

INTRODUCTION

Rats. Disgusting creatures all. In the Old World, the rat symbolizes decay and disease. The creatures lurk in the midden and the privy, in the slaughter yard and the boneyard. They gnaw at the dead and at their rotten flesh, and if not prevented they creep into homes and granaries, breeding in warm beds and devouring fresh food. And unlike the goat getting into the cabbages, a single rat in the granary could do more than just reduce the food stores. The filth it carries with it could poison the whole harvest, leaving the peasants with two unenviable choices: death by starvation or death by some hideous plague.

To control the rats, the Empire employs Rat Catchers, men who scour the sewers and streets with trusty small (but vicious) dogs at their sides. These brave men go even into the distasteful bowels of the cities, doing their part to stem the flood of the pestilential rat. Though he may reek of his hunting grounds and his prey, a Rat Catcher bearing a pole with a dozen fat brownies tied by their tails is a happy sight to all Older Worlders, regardless of class or station.

OMNES: *Rats! Rats! Horrible rats!*
WATCHMAN: *Rats in the streets!*
HERR GUSSER: *And rats in the houses!*
FRAU GUSSER: *Rats in my hair!*
JURGEN GUSSER: *And rats in my trousers!*
MAID: *Rats in the beds!*
GOVERNESS: *And rats in the cradles!*
FATHER PFELLER: *Rats in the stables!*
INNKEEPER: *And rats in the cellars!*
OMNES: *Rats! Rats! Horrible horrible rats!"*

—FROM THE OPENING CHORUS FROM
 DETLEV BIERCK'S COMIC OPERA,
 "THE RATS OF HAMMSTAT"

But the Rat Catchers know more than they let on. Behind the façade of grimy faces and hard eyes, they know that something far worse lurks below the streets. Certainly if you ask them they will deny it, but the truth is there. You can see it in their faces when they hear the scrabbling click of claws on the cobbles, or when they see the tattered silhouette of some bent creature peering out from an alley. They know there are things that look like rats, but larger. Things that walk upright like men.

No mere Beastmen, these creatures are far too cunning, and wildly dangerous. They fight with care, employ terrible weapons of destruction, and are relentless in their despite for the surface races. The wise men and sages, kings and viziers, say that these creatures don't exist. The Rat Catchers know better. Each one knows a peer or three who did not return from their forays into the sewers, whose bodies were never found. They say that these unfortunates were sacrificed, were taken by the Children of the Horned Rat, by the Skaven.

WELCOME TO CHILDREN OF THE HORNED RAT!

This volume examines one of the most dangerous races in the Old World: the Skaven. These Ratmen hatch terrible plots, commit profane atrocities, and breed both their own spawn and pestilence with equal zeal, all to overthrow Humanity's long reign on the surface. While the Skaven have made many attempts to destroy and enslave Humans, they are thrown back each time into their warrens, defeated by the resolve of the good people of the Empire. But the Skaven are not exclusive to the most populous regions of the Old World. No, their Under-Empire extends to every corner of humanity's kingdoms, from as far away as exotic Cathay to the steaming jungles of Lustria. Considering how widespread and powerful they are, it is a wonder the people of all nations aren't cowering in their homes for fear of their impending doom. The reason? The Skaven don't exist.

Or so say the powers that be.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Children of the Horned Rat explores every aspect of the Skaven, from their history to their culture, from the traits of their various breeds to the habits of their most infamous villains.

Within these pages is all the information you need to bring these dreaded foes full-force into your campaigns. Inside you'll find:

Chapter One: The Skaven Are Real, And They Are Among Us!

This chapter explains how the people of the Old World see the Skaven, examining their tendency to shroud legends of the sinister Ratmen in myth and denial. In addition, this chapter offers advice for those who would combat the Skaven menace, including views from established Skaven hunters, tips for equipment, and a list of the tell-tale signs of a Skaven infestation. This chapter also provides a broad overview of the different types of Skaven, as well as examining their physiology and habits, from the perspective of the somewhat baffled residents of the Empire. A few legends of the Ratmen are also explored.

Chapter Two: Skaven History

This chapter examines the history of this insidious race, revealing several diabolical secrets regarding the Skavens' origins.

