

Index Astartes



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

The Blood Ravens Space Marines Chapter

by Graham McNeill

A series focusing on the Imperium's finest warriors, the Space Marines of the Adeptus Astartes

Their origins shrouded in mystery, the Blood Ravens chapter are ever drawn to the pursuit of knowledge and the acquisition of ancient lore. Guided by their powerful Librarians, the chapter fights with a precision and calculated fury, able to predict an enemy's plans and thwart them before they come to fruition. These powers have led to great speculation about the chapter.

ORIGINS

Though the Blood Ravens have a long and glorious history fighting in the name of the Emperor, their exact origins and earliest days are clouded and ambiguous. Not even the mightiest Chapter Masters or revered Librarians can say with any certainty where the origin of their chapter lies. They are a proud and secretive order, obsessed with ritual, history, and the acquisition of knowledge – especially for the truth of their beginnings. The majority of the records on the chapter date back no further than early M37, though references to their service in the litanies of other chapters and Imperial organisations prove that they existed and fought the enemies of the Emperor for centuries before this. This gap in the Blood Ravens' history has led to endless speculation as to their origin, and what could have happened to expunge such a large and important portion of their history from the chapter's lore.

As a result, the Blood Ravens do not know from which Primarch or chapter they are descended from, and so revere no one as much as the Immortal Emperor, supreme master of all Space Marines. The current organisation of the Blood Ravens owes much to a Space Marine named Azariah Vidya, known to the members of the chapter through an ancient legend known as the Father Librarian, or Great Father.

The Legend of the Great Father tells that Azariah was the Master of the Blood Ravens' Chapter Librarium at a time when the chapter was still in its infancy. The legend states that the Blood Ravens suffered terrible losses in campaigns fought against a series of warp-spawned rebellions said to have taken place in the Gothic sector – though no corroborating records exist to confirm this. It is told that in the early days of the campaigns, the foul servants of Chaos were widespread and disorganised, with no hope of standing before the might of the Blood Ravens. But the machinations of Chaos are manifold and this impression proved to be horrifyingly false. The cult forces were far more organised than they at first appeared, and the centres of cult activity attacked by the Blood Ravens turned out to be fiendishly cunning traps. Many Blood Ravens were lost in these elaborate ambushes, and in a blow that could have proven fatal to the young chapter, the Chapter Master and the Master of Sanctity both fell defending the retreat of the remnants of the 1st Company. With their ranks depleted, the Blood Ravens turned to Azariah for guidance.

Azariah was an intelligent warrior who knew much of history and bore the burden of terrible knowledge of the Ruinous Powers. He was also blessed, some might say cursed, with tremendously powerful psychic powers. He spent months studying the enemy's movements, tactics and even their histories in an attempt to discern how they might be defeated. While keeping up the facade that the Blood Ravens were reeling from the previous attacks, he utilised his warriors and those of the Imperial Guard to probe the enemy to see how they reacted, gauging their response. To some it appeared that he wasted his time, that retreating to books rather than steel and courage was no way to fight the enemies of the Emperor.

Eventually, Azariah completed his divinations and studies, declaring that he possessed the knowledge to defeat their enemies utterly. The Blood Ravens launched a sweeping counter-offensive that at first seemed organised in a confusing and uninformed way, hitting areas that were virtually devoid of enemy activity. But each location proved to be a key point where the forces of Chaos were secreting large amounts of supplies and troops, massing for ambushes or raising dark idols to their blasphemous gods.

The attacks hit the Chaos forces with a supernatural prescience at their weakest points, smashing their resistance aside with ease. Feted with honours, Azariah insisted that the key lay in researching and dissecting the enemy's movements, but many believe that the powerful psyker was reading the minds of the enemy and gleaning the necessary information he needed to defeat them. After the crushing blow of the first offensive, the rest of the campaign was short and extremely bloody, with the forces of the Enemy melting before the Blood Ravens' relentless assaults. At the conclusion of the rebellion, Inquisitorial Purgatus teams discovered dark writings and abominable idols that pointed to the involvement of the traitorous Alpha Legion, a fact that did not surprise Azariah when he was informed.

