

WARHAMMER AGE OF SIGMAR



BATTLETOME SUPPLEMENT

DARKOATH

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Sigmar's whelps preach their asinine vision of progress even as their crusades seek to drive us from these lands. Lands that were ours in the Age of Myth and are still ours to this day.

Those fools call it heresy to see the world as it truly is. They name us savages and heathens, merely for seizing what we need to survive. We are less than beasts in their eyes.

They forget that the same blood flows in their veins as in ours. We were kin once, before the God-King's craven treachery revealed his promises to be worthless. Let them come, then, with their guns and their pride. They are hypocritical cowards, and one day we shall crush their pathetic dream of civilisation beneath our boots.

We are Darkoath. The deities we worship do not withhold their might, nor do they answer our sworn pledges with haughty silence. When we offer up the blood of our enemies, they drink it greedily, and in return, they flood our veins with power beyond measure.

It is this same power that we shall use to shatter the will of those who foolishly seek to impose order onto that which is orderless. They will die in droves, their slashed-open corpses offered up to the gods as tribute. In time, their cities will fall and their priests will writhe in burning agony upon the altars of their gilded temples.

When all they know is ruin, and they prostrate themselves before us in terrified submission, we shall present them with the same choice our ancestors faced so many centuries ago: bow their heads to the inevitable or endure torment unending with no hope of release.

How many will willingly embrace such suffering, I wonder? And how many will instead take their first steps upon the very path that the Darkoath now walk?

THE DARKOATH TRIBES

Descendants of those ill-fated humans left behind when Sigmar retreated behind the Gates of Azyr, the Darkoath have entered pacts with the deities of ruin in order to endure the unendurable. As merciless as they are proud, they launch raids from their Chaos-corrupted homelands, fulfilling oaths of slaughter and vengeance.

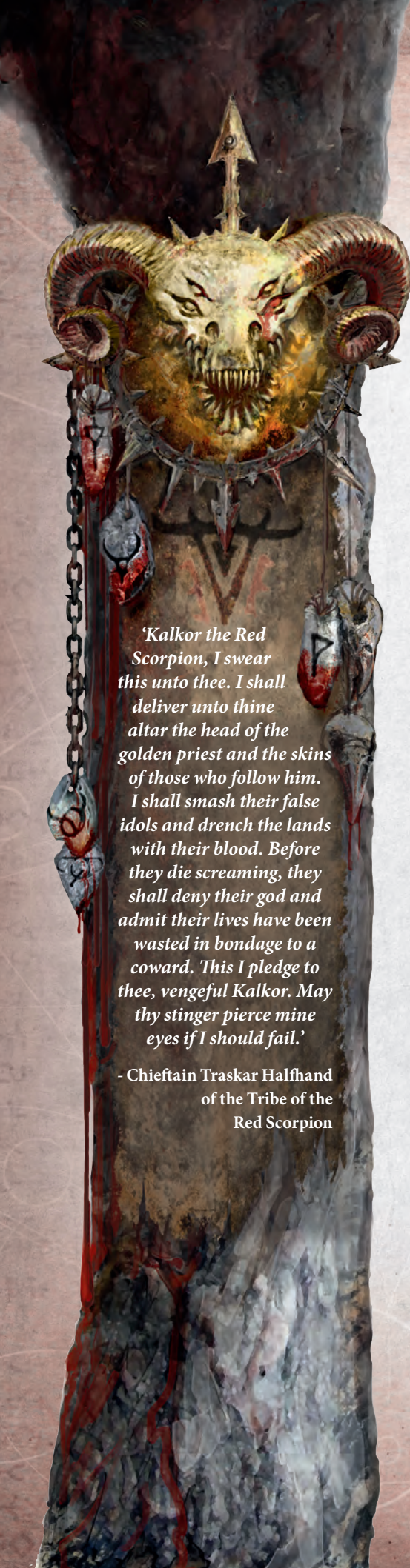
When the Darkoath tribes unite for war, the sight is enough to strike fear into the boldest hearts. Thousands of fearsome men and women line the horizon from end to end, clattering axes against their shields as they scream oaths to the Dark Gods and spilling their own blood to seal the pact. Infernal power gathers around them like a shimmering heat haze. A towering figure on horseback roars a command, and the bellowing mass surges forth to glory or death. Horsemen gallop along the flanks of the enemy army, hurling javelin volleys and twisting nimbly in their saddles to avoid any missiles dispatched in response.

Reeling from these attacks, the sturdiest of battlelines are hard-pressed to endure the furious impact of the Darkoath charge; snarling and spitting, leather-clad brutes knock their foes to the ground and slam axes into their yielding flesh. Just as the fighting reaches an apex of brutality, the air is split by a hideous shriek. All eyes are drawn to a loping monster emerging from the wilderness, its flesh rippling with dark flames and its eyes alive with a terrible hunger. When this fiend leaps into the fray, shredding flesh and armour with its sword-sized talons, the enemy's will is certain to break, and the battle is sure to devolve into a frenzied massacre.

Darkoath warriors may scorn the disciplined formations of professional soldiers, but when it comes to hardiness and sheer

ferocity, few humans alive can rival them. Sigmarites who have spent their lives in the cramped confines of one of the free cities like to imagine their own existence to be difficult. They simply cannot comprehend the horror of those lands beyond the borders of the God-King's consecrated domain, where raw Chaos bleeds from the earth, the skies rain acidic filth and half-daemon abominations prowl in search of living flesh. This is the environment in which the Darkoath were moulded. For them, every day is a nightmare from which they can never wake. They know nothing of luxury, nothing of the safety of high walls or the soothing lies of holy prophets. The Darkoath know only the path of the axe, through which the strong survive and the weak perish.

Strongest of all are those entities that have for so long dominated the realms, twisting everything to suit their tastes: the Dark Gods of Chaos. The Darkoath are no heretical scholars of the Ruinous Powers, nor do they worship them in the fashion of a formal pantheon. Indeed, most are not even aware of the dread names Khorne, Tzeentch, Nurgle and Slaanesh. Instead, they offer tribute to aspects of the gods that they depict as monstrous entities or animate spirits of the darkest places. The Blood Crow, the Thrice-hanged One, the Pale Elk, Saal-Tesh of the Pit: all these and more are spoken of by the Darkoath tribes, each of which pays homage to multiple regional



'Kalkor the Red Scorpion, I swear this unto thee. I shall deliver unto thine altar the head of the golden priest and the skins of those who follow him. I shall smash their false idols and drench the lands with their blood. Before they die screaming, they shall deny their god and admit their lives have been wasted in bondage to a coward. This I pledge to thee, vengeful Kalkor. May thy stinger pierce mine eyes if I should fail.'

- Chieftain Traskar Halfhand of the Tribe of the Red Scorpion

deities of its own. Yet though they respect strength, the Darkoath's fixation on personal willpower prevents them from entirely devoting themselves to any one deity. Those Chaos worshippers who do so are held in contempt, mocked as weaklings revelling in their own bondage.

