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THE FALL OF SOLACE

"In this galaxy, nothing is more fleeting than the illusion of peace."

—Ancient Imperial Aphorism

Originally written for use at Gen Con Indy 2013, **SALVAGING SOLACE** is a scenario for **ONLY WAR**. It is one of four linked scenarios that concern the fate of the Imperial world of Solace. While each adventure stands on its own as a complete module suitable for immediate play, a group that plays all four adventures will spot the connections between the events as they transpire around the hive world of Solace. This section includes a brief summary of each adventure to help the Game Master keep track of how they overlap if intending to run more than one of them.

BINDING CONTRACTS

BINDING CONTRACTS is an adventure for **BLACK CRUSADE** that follows a group of Heretics as they pursue the prophecy of the Many-Eyed, a dread oracle of Chaos. The Ruinous Powers have whispered to her that Solace will end in fire when a star descends from the sky. They murmur that the terror and confusion this event brings about must be properly dedicated to the Chaos Gods.

Before this portent appears, the Heretics must infiltrate Solace and rally the wretched mutants that live beneath the hive. Then, once the star burns bright in the sky, they must lead their newly assembled army up one of Hive Solace's spires, where they can cast down a rival sorcerer and take control of his ritual to summon a Daemon of unfathomable power to the Materium. If they succeed, the Heretics will have struck a blow against the Imperium within the Calixis Sector and won vast glory for themselves. If they fail, however, the unholy ritual could be their doom.

FALLING STAR

After centuries lost in the Warp, the *Ardent Crown* has returned in a degrading orbit around the world of Solace. This vessel vanished carrying a number of important relics, and in this **DEATHWATCH** adventure, a Kill-team has been assembled to board the derelict as it drifts toward the world of Solace, secure the sacred artefacts, and extract from the voidship.

However, the Battle-Brothers are not alone in their ambitions aboard the *Ardent Crown*. An Eldar Farseer also has designs for a particular relic, and leads an elite team of her allies in her quest to take it back. And while the Eldar are powerful and duplicitous foes, something even more terrible lurks aboard the *Ardent Crown*, stirring after aeons of cold slumber as footsteps fall once again on the long-abandoned decks. The Battle-Brothers of the Deathwatch must face these enemies, cast them down in the name of the Emperor, and escape the *Ardent Crown* before it plummets to its demise. The fate of the sector and the honour of the Deathwatch alike hang in the balance.

SHEDDING LIGHT

In this adventure for **ROGUE TRADER**, the Explorers delve deep into the ancient secrets of Solace. Solace was colonised by the Imperium in the final hours of the Angevin Crusade to unite the Calixis Sector, but its secrets wind perilously back into times forgotten by all but the most ancient. There have always been dark tales in Solace's mines about the things that dwell beneath the world's parched surface, but there have also been whispers of fortunes beyond the comprehension of any mortal.

These whispers have spread far and wide and have reached the ears of a daring Rogue Trader, a warrior-privateer who braves the dangers of the unknown in the name of incalculable wealth and glory. Now, an avid group of Explorers journey to Solace, delving deep into an ancient chasm that contains strange relics of forgotten aeons. But when a cataclysm rocks the world of Solace, the Explorers find themselves facing a terrible threat that is not pleased about its rude awakening.

SALVAGING SOLACE

In this adventure, **SALVAGING SOLACE**, the players take on the roles of Imperial Guard troopers faced with a mounting series of catastrophes in the hive city of Solace. When an unknown voidship strikes the world of Solace, the surface shakes and the brave men and women of the Cadian 99th must gird themselves for battle once again in this adventure for **ONLY WAR**. Having just suffered losses campaigning in the Spinward Front, the Cadian 99th is caught on the outskirts of the catastrophe in the midst of a training exercise. In addition to the devastation the crash wrought, the impact has sent waves of mutants surging up from the underhive, and so the troopers must step forth into the breach to restore order.

Unfortunately, this is only the start of the Player Characters' troubles. As they struggle to bring Hive Solace under control, still more crises loom over them. The troopers must go above and beyond their normal duties to have a chance of survival. With the lives of everyone on the planet—including their own—resting on their actions, the PCs are the last line of defence against the coming catastrophe.

