

DARK MAGENTA

Things that Dwell in Darkness

The Nocturnal Warriors of the Hrud in Inquisitor

By Joseph Garvin

"Shooting at them is like shooting at shadows. Except shadows never try to shoot back."

- Imperial Guardsman Sergeant Eric Turrock, after the battle of Menengrad.

"They're a little more of an inconvenience than your average vermin. They have guns."

- Agri-farm co-ordinator Simon Daemortis.

+++ A Study on the Most Foul Vermin of the Hrud by Savant Ahasuerus, servant to My Lord Euklid. +++

Honoured Lord -

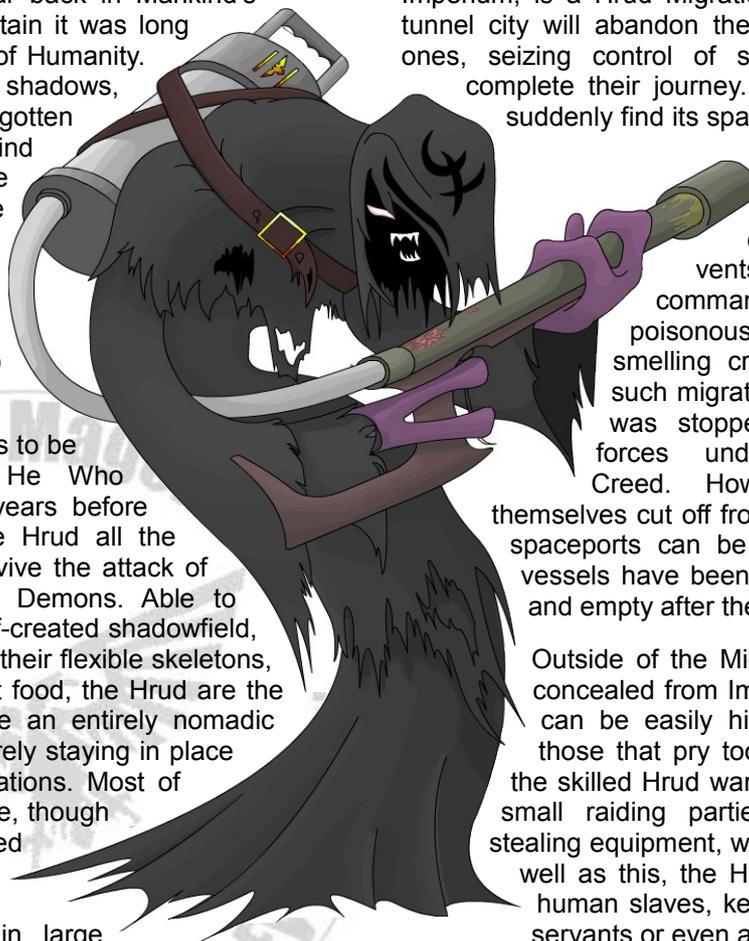
As requested, I have completed an introductory text describing the so-called 'Nocturnal Warriors' or Hrud. The Hrud claim to a heritage far far older than that of Holy Mankind [Age proves Nothing, only Faith]. Their history, we are told, reaches back millions of years, rivaling that of the Eldar in age. For most of that time, they have lived as they live now - as scavengers and vermin, hiding among the dark tunnels of more powerful races. They name their 'god' as Qah, a creator deity. This fiction is supposed to have created them, and transformed them to protect them from an enemy known as the 'Mirror Demons' [Only the Unclean shy from their Reflection - the Holy know Ugliness to be Truth]. From that day to this, they have lived hidden lives, residing in alleys and catacombs.

No-one knows when Humanity first learned of the Hrud. However, no matter how far back in Mankind's dark history it was, it is certain it was long after the Hrud had learned of Humanity. Wherever there are dark shadows, hidden tunnels, forgotten catacombs, there you will find the Hrud. They travel the stars hidden between the deckplates of Imperial battleships, and live off the refuse and leavings of hives. Who are this mysterious race? What do they desire?