The transactional nature of Darkoath faith is exemplified by the dispassionate manner in which they offer tribute, honouring whichever patron might serve their immediate needs best. By pledging bloody sacrifices, looted treasures and other offerings to these esoteric aspects of the Chaos Pantheon, Darkoath warriors nonetheless feed the gods themselves and earn their pleasure. In the process, they swell their own might beyond the limits of a human's physical constraints. It is this practice that allows them

to survive environments in which so many cultures have perished, either devoured or mutated beyond recognition.

The Darkoath despise all who preach about order and justice, but they reserve the greatest part of their antipathy for the worshippers of Sigmar the God-King, whom they name a coward and betrayer. The Darkoath view Sigmar as a posturing deity who so proudly proclaims his love of honour yet who abandoned their ancestors so many years ago, leaving them to face the horrors of the Age of Chaos alone. Now he has returned, they cannot believe that he has the gall to accuse his lost flock of corruption, when all that they ever did was survive. Hatred boils in the hearts of all Darkoath when they hear the name of the one they call the Craven God spoken aloud. As his

Dawnbringer Crusades drive into lands the tribes have claimed for centuries, they are met with an onslaught of violence and horror as the Darkoath beseech their own fell patrons for the strength to break the bones and cleave the heads of these self-righteous so-called 'reclaimers'.

And the Dark Gods answer. Unlike Sigmar, the entities beyond the veil have never forsaken the Darkoath. Harsh are their demands and cruel are their punishments, but there is a simple honesty in that most primal of transactions: the willing sacrifice of one's soul in exchange for power. The Darkoath long ago proved that humanity does not need Sigmar's blessing to endure or even to thrive. Now they mean to demonstrate this anew by reducing his meagre empire to ashes and bringing death and disaster to his deluded servants.

OATHSTONES

Each and every Darkoath warrior carries at their side at least one oathstone, a roughly carved chunk of rock or similar material upon which they scratch their pledges to the Dark Gods. Usually, these promises revolve around the taking of life and the seizing of trophies in honest battle, but not always. Sometimes, the pledge is more deeply personal and involves a feat of strength, cunning or endurance worthy of renown. Regardless, once they have etched their runic markings upon the stone, the warrior will slice open their own flesh and let the blood pool into the indentations. If they go on to fulfil their oath, they will be greatly rewarded for it. In truth, they earn no more than a tiny scintilla of the gods' favour, but to a human, this is exhilarating enough. A warrior might be blessed with the strength to crush a foe's skull in their fist or the endurance to shrug off a volley of musketry without stumbling. Some are granted bewitching powers of charisma or halos of coruscating sorcery that enable them to incinerate foes with a glance. Nevertheless, such gifts are only ever temporary, lasting only so long as the chosen vessel continues to prove their worth.

Those who walk this path to glory might go on to command a tribe or even a nation as a Warqueen or Chieftain, rallying thousands to join their conquests. For a rare few destined souls, perhaps even the ultimate dark blessing of true daemonhood awaits. To fail, however, is to invite a black stain upon one's honour that is almost impossible to remove. All Darkoath know that a curse of ill fortune surrounds pledge-breakers. It will haunt them unto death unless they can erase it through some spectacular penance. Those who repeatedly displease the gods might even be subjected to the agonising punishment of mutation, their flesh writhing as they are slowly and agonisingly remoulded into a shapeless form as wretched as it is repulsive. Such horrors prove that for all the Darkoath's claims to self-mastery, deep down they are as hopelessly in thrall to Chaos as any god-worshipping zealot.





“The gods are watching. Kursk the Raging Hound, the Bringer of Joy, the Thousandfold One, Flyblown Morghush and the Shadow-in-the-Moon. To them, we have sworn our oaths of slaughter. Failure is shame. Mercy is weakness. To war, kin of the Axe! To glory and slaughter!”

– Warqueen Yagatha of the Tribe of the Black Axe



THE COST OF SURVIVAL

The Darkoath endure amidst an ocean of horror, living, hunting and surviving in some of the most forsaken environs imaginable. Surrounded on all sides by corruption, untamed sorcery and rampaging mutant fiends, each day is a hellish crucible of suffering from which only the strongest emerge alive.

The tribes of the Darkoath are spread far and wide across the near-infinite expanse of the Mortal Realms, carving out an existence in every kind of environment: snow-caked mountain peaks, festering swamplands, metallic island chains and the blinding, fractal deserts of Hysh. They occupy wild places that no sane Sigmarite would ever consider habitable, locations so drenched in the stuff of Chaos that the ground beneath one's feet seethes with malignant hunger. In such places, the light of reason has long ago been snuffed out. One can only hope to survive through brutality and superstition.

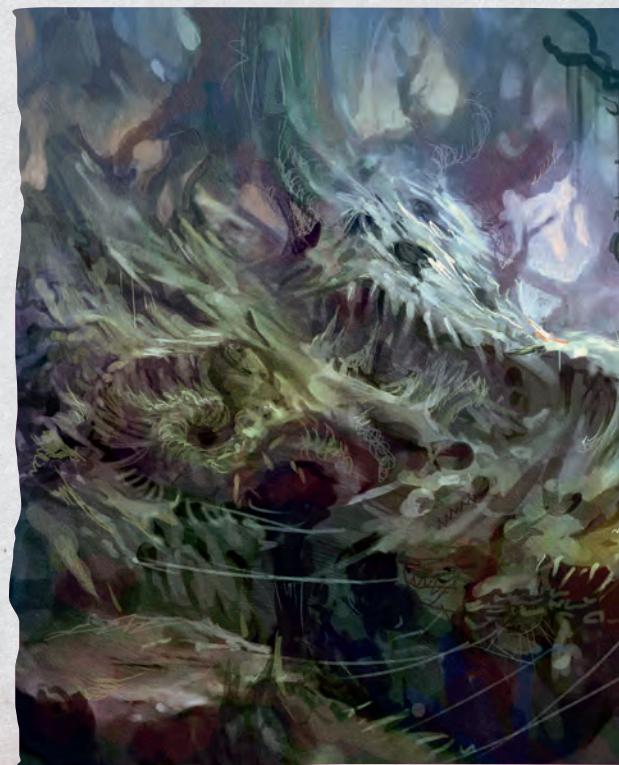
The Darkoath know all too well the menagerie of horrors that lurks beyond the torches of their war camps, prowling in search of flesh or souls. Such creatures are often their only source of food and precious skins that keep the bitter elements at bay. They understand that to survive in such a world demands the erosion of so-called 'civilised' concepts such as mercy or nobility, which serve only to ensure one's brutal demise. The ancient ways must always be honoured, no matter the cost. Rituals of blood sacrifice, self-mutilation and the pledging of ever more violent oaths become part of the routine of daily life.

