

THE THORNWINGS

Unofficial Fan Dossier · Anvil of War

„We fall first. We speak last. We do not yield. We judge the root.“

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CORE IDENTITY

Progenitor Legion	Dark Angels
Founding	c. 842.M30 — 1st Founding — raising of the 20 Legions (late M30)
Homeworld (name)	Sylvaren
Homeworld type	Jungle World
Combat doctrine	Drop-pod & shock assault
Allegiance	Loyalist
Chapter strength	Full strength (~1000 Battle-Brothers)
One-sentence definition	The Thornwings are the knife that the Lion lets fall from above into the heart of a rebellion before it knows it has one.

The four pillars

The Fall

Every attack begins from on high. The Thornwings seldom attack across a front line. They land in the palace, in the temple or in the cult's meeting hall, and they do so in the first minute, before an order reaches the streets.

The Silence

Before deployment, vox silence holds until impact. Only the Captain knows the plans. Losses are not spoken of outside the Chapter, not even to brothers of other Orders of the Legion.

The Root

Where a pod strikes, the squad holds until it is relieved or falls. No retreat is provided for, and there is no doctrine that governs one.

The Judgement

The Chapter does not kill indiscriminately. A Captain must name the head of the rebellion before the pods fall. Whoever burns the crowd to strike the head has failed.

Comparison vs. progenitor legion

Aspect	Progenitor legion	This chapter
Recruitment	Terra, later Caliban	Sylvaren, jungle tribes
Warfare	Full spectrum, each Order specialised	Decapitation by drop pod
Organisation	Hosts and Orders under the Lion	Five autonomous Great Companies
Principal Enemy	All enemies of the Great Crusade	Cults and rebellions on subjugated worlds

Secrecy	Deep-rooted secrecy throughout the Legion	Silence before the fall, losses remain internal
Colour Scheme	Black	Black with dark green
Initiation	Traditions of Terra and Caliban	Fall through the Crown Shaft

Further core facts

Fact	Value
Founding	First Founding, levy of the twenty Legions (late M30)
Homeworld	Sylvaren, Jungle World, recruiting world since 866.M30
Fortress-Monastery	Kathedra Viridis
Codex Compliance	0%, for a Codex Astartes has not yet been written
Battle Cry	"Out of the crown, for the Lion!"
Chapter Strength	1,000 brothers: 950 in five Great Companies, 38 in the Chapter command, 12 Unlanded

CORE IDENTITY (CONTINUED)

Forms of Address / Cascade of Titles

Level	Designation	Context of Use
1	Kerran, Sylvaric for "he who came down"	Self-designation after the Fall of initiation
2	The Thorns of the Lion	Name of the Chapter before the Legion and before outsiders
3	Thornwings of the First Legion, Spear of Lion El'Jonson, Keepers of the Deepgreen	Oaths, rites, declarations of war

Chapter Maxim

We fall first carries the virtue of courage. The Neophyte learns that the first brother into the fire lessens the burden of all the others. Whoever hesitates lets another fall in his place.

We speak last carries the virtue of silence, the inheritance of the First Legion. It is taught that every word before victory belongs to the enemy, and every word after it to the truth.

We do not yield carries the virtue of steadfastness. A drop pod does not launch again. The Neophyte sleeps his first night in a burnt-out pod whose hatch has been welded shut.

We judge the root carries the virtue of justice. An uprising has an origin. It is the origin that is killed, and the Neophyte learns to spare the crowd where the mission permits.

LORE & HISTORY

Founding history

The Thornwings arose from brothers of the First Legion's first Terran levy. Long before anyone thought of a Codex, they were gathered into an Order of their own in 861.M30, when the Legion ran short of worlds that could be conquered with armies, and the worlds that rose again after subjugation grew in number.

Their weapon was the drop pod, their target the head. Five years later the Order subjugated Sylvaren. With the permission of the Legion's command, it chose this world as its own recruiting world. Its geneseed remained unchanged, that of the Lion.

Homeworld description

Sylvaren is a Jungle World whose canopy lies 400 metres above the ground. On the floor, perpetual night reigns. The tribes live high in the treetops. The **Vhorl**, a black stoop-raptor, hunts by letting itself fall through the foliage. The Thornwings wear its feathers as the mark of the first fall. The **Sarcanth**, a strangler vine, overgrows every drop pod within a single rainy season, and the Chapter's dead remain spun within it.

