

WARMASTER TIBER ACHILUS

"All great deeds are the work of great men. Ours is a galaxy shaped by the will of those with the courage to keep the light of humanity burning and the God-Emperor's divine dream alive; a dream of unification, faith, and Mankind's domination over our galaxy, now and forever."

—Inscription on the wall of Achilus' Cenotaph

Much of what has come to pass during the Imperium's great Crusade into the Jericho Reach can be laid at the feet of one man: Tiber Achilus. During its planning and early years, the Lord Militant was the catalyst of nearly every move the Imperium's forces made within the sector, even influencing the decisions and actions of those only nominally under his control such as the Inquisition, the Ecclesiarchy, the various Space Marine Chapters, and the Deathwatch. Imperial scholars and historians have often used an ancient adage when talking of the Achilus Crusade; "If you know the man, you will know the mission." The truth of this wisdom can be seen in every fortified world and every glorious victory and every ignominious defeat which mark his nine years in command of the Imperium's bid to reclaim the Reach. Those that dig deeper into the man that was Tiber Achilus however have found more questions than answers and some disturbing and damning coincidences.

A RISE TO GLORY

The story of Tiber Achilus began thousands of light years from the Jericho Reach and many years before the Imperium's discovery of the Warp Gate. Born in the Ixaniad Sector on the hive world of Lordrium, Achilus was a product of a long and noble line of generals and commanders which had served the Ixaniad sector lords for centuries. The lexographers of Lordrium however record his birth year as laced with prophecy and portent. It was written that on the day of his birth there was an unanticipated convergence of Lordrium's seven moons and a rolling eclipse that last for almost a week over the hive in which he lived. Other signs included sightings of strange visitors to the hive: thin graceful men dressed

in robes who never showed their faces and vanished when approached. Strange ships were spotted to in orbit, appearing only on the edge of sensor sweeps and disappearing before their existence could be confirmed. These peculiar events however were not associated with the then infant Achilus, as despite his high birth he was but one of a dozen sons of the Achilus line and merely another Spire brat in the eyes of the nobles of Lordrium.

As he grew to adulthood, Tiber Achilus began to distinguish himself from his brothers and sisters and live up to the grand legacy of his name. A masterful swordsman and canny tactician, he excelled in the ranks of the Lordrium officer cadre as a cadet, earning a bloody reputation as a duellist even before his second naming day. While his siblings largely succumbed to the vices of nobility and decadence of their lifestyle, Tiber became even more driven to succeed with each passing year, as if he knew somehow there was a task for which he had been born and which only he could complete. His first taste of combat came during the Redgarvi Ashlander Riots on Lordrium, as a twenty year old officer of the 38th Hive Korlo planetary defence force regiment. As in his previous endeavours, he made a name for himself quickly, securing the Hive's central lifters in a series of bloody battles and brutal holding actions against the Redgarvi hordes. For his courage and his skill he was awarded both the Lordrium Silver Shield and a place in the sector lord's own personal regiment, the Ixaniad Purebloods.

It was over the next forty years in the service of the Purebloods that Tiber Achilus would earn a sector wide reputation, even becoming a known commander in the nearby Scarus and Calixis Sectors for his role in the fringe campaigns. These were the years in which he faced the bloodthirsty Khrave, the Sons of the Bleeding Shadow and the Ylarian Collective in the depths of the Halo Stars and on the edge of the Ixaniad Sector. A rising star of the Imperial Guard and stalwart ally of the Imperial Navy, Achilus travelled extensively and made many contacts with the noble houses and prominent Imperial organisations of the region. It was said by those that met the man that he had an air about him, a natural charisma or presence that seemed to call out to those around him and put them at ease. Such was this strange effect he had on both allies and enemies that in the many years he served in the Purebloods not one of his peers had anything bad to say about him, nor did he seem to make any foes at all. This feat was remarkable among the Imperial military structure and practically unique among his kind.