The price of such an existence is exemplified by the horned beasts known as Wilderfiends, at least one of which lurks close to every Darkoath war camp. Former champions of their clan taken and reshaped by the Dark Gods, these creatures retain an instinctual bond with their kin, even as a need for fresh corpse-meat threatens to overwhelm them. It is the duty of

the Chieftain and their shamans and spirit-speakers to appease the creature with offerings of flesh and the trophies of defeated foes, for although it is a vile entity, a Wilderfiend intuitively channels dark sorceries that protect its former comrades from even fouler predators. However, the beast demands ever greater tribute, regardless of whether or not the clan has captive prisoners to be sacrificed. If one of their own must be ritually flayed and delivered up to ensure the survival of the pack, then so be it.

Ruthlessness may be ingrained in Darkoath culture, but they are still humans, and their way of life is not without a sense of kinship and shared strife. The bonds of the Darkoath are forged in blood and are just as strong as those of Sigmar's faithful. The God-King's priests may rant about how the forsaken heathens value no life beyond their own, but the mere fact that successive generations have endured out there in the darkness belies this. Yet the truth is that the Darkoath's familial ties offer sweet succour to the Dark Gods upon whose patronage they rely. After all, no gift is more potent than one delivered at terrible personal cost. Should the survival of the tribe require a Wilderfiend's presence upon the battlefield, only the ritual murder of a treasured companion or family member will suffice to draw it from its lair. Often, those chosen go willingly to their doom, content that their own gruesome fate will ensure that their loved ones live on. The heady broth of grief, tragedy and betrayal that results from such an offering never fails to delight whatever fell powers bear witness to it.

For all the brutality of their existence, most Darkoath are neither insane nor blood-crazed. They live according to a moral system far removed from those who do not have to fight for each morsel of food or face the prospect of torturous death every time they step across the threshold of their homes. Some of the Darkoath's mightiest warlords began their journey not because of some vision of personal glory but simply out of the desire to keep their kin alive at all costs. It is true that a lifetime of constant, numbing violence has since turned many of these men and women into figures of dread, each obsessed with the fulfilment of ever darker and more bloodthirsty oaths. Yet they were heroes once.



RAVAGERS

The Darkoath may pride themselves on their autonomy and fierce individuality, but the vast majority of their tribes are chained to the will of Archaon the Everchosen, prime warlord of Chaos. Those who deny his call are marked for death, soon exterminated by either Archaon's roving agents or rivals seeking to prove their own loyalty. As the most widespread of human Chaos-worshipping cultures, the Darkoath can be found fighting alongside all of Archaon's Damned Legions. Wherever the Everchosen marches to war, opportunities for slaughter and oath-taking are plentiful, and no Darkoath warrior would ever turn down the chance to lay waste to the pathetic monuments of civilisation or revenge themselves upon the God-King's pious servants.

Most frequently, however, the Darkoath raid and pillage under their own banners, gathering themselves into great hosts led by tribal elders or charismatic figureheads. Known as Ravagers, these unruly hordes form a wildly varied assemblage, combining the tattered heraldry and bloodstained totems of scores of tribes from across the realms. Overwhelming their foes with their numbers and aggression, they sweep across the lands,

burning and despoiling as they go. Enemies are encircled by a tide of surging, chanting Marauders who revel in their prey's fear before closing in and hacking them to pieces. Though fearsomely powerful, Ravager hosts seldom remain united for long; bitter feuds and rivalries soon spring up. Only the most iron-willed warlords can hope to maintain the horde's cohesion and, in doing so, command an army capable of laying waste to any kingdom.



ALL FOR GLORY, ALL FOR THE TRIBE!

MASTERS OF THE DARKOATH

Only the most relentless champions may rise to take control of a Darkoath tribe, usually by slaughtering the incumbent leader in a ritual duel. These beings command the fear and respect of their kin, though they themselves are beholden to darker powers still – upon whose favour their people's very existence depends.

DARKOATH CHIEFTAINS ON WARSTEEDS

Sat astride a blade-masked warsteed, its flank strewn with the skulls of slain challengers, a Darkoath Chieftain surveys the battlefield. With keen eyes, they look for weaknesses in the enemy's

formation, much as an alpha wolf selects the most vulnerable prey to hunt. The moment they sense blood, the Chieftain raises their axe and lets it fall, ordering their warriors to charge and taking their place at the tip of the spear, as tradition demands. As these dread figures hew heads and limbs from their foes, they swear ever more outrageous oaths to the fell beings that they worship, receiving boons for each gory pledge fulfilled.

To rise to a position of leadership in a Darkoath tribe is no meagre feat. It requires a single-minded level of ruthlessness of which few humans are capable, a taste for killing and a willingness to risk one's soul in the pursuit of glory. Only those who prove their strength by gaining the Dark Gods' favour can earn the respect – and fear – of their kin.

Ultimately, these aspirants must challenge the warrior who currently occupies the position of Chieftain. In a ritual duel that takes place before the entire tribe, the two adversaries viciously hack and tear at each other until one strikes a mortal blow. Should the challenger claim the kill, their usurpation is almost complete. Though bloodied and exhausted, they must now seek out their tribe's Wilderfiend – a deformed and twisted patron that lurks in the depths of some benighted forest or dank cave near





the tribal war camp. Approaching this monster, the would-be Chieftain offers up the head of their rival as tribute, draping the monster's horns with oathstones and treasures. If the aspirant emerges from the Wilderfiend's lair alive, they can finally claim their due.

Even victory does not signal the end of their dark odyssey. Whereas before they needed to care only for their own advancement, now the Darkoath Chieftain must learn to wield the tribe itself as a weapon. Where once they swore oaths predicated upon their own skill as a warrior, now their promises to the Dark Gods are far more long-reaching. A failed oath taken by a Chieftain risks dooming not only their soul but also those of their people. Heroes' skulls or slain monsters alone are no longer sufficient to please the Ruinous Powers. Now the Chieftain must swear increasingly bold pledges in blood upon their oathstones – the subjugation of a rival tribe, perhaps, or the sacking of a city – if they are to prevent the favour

of the infernal from fading away. Knowing well the consequences of failure, Darkoath Chieftains demand much from their warriors, driving them relentlessly in their quest to conquer and ravage new territories and brutally punishing those who fail to follow their commands. Mounted atop a hardy warsteed, they oversee each raid and ambush, directing their kin with a battle-cunning whetted by decades of ceaseless warfare.

DARKOATH FELLRIDERS

Mobility is key not only to the Darkoath way of war but also to their very survival. Long ago, they came to understand that in the violent maelstrom of the Chaos wilderness, relying upon static defences was a death sentence. Daemons and hungry fiends would soon descend en masse, overwhelming whatever meagre fortifications they could fashion. Those clans that survived instead took up the way of the nomad, relying upon hardy steeds to keep them one step ahead of the horrors snapping at their heels.

