

THE BEAST HOUSE

"There is no need to dissemble here, I know why you have come. You have come for something real, something unique, something to drown your boredom in spilled blood and deafen you with the wild beating of your own living heart. You have come to find the Beast House. Now tell me, what's your pleasure?"

—Ryrin Night Eye, Mistress of Beasts

Humanity hates and fears the alien. For millennia this attitude has been taught and ingrained in each successive generation. Indeed, the very word "xenos" conjures up deep-seated feelings of horror and revulsion within the heart of the average Imperial citizen. However, there is a flip side to this ingrained loathing, a terrified fascination with the alien, and in the dark sub-levels of blood sport arenas and fighting pits, this dreadful attraction is played out for those that can afford the spectacle.

In its most common form, such bloody entertainment and the arenas that provide it are quite legal. Bull thornox battle to the death in Iocanthos barter-kraals, and carnosaurus rampage against teams of human gladiators upon Scintilla's many Red Circuses nightly. Yet, removed from the garish lights of such public entertainment, the rich and the jaded, not to mention

the lowest of the low, crave more desperate, darker, and forbidden pleasures. Their preferred games feature unwilling fighters, innocents stalked for sport, and creatures so vile and dangerous that the Imperial authority forbids their use on pain of death. Within the Calixis Sector, the most widespread and powerful network of such illicit arenas have but a single, whispered name—the Beast House.

As long as there has been a Calixis Sector, it seems as if there has been a Beast House. It is not in any true sense a cult, rather it is closer to a criminal network. However, behind this façade worse things lurk than can be found at the heart of any narco-gang or underhive clan. So insidious has the Beast House become that the name and the role of this secretive organisation has become ingrained upon the psyche of Calixian civilisation—the Beast House and the horrors it secretly contains go unobserved and unlooked for, hiding almost in plain sight. While local enforcers may raid an unlicensed arena linked to the group here or the Adeptus Arbites may break up a xenos-creature smuggling ring there, the Beast House goes on undiminished. Indeed, it is actually strengthened by the removal of those in its employ "weak enough" to fall foul of the authorities.

Today there are Beast Houses on many worlds, but few realise just how far the Beast House has spread through the criminal underbelly of the Golgenna Reach and how far its tendrils stretch into the dim stars beyond the sector. The Beast House is more than a set of physical locations, a trade, or even a loose guild of hunters and dealers in proscribed creatures.



RUMOURS SURROUNDING THE BEAST HOUSE

The following rumours are examples of what may be picked up from the void born families, dock-siders, merchants, and smugglers that have had dealings with the Beast House by way of gossip and bribed intelligence, although little is known of them, even then. They don't know the whole story, but what they suspect is bad enough. Getting hold of this information will require investigation or suitable social interaction, modified as normal for circumstance.

TABLE 3-5: BEAST HOUSE TALES

Degrees of Success	Rumours Revealed
Standard Success	"There's a group of beast slavers and hunters who deal in captured xeno creatures. They've been called the 'Beast House' as long as anybody can remember."
One	"Its not just a name, there's a real organisation with contacts off-world to get them whatever they need, and they trade with anyone who can afford them."
Two	"If you've got the money or the contacts the Beast House can get anything you want by way of xenos-creatures, regardless of what the law or the licence says. Just don't cross them or you'll end up in some horror's stomach. They use a lot of local muscle and hired help, but the real thing is all off-worlders—ferals, blood hunters, and smugglers—stone killers the lot of 'em."
Three	"If the stories are true, they run their own private arenas, invitation only, if you know what I mean. There you can see things worse than you could ever imagine. The rich and the powerful come out to play, they do. The story goes that they hold these shows far beyond prying eyes and, if the rumours are true, for good reason too. Just pray you never turn up as part of the show-bill, you understand me?"
Four or more	"Don't trust them and don't go near them unless you have to, that's what I've heard. Evil pure and simple. Alien tainted and worse than any of the monsters they trade in. How many people do you think go to them and their 'shows' and never come back? How many dregs and hivers taken in the night for their sport and Emperor know what else? If half of what I've heard whispered is true, I don't want to know the answers."

The hidden truth is that the Beast House is a criminal empire that spans worlds and is founded on blood and pandering to the very worst aspects of human nature. Centuries old, it maintains its shroud of secrecy by working through layers of intermediaries and local agents, and it is growing stronger year by year. It hides many dark secrets the Inquisition is only just beginning to suspect, and for some in the Ordo Xenos, the realisation is dawning that they may have let a serpent of alien-tainted corruption coil around the very heart of the Calixis Sector.

THE BEAST HOUSE BY REPUTE

In the shadowy entertainment zones on the edge of underhives from Sibellus to Solomon and beyond, the name "Beast House" is synonymous with extreme blood sports, arena combats, and the xenos-creature trade. Likewise, many jaded sons and daughters of the wealthy great houses also know the term through wicked and scandalous tales of hunts and monstrous things forbidden by the restrictions of Imperial law—all provided for discerning clients at enormous expense. Stories and rumours about the Beast House have been doing

the rounds, high and low, for so long most believe that the name itself is little more than a traditional effectation for those who deal in the blood sport trade. The popular belief held by most is that if an original Beast House once existed, it is now is long gone and that others have long since sought to cash in on the legend to further their own reputations. This is a view shared by many local enforcer groups, most criminal groups, and until relatively recently by the Adeptus Arbites and the Ordo Xenos. However, recently several incidents have come to light casting a far darker pall over the Beast House and its secrets.