After the resounding victory in the Gothic sector, legends tell of how Azariah took the chapter away to heal its wounds, mourn its dead and reflect on the battles it had just fought. At the insistence of his battle-brothers and the Secret Masters of the Chapter, Azariah took on the dual mantle of Chapter Master and Master of the Librarium, an uncommon occurrence, and one that was frowned upon by other Space Marine chapters who believed in a strict adherence to the Codex Astartes. Azariah served as

Chapter Approved. Access Level: Ω 7/a



Auto-reactive
shoulder guard:
Chapter Badge
Iconography



Auto-reactive
shoulder guard:
Tactical Squad
markings



Veteran Sergeants' Helmet



Blood Ravens Tactical Marine in Mk 7 Astartes Pattern
Power Armour. Note chest plate bearing Blood Ravens
chapter symbol.



Blood Ravens Librarian wearing artificer-made armour
with integral psychic hood, and welding a force staff
with Chapter Iconography.

Thought for the day: Heresy Lies Beneath

Blood Ravens, Founding M37 further access restricted.

CHAPTERMASTER ANGELOS

Commander Gabriel Angelos hails from the planet of Cyrene, a pleasant, civilised world in the Korianis Sector. Cyrene was once a verdant world with an eclectic mixture of technologies, hydrofoil systems nestling alongside corrals for Sharaq's, local dray animals used for drawing carts and hauling bulky wagons. It had long been the tradition for the youth of Cyrene to enter the local Imperial Commander's household guard, the Planetary Defence Force, and earn their place in society through armed service. Angelos excelled in this, becoming a well-respected leader even before reaching his teenage years and eventually being selected for initiation into the Blood Ravens after completing the Blood Trials set by the Chapter Chaplains.

Some considered the Blood Ravens' practice for selecting youths from Cyrene unusual due to the markedly higher proportion of mutant births amongst the populace. Though such abominations were swiftly cleansed and burned, it soon became clear that these incidences of mutation were linked to a sudden rise in nascent psykers. Such a vast number of unprotected psykers could only lead to trouble and such was to prove the case when the Blood Ravens returned to Cyrene to sweep for new recruits. Now a respected and courageous captain in the Chapter, Gabriel Angelos descended to the planet's surface and began the selection process. The Blood Trials were cut short, however, when Angelos returned to his Strike Cruiser and transmitted a secure Astropathic communiqué to an unknown location.

The substance of this message will, in all likelihood, remain unknown, but within months of its sending, fleets of Naval and Inquisitorial vessels were anchored in high orbit. Almost immediately, the orbiting ships began pounding the surface of the planet to destruction with lance strikes, mass drivers and cyclonic torpedoes. The constant barrage continued for over a week until the entire planet had been reduced to a smouldering wasteland with nothing left alive. Inquisitorial records remain sealed on this incident, and only the Inquisition and Commander Gabriel Angelos will truly know what occurred on the planet of Cyrene.



Chapter Master for several centuries, and his heroic deeds are told in great prayers committed to the hearts and minds of every single Blood Raven.

While the Blood Ravens follow the Codex Astartes in spirit, if not letter, their passion for knowledge was instilled into the chapter through the Great Father's example. As a result, the Blood Ravens maintain one of the most extensive, well-organised and detailed archives ever seen in a Space Marine chapter, rivalling even the ancient records of many of the First Founding chapters. The Blood Ravens believe that information, alongside faith, is the greatest weapon available to them in the fight against the Emperor's enemies.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Blood Ravens is the large number of Librarians within the chapter. The Librarians of the Blood Ravens are exceptionally powerful, but whether this is due to the Great Father or a result of the reverence the Blood Ravens hold him in, is unknown. However, neither explanation explains how the Blood Ravens manage to cultivate such a high number of psykers within their ranks, or how they develop their powers to such distinguished levels.

HOMEWORLD

The Blood Ravens do not have a specific homeworld, but whether this is due to its being expunged from their history or some darker reason is unknown. Their chapter fortress is a mighty Battle Barge known as Omnis Arcanum, and the rest of the chapter

travels aboard a host of Strike Cruisers and Battle Barges that travel as its escorts. The Librarium Sanctorum is aboard the Omnis Arcanum and it is here that they maintain their records of heroic deeds, lore of vanquished enemies and various captured heretical information.