The Hrud believe themselves to be the creations of 'Qah', He Who Lingers. Many millions of years before the present, Qah gave the Hrud all the abilities they needed to survive the attack of the Naam-Khoh, or Mirror Demons. Able to conceal themselves in a self-created shadowfield, slip through any barrier with their flexible skeletons, and survive on the roughest food, the Hrud are the ultimate survivors. They are an entirely nomadic race, with any one group rarely staying in place for more than a few generations. Most of what they use they scavenge, though they have a developed knowledge of plasma technology that rivals that of the Imperium. They live in large tunnel cities, often spreading many miles through an existing settlement, entirely unnoticed.

The most important Hrud activity, both for the Hrud and the Imperium, is a Hrud Migration. In these times, an entire tunnel city will abandon their homes and seek out new ones, seizing control of spaceports and starships to complete their journey. An unsuspecting world may suddenly find its spaceport under siege from near-invisible enemies, its orbiting spacecraft prowled by armed creatures who can slip through pipes and vents to reach anywhere, and its commanders assassinated by the poisonous touch of ragged, foul smelling creatures. One of the largest such migrations in the Imperium's history was stopped in 983.M41 by Imperial forces under then-General Ursarkar Creed. However, many worlds find themselves cut off from large-scale trade until their spaceports can be repaired, and many Trader vessels have been found seemingly abandoned and empty after the Hrud are finished with them.

Outside of the Migrations, Hrud remain mostly concealed from Imperial eyes. The tunnel cities can be easily hidden from prying eyes, and those that pry too far are easily dealt with by the skilled Hrud warriors. The Hrud do engage in small raiding parties into human settlements, stealing equipment, weapons and raw materials. As well as this, the Hrud utilise a large number of human slaves, kept not for hard labour, but as servants or even as pets.



Hrud in the Inquisitor Game

So, if the Hrud are so secretive, why would they be involved in a game of Inquisitor? Well, for one, Inquisitors are people who's job is to find out secrets! Beyond that, Hrud can make excellent opponents for a warband. Perhaps an Inquisitor's trusted savant has been kidnapped by Hrud to be used as a slave, and he must lead an expedition into the tunnel-city to rescue him. Perhaps a tunnel-city has been built around an ancient temple that contains a powerful daemon weapon that needs binding. Perhaps, even, the Inquisitor has simply heard rumours of a Hrud infestation, and has set out to bring the Emperor's Holy Light (in the form of burning promethium) to the shadowy Xenos. Whatever the reason, Inquisitors have more reason to face off against the Hrud than would most Imperial servants.

However, for some warbands, a Hrud may well be a member. The Hrud aren't incapable of making alliances outside of their species, though they may prefer to remain unseen. A radical Inquisitor would find the skills of a Hrud warrior very powerful, as would a renegade faction. A Hrud's loyalties could be bought with slaves, or technology, or promises of protection for their tribe. As well as this, a Hrud warband might not be out of the question. A Shaman or tribal leader accompanied by a small retinue of warriors and assassins could have a mission to counter any attempt to find the tunnel-city, or to scout out a new home in preparation for a migration.

In brief - the Hrud are secretive and deceitful, and Inquisitor is a game of secrets and lies. Whether as opponents, allies, or even a warband in their own right, the Hrud make for fascinating characters for Inquisitor.



Hrud Characters

Most Hrud are pretty similar to one-another in terms of capabilities. They aren't particularly strong or tough, nor are they amazing shots, relying more on their stealth to see them through. The statline below should be seen as a starting point for most Hrud characters. However, changes shouldn't be considered taboo! A Hrud Assassin would have a superior Weapon Skill, while a Shaman might have a high Willpower, and an even higher Sagacity than the existing one. All Hrud have the following abilities - *Bendie*,

Ssaak, *Poisonous Biology*, *Corpse Armour*, *Nightsight*. Most Hrud are low level psykers, and would have one or perhaps two low-difficulty psychic abilities. Occasionally a Hrud will develop more powerful abilities, and become a Shaman to the Hrud. Such an individual would have more powers.

