

CHAPTER XII: THE JERICHO REACH

"It is born of blood and darkness and to blood and darkness it shall return."

—Words spoken during a reading of the Emperor's Tarot at the outset of the Achilus Crusade

The Jericho Reach is a region of space long lost by Humanity. It has succumbed to darkness and barbarity, become infested by xenos, and is tainted by the Ruinous Powers. Laying close to the Galactic Eastern Fringe, the area known as the Jericho Reach was part of the Imperium in ancient days, and remained so for many millennia until it fell into an age of isolation, disintegration, and evil. One particularly significant discovery changed the region's status: it contains a Warp Gate that connects two far-flung edges of the galaxy. Now, the Imperium once again dreams of making the Jericho Reach its own, but its attempted re-conquest has quickly become mired in blood and its hopes have turned into nightmares.

The Achilus Crusade is a war of re-conquest fought on three fronts. It is a savage war waged with every weapon that the Imperium possesses, and its commanders have sworn that it will not fail. In spite of such oaths, the Achilus Crusade may come to ruin. The Tau Empire have cast their desiring eye over the worlds and resources of the Reach and move with all force to make it their own. On worlds long forsaken by the Imperium, the slaves of the Dark Gods of Chaos reign and at the Reach's heart, unsuspected at the Crusade's outset, they have created a blasphemous domain ruled over by Daemon Princes and Chaos Lords, where the quixotic laws of the warp rather than those of fragile reality now hold sway. Perhaps even worse, from the depths of the untamed void the Great Devourer has risen; the Tyranids who would consume all within the Jericho Reach and leave nothing but carcass worlds spread amongst the ancient stars.

While the war between the forces of the Achilus Crusade and its many enemies rages, others with agendas far older than those of the Crusade move amongst the stars of the Jericho Reach. They have watched over these worlds and stars since before it fell into shadow. They are the Deathwatch: A unique division of the Adeptus Astartes, the Space Marines, bound together by ancient oaths and who stand the long watch against the greater darkness that is still to come. While the rest of the Imperium turned its face from the Jericho Sector after it fell, the vigilance of the Deathwatch has never wavered. In the long millennia of the Age of Shadow, they have stood sentinel from their Watch Fortress and scattered Watch Stations dotted across the fallen sector, sometimes the hunted but more often the hunter, a shadow within shadows. By their hands, many

enemies of the Imperium have been denied and cast down amongst the Reach's forgotten stars, and many great threats ended before they rose up to beset the greater Imperium of Man, unspoken of and unknown even to the Deathwatch's distant masters. However, these battles have been but the prelude to the battles to come, for according to many, the true Time of Ending has come at last, and the final watch has begun. The Jericho Reach hangs in the balance—the intervention of the Deathwatch may be the only way to influence the outcome of the Achilus Crusade, for good or for ill.

BEFORE THE FALL OF NIGHT

Though the Jericho Reach is now an open wound of bloodshed, infected with the lies of false gods and the presence of aliens, it was not always like this. The area of space now known as the Jericho Reach was brought within the Imperium of Mankind during the Great Crusade waged by the Emperor and his Space Marine Legions over ten millennia ago. Though few details of its founding exist, it is known to have been an exceptionally bloody campaign, and the subsequent events of the Horus Heresy and the painful aftermath of civil war caused further devastation to its worlds. In the millennia that followed, untamed worlds and xenos-domains were obliterated, and the Jericho Sector was built as a bastion of Imperial might and majesty carved from the cold wilderness of space and colonized by a powerful and expansive Imperium. Worlds were raised from rubble and ashes to industrial power-houses, populations grew prosperous,



and with them, the importance and splendour of the Jericho Sector increased. Order predominated, and the wounds of the past became scabbed over with piety and the surety of stability. From the highest obsidian spires of the world-hives of Verronus to the glittering glass shrines of sainted Eleusis, the dominion of the God-Emperor ran uninterrupted across a hundred worlds. Though wars and lesser disasters would come and go like passing storms, the Jericho Sector remained a paragon of Imperial order and strength for many millennia, until quite abruptly, all was lost; utterly relinquished to the darkness and bloodshed from which it had been raised.

