

Founding.

As with all aspects of the Imperium of Man, the history of the Steel Drakes began in blood and fire. The War Against The Beast, the mass ork invasion that nearly crippled the Imperium and nearly saw Holy Terra destroyed by the foul greenskins in the 32nd Millennium. Under the auspices of Lord Commander Maximus Thane, former Chapter Master of the Fists Exemplar and newly appointed commander of the rebuilt Imperial Fists, the Fourth Founding of Adeptus Astartes chapters was undertaken.

From the hallowed gene-vault stocks of Terra, gene-seeds of the Imperial Fists were selected and gifted to a one-hundred Astartes of the Crimson Fists and the Black Templar chapters, warriors of chosen valour and courage. Led by Captain Sebastan Drago, the as-yet unnamed force of Space Marines were sent to the Segmentum Pacificus, to draw recruits from a system untouched by the hands of the orks, to build up their own chapter, and to prepare the defence of the Imperium once more. Not as one of a dozen chapters, but one of hundreds.

Gifted a battle-barge, the *Ferro Cordis*, and two strike cruisers for the journey, the fledgling chapter set forth to the galactic south. While their journey through real-space and the Warp was sound, it was not uneventful. The astropaths aboard the ships could not drown out the laments of the dead. The mortis cries of worlds fallen to the orks and destroyed, either by the foul xenos or destroyed by humanities own hand. Distress signals, begging, pleading for aid from the Adeptus Astartes, Astra Militarum, anyone for assistance, evacuation, salvation, from the invaders.

To the human crews of the ships, it upset them greatly. Depression and anxiety became rife among the mortal crewmembers. For how could they not be affected? The dead were crying out for aid, salvation, things they could not give them, and things they brought too late.

To the Astartes, they heard the lamentations of the dead, and they were affected too. But where sorrow and grief settled in the hearts of humans, in the transhuman Astartes, rage was kindled. Righteous and wrathful, each Astartes on-board the three ships swore oaths, either in private or together as squads or kinsmen; they would avenge the dead. The oaths they swore would see the blood debts the dead messages carried would be repaid hundred-fold against the foul greenskins.

Most affected by this was Captain Sebastan Drago himself. Somewhat of an oddity in the Crimson Fists, and the Imperial Fists at large, Sebastan saw himself as a humanist. Though he stood far above the regular baseline humanity that made up the Imperium, he saw that it could not exist without them. The Mechanicus, Imperial Navy, Astra Militarum, even the vaunted Astartes, all relied on simple humans to exist. So to hear the cries of the dead, the cries of those he had sworn to protect tore at him more than any of his brothers aboard.

He sought retribution. He swore his own oath, one that would be passed down from chapter master to chapter master of the chapter to be: never again.

A Birth in Blood and Flames.

After a full two-months of travel through the Empyrean, the trio of ships reached their destination. The midpoint of a spiral arm near the furthest point spinward in the galactic west, the fledgling founding found their new home.

The Sigilis System.

A minor system made up of six planets and three minor planetoid bodies, it was nothing impressive to the Astartes. Accessing Imperial Navy reports of the system, they quickly scanned the info on the system they had been given as their new home.

The layout of the system was levied more towards the titling grade of each planet over the actual numerical order of discover:

Sigilis Prime was the system's capital. An arid world with prominent hives, its main tithe was mineral ore, promethium and souls for the Astra Militarum. Sigilis Secundus was primarily barren rock but home to a minor Adeptus Mechanicus mining operation for mineral ore. Sigilis Tertius was a gas giant, larger than any of the worlds in the system, and mined for gasses and rare minerals. Sigilis IV was a world of sun and sand, home to peoples listed at last census as living in a Feudal World, while Sigilis V was a more temperate world again with a population listed as living at the Feudal level of technology. Sigilis VI was a barren ball of ice and rock, with the minor planetoids being no more remarkable. The system itself was unremarkable.

Not that that stopped the orks from finding their way there. Whether by luck, choice, or mere circumstance, the foul greenskins had found their next playthings. This was no organized force like those under the control of The Beast, but a band of freebooters, piratical xenos intent on plunder and bloodshed. Long range scans showed the orks fleet, a collection of ragtag and motley vessels, were inbound towards Sigilis V.

"Never again."

The words were said by Captain Sebastan as he looked at the enemy before him and his force.