It was during this period of ascension that one of the more unusual incidents surrounding Achilus occurred. It was while he was campaigning in the Formorian Sector against the Khrave and their allies, cleansing the cursed Sydratie Seven Systems. After defeating a Khrave vanguard fleet around the world of Taryo he made planet-fall with a battalion of Purebloods to clear out any xenos which had escaped the fighting and landed on the world. An uncharted planet, Taryo was a labyrinth of frozen canyons and ice tunnels which forced Achilus to divide his landing party into platoons to find the surviving xenos. After hours of searching, Achilus and the men with him became lost, stumbling into an ancient ruin of strange but familiar architecture. Almost immediately Eldar pathfinders attacked them and their platoon was cut down in a matter of minutes leaving only Achilus and a few of his men alive. A secret report from one of these survivors (gathered years later by the Ordo Xenos) recounts what happened next. Apparently even as the leader of the pathfinders loomed over the wounded Achilus to finish him, she seemed to pause, looking closer at the general before turning to her men and motioning for them to retreat. Why this occurred was never documented and Achilus never spoke of it, however the eye witnesses swear that when the alien looked at Achilus it seemed to recognise him.

FIRST LORD MILITANT OF THE CRUSADE

To lead an Imperial Crusade, a commander must have more than just experience, charisma and favour. In such an undertaking it is not enough for a man to be the greatest in his field or the most idolised among his peers, he must have something more. When the Warp Gate was discovered and the first whispers of Crusade began to permeate among the upper echelons of the Imperium, Achilus found himself drawn to the cause, struck by the righteousness of conquering the Jericho Reach and bringing its worlds back into the light of the God-Emperor. It was as if this was the moment of greatness he had been waiting for, and typical of his confidence and drive, he wasted no time in rallying support and gathering together allies to make his dream a reality.

Here history turns up yet more anomalies and curiosities, as even though Achilus was a man of power and influence, even he should have had a long struggle to win the hearts and minds of three sectors as well as the favour of the High Lords of Terra to mandate his claim to lead the Crusade. Typically such a political viper's nest could take years to resolve as families and military commanders circled and skirmished to gain the power to make a petition to the High Lords. In the case of Tiber Achilus it took only months. Rivals changed their allegiance when they learnt of his intent, while stubborn holdouts came round to his way of thinking. At the time it was seen as the great charisma and connections Achilus must have had and seemed to speak of his ability to hold together the many factions which would make up a Crusade and thus favour him for the job. A closer look however revealed more than just the persuasive tongue of a much loved commander, but in some cases complete shifts in stance or personality for particular opponents. Even the brief spate of assassinations (typical of many a significant ascension within the Imperium)

seemed as much for show as to aid Tiber Achilus. For better or worse however in those first months following the formation of the Crusade, Tiber Achilus was named Lord Militant and the Crusade had begun.

Tiber Achilus was only to lead the Crusade for nine short years, and oversee just the very beginning of its push into the Reach. In that time he proved an able commander and a strong presence for the Imperial forces, holding together the at times fragmented organisations and officers under his control. For an overview of this time and some of the great achievements of Achilus during these early years see *A History of Conquest and Carnage* on page 14.

LOST TO THE WARP

Achilus' death was to prove as interesting and unusual as his life, shrouded in mystery and strange circumstance. It was in the year 786.M41, during a routine voyage from Alphos to Karlack that the Lord Militant's vessel the *Proclamation of Wrath* was lost to the Warp. While the Warp is always a dangerous place, and no journey through it can ever be said to be completely safe, Achilus and his vessel were lost on a trip that should have taken days at most and in a Warp route as established and stable as any within the sector. Stranger still is that of the twelve vessels within his fleet that day only the *Wrath* was lost; all the others arriving at Karlack completely unharmed. Reports from the other captains and their Navigators are varied as to what happened to the *Wrath*, some saying it was swallowed by a sudden vortex in the Warp, others that its Geller Field must have failed allowing the horrors of the Warp to consume it. There were even some reports that Achilus and his vessel had translated from the Warp to real space, disappearing somewhere into the deep void between worlds. Whatever the truth, the *Wrath* utterly vanished and Achilus was considered lost.

Unwilling to accept such an explanation for the death of the Lord Militant, many agencies and individuals sought answers, not least among them the Inquisition. A secret inquest led by Inquisitor Kya Tellemain of the Ordo Malleus spent the next few years examining logs and hunting down leads. At first Tellemain was convinced that the disappearance of Achilus had been the work of the Stigmartus and the Dark Gods, an elaborate plot to rob the Imperium of one of its greatest leaders. She even discovered fragments of evidence which seemed to point her in the direction she hoped the investigation would lead. Unfortunately such leads always came to nought, and she only ever found more rumours and lies the deeper she dug. The most disturbing of these however, and the one which haunted her entire investigation, was the discovery that the Eldar assassin Syndilian had been sighted on Alphos only hours after the departure of the Lord Militant. Never able to undeniably confirm the sighting or establish why he had been there (the alien left no clues and made no attacks if he had in fact been present) Tellemain could only wonder what role the pathfinder might have had in Achilus' death, and why?