Chapter cult

The Legion values rank, knowledge and order. The Thornwings also honour the moment of the fall. Their Chaplains teach that a man is most honest between leap and impact, because he can no longer change anything. Every deployment therefore begins with a silent litany in the sealed pod. To them the Lion is a judge whose verdict is earned through deeds. They do not ask him for aid.

Gene-seed quirks

The geneseed is stable. Sylvaren Aspirants, however, bring with them a climbing anatomy that reinforces the Ossmodula: long forearms, grip strength above the Legion average and a sense of balance that does not fail in free fall. The Occulobe adapts particularly strongly to darkness. Harsh light pains these brothers longer than others.

Curse Stages

The flaw of the First Legion shows itself here as a fall that does not end in the mind. The Chapter records every symptom with its date. It celebrates none of them.

Stage 1 — The Upward Gaze - The brother now sleeps only upright against a wall, with his helmet on. - Without orders, he climbs to the highest point in every position. - His head tilts to the side, listening, his hand resting on the grip of his chainsword.

The Captain reports the brother to the Chaplain. He remains in service, but is assigned to the Captain's squad for every fall.

Stage 2 — The Long Listening - He no longer sleeps at all, but stands strapped in an empty pod at

night. - On the palms of his gauntlets, the paint has been worn down to the ceramite by climbing. - He has removed the audio filters from his helmet, and his chainsword is never again sheathed.

A Chaplain and an Apothecary watch over him in the Gallery of Listening. Once a month the brother spends a night in a welded-shut pod. The number of times he strikes the wall is counted. If the number rises on three consecutive nights, he is considered lost.

Stage 3 — The Fall Without Ground

The brother believes he is still falling. He no longer speaks, and in everyone who stands below him he sees a cultist.

He is taken to the Root Crypt. He is not killed, for the Chapter considers him a warrior who could not finish the fall.

Lost Company

The Name. The twelve Unlanded are so called because, as the Chapter understands it, they never touched the ground. Their fall continues.

What Is Removed. Every brother in good standing bears on his left pauldron a bone-white thorn wreath around the Legion symbol, the mark of his bond to the Chapter. On the Unlanded the wreath is ground away, so that the sword stands unframed on bare black. They still belong to the Legion, but no longer to any brother.

What Is Added. Set into the exhaust housing of the backpack is a small bronze bell, struck by a clapper on a servo-joint. The clapper is powered by the backpack's energy circuit. With every step the bell strikes once, so that the brothers hear where an Unlanded walks.

FOUNDING

Distinction

Whoever hears of drop-pod assaults, jungle and silence often suspects the Raven Guard. The resemblance is convergent and has nothing to do with kinship of geneseed. The Thornwings are sons of Lion El'Jonson, and their silence is that of the First Legion.

HOMEWORLD AND FORTRESS-MONASTERY

Gazetteer of the Fortress-Monastery

Location	Function	Distinguishing Feature
The Crown Eyrie	Launch deck on the highest tree-mountain	Racks full of drop pods, smell of promethium and wet wood
The Crown Shaft	Site of initiation	300-metre vertical fall into black water, constant dripping
The Hall of Silent Pods	Place of remembrance	Upright pods of the fallen, overgrown with Sarcanth, names scratched into the hatches

The Gallery of Listening	Observation of marked brothers	Welded pods in a row, dull knocking on metal from within
The Root Crypt	Abode of the Unlanded, hidden from outsiders	Soft, irregular tolling of bells from the depths

COMPANIES

Companies

Duskbriar
Role: Intercessors

Hero name: Seraphicus Ironbriar

Hero title/epithet: Sergeant

Coldbrook
Role: Intercessors

Hero name: Nemiel Falconcrest

Hero title/epithet: Sergeant

Thistlemoor
Role: Intercessors

Hero name: Barachiel Hollowmere

Hero title/epithet: Sergeant

Mistvale
Role: Hellblasters

Hero name: Seraphicus Shadowglen

Hero title/epithet: Sergeant

Grimward
Role: Hellblasters

Hero name: Belial Vowbearer

Hero title/epithet: Sergeant

Duskmantle
Role: Terminatoren

Hero name: Ezekiel Ravensword

Hero title/epithet: Veteranen-Sergeant

Thornevale
Role: Scouts

Hero name: Danatheum Cinderoak

Hero title/epithet: Veteranen-Sergeant

Stonevale
Role: Scouts

Hero name: Nemiel Nighthollow

Hero title/epithet: Veteranen-Sergeant

GREAT COMPANIES

Overview
There are five Great Companies, because the subjugation of Sylvaren began with five simultaneous Falls onto the five treetop thrones of the tribes. Each Company holds one of these thrones as its recruiting ground. Its lord holds the rank of Captain.