Chapter III: Skaven Society

This chapter explores the intricacies of Skaven society, providing details on its hierarchy, the nuances of social interaction between its members, and the minutiae and details of the culture, such as it is, that binds these abominations together.

Chapter VI: Settlements

The Skaven world bears a disconcerting resemblance to the surface world. This chapter illustrates the appearance, organisation, and structure of Skaven settlements.

Chapter V: Warfare

This chapter explains the martial motivations of the bellicose Skaven as well as offering insight into typical Skaven tactics. This chapter also includes new spells and rules for Warp Technology.

Chapter VI: Skaven Characters

Designed for groups who want a more vicious game or for Game Masters who want more robust adversaries, this chapter presents new Careers and Talents designed specifically for Skaven.

Chapter VII: A Skaven Campaign

This chapter is invaluable for campaigns that heavily feature Skaven, whether as Player Characters or as opponents. Filled with roleplaying tips and adventure seeds, it pulls together and provides context for all of the information presented previously.

Chapter VIII: Slaves of Destiny

Finally, an adventure pitting the adventurers against the foul Ratmen is provided, as well as guidelines for playing the scenario from the side of the Skaven as well.

PRISONER OF SKAVENBLIGHT

The last thing he remembered was praying to Sigmar. A terrifying animal face had snarled, he'd heard a blade hit his helm, and his vision had faded a second before his mind did. And he had prayed to Sigmar that he would not die that day.

For a moment, when he came to, he thanked his God for having had heard him. Then his vision cleared, and he felt the weight around his neck and arms, and he knew the Gods were cruel and fickle. He did indeed live, but as a chained prisoner of the Ratmen.

He stared around the cramped stone cell he was lying in, trying to see faces in the darkness. Were any of his fellow soldiers here? A friendly face would be a great comfort. But he saw only old men he did not know, their eyes reflecting his own fear back at him. He thought of his brother, Heinrich, who had disappeared fighting the Ratmen that spring—had he ended up in a place like this? If so, might he still be here?

That hope gave him courage. He began to stand, pushing his body up against the rock walls. Almost immediately, another prisoner crashed into him, grappling him with cold, stammy arms. He looked into the face, hoping for anything familiar, but there was no longer even any humanity there. The eyes lolled, bloodshot and blind, and the withered skin was stuck to the skull like wet paper. The madman tried to talk, but his mouth was filled with sores, and his tongue had long ago been severed with a dull knife.

He pushed away the gnarled prisoner, and raised himself up again. He could see a gate, and a light beyond it, and then all of a sudden, the light was gone. At the top of the darkness that replaced it, the light silhouetted two pointed ears, and whiskers wafting in a slight breeze. The smell stung his eyes, and he fell back. The gate clanged open, and leathery claws grabbed his chains and dragged him out of the cell.

The world spun about him. He felt the pebbles of a rocky path cutting into his back as he was dragged. A cliff face towered above, and beyond it, a cavern of impossible size, filled with light, and noise, the sound of a thousand forges and a thousand shipyards, though how such things could be found in the dark underground, he couldn't understand. The dragging stopped, and he lolled into the fellow prisoners who were being dragged along with him. He saw the old madman again, still trying to form words, bellowing out urgent sounds at him from his broken throat. A warning, perhaps? A terrible cry about what was to come? What torture would they have him endure? What knowledge could they possibly need from him?

Claws grabbed him, and threw his body onto a wooden seat. Spikes hammered his wrist-shackles into the wood, locking him into place. Dimly, he realised it was some kind of slave galley. An iron-bound handle sat in front of him, and the floor moved when he trod on it. Not a galley, he thought, but a treadmill, for crushing grain. They meant to use him as slave labour. Well, he could handle that. He had worked a treadmill as a boy. It would be brutal work, but at night he could plan his escape. He was strong. Almost as strong as his brother. He would find others like him. He would escape. He would survive.

Another bellow came as the madman was pushed in next to him. He recoiled in horror as once again the crazed cripple grabbed at his hands, sliding over them with his death-cold skin. Then he saw it. The old man was putting their hands together, next to each other, so it was obvious that the rings they each wore on their second fingers were identical.