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

BINDING CONTRACTS, **FALLING STAR**, and **SHEDDING LIGHT** each include a full adventure, premade characters, and the profiles for any NPCs unique to the adventure, much in the same way as **SALVAGING SOLACE**. Each is designed to be run with the system for which it was written and requires a copy of the appropriate Core Rulebook to play.

Using all four of these adventures, a GM can create a cohesive event that tells the story of the **Fall of Solace**. Because these adventures were originally written for use at a convention, each one includes certain notes on the time that should be devoted to given sections. If the GM wishes to run one of these adventures in a typical four to six hour convention timeslot, these notes can be useful; if the GM is not under any time restrictions, however, he should feel free to pace the adventure as he sees fit based on the group and other circumstances.



SALVAGING SOLACE ADVENTURE SUMMARY

"When you fight the enemies of humanity, you can't always rout your foes and stride triumphantly across their corpses. Sometimes you just have to set your mind on not losing, no matter the cost, for one more day. Sometimes that has to be enough."

—Private Mercito Grant

Originally written for Gen Con Indy 2013, **SALVAGING SOLACE** is a scenario for **ONLY WAR**. Game Masters must have a copy of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook in order to run the adventure. This adventure was originally designed for Player Characters with 1,000 additional xp (beyond starting xp), but some of the foes within can provide a challenge for even the most tested veterans. Players can use the premade characters found on pages 18–32 or create their own PCs as described in the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook.

Because it was written as a convention scenario, **SALVAGING SOLACE** has notes about the time allotment for certain events. These notes have been left in for the convenience of any GM who wishes to run **SALVAGING SOLACE** in a typical 4–5 hour convention timeslot, but any GM who is not pressed for time should feel free to amend (or ignore) these suggestions about time allotment and the pacing of encounters to best accommodate his particular group and schedule.

"The enemies of humanity descend on us from all sides. This could be the fall of Solace. Or it could be its finest hour! Soldiers, follow me, and we'll find out if this is Solace's end or the start of a new saga of glory!"

—Corporal Etheni of the Castus Levy

The Guardsmen of the Cadian 99th Mechanised Infantry, Eighth Battalion, are having a profoundly bad day. Of course, so are all of the other residents of Hive Solace, which is in the midst of being afflicted by disaster after world-shaking disaster. What should be a relatively low-effort assignment for the Eighth Battalion turns into an unmitigated disaster when a crashing Imperial cruiser (filled with Tyranids) strikes the hive. A small army of heretics and Chaos mutants, who have foreseen this event and wish to exploit the catastrophe in a powerful ritual, provides a further layer of opposition for the redoubtable troopers of the Cadian 99th.

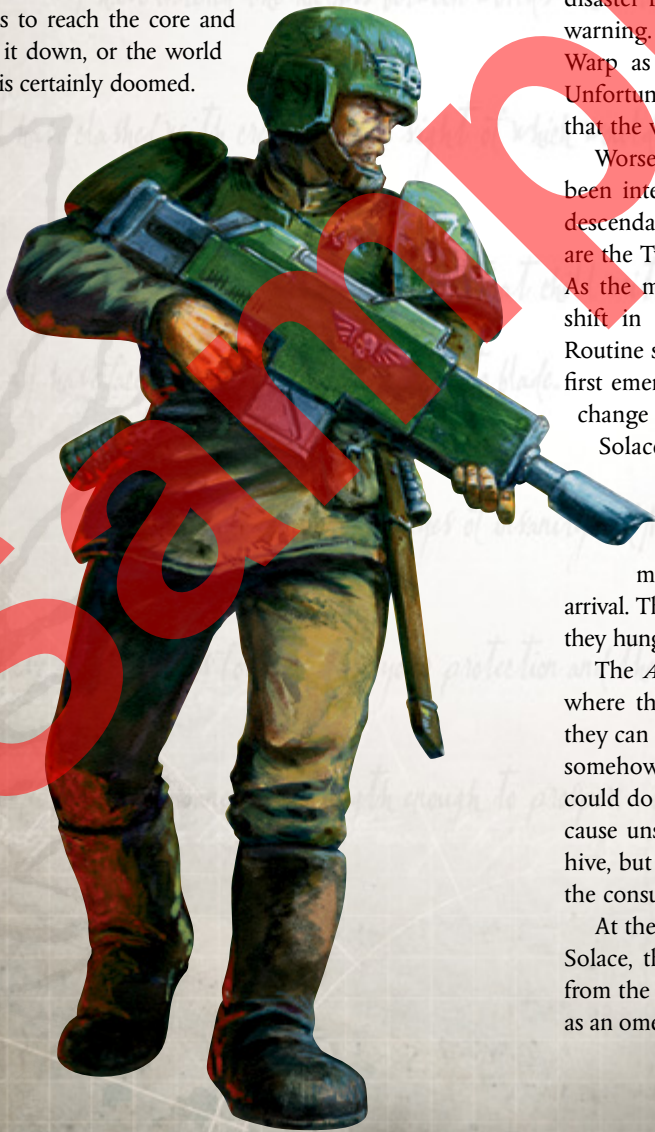
The adventure begins as another grinding day of running a new batch of troopers through a simple training exercise. These recruits, newly raised from the world of Solace and merged into the veteran Cadian 99th by an errant stroke on a Departmento Munitorum form, have kept the Player Characters busy with such exercises for the last several weeks. The relative calm ends abruptly when a tremendous explosion of a cruiser striking the hive hurls the PCs from their feet