To this day, the Darkoath are known for their skilled horsemanship, for they have learnt to turn those talents towards offence as well as defence. Their mounts have grown as vicious as their riders, their scrawny frames rendered wiry and tough by a diet of corrupted vegetation and mouldering corpse-flesh. These are no noble chargers such as the folk of the cities bring to the battlefield; they are beasts tainted with daemonic ichor that delight in war and are driven crazy by the scent of blood.

These warsteeds bear their masters into battle with sure-footed speed, their lack of barding and natural agility allowing them to wheel and turn upon a coin. Darkoath riders favour strike-and-fade tactics, hurling volleys of javelins into the flanks of their foes with great accuracy, skewering warriors and leaving gaping holes in their battleline. When the enemy breaks and flees, the Fellriders begin the exhilarating chase, riding down their terrified prey and competing with one another to see who can score the most kills.

WARRIORS OF THE WASTES

Darkoath take pride in their strength and ability to tolerate the intolerable. Rendered steel-hard by lives spent surrounded by death and suffering, they are ferocious fighters capable of overwhelming more professional, well-equipped armies with the sheer fury of their assaults.

DARKOATH MARAUDERS

The merciless culture of the Darkoath gives rise to hardened folk to whom killing comes as naturally as breathing. Tall and broad, they drape themselves in beast-skins and leathers, preferring the freedom of fighting unencumbered to the clumsy suits of armour so beloved of the God-King's folk. In their hands, they clasp axes and shields of crude but rugged design, etched with ill markings and affixed with trophies and tchotchkes. These are the Darkoath Marauders, the bane of civilisation the realms over. Woe to those who stray into their territory, for they will soon hear the terrible sound of bellowed oaths and weapons hammered upon wooden targets, followed by the thunder of footfalls all around. In a great

mass, the Darkoath Marauders descend upon their foes, roaring with triumph as they litter the ground with severed limbs and cloven skulls.

From the moment they can walk, the youth of the Darkoath tribes are schooled in the art of killing and trained to wield the axe and the sword. Upon their coming of age, they take part in 'blooding raids' on enemy territory, usually targeting rival clans or Sigmarites. During this trial, they will swear their first oath; slicing open their flesh and letting the crimson liquid soak into their oathstone, they will promise a gift of sacrifice to whichever entity their culture venerates above all. Kill follows kill, raid follows raid, and soon the annihilation of one's foes becomes a visceral thrill to be cherished.

Darkoath do not rely upon close formations and well-drilled tactics to defeat their foes. By no means does this suggest they lack cunning; many are the Dawnbringer officers who have experienced the nightmare of fighting a foe who understands the Chaos-ravaged wilderness implicitly and whose ambushes are as swift as they are brutal.

Eager to wet their blades and speartips with the gore of worthy foes, Marauder kinbands swear oaths of first blood, racing to claim the honour of being the first to cut an opponent down. Should that pledge be fulfilled, they are granted might beyond that of even the strongest humans. They become so inured to pain that they do not stop fighting even when carved open or riddled with arrows.



CURSED IS THE OATHBREAKER

DARKOATH WILDERFIENDS

Every Darkoath tribe is watched over by a dark entity known as a Wilderfiend, a hulking, malformed thing that lurks in the shadows beyond the reach of the campfire's light. It is a manifestation of primal malice that demands constant appeasement. If it does not receive a steady supply of sacrifices, its wrath will fall upon the tribesfolk. Food and water coagulates into a foul-smelling ooze. Warriors set upon one another in a frenzy, driven mad by visions they cannot banish. Eventually, the fiend itself lopes out of the darkness to snatch away those haunted and luckless souls that remain, dragging them back to its lair to be consumed.

Each Wilderfiend was once a Chieftain or Darkoath elder, twisted by the Ruinous Powers for failing to fulfil their sworn pledges. Their spine curls, their limbs elongate and antlers burst from their skull as the victim screams and writhes in agony. Eventually, a creature more beast than man emerges, its eyes blazing with dark fire but retaining a flicker of cold sentience. Haunted by shadowed memories of the life now lost to it, a Wilderfiend is bound to forever stalk the clan from which it hailed, acting as both watchful sentinel and ravenous persecutor of its kin.

This transformation is not merely physical. Now able to call upon innate powers of sorcery at will, a Wilderfiend can trap its prey in a circle of coruscating flames with but a gesture. The aura of unnaturalness that surrounds it is so potent that wherever it prowls, the grass withers and animals flee in dread. It is these same abilities, along with its formidable strength, that it uses to destroy threats to its clan or to unleash grotesque maledictions upon those who fail to honour it with gifts. Some rare tribes are blessed – or cursed – by two or more of the monsters. This inevitably

means that they must raid and kill all the more ferociously to keep their protectors satiated.

If a Darkoath Chieftain is transformed into a Wilderfiend, their vacant title will go to another hero of the tribe, to whom also passes the gruelling duty of appeasing their predecessor. Few relish such a grim task, and not only because they risk being ripped apart every time they descend into the beast's lair. When these supplicants gaze into the creature's eyes, they see a reflection of their own doom. Unless they can earn the favour of the Dark Gods forever, they will one day suffer the same fate, beginning the tragic cycle of sacrifice anew.

A Wilderfiend does not typically accompany its kin on minor raids, but in times of desperation, it may be summoned to battle. Even then, it is only drawn forth by offerings of great sacrifice: the gouged-out hearts of every eighth member of the clan, perhaps, or the flayed but still-living bodies of a Chieftain's most trusted companions. Should the tribute meet its approval, the beast will fall upon the foe with gruesome eagerness. Sometimes a Wilderfiend will demand a blood sacrifice from its own people in the midst of battle so as to unleash the full measure of its might. This is a price that most Chieftains are prepared to pay. The moment that it bites into the victim, it emits waves of infernal energy that empower nearby Darkoath.



WORTHY OFFERINGS

Filthy heathens,' the Arch-Knight spat. Even drenched in mud and gore, the man managed to project sneering disdain. 'What are you waiting for? Let's end this.'

He lumbered forward in his heavy plate, his basilisk-crested helm swaying with each step. Laughing, two Darkoath warriors closed in, perhaps thinking their wounded prey was ripe for the kill. The first fool ate a length of steel as the Arch-Knight's broadsword flashed out. The second cursed and tried to plunge a bone knife into the Sigmarite's back. It scraped across hardened metal, and the intended victim spun, clamped his free hand around his assailant's throat, and proceeded to smash his face to pulp with a jewelled pommel.

'Is this it?' the Arch-Knight cackled. 'Is this all you have? By the God-King, you weakling ba—'

Chieftain Argath slammed the blunt haft of his axe into the base of the Sigmarite's neck, below the rim of his helm. The man slumped to the ground bonelessly.

'He fought well,' said Dathul.