He looked up in sudden realisation. He stared into the eyes of the broken, inhuman creature that his brother had become in only six months. And he went mad.



THE SKAVEN ARE REAL, AND THEY ARE AMONG US!

If you are reading this, then first I thank you, but second I must warn you: herein are contained truths you will not wish to hear, and that others will seek to persecute you for knowing. If you are reading this in any town or city in the Empire, then know without doubt that there are one or more Skaven warriors within a mile of you, and furthermore that they are, at this moment, planning or carrying out acts of theft and murder, spreading sedition, and working to bring about the destruction of our great Empire and the death of every person within it. The Skaven are real, and they are among us, and they are working constantly to murder us all.

If you have found this document, then it means that you are one of the few with the courage to face this truth and the desire to know more about your enemy. It is for you that I have assembled these pages. They are based on 10 years of study and exploration, during which I travelled across all the Old World, seeking truth in all the oldest books and all the darkest corners. I have tried to learn everything of the Skaven that I can, so that you and those like you need no longer be ignorant and afraid. There are, I know, many of you who have seen through the comforting lies and know that the Ratmen are an ever-present and very deadly threat. I hope that with this document those who were ignorant will be made aware, and those who were already aware will become learned and skill hunters of the beasts. Perhaps if enough learn what they are, and of the atrocities of which they are capable, we may one day together drag these vermin out into the harsh light of day.

*Yours in Vigilance,
Ammelie Meyer, Priestess of Verena, 2522*

LEGENDS OF THE RATMEN

There are few tales told of the Skaven, for those who have seen them do not wish to be reminded of such horrors, and those who have not seen them have little desire to hear stories of invisible enemies when there are so many more apparent ones in this age of war. What few exist I have collected here, as an example of both the truths and the fictions that surround the Ratmen.

It is said that all myths contain a glimmer of truth. Our first story's purpose, however, is to bury that glimmer, to eliminate the truth and put a great falsehood in its place. It transmutes historical facts and honourable deeds, in particular those of Emperor Mandred Ratslayer, into a child's tale of the Ratslayer driving out vermin. I present it here as a demonstration of the full extent of the lies our children are being taught.

GRAF MANDRED THE RATSLAYER AND THE INCREDIBLE CHEESE

In the year IIII after the reign of Sigmar, there came a great calamity. The people of the Old World were even more wicked than they are today. They had turned away from Sigmar and Ulric and the goodly Gods, and the Gods of Evil and Chaos punished them gleefully for this. First there came a great plague of horrible black boils, and thousands upon thousands died in their beds and on the streets. And then came an endless horde of rats, larger than any the world has ever seen, and at their head ran the rat-kings, the Skaven, larger and more cunning and more deadly than all other rats. With these leaders the rats ran unafraid through the land. They fed on the living as well as the dead, killing the young and the old. With each passing day, the rats grew ever more brazen and more vicious. They attacked men and women in the streets, they chased dogs and killed cats and feared no trap or net, nor was there enough poison in the whole of the Empire to kill them.

Soon there was not a town or village in the Empire that was free of them. They filled the streets and rushed along the gutters. They sat on the rooftops and the steeples, they crawled through the middens and climbed into the privies. They ate the food and they poisoned the wine and they scratched the widows and they bit the babies. They ran through the great palaces of Altdorf and the trading houses of Marienberg and the Colleges of Nuln, and they came swarming over the great wall of Talabheim. Soon, most every man and woman in the Empire lay sickening or lay in their graves. And all the while the Skaven kings did laugh to see such slaughter.

Only Middenheim held out against the plague and the rats, safe at the top of Ulricsberg. Graf Mandred wisely ordered the great viaducts of the city smashed before the rats could cross, and men stood at every wall and window with fire and oil to stop them climbing up the rocks. But the rats swarmed around the base of that mountain and the city lay besieged. Months passed, and the food grew short. Graf Mandred knew that though he could protect his people from the plague he could not protect them from hunger. Yet he and his soldiers were too few to turn the tide of rats away from the mountain, and there would be no help coming from the south, for all the other cities had fallen to the endless hunger of the rats.

For 13 days and 13 nights Mandred sat on his throne, trying to think of a solution lest all the men of the Empire perish and Sigmar's great nation fall back into Chaos and darkness. And on the morning of the fourteenth day, he stood up in triumph, for he had a plan.