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

and immediately cuts out the power. The Player Characters and their allies have a few moments to scramble in darkness and ruin as they try to help the injured and achieve a state of controlled calm and relative normalcy.

The first complications occur once communications are restored. Initially, the Player Characters are tasked with establishing a perimeter against the rabble spilling forth from the underhive. This means not only restoring the chain of command, but also getting any civilians in the region calmed and under control. However, a rampaging force of chaos mutants offers a swift challenge to their perimeter and inflicts further damage upon the unit and its allies.

Sadly, the rug is soon pulled out from under them between waves of the mutant attack. The recruits—former soldiers of the Castus Levy—are drawn off to help evacuate Hive Solace. The cruiser's engines are rapidly dying, and their final scream will be an explosion that reduces Hive Solace to a vast pool of bubbling slag. The surviving members of the Cadian 99th are assigned a last-ditch effort to travel into the ruined warship, find the engines, and shut them down before they can enter meltdown. Along the way, the PCs make the unpleasant discovery that the cruiser is filled with Tyranids. These foul xenos are seemingly the cause of the crash, and infest the twisted corridors of the vessel in horrifying numbers. As is their nature, the Tyranids spill forth in a wave of ravenous jaws and chattering teeth, seeking to devour any and all biomass that they happen upon. The Player Characters must survive these trials to reach the core and then shut it down, or the world of Solace is certainly doomed.



"For its valorous service in the Spinward Front, the 49th Company is assigned a provisional reprieve from patrols and the honour of initiating the prospective recruits from the Castus Levy."

—Colonel Arkat of the Cadian 99th

The 49th Company of the Cadian 99th Mechanised Infantry were recently recalled from the Spinward Front. The company had suffered serious casualties during particularly brutal fighting against an Ork assault. More than 70 per cent of the soldiers sustained incapacitating or lethal wounds. The Departamento Munitorum responded to these losses by merging the regiment with the 19th Solace Castus Guard. Unfortunately, due to an errant stroke of an autoquill on the part of a clerk, this regiment did not exist yet. Thus, the Cadian 99th found itself rerouted to Solace to integrate the new recruits into its own forces.

Meanwhile, a new threat was emerging in the Solace system of the Calixis Sector. Even as doom approached, the planet's citizens remained utterly oblivious to its danger. Decades earlier, a choir of Astropaths had prophesied a xenos-spurred disaster for Solace. The sector's officials largely ignored the warning. That vessel—the *Ardent Crown*—emerged from the Warp as prophesied and, hours later, its course changed. Unfortunately, that alteration in trajectory was just enough so that the vessel now travels directly toward Solace.

Worse yet, the seemingly abandoned Imperial craft has been internally transformed. It no longer plays host to the descendants of human survivors. Instead, its sole passengers are the Tyranids that have haunted its corridors for centuries. As the massive vessel lacks power and communications, its shift in direction toward the planet has gone unnoticed. Routine systems noted its course as being innocuous when it first emerged into the system. They have not recognised the change in direction, and so it plunges toward the world of Solace, blind and deaf in the emptiness of space.