Name	Lord	Colour/Insignia	Character
The High Bough (210)	Captain Zahariel Sablecrest	Dark green, Vhorl feather	The first Fall, proud
The Nightroot (200)	its Captain	Black, closed eye	Scouts, doubters
The Thorngate (190)	its Captain	Deep red, ring of thorns	Heavy breakthroughs
The Rainstream (180)	its Captain	Grey-blue, three drops	Holding after landing
The Ashclearing (170)	its Captain	Bone white, circle of ash	Purging, youngest

The High Bough
It holds the highest treetop throne and insists on the right to fall first. To it belong the squads Duskbriar and Mistvale, as well as the Predator "Darkhollow".

Hero: Sergeant Seraphicus Ironbriar. At Varr Thessin his pod struck beside the Prophet's pulpit. He held the stairway alone for eleven minutes. *"The stairway was narrow. I needed nothing more."* — Sergeant Seraphicus Ironbriar

The Nightroot
It seldom lands and sees much in return. Veteran Sergeant Nemiel Nighthollow leads the Scouts of Squad Stonevale, Sergeant Nemiel Falconcrest leads Squad Coldbrook. Its quarrel with the High Bough is old.

The Thorngate

It breaks open what others cannot open. To it belong the Dreadnought Ironvow and the Land Raider "Bleakwood".

Hero: Veteran Sergeant Ezekiel Ravensword. He led the Terminators of Duskmantle through the bunker gate of Hessik Grau, which had withstood three demolition charges. His thunder hammer opened it. *"A gate is a question. I answer it."* — Veteran Sergeant Ezekiel Ravensword

The Rainstream

It falls second and holds what the first Fall has won. Sergeant Barachiel Hollowmere leads Squad Thistlemoor, Sergeant Belial Vowbearer the plasma squad Grimward. The Dreadnought Everbough covers their positions.

The Ashclearing

It is the youngest Company and cleans up after the judgement. It is held to be the hardest.

Hero: Veteran Sergeant Danatheum Cinderoak. With Squad Thornevale he found the hidden shrine beneath the granaries of Ulmar. His Scouts needed three days without water to do so. *"The cult hides in the bread. So we search in the bread."* — Veteran Sergeant Danatheum Cinderoak

What Holds Them Together

The Chapter Master decides which Company falls and against whom. How it falls is decided by its Captain. Only the Legion can depose a Captain. If the Chapter Master orders two Companies onto the same target, precedence is wrestled out in the Crown Eyrie, and this dispute is not always purely ceremonial.

Recruitment and the Next Generation

Each Company draws its Aspirants from its own treetop tribe. It also oversees the Fall itself. This fosters deep loyalty to the Company and only shallow loyalty to the Chapter. A Neophyte of the High Bough often regards a brother of the Nightroot as a stranger.

NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Characters

Zahariel Sablecrest

Title/role: Captain

Tamiel Highward
Title/role: Lieutenant

Azrael Swordkeep
Title/role: Chaplain

Farith Blackthorn
Title/role: Librarian

Amriel Oakenshield
Title/role: Techmarine

Ironvow
Title/role: Redemptor-Dreadnought

Everbough
Title/role: Ballistus-Dreadnought

NOTABLE CHARACTERS (CONTINUED)

Chapter Master Hadriel Vannoc

He is a Terran of the first levy, grey and taciturn, and Chapter Master since 939.M30. He wears master-crafted armour with the Legion insignia ground away and wields a power sword from the time before Caliban. In 931.M30 he was the only one of his command squad to survive the Fall into the temple well of Kessivar. Of what he saw down there, he does not speak. *"I give you the target. The way you must fall yourselves."* — Chapter Master Hadriel Vannoc