He called together all the storefolk of the town: the shopkeepers, the butchers, the bakers, the fishmongers, the men who owned

the warehouses and stored the grains and the men who owned the restaurants and cooked for the lords. And he summoned all the people of the city also, and he charged them all with a simple task: to bring forward all their meats and cheeses from their larders.

The people cried out at this, for they had so little left, and they feared the Graf meant to starve them then and there. The Graf calmed them, speaking to them of his great plan. Such was his kindness and conviction that the people knew he meant them no harm at all, and such was the wisdom of his plan that all in the city at once fell to their tasks.

Meanwhile, Graf Mandred called upon the engineers to bring forth the largest smelting pot in the armoury. This pot was large enough to boil a man on a horse, and they its purpose was to smelt the cannon-balls for the great trebuchets. He ordered the great pot to be placed in the Square of Martials, right in front of the palace. And all the people of the city were asked to bring their meats and cheeses and throw them into the giant vessel. And so they did, every one, bringing sausages and soup bones and dried steak, and so many cheeses: great wheels of Ulric's Day, and Red Salzemand and Nordland Copper and many more, for the cows had been spared the plague and given much milk that spring, and cheese was plenty. Soon, though the pot was huge, it was full with cheeses and meats, a feast fit for a thousand men, maybe more.

Then the Graf hitched a mighty team of oxen to the pot, and they began to move it. They took it down to the very bottom of that great city, and then farther, down into the tunnels beneath. The Dwarfs guided their way, and great logs were rolled under the pot to help it move. Soon enough, they had the giant pot sitting next to the Great Black Well, that awesome channel that pushes water forth from the deepest depths, miles and miles below Ulricsberg. This great well provided the people of Middenheim with almost all their water, and was the lifeblood of the city. Graf Mandred honoured the Black Well, and asked forgiveness from the Gods, and from the Dwarfs, and from the people of Middenheim, and from the earth itself, for what he was about to do.

First, he gave the order for the great bell of Ulric to be rung out 13 times. This was the signal for all the good folk of Middenheim to hide in their homes and in the watchtowers, to find the highest ground they could. Soon only the soldiers remained on the streets and walls, so as to protect any folk found wandering. Down below Graf Mandred ordered the pot to be raised up on the logs, and a great fire lit beneath it. The bonfire blazed, and soon enough, the great pile of cheese and meat began to melt and warm, then bubble and boil. A great aroma wafted off the pot, the most delicious thing that had ever been smelt or smelled in that city. So strong was this flavour that it was soon born on the wind, rising up out of the undercity, shooting out through the pigeon holes in the rock itself, and down through the tunnels to the ground below, and ever outward, onto the plains.

The rat hordes below were hungry and angry, and had begun eating each other for want of prey. When the smell hit their noses, they went into a frenzy of hunger. Their mouths filled with foam and their eyes with red desire, and they thought of only one thing: to find this food and devour it. In a huge wave the rats charged up the mountain, climbing over each other in their fury, and at their head ran the Skaven lords.

They charged up to the top of the cliff face and swarmed over the walls. Others tunneled in through the pigeon holes and raced up

the tunnels towards the scent. So great was the odor, so furious was their hunger that they cared for nothing else but to find the source and eat until sated. They did not see that the streets were empty. They did not care that they met no guards. All they cared for was the delicious smell of cheese and flesh in that great boiling pot.

Down and down they raced, jaws frothing, eyes bulging, their hunger raging, their claws ready for death. Down they charged to the great cooking pot, where Graf Mandred and his men still stood. Hundreds of the beasts, thousands of them, filled the city and choked the tunnels beneath. And as they leapt for their food, and for the Graf's men, the Graf gave the word. The Dwarfen engineers lit their fuses, and the gunpowder exploded. The Great Black Well was split asunder, and an endless wave of water burst forth into the tunnels. It gushed like a torrent, spilling down through all the tunnels, filling the under-city to the top and washing into the streets above.