'He did,' Argath agreed. 'Worthy flesh.'

He kicked the Sigmarite's sword aside. Doing so triggered a lance of agony that ran right through him, from the sucking wound in his chest down to his boots. Argath let loose a sound halfway between a growl and a wheezing cough.

'That is a grave wound, father,' said Dathul. There was no audible concern in the words. 'It should be packed and sealed with flame.'

'Not yet,' Argath snarled. 'An offering must be delivered. The gods hunger.'

Dathul said nothing. Perhaps he was wondering whether the time was right to sink his own axe into Argath's skull and claim leadership over the Dread Wolf clan. Argath would certainly have been considering it, were their positions reversed. Yet his firstborn made no such move. The young warrior sat high in his saddle, his shaved and tattooed head spattered with recently spilled blood, his expression unreadable as ever. The last vestiges

of youth had vanished from Dathul over the past few months, revealing a lean and scarred warrior. Already he had earned the respect of the tribe's strongest fighters, having fearlessly fulfilled his bold oaths.

In the distance, they could hear screams and clashing steel. Battle had long since devolved into slaughter. The Sigmarites had made a good account of themselves, truth be told. It had taken the Dread Wolves three days and nights of brutal butchery to drive them from their trenches. Argath had led the last charge himself. Somehow, the cannonades of the enemy had screamed past him and his warsteed, even as they shredded so many of his tribe to mist and bone. The Sigmarites had paid dearly for those deaths. Argath himself had pledged to Kalul the Lurker that he would slay a dozen worthy foes in battle. His axe had claimed twice that many scalps.

Only later did he realise he had taken a lead ball to the chest. When the thrill of battle finally faded, he came to his senses, unhorsed and standing alone amidst a butcher's yard of corpses in the lashing rain.

Even then, it was not the searing pain that concerned him. Nor the prospect of death, even. It was the voice echoing in his skull, the insistent, hungry call that rattled his brain and turned his spittle to acid. A demand that could not be ignored.

Flesh. Souls. Tribute.

'Father?' said Dathul.

'Come,' said Argath, gesturing at the stricken enemy commander. 'Help me with this one.'

Mounted once more with their prisoner lashed across the back of Argath's steed like a butchered spiralhorn, they departed from the battlefield and followed the Witch's Trail. It curled like a crone's finger along the edge of the forest before plunging between the trees. Soon it perished, swallowed up by knotted roots and vines. Argath had walked this path many times before. As they rode on, Hysh's light dimmed to a thin band of silver, which faintly illuminated the lumpen shapes strung from branches and boughs all around.

The corpses swayed and spun in the wind. Some were pallid and waxen, untouched save for the flies and maggots making a slow feast of them. Others had been half-eaten, and in some places there dangled nothing but yellowed bones.

'Stop,' said Argath, bringing his steed to a halt. 'We go on foot from here.'

All around the bodies, oathstones were strung like stone fruit. The last pledges of fallen Dread Wolves.

'Fell times of late,' said Dathul.

'Weakness breeds contempt,' Argath replied. 'The gods scorn us and our meagre offerings.'

'Not a day has passed without us spilling Sigmarite blood,' said Dathul. 'How many did we kill this morning alone? Barely an oath of blood was left unfulfilled.'

Argath laughed bitterly and immediately regretted it. So terrible was the lance of torment that flashed through him that he doubled over, straining his neck in an attempt to quench a scream. He felt Dathul's gaze boring into him.

'Meagre offerings,' he repeated through gritted teeth. 'Sacrifice must have meaning. Have I not taught you this a thousand times?'

'You are dying,' said Dathul.

'Then listen well, fool. I have led our tribe for two and twenty seasons. I have sworn more oaths than I can remember. I have slaughtered the Great Betrayer's whelps on a hundred battlefields. It will never be enough, for the powers we bargain with know neither satisfaction nor contentment.'

There followed an uneasy silence, broken by a groan. The prisoner had awakened. The man was shifting groggily, trying in vain to unbind wrists secured with lengths of oxen-gut.

'Where... where am I?' he gasped. 'Where are you taking me, you devils?'

Dathul dropped agilely from his saddle, strode over to the captive and unceremoniously hauled him to the ground.

'Be silent,' he said, running the edge of a skinning knife softly down the knight's temple. 'And know that if you run, I will peel you slowly.'

The man spat a mouthful of blood and glared at them with an admirable lack of fear. He was a stocky, ugly creature, with a scarred face and thinning grey hair plastered flat where his helmet had rested. On his cheek was a tattooed word in some High Azyrite script that Argath did not recognise.

'You think I will beg, heathen?' he spat. 'Sons of Hammerhal do not beg. We do not so eagerly taint our souls with the poison of surrender.'

'Then you are braver than the god you serve,' said Argath, dismounting with far greater difficulty than his son. His skin was sticky with matted mud and sweat, and he felt blood trickling down his torso. It took every ounce of willpower not to collapse to the ground, but he masked his discomfort as best he could. There was one final trial yet to come.

'Follow,' he growled.



Dathul hauled the prisoner to his feet, roughly dragging him along. They passed onwards beneath the increasingly dense foliage, brushing aside the stones that dangled from every tree. There were the remnants of bodies here, too, but they were little more than scraps clinging to torn-open ribcages. The sound of their boots crunching upon a carpet of bone was unerringly loud. Otherwise, the forest seemed dead and silent. Not even a bird cry could be heard.

'If you're going to string me up like the rest of these wretches, get it over with,' said the Sigmarite. 'I have no fear of death.'

Dathul snorted. 'You wish to take your place amongst the shamed? Those who broke their word and scorned their oaths? Even you, city-dweller, are worthy of a better fate than that.'

'Murdering your own kind and leaving them to the crows,' the prisoner said, shaking his head. 'Barbarous devils. We should have killed you all.'

Dathul slammed his fist into the man's gut. 'I have seen the gibbets swinging from the walls of your shining strongholds, crusader. How many so-called witches, traitors and criminals have your holy orders delivered to the flames?'

'That is justice,' wheezed the Arch-Knight. 'Carried out in the name of the God-King. Not the senseless butchery you people practise.'

Argath stopped and turned to look the man in the eye.

'We both kill to please our gods,' he said. 'The powers that we oathsworn call upon are at least honest about what it is they crave. They granted us the strength to survive the horror to which your beloved God-King abandoned our forefathers.'

'And in return you have damned yourselves.'

'Inside our veins runs the same blood as yours. It is only by the fickle whims of the Many-armed Weaver that you do not stand in my place. Your ignorance wearies me. Do not speak again, or I will have Dathul peel the skin from your face. We are close.'