"Never again!" He roared, the cry being taken up by his battle-brothers, before being taken up by the mortal crews of the vessels.

They attacked in a blitz, righteous anger and hatred overtaking any tactical sense passed down by the Codex Astartes or the legacy of Dorn. They hungered for the fight, to spill alien blood. Torpedoes, lances and macrocannons soared silently through the cosmos, trails burning bright

before they impacted against the unaware ork vessels. Like a blade, the three vessels cut through the disparate fleet, destroying any and all they came across.

However, retribution has never been achieved at an easy cost. Augur scans showed the orks had already landed their first wave upon the planet, roks, landas and other makeshift drop-ships having already been sent on ahead.

That mattered little to the Astartes. Their blood was aflame, and naught but the life essence of the slain aliens would sate it.

The order was given, and the Space Marines launched their own drop-pods.

It was at Angels Fall that they fledgling chapter came to their new home. The name of the original city has been lost to the Imperium ever since the Steel Drakes were founded, but what is known is that original city was under attack from the orks. Feudal warriors in plate and mail armour, armed with longbows, axes, polearms, swords and shields fought against greenskins armed with shootas of all types, choppas and all the assorted weaponry the orkish race could devise. For the orks, it was sport. For the humans, it was close to a slaughter. Is it any wonder the inhabitants renamed the city after their saviours?

Retros burning bright and their hulls marred by atmospheric entry, the drop-pods smashed into the ork horde attacking the city walls, cutting right into the heart of the mob. Bodies destroyed by sheer kinetic impact and shock, the orks were sent reeling, even before the Astartes poured forth from their transports, bolters roaring and chainswords howling for blood. And at the fore was Sebastan Drago himself, jump-pack alight and his thunder-hammer, *Eagle's Talon*, crackling with energy.

With unfettered rage and righteous fury, the combined martial might of the Crimson Fists and Black Templars fell upon the foe. Xenos bodies were ripped asunder, bathed in flaming promethium, cored by melta and plasma, or destroyed by aetheric energies from the sole librarian, Epistolary Rayan of the Crimson Fists. Howling the litanies of rage, Chaplain Toreus of the Black Templars led the battle chants of his battle-brothers as they slaughtered the foe. From the walls of the city, the defenders saw the enemy besieging the walls set upon. Hope filled their hearts, and they sallied forth to join the attack.

For a full Terran hour, the orks were slaughtered to a beast, their unnatural biology no match for the resolve and wrath of the Angels of the Emperor.

And in that blood-letting, each warrior experienced something unknown to them at that time. The sensation was new, but it spread among the host like a promethium blaze. For they heard a sound that they had not heard in an age, one they never thought to hear.

From the walls of the city and the war hosts of men, cries of jubilation were called. After the slaughter they had meted out, after two months of nothing but the cries of unavenged human dead, the joyous cries of those saved from the orks swelled the souls of the Astartes in ways no

member of the chaplaincy could. The city gates opened, and a procession of lords and noblemen, each one clad in battered and bloodied plate armour exited the city, forming an honour guard for the High King, High King Degenhardt. A bear of a man, even in his suit of plate armour and chain maille, with a large cloak of reptilian scales hanging from his shoulders, he was but a child before Sebastian Drago. Before this mighty leader of Astartes, Degenhardt bent his knee and bowed, a show of humility that was never to be forgotten on Sigilis V and the Steel Drakes.

The High King asked Captain Drago. "From whence didst thou come, warriors from the stars, and for what purpose art thou here?"

Sebastian Drago replied: "We are the sons of Dorn, and the scions of the Emperor of Man, His Angels of Death. We have come to raise an army of heroes to defend His realms and His people from the alien scourge, like these beasts we have fought today. We come as defenders of humanity, and the judgment of its foes."

At the proclamation, the nobleman and common soldiery joined in cheers of praise and adulation for the Adeptus Astartes and, rising to his feet, High King Degenhardt began to order a mighty celebration to be started forthwith, to celebrate the coming of the Space Marines. However, Drago stopped any such order. The ork warboss leading the group had not been slain in the fight, nor was his body found among the bodies of the routed. As long as the ork warboss still lived, the threat to the planet remained.

So Drago turned to the people of Angel's Fall, all of its inhabitants dirtied and bloodied by the siege, and he asked them one simple question: would they join him on the hunt for the warboss?

To a man, each warrior still capable of bearing arms, raised their voices in acceptance.