As the adventure begins, the Player Characters are completely unaware of the incoming threat. The Tyranids, in contrast, have begun preparations for a major assault, their eldritch senses detecting the imminent arrival. These foul xenos have awakened from their slumber, and they hunger to swallow up the entire world of Solace.

The *Ardent Crown* is on a direct course to strike the hive where the Player Characters are training. There is nothing they can do to be aware of the impending threat. Even if they somehow had knowledge of the danger, there is little they could do to avoid it. Not only is the doomed vessel certain to cause unspeakable damage when it crashes into an Imperial hive, but it carries a savage army of Tyranids bent entirely on the consumption of all biomass on Solace.

At the same time, a violent riot has erupted within Hive Solace, the twisted denizens of the underhive rising up from the depths as the falling star descends. They see it as an omen—the harbinger of the will of wicked gods.

GAZETTEER: SOLACE

"Solace might be a miserable, boring rock, but at least it's quiet."

—Sergeant Zakil of the Cadian 99th

Colonist began to settle Solace even before the Angevin Crusade had completed. Preliminary auguries and portents confirmed of the world could not wait for the end of the interminable conflict, and so colonists deemed "suitable" for this rough, unshaped world—including an exceptionally high percentage of penal colonists—were dispatched to Solace. This first wave of colonists worked under the direct supervision of Adeptus Mechanicus elements from the crusading forces. Hardy individuals were tithed from harsh worlds across what would become the Calixis Sector and Koronus Expanse and relocated to Solace; these new arrivals were promptly put to work extracting the phenomenal mineral wealth that rested beneath the world's surface.

During these early days on Solace, countless small vessels flitted back and forth between the mines and much larger craft in orbit, creating a glittering flow of lights in Solace's sky that blotted out even the stars. From orbit, the massive ships transported the fruits of their labour to forge worlds, where the ore and other materials were forged into the equipment necessary to continue the crusade to conquer the Calyx Expanse. Some religious scholars on Solace claim that, were it not for the wealth extracted from their world and the many who shed their blood to get it, the crusade might have run out of raw materials and faltered.

Of course, precise records from this period are fragmentary. The Imperial forces in the region were so focused upon prosecuting the crusade that minor details—particularly those associated with procurement—were often not properly recorded. However, the amount of raw materials extracted from the planet seems to have been truly extraordinary. Further, many of these materials seem to have been combined into alloys that were ready for manufacturing almost immediately, requiring very little refinement. Some historians have speculated that this was simply evidence that the materials had been illegally obtained from another, undocumented Imperial asset. Other, more radical elements have argued that this could be compelling evidence that the world was once home to a sophisticated xenos species, and that the alloys were all that remained of a long-dead civilisation.

Regardless of whether or not the materials came from Solace, one factor is clear. Assignment to the mining facilities on Solace was a death sentence. Few, if any, of the tens of thousands of colonists sent into these facilities ever returned. Official Imperial records indicate that this was due to toxic elements present in the mines and a lack of faith amongst the workers.

The legends, however, are far darker. They speak of unholy terrors that lurked beneath the planet's surface.

Oral histories, passed down through the generations, say that there were xenos dwelling far beneath the surface. These tales indicate that the dark things

were only banished after the blessed Drusus visited the world and expunged them in the name of the God-Emperor. There are no official records of St. Drusus ever having visited Solace, but the population still reveres him as the man who cleansed their world and liberated them from terror and death at the hands of shadows and nightmares.

THE FIRST HIVES

As the Angevin Crusade wound down, there were few resources to transport the surviving soldiers back to their worlds of origin. Consequently, many were simply delivered to Solace, where they were left. While a minority saw this as a just reward, permitting those who had worked so hard to enjoy the fruits of their labours of war, only a scant few of the newly retired soldiers looked upon their new lot in life as a blessing. While the soldiers now lived without the immanent certainty of a violent death, they also possessed few skills and assets with which to forge their survival. The functionaries of the Adeptus Administratum were no longer willing to provide them with clothing, food, and shelter. Instead, it was up to the soldiers themselves to make their way where and how they might.