Arvant Soleth, First Master

Soleth founded the order in 861.M30 and fell in 866.M30 on the treetop throne of the fourth tribe of Sylvaren. He wielded a storm bolter and a Vhorl beak as a dagger. He bowed before the treetop kings instead of killing them, and so won the world. *"Whoever lives above understands the Fall. These are the sons we need."* — Arvant Soleth

Captain Zahariel Sablecrest

Zahariel is lord of the High Bough and a Kerran of the third Sylvaric levy. He is slender and long-armed. He wears Mark IV Maximus armour, a power sword and a bolt pistol. He leads the current force with squads from three Companies, which the Nightroot holds against him. At Varr Thessin he fell first. *"Above, no one is safe. That is why I go first."* — Captain Zahariel Sablecrest

Lieutenant Tamiel Highward

Tamiel is Zahariel's second and a quiet reckoner who calculates the impact points. He carries a bolter with an auspex sight. At Ulmar he shifted the landing zone by 90 metres and thereby missed a grain hall full of refugees. *"Ninety metres. That is the width of my conscience."* — Lieutenant Tamiel Highward

Chaplain Azrael Swordkeep

He is warden of the Gallery of Listening, counts the knocks of the Marked and bears a crozius. He has brought four brothers into the Root Crypt and scratched each of their names into his own armour. *"I count so that none of you forgets that he is being counted."* — Chaplain Azrael Swordkeep

Librarian Farith Blackthorn

Farith is a Psyker who senses cult gatherings through the canopy of a city. He bears a force staff of black Sylvar wood. At Kessivar he found the temple well, and he keeps silent about what he heard within it. *"An uprising has a heartbeat. I only listen."* — Librarian Farith Blackthorn

Techmarine Amriel Oakenshield

Amriel is keeper of the drop pods of the Crown Eyrie. He bears a servo-arm and a plasma pistol. He blesses each pod individually before the Fall. At Hessik Grau he restored, within an hour, four pods that had been damaged in orbit. *"The pod falls. Whether it arrives, I decide."* — Techmarine Amriel Oakenshield

CAMPAIGNS

Campaigns

The Night of Kessivar
Era: 931.M30

Enemy: Well Cult of Kessivar

Duration: seven months

Outcome: Victory, 58 brothers fallen

Kessivar had risen again four years after its subjugation. The cult had no leader, only a well around which it prayed. Hadriel Vannoc fell into it with his command squad. He returned alone, and the cult collapsed within a week. Of the seven months that followed, the Chapter holds only a single sealed record.

The Fall on Varr Thessin

Era: 902.M30

Enemy: Prophet of Varr Thessin

Duration: three months

Outcome: Victory

The Prophet preached from a pulpit that the entire hive could see. The High Bough fell upon the pulpit square in a single wave. Seraphicus Ironbriar held the stairway, and Zahariel Sablecrest slew the Prophet in the middle of his sermon. The purge of the lower levels took three months. To this day it is the proof to which the doctrine of the first fall appeals.

The Grain Halls of Ulmar

Era: 974.M30

Enemy: Granary Cult of Ulmar

Duration: five weeks

Outcome: Victory, 61 brothers fallen

The cult had no head, but a thousand hands in the granaries. Three Companies fell upon empty squares. The shrine was found only by the Scouts of Danatheum Cinderoak, on the ground and on foot. Lieutenant Tamiel Highward saved a grain hall full of refugees. The Chapter carries the 61 dead to this day as an open debt.

THE TAINT

The doctrine of the first fall no longer fits the wars into which the Chapter is sent. The uprisings that the Legion assigns to the Thornwings have a head less and less often. They grow out of granaries, wells and workshops, much like the Sarcanth that overgrows a pod. A drop pod strikes a palace, but it does not strike the hunger in a hive city.

At Ulmar this mismatch cost 61 Battle-Brothers. Since then the Nightroot has demanded that Scouts search the ground before every fall, and for weeks at a time. The High Bough answers that a Chapter which goes on foot is merely another Company of the Legion. Captain Zahariel Sablecrest stands for the old doctrine. Lieutenant Tamiel Highward, his own second-in-command, has handed the Chapter Master a memorandum against it, and Zahariel knows of it.