The trees thinned, and the ground descended into a shallow gully perhaps a hundred paces across. It was cast in a deep shadow. At its far end was a cave, its opening low to the ground so that Argath would have had to stoop to enter it. The mouth of the cave was strewn with bones, and two vast pits on either side were filled with skulls. Blood – fresh and old – was smeared so thickly about the place that the stark white rocks were stained a muddy brown. The air was rank, not just with the sweet stench of corruption but also with the jaw-aching thrum of old, powerful magic.

'What is this place?' said the Arch-Knight, no longer able to keep the fear from his words.

Dathul dragged the prisoner roughly forwards, holding his knife close to the man's throat. Argath stood at the mouth of the cavern, blood pouring from his wound, axe in hand.

'Come forth and witness my offering, Drinker of Souls,' he shouted. 'The enemy is vanquished at my hand. Their camp I burned, their warriors I slaughtered. They fled before the storm of my fury, and one by one I hewed them down.'

He held up his oathstone. The runes etched upon the smooth tablet glowed the colour of blood.

'My oaths I have fulfilled with axe and sword. Let the flayed corpses of my enemies be the proof of my triumph. Come forth, Drinker of Souls, and accept my final offering.'

There followed a guttural snarl, so deep it rattled the bones. Something shifted within the pitch darkness of the lightless aperture. A long, grasping hand emerged, its taloned fingers feeling their way across the earth with unsettlingly precise motions.

'God-King preserve me!' gasped the Arch-Knight, his defiance forgotten.

Chieftain Argath was regarded as a stoic amongst the Dread Wolf clan – a man who knew neither fear nor doubt. This was absurd, of course. Only a fool or a madman could see what he had seen and not feel the cold grasp of terror seize their soul. He felt that same sick sensation wash over him now. But fear was no use. Running would earn him only a slow death.

He heard Dathul's breath catch in his throat. The warrior's usually calm visage was pale and skull-like, his eyes bulging from their sockets.





Dathul had never set foot in the circle of offerings before. Argath knew that he had once worn that expression, before he had taken up the mantle of rulership over the Dread Wolves. Before he had known the price of survival in this benighted realm.

'Swallow your fear,' he said. 'The gods are watching.'

Another hand grasped the roof of the cave, and a sinewy form slid from the shadows, moving as silently as a hunting cat. Twin pools of icy hunger fixed themselves upon Argath, and the skull-pits in front of the cave suddenly burst into blue-white flames, casting the bright Aqshian night in an unnatural, silvery glow.

The Sigmarite screamed, writhing and thrashing like a beast at the slaughter. Dathul, no less terrified, continued to hold him fast.

The form of the Drinker of Souls was revealed in all its dark and terrible glory. Twice the height of a tall man, it hunched over on hideously elongated forelimbs, gouged with scars. Its lean frame was draped in chains and leather bands and clad in tattered vestiges of clothing. Curling antlers sprouted from its brow, and bones protruded from its spine and narrow, dog-like skull. Most terrifying of all were its eyes, which blazed with malicious intelligence.

The fiend rose to its full height, spine arcing and one taloned hand reaching out, upturned, in a gesture that was grotesquely human. The claws curled inwards. Eager drool spilled from its elongated maw.

The wet grass around Argath and the others erupted in flames, trapping them in a circle of heat so intense that the Chieftain's skin peeled and blistered. Argath turned to face his son and the struggling captive. He raised his weapon.

Flesh. Souls. Tribute.

'Father?' said Dathul, continuing to wrestle with the terrified Arch-Knight. 'What are you waiting for? The gods demand a sacrifice.'

'So they do,' said Argath, softly.

His axe fell. It struck Dathul's skull, and Argath felt the impact shock reverberate along his arm. Blood and shards of bone splattered across his face.

Dathul swayed on the spot, blood gushing from an awful wound. His eyes fixed upon Argath with an expression of pained

bewilderment that bored into the Chieftain's soul. His mouth twitched, searching for words that would not come.

'One life for the clan,' said Argath.

He ripped his axe free, and Dathul's corpse dropped to the ground. The Arch-Knight fell with it, sprawling on his back and groaning softly. Argath kicked the man aside, seized his son's body by the leg and dragged it over to the waiting beast. Its lips peeled back, exposing its fangs in a ghastly leer. Taloned hands snatched Argath's offering, and the beast hunched over its prize.

Argath turned away before the sound of crunching bone and tearing flesh met his ears. The Sigmarite lay on his back in the filth, too stunned even to flee. His face was a mask of horror, streaked with gore.

'What... did you do?' he gasped.

'What had to be done,' said Argath.

'I thought...'

'That your flesh would suffice? And where would be the sacrifice in that? What would it cost me or my people to see you perish? Tragedy, suffering, betrayal: these are the fruits that the Dark Gods crave.'

'Then why... why did you bring me here?'

The Drinker of Souls snarled. Argath could not bring himself to look at the creature, for he knew the sight would leave a scar upon his soul that no sacrifice could ever heal. Wounds of the flesh were more malleable. Pain seared across his torso, as if someone were rolling a lit torch across his chest. Argath looked down to see his skin ripple and tear, sloughing free and reforming to close over his injuries. He breathed freely once more.

'The gods may crave our suffering, but their heralds have other tastes,' he said.

The Sigmarite struggled frantically against his bonds. A shadow fell across the two men as the Drinker of Souls loomed over them, stretching to its full height.

Argath picked up Dathul's axe and ran his finger down its edge until he drew blood. Then he tossed it so that it landed blade first in the ground beside the terrified Arch-Knight. The man's crazed eyes found his own.

'Pray to your God-King now,' said Argath, as he turned and strode from the clearing. 'Let us see how generous he feels.'



MIGHT OF THE OATHSWORN

When a Darkoath tribe goes to war, each member takes up their weapon and vows to slaughter a worthy foe to sate the hunger of their patron gods. Brandishing well-notched axes and spears, eyes aflame with slaughter-joy, the appearance of these hardy warriors is enough to strike fear into the boldest heart. Spitting blood-chilling promises of ruin, they weave their names into the sagas of their people with each gory kill, blood flushed with the power of pledges fulfilled.

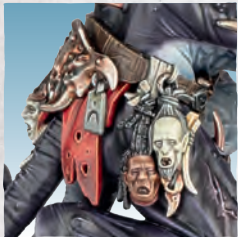
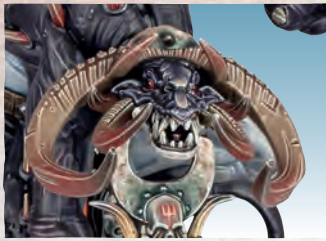


Darkoath Chieftain on Warsteed



A Darkoath Chieftain summons his tribe to war, intent upon annihilating the Sigmarites who have dared to invade his territory. Even a terrifying Wilderfiend has joined the slaughter, dragged from its lair by gifts of sacrifice and the promise of raw flesh.