Eventually pressure from the new Lord Militant along with the pressing concerns of the Crusade put an end to Tellemain's investigation. The official histories recorded that Achilus and his vessel had been lost due to a Geller Field failure; a chance accident which could not have been foreseen. Strangely however Tellemain herself disappeared not long after the investigation was closed, vanishing on a mission deep within the Orpheus Salient. Rumours within the Inquisition speculate that she was silenced for what she knew about the old Lord Militant's death. Whether this is true or not, the day she vanished her Acolytes across the Reach went into hiding, as if they knew they too would soon be hunted for what they had learned.

ACHILUS' LEGACY

Tiber Achilus' death has been in many ways only the beginning of his role within the Crusade. In addition to lending his name to the Imperium's grand undertaking, his memory has become a corner stone of the morale and dedication to duty for many of the Crusaders. It has even become a tradition among many of the high ranking officers of both the Imperial Guard and Navy to take vows before Achilus' Cenotaph on Karlack before accepting their posts, pledging their loyalty to the Crusade before the tomb of its father. Ostensibly Tetrarchus seems to embrace this form of honour afforded his predecessor, though in reality he has little control over the ritual or the strong popularity it has garnered in the ranks. In the Imperial Guard, men favour those officers who have made their pledges at the Cenotaph of Achilus, the regiments responding well to those who have sought out the "Old Man's" favour before embarking on their combat missions. The Navy is little different, most Captains feeling more secure knowing a man with the blessing of Achilus leads them.

In addition to his lingering presence within the minds of the Crusader commanders, rumours also persist that Achilus has left behind another more sinister legacy. It is whispered that there exists a cult led by his most loyal officers, men and women deposed by Tetrarchus during the Council of Ashes and who still oppose the new Lord Militant's control of the Crusade. Known as the Children of Achilus, it is said that they hold positions throughout the fleets and armies of the Crusade, sometimes directly under the control of a veteran of the Council of Ashes, sometimes with no apparent connection to this old guard though loyal nevertheless. Not traitors to the Imperium (at least in their own eyes) the Children of Achilus work in subtle ways to undermine the strength of Tetrarchus within the sector, fouling up logistics, slowing down troop transfers and even passing on false or flawed intelligence to make the new Lord Militant look a fool or incompetent. The Ordo Hereticus made investigations into these rumours of a disgruntled officer cult within the Crusade, though to date their efforts have turned up nothing. This either indicates that the rumours are indeed just rumours, or possibly that the infiltration of the Children of Achilus goes far deeper than even the Inquisition could have suspected. Always willing to favour the more paranoid response several Inquisitors have chosen the latter and maintain open investigations into the

Children. However in a sector rife with alien sedition and true heresy, most can only spare a few low-ranking Acolytes for such a frivolous endeavour. Thus far their actions have potentially cost thousands of lives, but in the chaos of a full blown Imperial Crusade such military blunders regularly occur and draw little attention. It is said however that the Children of Achilus are escalating their operations and are currently planning something momentous to lay at Tetrarchus' door, something even he will not be able to ignore.



NEW DEED:

THE LORD MILITANT'S FAVOUR

A Deed is a special benefit that a character may select at character creation. For more information on Deeds (and many more options), see **rites of battle**.

Cost: 400xp

Prerequisites: Member of a Space Marine Chapter taking part in the Achilus Crusade, Fel 40+

Many Space Marine Chapters involved in the Achilus Crusade have won great honours in the service of Lord Militant Tetrarchus or his predecessor. A number of these Space Marines so honoured have become well-known by many Crusade officers in the Imperial forces, and thus carry great influence among them. Prior to your service in the Deathwatch, you were one of these Space Marines, and you have knelt before the Cenotaph on Karlak and taken vows of duty to Tiber Achilus, the father of the crusade. You wear the medal of the crusader and those who know you know that you have brought glory to the crusade and to the memory of the man which first led it into battle.

EFFECTS:

When dealing with either the Imperial Guard or the Imperial Navy of the Achilus Crusade (depending on which Peer Talent you possess) you add an additional degree of success on all successful Fellowship Tests or Skill Tests based on Fellowship. The Battler-Brother also gains the Peer (Imperial Guard) or (Imperial Navy) Talent.