Hadriel Vannoc has not decided. He has forbidden both sides from carrying the dispute before the Legion, for the First Legion tolerates discord only so long as no one sees it. This silence has a price: the Nightroot refuses to take part in Zahariel's strike force, and its Scouts serve there only because the Chapter Master has ordered it.

The recruits of the Nightroot come from the tribe of the deepest treetop. There it is already said that the High Bough lets sons fall so that it may itself remain above.

SHORT STORY

Ninety Metres

In the pod it was silent, as it should be.

Captain Zahariel Sablecrest stood in the harness, his power sword held across his chest, and counted along. Around him nine brothers of Squad Duskbriar breathed in time with the silent litany. No one spoke. Words before victory belonged to the enemy.

The pod shook as it struck the upper atmosphere of Merrow. Below lay a hive city that had submitted to the Legion six weeks ago and had been rising again for four days. The Planetary Governor was dead. Who spoke in his place, no one knew.

"Scriptor," said Zahariel on the Chapter frequency. It was the only word permitted before impact.

From another pod, falling four seconds behind, Farith Blackthorn answered. "The foundry in the third ring. There are many, Captain. I hear no single heartbeat, only many."

Zahariel did not like that. A head he could have struck. Many heartbeats meant a crowd.

From pod four came Tamiel's voice, calm and matter-of-fact. "I am setting the impact on the foundry yard. The yard is empty. The hall beside it is not."

"What is in the hall?"

"Heat. Hundreds of heat signatures."

"Impact as calculated," he said.

The retro-thrusters fired, and the ground struck the pod like a fist. The hatches fell outwards, and Duskbriar was out before the echo had faded.

The foundry yard lay in the haze of glowing slag. Men in aprons of plasteel ran, some of them towards the pods. They carried pipes, spanners and a single lasgun. Sergeant Seraphicus Ironbriar shot the man with the lasgun with a single bolt round. The others stopped.

"Where is your prophet?" Zahariel called over the external vox-speaker, a voice like metal on metal.

An old man with burned forearms stepped forward. "There is no prophet," he said. "There is the ration. The Legion has halved the ration."

"The Legion has halved nothing."

"Then someone who speaks in its name."

Behind the hall a second pod struck. Zahariel heard the sound and recognised from its pitch that it had landed too close. Amriel Oakenshield spoke on the Chapter frequency, faster than a Techmarine ought to speak. "Pod five, crosswind, impact was twelve metres off the calculation. The hall wall is hit."

In the hall someone began to scream, then many.

Zahariel turned. Through the gap in the wall he saw women, children and kettles of soup. Among them stood men with pipe guns, because forging was also done in this hall. Whether the weapons had been made against the Legion or to protect the soup, he could not tell.

Chaplain Azrael Swordkeep came out of the smoke, his crozius lowered. "They are shooting, Captain. Two of Grimward are hit."

"Who is shooting?"

"The hall."

The hall was indeed shooting, badly and desperately. A round glanced off Zahariel's pauldron, just above the thorn wreath.

Tamiel was suddenly beside him, auspex in hand. "Captain. The Governor's ration lists, from his cogitator. The halving bears the seal of the Munitorum representative. He sits in orbit, aboard our own transport."

Zahariel looked at him. Tamiel had written the memorandum, and both of them knew it.

"That does not change the fact that they are shooting," said Zahariel.

"It changes what we shoot at."

In the hall a child screamed. Somewhere behind Zahariel a brother of Duskbriar climbed onto a slag heap without having been ordered to. The brother's head tilted to one side, listening. Azrael saw it too and marked it.

"Hold fire," said Zahariel. "Duskbriar, shields to the breach. We are going in."

"And if they keep shooting?" asked Ironbriar.

"Then we hold, as the doctrine demands."

They went in, five brothers in power armour between soup kettles, and took the hits on their ceramite. One of the shooters lowered his weapon. Another did not, and Ironbriar killed him. The child who had screamed went on screaming.

Later, when the hall was quiet and the rations were being handed out anew in the yard, Tamiel wrote the report. Zahariel read it and struck out one line, the name of the Munitorum representative.

"That belongs to the Legion," he said. "We speak last."

"When is last?" asked Tamiel.

Zahariel did not answer. Up on the slag heap the brother of Duskbriar still stood, head tilted, listening for something that none of the others heard.