The tide of water blasted the rats against the walls and choked them with its fury. Those who survived its first coming could not swim against the current, their small arms useless against the ever-filling waters. In a few moments, every single rat was drowned. And the last do go under where the Skaven lords, paddling desperately against the flood and screaming for help as the waters covered them. The Graf and his men, whose strong strides had taken them safely to the surface, watched all the Skaven lords die, and watched their bodies sink below, and knew that the horror of the rats had passed. The next day, Mandred raised his troops and marched out to relieve the great city of Altdorf, and from there onward to the whole Empire. When he had finished, the people made Graf Mandred the Emperor, and he ruled long and wisely over the land he had saved.

And every year since, on the 14th of Ulric-Tide, we celebrate the great victory of Emperor Mandred the Ratslayer by boiling up a big pot of cheese and sausage for all to eat, joyous in the knowledge that the rats were driven out and that never more shall they return to plague our great Empire.

—FROM THE GREAT GRAFS OF MIDDENHEIM, CHILDREN'S READER

The following tale is told throughout the Empire, with the city in question always changing to suit the audience. I have been unable to trace the origin of the story, but if it was not inspired by real events, there are certainly events much like it happening all over the empire, far more often than we would ever care to imagine.

THE HORRIBLE TALE OF TRESPASS THE RATBOY

There once was a butcher who lived in the city of Middenheim, and he had a son by the name of Trespass. Now, Trespass was a perfectly normal lad, excepting for the fact that he had six toes on his right foot. When the boy was born the father grabbed for his cleaver to lop that extra toe right off, but his mother did wail and



hold the boy away from such a thing. So they were merciful, and called not for the Witch Hunters, for who would lose a strong son for nowt but an extra toe?

One summer day, Trespass was playing barefoot with the other children, and they saw his six toes, and they pointed and laughed. They called him names and threw horse-cakes at him and made him cry. But they did far more than that. For the calls of the boys drifted down the streets, and it was heard by passing folk, and they did whisper it to others, who whispered it further and soon enough it came to the ears of a certain wizard. Mad, he was, like all wizards, and in league with the horrible Skaven as well. He and his fellow wizards worshipped those rat-things deep down in the sewers, where they did

unpleasant things with them, and called upon the Chaos gods for their powers.

This wizard hears about Trespass's six toes, and he sees in Trespass a boy tainted by Chaos and ripe for the picking. So that stormy night he comes to the butcher's house, kills the mother, and snatches the boy away. He takes him down into the sewers, into the darkness, and into his Chaos temple. He ties him down, and calls on the rat-things to come forth. A Skaven comes out of the blackness, and it carries with it a shard of that damned Wyrdstone. It takes the shard, wraps it in rat hair, and binds that to the boy's six-toed foot.

Then they send the boy out on horrible errands for their twisted practices. They strap a cage to his back, bursting with dozens of rats. And they charge him to go around to every butcher's shop, every pie stall, every tavern and meadhall, and put a rat down in the cellars of every one. And the boy, terrified and knowing no better, does what he is told. And the rats get into the meat and the pies and the beer, and everyone gets sick, just like the Skaven want. Disease and plague run riot through the town, and scores of men and women are struck down.

Meanwhile, the boy's father searched desperately for his son. He sold his butcher shop and family home and took to the catacombs. But find him he never did. The brave father walks through the sewers, calling out every minute for his boy, knowing only despair. But Trespass, if he hears his father, does not go to him, for fear of his captors' wrath. Days pass, then weeks. Trespass continues on with his errands, creeping through the sewers with his box of rats, quiet as anything. He finds other rats, whole clutches of them, and he picks them up and puts them in his little cage, or even lets them run around in his coat or hair. And all the while, the stone is working on his foot, turning it from human flesh into rat flesh. Soon enough, where there was a human limb, there is only a horrid rat leg, all hairy and ending in bloody claws. And every step he takes through the sewers, he has one normal footstep—thup—and one horrible scratch along the stone—screech!

And Trespass goes mad at the sight of it, and dearly loves his new leg. And he swears his life and soul to the Skaven forever. Then he creeps back to the boys who had called him names and thrown horse-cakes. He puts rats in their beds and rats in their coats and rats in their shoes, and they are bitten all over, and die of the pox a few

days later, all swollen up with blood and pus. And that's why you must never suffer a Mutant child to live. And why you must always be home before dark, and never go down in the sewers. Because you never know when you'll hear him coming for you, his box of rats rattling in the dark, and that horrible sound of his Chaos-twisted rat-leg: Thup — screech! Thup — screech! Thup — screeeech!