WHAT THE ORDO XENOS KNOWS

The Ordo and the Sector Arbites are slowly recognising that there is a dark thread connecting those who run the blood arenas and those who deal in xenos beasts. In the last few decades, encounters and reports of dangerous and proscribed xenos-predators appearing in illegal arenas or the hands of depraved recidivists have steadily increased in the sector's core worlds and on Scintilla in particular. Subsequent investigations into these occurrences pointed time after time to the so-called Beast House. Further investigation also turned up rushes of disappearances among the poor and the

underclass in the areas where a particular Beast House was said to exist, rumoured links to smuggling rings, murder for hire, strange sightings of creatures, and other peculiarities. Yet nothing was concrete enough to show an overarching threat.

It was only when Inquisitor Layvan and his retinue disappeared while investigating the Beast House on Fenksworld that the full attention of the Ordo Xenos came to bear on the organisation, and it has not liked what it has begun to uncover. Currently, Inquisition backed elements are conducting a widespread series of covert investigations into the Beast Houses on several worlds, but they have met with little success in penetrating its higher echelons. However, alarm at their discoveries to date is spreading due to the Beast House's links to many of the wealthy houses and criminal gangs across the Golgenna Reach and Markayan Marches and the suspicion that extreme and dangerous alien corruption lies at the Beast House's heart. In direct response to ongoing

BLOOD SPORTS AND FIGHTING ARENAS IN THE IMPERIUM

Aside from more sedate or spiritually worthy pleasures, the common Imperial citizen, particularly if he lives in the crowded and heavily regulated societies found on most hive worlds, favours his public entertainments in the form of visceral and often violent spectacle. Fighting contests, from simple bare-knuckle brawls and displays of martial skill right up to the rare extreme of prisoners condemned to battle as augmented gladiators, are all popular in the low hives. Meanwhile, attending duelling schools, sponsoring champions for battle, and hunting dangerous prey are all common pastimes of the elite.

Beast shows and games at the circus or carnivora are somewhat rarer than the more mundane human fighting attractions. However, they are a long-standing tradition on some worlds whose own hazardous life-forms make for suitable opponents, or whose wealth allows such beasts to be imported from afar. In the Calixis Sector, Hive Sibellus has by far the greatest number of such arenas, as the hive's position as capitol and trade nexus has long afforded it the ability to pack its circuses with a bewildering variety of beasts and creatures from across the sector. But without doubt, the pale pits of Hive Volg on Fenksworld have the undisputed crowning reputation as the most horrific, dragging up "things" from the polluted depths below to fight against human combatants.

Despite public demand for ever more exotic and ferocious battles, certain xenos creatures are forbidden or have their trafficking proscribed by Imperial law. Some are simply judged too alien or too dangerous for public exposure, while others represent a threat that goes far beyond that of a mere loosed beast should they escape. This proscription, of course, does not prevent the desire to see such terrors for those willing to flout the law, and in the underhives and black markets of many worlds, all kinds of forbidden creatures and deadly games can be enjoyed by those with the money and stomach to do so.

events and with characteristic subtlety, the Ordo is doing its best to uncover the full extent of this xeno-crime before it takes overt and decisive action, rather than attempting a premature strike risking the Beast House's fragmenting and scattering only to resurface later. This strategy, while sound and based on past experience, is not without the wider risk that the alien corruption may spread further before it is checked and thus is the cause of some contention within the Ordos.

THE XENO CONSPIRACY ON FENKSWORLD

Fenksworld has long been a breeding ground for cults and conspiracies, many of which have been known to spread out into the wider sector, and the notorious independence of its rulers has much to do with this. One collection of conspiracy tales persisted for decades about a shadowy group based in the dilapidated sections of Hive Nova Castillia's industrial underbelly, devoting themselves to obtaining illegal xenos specimens for the purposes of study and experimentation. This rogue cabal of xenophiles and heretics persisted on the edge of the Holy Ordos's attention until three years ago a junior Xenos Inquisitor called Layvan and his retinue undertook a close investigation of the circumstantial evidence.

Layvan quickly discovered the group was little more than a front for a darker conspiracy. His last communiqué alleged that the conspiracy used a hidden facility somewhere in Nova Castillia to breed and augment a variety of vile alien and mutated creatures, which were then transhipped through the busy orbital port and out across the sector to various Beast Houses on other worlds. Shortly afterward, Layvan and his entire retinue disappeared, and despite the sudden and direct action by the Holy Ordos and a full Adeptus Arbites backed operation to seek out and purge the suspected xenophile presence, no trace of Layvan or the xeno-lab was ever found.