Hrud carry a wide variety of equipment, both stolen and of their own design. Hrud engineers produce unique and sophisticated warp-plasma weapons, usually around the same size as a lasgun or autorifle, but also in pistol sizes. Larger weapons are not unheard of, but very rare outside of full scale migrations. The Hrud are famous scavengers though, and much of their equipment is stolen, meaning they can be equipped with nearly anything. Common, Rare and Exotic equipment would all be available to Hrud warriors, including a variety of weapons from other races, such as the Eldar, the Kroot, and the K'nib. Armour other than the Corpse Armour is very rare, and Power Armour utterly unheard of.

Bendie – A Hrud's flexible skeleton grants them remarkable abilities when it comes to movement. Able to slip through the tiniest nooks and crannies, there are few places sealed against the Hrud. A Hrud moves at Walking pace when Crawling or Sneaking. They can move through any gap, have the *Catfall* ability and have the *Scale Terrain* ability from the *Sons of Khaine* article.

Ssaak – possessed of strange abilities to twist the perceptions and wrap themselves in darkness, a Hrud can almost hide in plain sight, an ability they call the Ssaak, or "See-mist". All visual awareness tests are at -50 to detect a Hrud, no matter what the equipment (so Infrascopes would not help). Auspexes act as normal, as do the Detection and Psi-Track powers.

Poisonous Biology – the Hrud are intensely poisonous creature, rivalling Tyranids for the toxicity of their bodily fluids. All Hrud count their unarmed attacks as being poisoned with one poison, chosen when the character is created (so Zhuun-Tar, Hrud Shaman, might have "*Poisonous Biology (Choke)*" on his profile). They also have +20 to all Poison Resistance Tests.

Corpse Armour – the Hrud rarely wear armour in the usual sense, instead trusting to their 'natural' armour. In other species this would be a tough hide or a chitinous shell, but in the Hrud it is waste matter and rotten flesh packed around the Hrud's thin form. Before a battle, a Hrud character rolls for D3+2 levels of armour, applied to all locations. The armour counts as Ablative.



Hrud Profile

| | WS | BS | S | T | I | Wp | Sg | Nv | Ld |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Hrud | 40 | 50 | 40 | 30 | 60 | 60 | 70 | 40 | 40 |

Hrud Armoury

Hrud Pistol – Common for Hrud in a Juuntaak, Rare outside, Exotic for non-Hrud.



The Hrud Pistol is a common side arm amongst those who living the large hidden Juuntaak where the Hrud have freedom to produce their own weaponry. Simply a compact form of the Fusil, the Hrud Pistol packs a powerful punch.

| Type | Range | Mode | Acc. | Dam. | Shots | Reload | Weight |
|--------|-------|--------|------|------|-------|--------|--------|
| Pistol | E | Single | -15 | 2D10 | 1 | 3 | 20 |

Notes – Plasma Weapon

Psy-gore Shardthrower – Exotic



A weapon formed entirely out of the crystal it launches at its target, the Psy-Gore Shardthrower is only ever found at battlefields. These weapons are quite rare, as they cannot be repaired or reloaded by any other than a Psy-Gore, who renew them out of their own flesh.

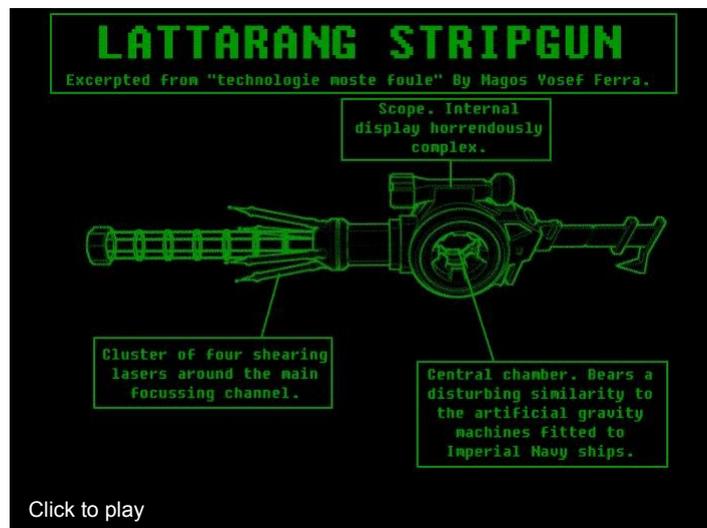
| Type | Range | Mode | Acc. | Dam. | Shots | Reload | Weight |
|--------|-------|----------------|------|------|-------|--------|--------|
| Pistol | F | Full Auto (10) | - | D6+2 | 100 | X | 25 |

Notes – For each 10 shots fired (one Full Auto action), the Shardthrower loses 2 points of weight, until with its final 10 shots, the weapon is used up, leaving just the handle.