At the conclusion of the Angevin Crusade, the Adeptus Mechanicus still had a significant number of assets active in the Solace system. Before all of the elements in the system were reassigned, however, a cunning administrator requested that the manufacturums' available capacity be put to immediate use. Taking advantage of some of the already available raw materials, the manufacturums built rudimentary settlements to house the veterans of the crusade and let them continue to serve the Imperium. While toiling upon Solace was hardly a pleasant prospect, it might have seemed less terrible than the brutal warzones of the Angevin Crusade.

Eventually, what began as a barren mining world became the home of six fully functional Imperial hives, most dedicated to further mining operations. The Adeptus Mechanicus had built facilities that housed the original colonists, and these structures gradually grew into the massive, towering spires of Solace's hives as generation upon generation built upon them.



PLANETARY LEADERSHIP

The leadership of Solace treads a dangerously narrow path. In what some factions in the Calixis Sector revile as a violation of Imperial regulations, the Planetary Governor of Solace has always been, since the early days of the colonies there, an Ecclesiarchal Cardinal. While this is not strictly in violation of the Decree Passive, the Planetary Governor is the supreme commander of the defence forces of any given world, and the Cardinal who governs Solace has always been eyed with suspicion as a result. The argument has been made, by some, that as neither the Sector Lord nor an Inquisitor has chosen to take action upon this matter, the governance of Solace must be divinely ordained.

Because of the piety of its rulers, the populace of Solace has shown few deviances from the Imperial Creed over the centuries. There are remarkably few known incidents of heresy on Solace. The world has consistently paid all necessary tithes to the sector government, including consistent surpluses of soldiers, labourers, and processed materials.

THE CASTUS LEVY

Thanks to the fact that Solace was settled largely by veterans, military service is an integral part of the world's culture. All able-bodied men and women are required to perform a period of service within the planet's defensive military, known as the Castus Levy. This is typically a five-year term. Often, a large portion of this service is devoted toward maintaining planetary peace within the now tightly crowded Imperial hives. However, roughly once a generation, the Castus Levy are called upon to repel a significant xenos incursion. Solace's assets are sufficient to regularly draw the attention of the greedy, who think that it might be a world ripe for conquest. To date, none of those assaults have succeeded.

Solace has also gladly tithed full regiments to the Imperial Guard upon fourteen separate occasions. Most often drawn from the ranks of the Castus Levy, these regiments proved their devotion to the Emperor by their noble acts of sacrifice to carry on the glorious tradition of the Imperial Guard. While none of these regiments managed to assemble a particularly prestigious roll of service, none disgraced their home world.

Even among the Imperial Guard, the Castus Levy often exhibit an exceptional level of devotion to the Imperial Creed. Those who interact with them often consider them particularly pious. Some argue that this reaction may be a consequence of their uniforms as much as anything else. This is because those of the Castus Levy invariably wear a chasuble over their armour and kit, proudly displaying the iconography of their devotion upon a field of purest white.

BEYOND THE HIVES

Even before its great hive spires and the fires of industry blackened the sky, Solace was never a world hospitable for colonisation. Its surface is harsh and largely devoid of water, and its atmosphere was only technically breathable before the fires of human industry poured countless pollutants into the air. The mineral resources beneath its surface, however, were reason enough for the Imperium to claim Solace and condemn millions to toil in vast, cavernous mines, extracting ore and other valuable materials.

Outside of the all-protective enclosures built to house the miners, Solace is little more than a hellish wasteland. Its atmosphere has become even more polluted from the waste that the hives generate. The mines are no longer actively worked by anything more than a skeleton crew. The population centres are capable of producing a significant percentage of their own foodstuffs through fungal farming in long-depleted mineshafts and nutrient reclamation techniques. Still, imported food and other supplies are crucial to the survival of Solace's people (and, more importantly, to its ongoing productivity). Without the support of other worlds in the subsector, the hives of Solace would be utterly unsustainable.

When people leave the relative safety of the hives, they must contend with a dangerous atmosphere and predators who are far better evolved to deal with the dangerous conditions. Much of the world's surface is little more than barren rock that offers no shelter from the planet's scorching daytime heat. As a consequence, travel between the hives most commonly takes place via subterranean tunnels that were adapted to that purpose from the world's ancient mines.