A year later, a raid on a heretek workshop on the distant hive world of Solomon recovered a damaged data slate. Ordos officials reconstructed the dying and confused testimony of Layvan's savant Acolyte Urisa from the slate. The recordings contained on the slate show scenes of some hidden industrial centre given over to xenos flesh-craft, where Urisa alleges that hundreds had died in blasphemous experiments and that monstrous things walked. Clearly suffering from shock and blood loss, Urisa's testimony was garbled and rambling, but he clearly named the Beast House as the secret power behind the conspiracy.

"NO FOE CAN STAND WHEN CONFRONTED BY THE WARRIORS
OF THE IMPERIUM."



USING THE BEAST HOUSE IN YOUR GAMES

The Beast House is a horror show, a vessel built to contain monsters for Acolytes to encounter. You can use it simply in its physical sense as a very bad place where your Acolytes might encounter all manner of horrors and terrible creatures to uncover, fight, or evade. You can of course ramp-up the fear factor and sense of threat in such places by forcing Acolytes into situations where their resources are limited and they are literally alone in the dark. They may even simply stumble on the Beast House as part of an unrelated investigation and find its masters unhappy with such an intrusion!

The Beast House also makes for an excellent opponent in conspiracy and covert investigation adventures. You could have a highly varied xenos focused campaign, where the Acolytes attempt to track down and combat the Beast House on different world. Starting with investigating the Beast House's involvement in the arenas and then tracing back to the hunts on forbidden worlds where it captures livestock, the Acolytes could slowly uncover just how far its tendrils extend and what horrors lie concealed at its heart. Ultimately, a campaign's climax may even involve a confrontation with Solkarn Senk himself, although just who or what he is has been left to the GM's own dark imaginings.

BEHIND THE MASK

The Beast House, as presented here, focuses on the xenos elements of the beasts it uses and the evil and corrupt men and women who are involved in running it. The evil of the beast slavers is best expressed as an unrestrained bloodlust and the love of the hunt gone mad, with such attendant evils as slavery and the torture of lesser creatures for sport. The danger the Inquisition and Imperial law sees in this is not simply the crimes of those involved but also the myriad possible dangers presented by the xenos creatures themselves, both known and unknown. At the secret heart of the Beast House, this menace has gone so far as to enter the realms of the truly horrific, with hideous experiments and insane games where innocents are killed for nothing more than sport. The GM may, of course, feel that this is not enough to explain it all and may wish to add a truly alien conspiracy or even daemonic sponsorship to its secrets.

STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

"I'm not interested in your money or who you are, pretty one, just how nice you can scream for me."

—Shakas Wvendaal, Beast Slaver

The Beast House operates to supply, store, and in some cases, even modify or breed creatures for use in arena-circuses and blood sport operations in the criminal underworld. It has also been known to provide beasts to private owners, including cults and hereteks, for their own dark ends. There is a great deal of money to be made from this illegal trade, and in order to do so, the Beast House acts to control the supply chain, running the whole operation from initial capture of the creatures to their distribution. Furthermore, the Beast House sometimes acts as the secret owner or backer of the venues that host its creatures, often taking a hand in incidental activities such as gambling and criminality that surround these places.

The Beast House protects itself by making extensive use of local intermediaries on the worlds where it operates and maintaining progressive layers of secrecy about its true size and what it can supply. This secrecy means that many of those who work for it don't know the full truth and that parts of the group and its assets can be "cut loose" if faced with sanction by local law enforcement, or when infiltrated by outsiders, with little danger to the other parts of the organisation or its true masters, the "beast slavers." Just how many true members of the Beast House are privy to its inner workings remains unknown to the Holy Ordos, but probably there are no more than a few hundred in total scattered across the Golgenna Reach and the Markyan Marches, and perhaps

that many again operating to acquire savage livestock on numerous far flung worlds and roving hunting ships.

Of these, those who lead the organisation and hold the power of life and death over their fellows and their creatures are fewer still. This last group consists of the most secretive and dangerous members of the Beast House. They are the beast slavers, hunt masters, and flesh crafters who are the true driving force behind the organisation. However, all report to a single mysterious authority who's power and mastery over the Beast House is without question, a man known as Solkarn Senk.

THE OUTER CIRCLE

The outer circle of the Beast House is made up of hired muscle, local criminal groups, and contacts developed through bribery and coercion to serve the Beast House's interests, acting as a legitimate cover (such as licensed arena or trader operations), keeping it safe from the authorities, or simply buying its services. Made up of largely ignorant intermediaries or individuals bribed or scared enough to keep their suspicions to themselves, the Beast House at this level appears to be no more or less than a criminal enterprise dealing in xenos-creatures and illegal blood sports with extensive off-world contacts. Such intermediaries may work for the Beast House without ever knowing they have done so. Others looking to enhance their reputation (and wealth) may well pick up numerous, often contradictory, rumours and dark tales that they are more than happy to spread. Of these hirelings and go-betweens, only those who show the uncommon bloodlust and particular talents the organisation favours will be chosen by the Beast House to be drawn further into its ranks.