Lattarang Stripgun – Rare

The Lattarang are a scavenging race, prowling the spacelanes for the remains of battle, when they will set out and find whatever they can. The most novel and unusual aspect of Lattarang technology is the 'Stripgun', a device originally designed to give access to ships, vehicles,

locked boxes, and the like without damaging the interior. Using a complicated array of magnetic and laser arrays, the Stripgun cuts armour to pieces and shifts it away quickly. The Stripgun only ever damages something with a constant Armour Value - that is, physical armour, cover, boxes and the like. Natural armour, force fields and psychic armour are all immune. Whatever the Stripgun can damage, it counts as Ablative for the purposes of destroying it.



| Type | Range | Mode | Acc. | Dam. | Shots | Reload | Weight |
|-------|-------|--------|------|------|-------|--------|--------|
| Basic | -20 | Single | - | D3 | 10 | 3 | 40 |

Notes – Damages Only Armour or Cover - Treats all Armour/Cover as Ablative

Nekulli Whisperlance – Rare

The Nekulli are a mysterious race from the Ultima Segmentum. The earliest records list combat between the Nekulli and the Ultramarines Legion during the Crusade, showing that they are certainly a long established race. The Nekulli Whisperlance is their primary weapon. In the hands of a Nekulli, it is a powerful weapon at range, enhancing the Nekulli's natural sonic attacks. Even without that inherited ability, the Whisperlance is a powerful weapon, capable of chewing through armour plate and flesh alike.



| Reach | Damage | Parry Penalty |
|-------|--------|---------------|
| 2 | 2D10+4 | -25.00% |

Notes – Strength Bonus only when wielded in two hands.

Slaan Neural Dominator – *Legendary*

The Slaan Neural Dominator is considered little more than a rumour by the Xenotechnologists of the Adeptus Mechanicus. A device successfully integrating both Abominable Intelligence in some form and warp technology is considered by many to be impossible, and even among those who think it possible, the very idea is unpleasant. However, such devices exist. Many millions of years before the first human clutched an axe, the ancient Slaan had developed a device that would allow its wielder to control the minds of others. However, darker rumours suggest that this is only a by-product of its true purpose, one which is unimaginably powerful.



The Slaan Neural Dominator allows its user to use the Puppet Master psychic ability. This use is not Risky, and is used with a Willpower of 40+D10, rolled each time the ability is used. A character may spend 'concentrate' actions before using the dominator, and each concentrate action provides an additional 2D10 to the dominator's willpower. As with normal psychic concentrate actions, the bonus is lost after the dominator is used.

About the Authors

Joseph Garvin is troublingly proud of his place as the Conclave's 8th biggest poster, and should probably actually play a game of Inquisitor now.

Kenneth Gardner is an (occasionally) active member of the Conclave, who is best known for his originality, and sometimes rather twisted characters.



The tunnels were dank, dark and filthy. Every vile thing you can imagine littered the floor, from fecal matter to rotting, half-finished meals. Crawling into their nest was like crawling through an open sewer, and it was an experience that all four of us would remember to our graves. The tunnel was only wide enough for us to travel in single-file, and it was barely tall enough for us to crawl through. Some areas were so narrow that we had to slither on our bellies through the filth to get through. However, after what felt like hours, the tunnel seemed to open up into a larger cavern, perhaps a dozen metres wide, and we were finally able to stand up straight. Our backs ached after the long slog through the filth, but we remained ever vigilant. For the past nine days, various toxic gases had been pumped through this nest, and should have killed off the most of the alien filth, but this species was surprisingly resistant to poisons. It was almost a certainty that some of them would have survived.