—MAD ARTHUR, VAGABOND

'THE LAZY SONE' OR 'THE SKAVEN CREPT IN'

"Now sone," spake the father
"Will you to work?
Will you go doon in the well
Or will you stay here and shirk?"
"No fear," spake the sone
"In bed I shall lie
For there be rats in the well
And if they bite me, I'll die"
And the father cried:
"Rats! Rats!
You should give thanks to the Gods that it is only rats!
For fate is a strumpet, and life is a curse
And if it war'n't the rats, it would be something worse!"
"Now sone," spake the father
"Be ye working today?
For the cows are at milking
And a-needing their hay"
"Not I," spake the wastrel
With a piteous wale
"There are rats on the rafters!
And rats in the pail!"
And the father cried:
"Rats! Rats!
Give thanks to the Gods that it is only rats!
For fate is a strumpet, and life is a curse
And if it war'n't the rats, it would be something worse!"
"My sone," blew the father
"Ye will come to work now!
Get the seeds up and garnered!
Hitch the horse to the plough!"
"None!" cried the boy
"For down there in the mud
There are rats by the hundreds
And they're hungry for blood!"
And the father cried:
"Rats! Rats!
Give thanks to the Gods that it is only rats!
For fate is a strumpet, and life is a curse
And if it war'n't the rats, it would be something worse!"
But the boy he was stubborn
And staid in his cot
And his father, a-sighing
Returned to his lot
And there all alone
The boy slept owt the day
Till the Skaven crept in
And stole him away
And the boy cried:
"Rats! Rats!
Sweet merciful Shallya, let it be rats!
For fate is a strumpet and life is a curse
And I no longer fear rats now I know what is worse!"

—POPULAR TAVERN SONG IN WISSENLAND

COMMON VIEWS

In my travels and my research, I have heard a thousand facts about the Skaven, almost all of them wrong. I include a sample of them here, in the style of the great Odric of Wurtbad, to give the reader a sense of the scope of beliefs that exist about the insidious Ratmen. If nothing else they show that, where ignorance reigns, the mortal mind creates stunning variety to fill the recess.

"This very day I was accosted by the bailiffs in my own school room, and given an edict signed by Ar-Ulric himself. We are not obliged to say that Skaven exist, but we are ordered to "teach the controversy." As if to say that children's tales and the ravings of the mad are somehow creating disputation in the field! As if there was ever any sign or mark found anywhere to give credence to these fantasies of rats that walk like men! As if their existence was as scientific as the Grand Elemental Proposition! I fear for education today and in the years to come, for it seems we will never move beyond this benighted and fearful age in which we live."

—MASTER STEFAN ELLENDAN,
PROFESSOR OF SCIENCES AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF SALZENMUND

"There are those so overcome by their depraved lusts they lie with the beasts of the field. Those that lie with goats spawn the horned Beastmen; those that lie with the dogs and cats give birth to the furred Skaven; those that sell their souls to Slaanesh and lie with snakes and toads give birth to Orcs; and, of course, those that lie with sheep give birth to Averlanders."

—FATHER SCRINSTER,
ULRICAN FRIAR

"A friend of my uncle's knew a sailor who went all the way across the ocean to the other side of the world, where the men walk upside down and the horses breathe fire, and he said that down there are these newts that walk around just like men. So if you ask me, same thing with these Ratmen and Beastmen: animals just get uppity if you don't watch them, and they start acting like us. That's why we must beat them and stomp on them, to show them who's master, and we should burn any that start to talking or standing on two legs."

—GERHARDT VON HECKENBERG, MULESKINNER

"Oh, 'the Skaven did it,' or 'the Skaven took him,' that's what all the city workers say. Really all they want is to get out of doing their jobs! 'Can't clean your privy today, ma'am, there's Skaven about. Can't get the rats today, ma'am, saw a Skaven in the alleyway.' What utter tosh! Frankly, I think we should arrest any giving voice to this fantasy and flog them in the main square. That will stop their tongues wagging."