While there is no fixed base of operations for the Blood Ravens, there are a number of planets that they consistently draw their potential recruits from, ranging from feral worlds of club-wielding savages to sprawling hive worlds. There appears to be no rhyme or reason to this process, but there are a number of worlds in particular that the Blood Ravens favour over others. Why this should be the case is unknown, but it is speculated by some that these worlds have a higher incidence of psykers than is normal, though such speculation is, thus far, unsubstantiated.

COMBAT DOCTRINE

The Blood Ravens belief in studying the enemy and predicting their movements before launching any attacks, rather than using rampaging charges or spur of the moment, lightning assaults, has led to some friction between other, more headstrong chapters. Those who prefer a more straightforward approach to battle, and in particular one chapter, have branded the Blood Ravens cowards for their precise, methodical way of waging war, but this would be an unfair judgement. Once the Blood Ravens take to the field of battle, they fight with a fury and zeal the equal of any other chapter of the Adeptus Astartes.

Their battle plan never varies from initial concept to final execution, and is executed ruthlessly. Such is the depth of planning and thoroughness that every eventuality is planned for, thanks to their Librarians' uncanny ability to predict. As a result they have in the past warned or responded to enemy attacks or invasions well before most Imperial sources have even been aware of them. This has led some puritanical figures to make dark mention of the tale of the fallen Primarch, Magnus, and his ultimate fate – claiming that his path to damnation began with such warnings...

ORGANISATION

The Organisation of the Blood Ravens follows the standard practices laid down in the Codex Astartes, with ten companies, each of ten squads. The chapter consists of the prescribed mix of Battle Companies, Assault, Tactical and Devastator Companies, though the exact make up of these companies can vary quite extensively.

Due to the higher proportion of Librarians, it is rare, but not unknown, for them to lead companies into battle, though this usually only occurs when the chapter fights alone and unaided. The higher echelons of command within the Blood Ravens reflect the high proportion of psykers too and many of the Secret Masters of the Chapter are themselves psykers, leading powerful units of warriors chosen from the Librarium itself. These warriors obsessively study the ways of the Enemy to better fight the Ruinous Powers and are steeped in all manner of forbidden lore. Because of this, though, they are extensively monitored by the Chapter's Librarium for signs of corruption, as even the mightiest of psykers are not immune to the insidious lure of Chaos.

The chapter's Librarium Sanatorium is grim testament to this fact, filled with the mad souls who have proven too weak to complete the final transformation into a Librarian. Here, these unfortunates are put to final use by the chapter before being ritually executed as a danger to themselves and others. It is a place of great solemnity, with those who have made the ultimate sacrifice honoured before their deaths with a personal shriving from the chapter's Master of Sanctity himself.

BELIEFS

Like many Codex Chapters, the Blood Ravens do not venerate the Emperor as a god, but as the mightiest of men. This inevitably brings them into conflict with the Ministorum. This is allayed by the fact that they do not know the identity of their Primarch, which leads them to give praise to the Emperor with a fervour greater than almost any other chapter. As their quest for knowledge echoes many tenets of the Adeptus Mechanicus, the chapter maintains close ties with the Priests

of the Machine God, often joining forces with their fleets of Explorators in their conquest of the unknown quarters of the galaxy.

The Blood Ravens are often known to seek out sites of lost artefacts and ancient significance to deny what they hold to the Enemy. To achieve this, they rely heavily on their Librarians both to keep the secret archives in order and compile new records, as well as lead the continuing search for fresh information to bolster their precious archives.

It is not uncommon for groups of Librarians to be dispatched with an army of servitors and a number of squads of Space Marines to uncover a lost artefact whose location has been recently unearthed or revealed through ritual divination. This has brought the Blood Ravens into direct conflict with the Inquisition on several occasions, as many of the items they seek are touched by the Ruinous Powers. The Blood Ravens insist that it is their duty to hunt out and oppose the forces of Chaos wherever they may be and that by recovering and destroying the tools of Chaos they deny the Enemy their use. However, the Blood Ravens have been less than forthcoming regarding any proof of the destruction of any of the hundreds of artefacts they are said to have procured. Such actions do nothing to allay their critics.