And that was where we came in - the PDF's 162nd vermin population control team. It was our job to make sure that alien pests such as these 'Hrud' met a messy end before they became anything more than an inconvenience. However, this nest had gone unnoticed for so long that it had grown to an incredible size. Already, we had crawled through hundreds of metres of tunnels, caverns, and caves. And so far, we still hadn't seen anything to signify that this nest had been occupied.

"Stay alert." Sergeant Vortis muttered as he brought his compact las-carbine up to his shoulder, his eyes sweeping the room from side to side, looking for any trace of the alien menace. However, like all the others, this room appeared to be completely deserted. As I followed his gaze, I noticed all manner of unusual devices and equipment. At one side of the room, a large number of stolen Imperial weapons had been stockpiled. At various points throughout the room, there were butchered lasguns or autoguns that had been hybridised with other forms of technology which I didn't recognise to create machine-heresies that the aliens probably planned to use as weapons.

"It's a weapons workshop." The Sergeant murmured, nudging one of the mutilated lasguns with his boot. "Looks like they were gearing up for an attack..."

"Sergeant..." interrupted Miller, our auspex operator, who had only just emerged from the tunnel. "...I think we've got a live one somewhere in here." He warned, as a wry, knowing smile spread itself across the sergeant's weather-beaten features.

"You heard him, boys... Keep them peeled, and shoot anything that isn't human." At the sergeant's orders, we fanned out, examining each and every corner, crack, nook, and cranny for signs of the alien menace we had been sent to destroy. Our lasguns swept across crudely fashioned work-stations, and all the while, our fingers were on the triggers and our nerves were on edge.

After only a few moments of searching the room, a bolt of superheated blue-hot plasma erupted from the darkness up ahead and caught Corporal Friars square in the chest. He managed to let out a panicked scream before his lungs, along with most of his internal organs, were vapourised to nothingness. In response, a half-dozen hurried lasgun shots peppered the area that the blast had originated from, but we were too late - the creature had already repositioned himself. Only a heartbeat later, the creature in the dark fired again, this time catching Miller's left leg, burning the flesh and bone away to little more than a sprinkling of ash. With an agonised cry, Miller collapsed onto the filthy tunnel floor. When he hit the deck, his face landed in a pile of cold, black filth that I didn't even want to guess at what it might have once been. As Miller rolled on the floor, screaming, we fired into the darkness once more, but again, were denied the satisfying sound of an alien death-scream.

"Shut up, Miller!" The Sergeant barked as he snatched up the auspex. The Hrud were almost impossible to see with the naked eye, and this meant that your best chance of hunting them was by ear. However, we couldn't hear anything over Miller's agonised screams and cries. "Miller, you will shut your damned noise-hole right now, or I'll put a las-bolt through it!" The Sergeant bawled, which seemed to shock Miller into silence for the time being.

Sergeant Vortis checked the Auspex, probably to see if he could get a better fix on the alien's position, and for a moment, I was so distracted watching him that I didn't even see the slithering filth-creature approaching me from the side. With a gargling war-cry, it leapt upon me, knocking me to the ground and stabbing at my flak-vest with a crudely fashioned, curved iron knife that looked like it may have once been part of the inner wheel of a cog. At that moment, I was thankful to the Emperor that the alien didn't have the intelligence to attack my unprotected throat or face, and thankful to the PDF's quartermaster for issuing us with these protective vests.

The creature had raised his knife to make a second blow when its filthy, necrotic face was blown apart by a well-placed las-bolt. I pushed the alien's corpse off of me with revulsion. Its blood smelt absolutely foul, and the tattered rags that it wore were so filthy that I doubted if they had ever been washed.

That was all we saw of the Hrud that day. Of the nineteen teams sent in to cleanse the survivors of the Hrud nest, ours saw the least conflict, and when I think back to that dark, vile alien creature that attacked us, I am thankful that we didn't see more of them.

- Excerpt from the logbook of PDF vermin control team member Michael Keveth, 898M41