—LADY CONSTANCE CULVETT OF WOLFENBURG

"Japp and I were on watch on the wall that night, when we saw 'em. A dozen of 'em, coming right out of the river. Bigger 'n men, and all covered in fur and horns and spikes, and with burnin' green eyes and long noses and tails. Like rats! They climbed up the bank, up the wall, and all of 'em went into the east tower, through the Master's window. Sword of Verena, I swear 'tis true as I stand here. An' it was the very same night, exactly one year later, that the Mistress who was supposed to be barren had her baby. I lit out after that, fer I din't dare to work there no more."

—PIETER STAPEL,
MILITIAMAN AT CASTLE DORFLINGEN

"Are they a myth? Well, if you mean the Skaven that lurk under every city and trade with every burgomaster, and the magic rats in



all those tales they use to scare visitors to Nuln, then yes, of course those are myths. If you mean the rat-headed Beastmen we met on the fields of Ostermark, though, then you're very much mistaken. We call them ratters in my regiment, though, not Skaven. Keep the men from thinking they're bogey men, reminds them that the ratters are the cowardly ones. The ones who rout as soon as they take a few losses. That gives the men courage, especially if they've been fighting the horned ones, or the four-legged buggers, who won't rout for love or money."

—GENERAL MORRSHEIM, MARSHALL OF THE TALABECLAND ARMIES

"The enemies of our faith are legion, and the creatures of Chaos uncountable. It is unseemly for us to dwell too much on their nature, for their nature is only Abominable to our sight, and we must surround ourselves only with the good, and the Holy. Therefore we shall have no names for any of them but Chaos-Spawn, and no thought for them except their universal destruction with cleansing fire."

—ARCH-LECTOR AGLIM, HIGH PRIEST OF SIGMAR, FROM HIS TREATISE ON THE PROPER CONDUCT OF THE DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH

"The Ratmen came up behind me and they put me in a box and they took me to the dark place and they fed me soup that was all black and nasty and I said I don't like your soup and then they beat me and said eat it manthing or we cut out your tongue and so I ate it and then I couldn't see proper and then they let me go and I couldn't find my house or my mam and my skin was real itchy and I was bleeding and falling over and then the watch came and said wicked boy you should have a bell to warn folk but I didn't have a bell so they beat me and now I am in another box and I don't like it either but there are no Ratmen and no soup and I have rags all on my face but I feel real sick and I wish I could see proper and go find my mam."

—PRISONER #108, OLD TEMPLE PRISON, MIDDENHEIM

THE SCHOLAR'S VIEW

"The question isn't 'what are they,' but rather 'who are they working for?' Do you think it is some random accident that they so resemble rats, the perfect creature to infiltrate our cities and our settlements? Do you think it is coincidence that no hard evidence is ever found to prove they exist? No, these rat-beasts were made for a purpose, and in the dark hours, they kill whomever their masters set them upon. And who else would their masters be but the Wizards—for who but they would be able to create such beasts? And didn't they benefit nicely when Lord Kaschen dropped dead of the pox last month, and his Wizard Tax went with him?"

—LANGFORD BEYER, AGITATOR OF MIDDENHEIM

There are two great myths about the Skaven. The first is that they do not exist. The second is that anybody truly believes in the first.

It is impossible for the Skaven to have an empire so large and plans so all-invasive yet to leave no signs whatsoever of their passing. There are always witnesses, sightings, stories, tracks, clues and artefacts; things left behind, or forgotten. Despite the secrecy and deceit that protects the Ratmen, even the most ignorant peasant cannot fail to see patterns in the traces, and thence create their own stories to fill the gaps. Thus many scholars and sages have come to believe in the Skaven, or whatever they think is the Skaven—be that giant rats, or rat-headed Beastmen, or Wizards in the form of rats, or anything else. What they do not believe is the true nature of the Skaven, nor the true enormity of the threat they represent to us all.

"Is it likely there exists a separate strain of Beastman with uniform rodent characteristics? Of course. Is it likely that these beasts are anywhere near as intelligent, as numerous or as omnipresent as the tales would have us believe? Of course not. The question is laughable, and a product of nothing more than typical human paranoia, fed to bursting by the propaganda of our jingoistic