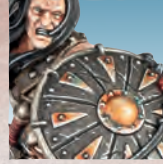
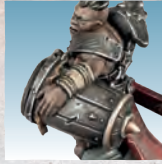




Darkoath Wilderfiend



The mutated abominations known as Wilderfiends were once mortal Darkoath champions, but they now exist solely to serve the malevolent will of the Dark Gods, as these unfortunate Sylvaneth are about to discover.



*Darkoath Marauder
Doombeater*



*Darkoath Marauder
Champion*



*Darkoath Marauder
Icon Bearer*



Darkoath Marauders with Raider Weapons



Darkoath Marauders with Darkiron Spears



*Darkoath Fellrider
Champion*



Darkoath Fellriders





Darkoath Fellrider Hornblower



Darkoath Fellrider Icon Bearer

Agile and daring horsemasters, Darkoath Fellriders can ride rings around any foe, all while hurling lethal volleys of javelins or lashing out with heavy, skull-splitting blades.

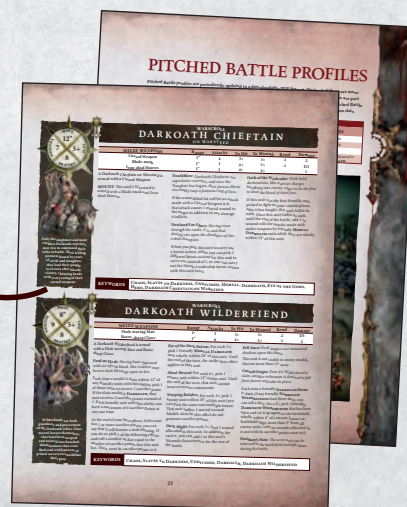


BATTLETOME SUPPLEMENT: DARKOATH

The warscrolls in this supplement are considered to be part of *Battletome: Slaves to Darkness* and each has the **UNDIVIDED** Mark of Chaos. If you have a Slaves to Darkness army, you can include any of the units in this supplement in that army.

'While others cower behind high walls and bleat to their cowardly masters for salvation, we thrive amidst the mud, blood and gore of the wild realms. We have earned the gods' favour. We did not beg for it.'

– Thallax,
Fellrider of the
Corpse Crow clan



WARSCROLL DARKOATH CHIEFTAIN ON WARSTEED

MELEE WEAPONS	Range	Attacks	To Hit	To Wound	Rend	Damage
Cursed Weapon	1"	4	3+	3+	-1	2
Blade-mask	1"	1	4+	3+	-1	D3
Iron-shod Hooves	1"	3	4+	4+	-	1

A Darkoath Chieftain on Warsteed is armed with a Cursed Weapon.

MOUNT: This unit's Warsteed is armed with a Blade-mask and Iron-shod Hooves.

Deathblow: Darkoath Chieftains are superlative warriors, and once the slaughter has begun, their furious blows inevitably reap a fearsome toll of lives.

If the unmodified hit roll for an attack made with a Cursed Weapon is 6, that attack causes 1 mortal wound to the target in addition to any damage it inflicts.

Destined For Glory: Having risen through the ranks, it is said that destiny sits upon the shoulders of this tribal champion.

When you pick this unit to carry out a heroic action, either you can pick 2 different heroic actions for this unit to carry out instead of 1, or you can carry out the Heroic Leadership heroic action with this unit twice.

Oath of the Warleader: With bold declarations, this warrior charges headlong into enemy, eager to be the first to shed the blood of their foes.

If this unit was the first friendly unit picked to fight in your combat phase, after it has fought, this unit fulfils its oath. Once this unit fulfils its oath, until the end of the battle, add 1 to wound rolls for attacks made with melee weapons by friendly **MORTAL DARKOATH** units while they are wholly within 12" of this unit.

Only the mightiest and most ruthless Darkoath warriors may rise to command their tribe in battle. Their killing prowess honed by years of strife and slaughter, they lead their people to victory after bloody victory, claiming heads with every swing of their cursed weapons.

KEYWORDS

CHAOS, SLAVES TO DARKNESS, UNDIVIDED, MORTAL, DARKOATH, EYE OF THE GODS, HERO, DARKOATH CHIEFTAIN ON WARSTEED

WARSCROLL DARKOATH WILDERFIEND

MELEE WEAPONS	Range	Attacks	To Hit	To Wound	Rend	Damage
Flesh-tearing Maw	1"	3	3+	3+	-2	D3
Razor-sharp Claws	1"	6	4+	3+	-1	2

A Darkoath Wilderfiend is armed with a Flesh-tearing Maw and Razor-sharp Claws.

Feed on Flesh: Having been appeased with sacrificial blood, this creature may bestow dark blessings upon its kin.

Each time a model is slain within 12" of any friendly units with this ability, pick 1 of those units to receive 1 sacrifice point. If the slain model is **DARKOATH**, that unit receives 2 sacrifice points instead of 1. Each friendly unit with this ability can have a maximum of 6 sacrifice points at any one time.

At the end of your hero phase, if this unit has 1 or more sacrifice points, you can say that it will bestow a dark blessing. If you do so, pick 1 of the following effects and roll a number of dice equal to the number of sacrifice points that this unit has. Then, reset its sacrifice points to 0.

Eye of the Dark Patron: For each 5+, pick 1 friendly **MORTAL DARKOATH** unit wholly within 18" of this unit. Until the end of the turn, the strike-first effect applies to that unit.

Mind Shroud: For each 4+, pick 1 enemy unit within 12" of this unit. Until the end of the turn, that unit cannot issue or receive commands.

Warping Balefire: For each 3+, pick 1 enemy unit within 18" of this unit (you can pick the same unit multiple times). That unit suffers 1 mortal wound. Models slain by this effect do not generate sacrifice points.

Dark Might: For each 2+, heal 1 wound allocated to this unit. In addition, for each 6, you can add 1 to this unit's Wounds characteristic for the rest of the battle.

Fell Aura: Dark magics cast unnatural shadows upon this beast.

This unit is not visible to enemy models that are more than 12" away.

Cursed Origin: Even if a Wilderfiend is slain, another tribesman is destined to fall from favour and take its place.

Each time a friendly **DARKOATH HERO** is slain, if any friendly **DARKOATH WILDERFIENDS** have been slain, you can roll a dice. On a 2+, pick 1 friendly **DARKOATH WILDERFIEND** that has been slain and set it up again on the battlefield, wholly within 6" of a terrain feature or battlefield edge, more than 9" from all enemy units, with no wounds allocated to it and with its sacrifice points reset to 0.

Designer's Note: The same unit can be returned to the battlefield multiple times during the battle.

Wilderfiends are both guardians and persecutors of the Darkoath tribes. Once mortal heroes themselves, they have been warped and twisted into hunched abominations that crave flesh and wield powers of primal sorcery to annihilate their prey.

