary Blackfur, for he had two horns jutting from his crown. Could he be the one? "And how would you identify yourself as The One, may I inquire?" spoke Jaelarnak. Without saying a word, Morskittar manifested his right hand into an Essence Form, and touched the half-dead body of Varmin. At that instance, Varmin's body repaired itself, as if new Warpstones were injected into his body. "Only one containing the Essence Form of the very Father of our Divine Race could restore one of His children through touch alone. You must be That One!" said Jaelarnak, bowing deeply to the Third Skavenlord Morskittar, Chosen One of the Hrud.

### **The Great Age of the Hrud**

So came the final age of the Hrud, one where they were all united under a single banner, by one fateful and decisive fight between gods, the Great Age of the Hrud. Morskittar ruled as the Underemperor of Hrudom then, and as Third Skavenlord of Clan Skaven, with his father Skittar at his side, as advisor and aide. This great age signified a grand stage of cooperation among the Hrud at all levels of society, and the greatest and most impactful of all effects taken place during this time was the seeding of many Infested Worlds with the presence of Hrud, in the hopes of bringing the Divine Infestation to as many worlds as possible and war with them, all in preparation for the great coming of the Rhana Dhandra, the Great End of Times, the "Vermintime", the final battle that will consume the entire galaxy in flames, and in which all life will be extinguished. For that grand participation in that final battle, when the fate of all sentient species throughout the galaxy are considered, the Hrud, notable or noble, prepare for war.

### **The Mor Hrud of Mor Gor Hrud**

Now Mor Gor Hrud, sensing the final unity of the Hrud collective, knew that the time was at hand and sought manifestation within His chosen portal, and by this it was revealed that indeed Morskittar had the necessary genetics, in fact so perfectly did he match the correct proportion of not just Whitefur or Blackfur genes, but Greyfur as well, was such that the manifestation of Mor Gor Hrud within the vessel of Morskittar proved to have a power of influence, that was psychic in nature, over all of Hrudom and Its inhabitants of all colours, from White, to Grey, to Black. In other words, Morskittar could affect or influence the actions of any Hrud, compelling them to his will. And now, as Mor Gor Hrud the Great Horned One found residence within his being, Mor Gor Hrud addressed His children as their Deity and God. From His words of address, He called all of Hrudom a term that had been previously taken as offensive, but now used to represent their identity: "Us The Great Hrud, or Mor Hrud!", as the Great Unification of the collective Hrud is called. They had assumed a new identity by the birthing of their God back into the material plane, now regarded and acknowledged by themselves as the "Great Ones" in the rawest interpretation of this term of their self-address, and it is recognised in this unity that the identity of the Hrud is as now defined: Mor Hrud, as the children of Mor Gor Hrud seemingly having derived this name as a contraction from His true title, in a sense dedicating them officially as His spiritual children. In this way, the Mor Hrud or Great Hrud, attaining this new title in their last incarnation, made known their stand with all their forces in union, mustered and prepared for the Great Ending, the burning of worlds that is the Rhana Dandra, or "Vermintime", as it is in their tongue. For this part of the Great Scheme, is given the name "The Great Domination", the great act of conclusion on the part of this Great Scheme of incalculable cunning and brilliance, rising the Great Hrud to a state of unchallenged supremacy, an action of the confrontation of war against all that are not Hrud that lives. This threefold scheme is thus finalised and achieved, with the Great Migration leading to the initial separation and division of Hrudom, to the Great Unification, the bringing together of the divided Hrudom into one Underempire again, and finally the Great Domination, the conquering of the Galaxy through the united Hrudom.

### **The Final Act**

As a last act, Mor Gor Hrud, now manifested, sought the buried body of Gorisnak at the centre of the Underempire, where the location of the Tower of Heaven is situated. There, he revived him with the restorative powers gifted to Him as the Sire of their Great Race. Seeing the power and potential of the great Gorisnak while he was alive, marking out for his bravery and strength, Mor Gor Hrud sought to incorporate him into the Hrud army, by his mystical revival. Having another powerful agent working for him, the success of their Race is further guaranteed. This thus begins the Final Act of the Hrud's Race encroachment into the sentient races of the galaxy, a threat that cannot be easily dismissed.

~End~