GENESEED

The Blood Raven geneseed is relatively stable, though the high proportion of psykers has resulted in their geneseed tithe being tested on a more regular basis than most.

The Blood Ravens' 5th Company is known as the 'Fated', and though the reasons for this are unclear, it may hark back to an incident recorded in the annals of the Chapter's Librarium, but never spoken of openly. The 5th Company of M38 are recorded as having been lost in the warp, the great Bell of Souls tolling a hundred times for each lost Space Marine, but the truth of the matter is far darker. It is whispered that one of the company's Librarians was seduced by the lure of the Ruinous Powers and turned his brethren to evil, though of course this notion is dismissed by the Chapter today. No records exist as to the ultimate fate of this company or whether such a traitor was ever brought to justice. The Blood Ravens have an especial hatred for those who turn from the Emperor's light, and to this day, the Space Marines of the 5th Company wear badges of shame and penitence upon their armour, though none will reveal the reasons for this.

Thus far, there has been little evidence of mutation, and nothing that points to the geneseed as the source of the Blood Ravens' disproportionate number of psykers or the power they exhibit.

There has been much speculation regarding which of the Founding Chapters the Blood

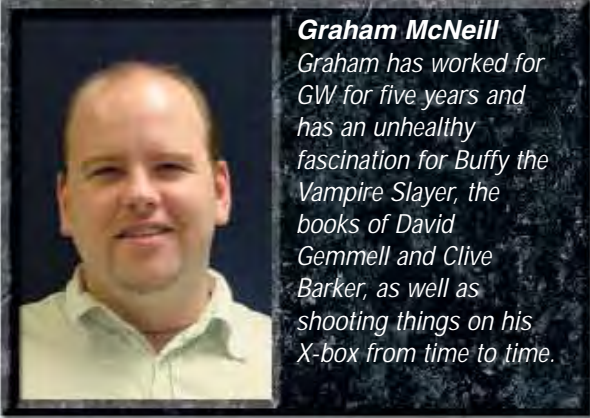
Raven's geneseed is derived from. Both the Blood Angels and Raven Guard have been suggested, but these are likely to be based simply on the similarity in names between the chapters. Rumour has also persisted that the Blood Ravens may be derived from the Dark Angels geneseed, but no facts have ever been presented to establish a definitive single



source of the genetic material that makes up the chapter. The fact that the Blood Ravens themselves have no record of the chapter they descended from implies that they could easily have been a chapter created in anticipation of some threat to the Imperium in centuries past that has since been met and defeated, but the truth of their origin is the one piece of information the Blood Ravens seek above all else.

BATTLECRY

“Knowledge is power, guard it well!”



The path to becoming a Space Marine is long, arduous and fraught with peril, but it is an easy path to tread when compared to the hardships an Aspirant must endure to become a Space Marine Librarian. Deadly trials and terrifying ordeals that test an Aspirant's strength of will, character and psychic resilience are necessarily harsh to ensure that the potential Librarian has the power to resist the predations of warp creatures and astral entities that inhabit the haunted depths of the empyrean. Most human psykers must undergo the agonising ritual of the Soul Binding to withstand such creatures, but Space Marine Librarians have to be strong enough to resist these horrors on their own.

Those who fail in such endeavours usually either die in agony during the testing or are swiftly executed as potential conduits for warp creatures. But there are others who fail in their testing, but are so ravaged by it that they are no longer sane or, in some cases, even humanoid anymore. These poor, unfortunate individuals are taken in pentagrammically warded chains to a shuttered, lonely place on the Omnis Arcanum known simply as 'The Tower', where they are studied by the chapter's Librarians to better understand what makes an Aspirant fail and how they might hone the minds of those who survive their trials. It is a horrifying place, echoing to the sounds of lunatic screams and shunned by all, save those who must brave the soul-destroying terror of those condemned to this place. What happens behind the locked and warded doors of the Tower is never spoken of, but there are dark tales of beasts conjured from beyond the veil and briefly allowed to manifest themselves in the flesh of those incarcerated within the Tower, before being banished back to the warp. The veracity of such tales is suspect - to say the least - but were they proven true, they could potentially be the chapter's undoing..