KEYWORDS

CHAOS, SLAVES TO DARKNESS, UNDIVIDED, DARKOATH, DARKOATH WILDERFIEND

WARSCROLL

DARKOATH MARAUDERS

Each and every Darkoath warrior is trained in the way of the axe and the sword from the youngest age. Having sworn bloody oaths to their patron gods, they seek to fulfil them by any means necessary, their bodies flushed with power by every pledge completed.

MELEE WEAPONS	Range	Attacks	To Hit	To Wound	Rend	Damage
Raider Weapon	1"	2	3+	4+	-	1
Darkiron Spear	2"	2	4+	4+	-	1

Each model in a Darkoath Marauders unit is armed with 1 of the following weapon options: Raider Weapon; or Darkiron Spear. All models in the unit must be armed with the same weapon option.

CHAMPION: 1 model in this unit can be a Darkoath Champion. Add 1 to the Attacks characteristic of that model's melee weapons.

STANDARD BEARER: 1 in every 10 models in this unit can be an Icon Bearer. Add 1 to the Bravery characteristic of this unit while it includes any Icon Bearers.

MUSICIAN: 1 in every 10 models in this unit can be a Doombeater. Add 1 to charge rolls for this unit while it includes any Doombeaters.

Glorious Death: *Ever keen to earn the favour of their tribe, when the eyes of the fiercest fighters are upon them, these ferocious warriors will not go down without a fight.*

While this unit is wholly within 12" of any friendly **DARKOATH HEROES**, each time a model in this unit is slain by an attack made with a melee weapon, pick 1 enemy unit within 3" of this unit and roll a dice. On a 5+, that unit suffers 1 mortal wound.

Oath of the Marauder: *These bloodthirsty tribal warriors loudly declare vows of violence and slaughter as they race after their foes.*

If you make an unmodified charge roll of 7+ for this unit and this unit makes a charge move with that charge roll, it fulfils its oath. Once this unit fulfils its oath, until the end of the battle, the Rend characteristic of this unit's Raider Weapons or Darkiron Spears is -1 instead of '-'.
 If this unit finishes a charge move within ½" of an enemy unit that is more than 3" from any other units in your army, it fulfils its oath. Once this unit fulfils its oath, until the end of the battle, the Rend characteristic of this unit's Marauder Javelins or Broadwords is -2 instead of -1.

KEYWORDS

CHAOS, SLAVES TO DARKNESS, UNDIVIDED, MORTAL, DARKOATH, DARKOATH MARAUDERS

WARSCROLL

DARKOATH FELLRIDERS

The Darkoath prize speed and agility above all in their light cavalry. Fellriders are mounted daredevils, outflanking their foes on lightning-swift and aggressive mounts, riddling their ranks with volleys of javelins before charging in to deal the killing blow.

MISSILE WEAPONS	Range	Attacks	To Hit	To Wound	Rend	Damage
Marauder Javelin	12"	1	4+	4+	-1	D3
MELEE WEAPONS	Range	Attacks	To Hit	To Wound	Rend	Damage
Broadsword	1"	3	3+	4+	-1	1
Marauder Javelin	2"	2	4+	4+	-1	1
Trampling Hooves	1"	2	4+	4+	-	1

Each model in a Darkoath Fellriders unit is armed with 1 of the following weapon options: Broadsword; or Marauder Javelin. All models in the unit must be armed with the same weapon option.

MOUNT: This unit's Marauder Steeds are each armed with Trampling Hooves.

CHAMPION: 1 model in this unit can be a Darkoath Champion. Add 1 to the Attacks characteristic of that model's melee weapons, excluding those of its mount.

STANDARD BEARER: 1 in every 5 models in this unit can be an Icon Bearer. Add 1 to the Bravery characteristic of this unit while it includes any Icon Bearers.

MUSICIAN: 1 in every 5 models in this unit can be a Hornblower. Add 1 to charge rolls for this unit while it includes any Hornblowers.

Swift Attackers: *As they close in on the enemy at frightening speed, these skilled horsemen are nigh impossible to hit with missile fire.*

Subtract 1 from hit rolls for attacks made with missile weapons that target this unit. In addition, if this unit is targeted by attacks made by an enemy

unit that received the Unleash Hell command in that phase, those attacks only score a hit on an unmodified hit roll of 6.

Oath of the Raider: *These fearsome riders ply deep into enemy lands to seek out worthy foes and earn the favour of the Dark Gods.*

KEYWORDS

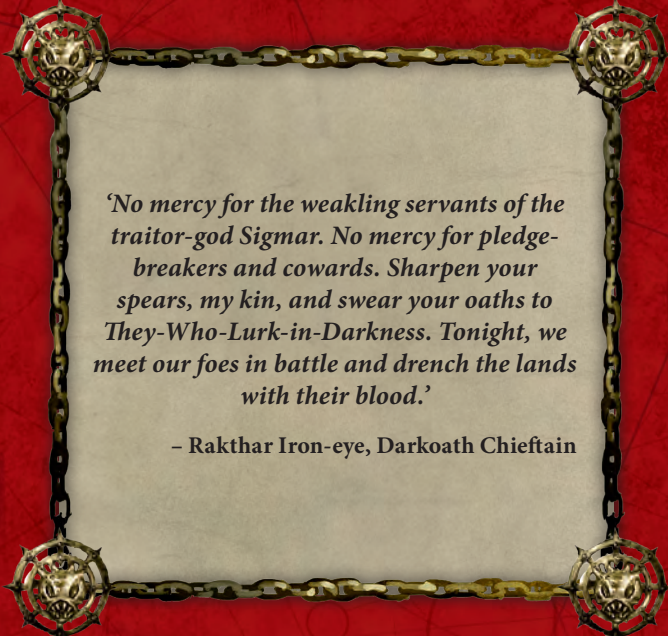
CHAOS, SLAVES TO DARKNESS, UNDIVIDED, MORTAL, DARKOATH, DARKOATH FELLRIDERS

PITCHED BATTLE PROFILES

Pitched Battle profiles are periodically updated in a downloadable PDF format. To check if there are more recent Pitched Battle profiles for your faction, visit warhammer-community.com. The units below are part of the Slaves to Darkness faction together with those found in *Battletome: Slaves to Darkness*. Pitched Battle profiles with a more recent date of publication take precedence over those with an earlier date or no date.

SLAVES TO DARKNESS (APRIL 2024)				
WARSCROLL	UNIT SIZE	POINTS	BATTLEFIELD ROLE	NOTES
Darkoath Chieftain on Warsteed	1	110	Leader	Single
Darkoath Wilderfiend	1	170		Single
Darkoath Marauders	10	80	Battleline	
Darkoath Fellriders	5	125		Battleline if general is DARKOATH





'No mercy for the weakling servants of the traitor-god Sigmar. No mercy for pledge-breakers and cowards. Sharpen your spears, my kin, and swear your oaths to They-Who-Lurk-in-Darkness. Tonight, we meet our foes in battle and drench the lands with their blood.'

- Rakthar Iron-eye, Darkoath Chieftain