THE AGE OF SHADOW

During its Age of Shadow, darkness and decent into anarchy enveloped the Jericho Sector, shattering the ties of Imperial rule and regressing its worlds back into a state of untamed barbarity. This Age saw the splendour and might of the Jericho Sector entirely undone, reverting it into an area known on the Navis Nobilitate's charts as the Jericho Reach; a place wallowing in evil and untouched by the light of the Imperium. The Age of Shadow came swiftly, but did not fall on the Jericho Sector overnight. Rather, it slid inexorably across the worlds of the Jericho Reach like the shadow of a setting sun.

The decline began during the time of misrule, unbelief, and tyranny known as the Age of Apostasy. During this era of insularity and civil war, the Imperium came closer to destruction at its own hand than it had at any time since the Horus Heresy. For reasons which remain unclear, communication between the Jericho Sector and the core of the Imperium became more and more difficult; Astropathic messages became unreliable, and ships travelling in and out of the region were lost to warpstorms that gathered as if to increase the sector's isolation. In particular, the great trade routes between the sector and the powerful worlds of the Imperial region of Ultramar to the galactic south were utterly severed by a massive Ork Waaagh! of a scale unseen in millennia. With the Imperium as a whole in turmoil and the tide of war rising, the Jericho Sector was marginalised and forgotten, ultimately slipping beyond the reach of the Imperium without a single scribe on Holy Terra noting its passing.

Scattered records recovered many centuries later indicate that a corrosive dread pervaded the sector, cut-off from the greater Imperium. One by one, the planets formerly under the central dominion of the sector capital of Verronus fell into darkness. Some, such as Verronus itself, succumbed to rebellion from within. Shorn of outside aid, others fell to warring on their neighbours whether through paranoia or unbridled ambition; their leaders clutching to the promises of Dark Gods or laid low by the flaws in their own hearts. Within a single generation, much of the Jericho Sector had slipped into anarchy and feral barbarism. When the last Segmentum naval patrol was recalled to Kar Duniash to more pressing duties, they reported that the last tatters of Imperial order in the Jericho Sector were small and ragged circles of light beset by predatory darkness. Soon, unsung and disregarded, they too fell, and the sector's Age of Shadow lasted for over five millennia. Its notable events, and the tragedies and disasters that befell the worlds caught in its grip, remain largely unknown and unrecorded. Only the Deathwatch possess some knowledge of what passed in the

Age of Shadow, and even then, they recorded little. Their gaze was cast elsewhere, upon places already dead and darkened, and their concerns were of a greater import than the fate of a few lost worlds.

During the thirty-seventh millennium, the High Lords of Terra—as part of a great reassessment of the Domains of Man known as the Third Mesericordia Imperialis Mundi—decreed that the Jericho Sector, along with a dozen others along the Eastern Fringe, were no more until a Crusade could once again bring them back into the Imperium's fold. The blighted region was re-designated as the Jericho Reach, and so returned in name and nature to the darkness from which it had been raised. The warpstorms and temporal distortion that so isolated the Jericho Reach at the beginning of the Age of Shadow have never truly abated. Although they have waxed and waned many times, the Imperium's claimed borders have shrunk away from it further yet. As a result, voyaging into the region remained a dangerous and arduous affair. Indeed, it is a task that few outside of the Deathwatch and Inquisition have braved in the past four millennia. This was to change, however, with the discovery and opening of the Warp Gate linking the Jericho Reach to the Calixis Sector; an event that has allowed the Jericho Reach to once again become accessible to the forces of the Imperium, with the inevitable consequence of Crusade.

USING THE JERICHO REACH

This chapter presents a view of the Jericho Reach, important locations within it, and some details of the momentous events that are unfolding within it. This information is intended to provide Game Masters with a ready-made setting for their Deathwatch games and campaigns and to act as the context for future supplements and adventures. The Jericho Reach is intended to show the many faces of the Imperium at war: its dynamism, hubris, heroism, and blindness. It also provides an example of the enemies that the Imperium faces and how they can interact to produce a deadly situation in which victory for one side or the other is not assured. It also shows one example of how the Deathwatch can operate and how their traditions and duty set them apart from the other forces of the Imperium that also fight in the Jericho Reach.

It is important to note that a Game Master should feel encouraged to use and modify the Jericho Reach as it is presented here: make it the setting you want, take what you like, discard what you do not, and modify it as you need. This is your game, and the universe it is set in is for you to realise as you see fit. Keep your bolt gun loaded, your eyes vigilant for dark patterns, and enjoy.