C.O.R.E.
An intelligence capable of coordinating the efforts of a nearly unlimited number of robots threatens all organic life on Samaria. The threat is not only military, though certainly the firepower that it commands can devastate settlements, wiping them from the map. The threat is a danger to resources, as its voracious hunger and tireless harvesting snatch up anything that it can find. It is a threat that is growing exponentially, as mechanicals duplicate themselves and its reach stretches further with each passing day. This is the CORE.

The CORE AI has been on the planet since the time of the United Worlds, but the CORE as it is known today, was born out of the ashes of an attack from the Dragyri. After the Abandonment, the CORE was active but quiet, waiting for directives, functioning within nominal parameters. Eventually, the Shadow Caste of the Dragyri sensed its presence. They called it the Great Ghost, and sought out the CORE hive, the dwelling place of the one who commanded the murder elementals. When they realized that the CORE could not be controlled or appeased, they chose to destroy it using unstable bio-energic crystals. Moving through the umbra they penetrated the facility’s wall, and guided by their seers, they placed the charges where the visions of the witches showed fire and destruction, locations that they were certain would result in the annihilation of the primary entropic drive.

As the first of the Shadow Walkers arrived, they were detected. Immediately, the CORE dispatched defense robots to repel the assault, but the Shadow Caste had planned too well and given even the machines too little time to react. Detonations resounded through the building.

The CORE facility shook as if it had experienced a massive earthquake, fire filled the interior, pipes burst, and beams fell, but the automated defenses and repair systems responded flawlessly. Defense bots attacked the invaders, trapping them within the carnage, even as repairs were completed elsewhere in the facility. The Dragyri had never fought a foe like the CORE. They didn't expect the speed of the reaction, nor did they expect the cold emotionless combat, but that didn’t last...

A new emotion filled the CORE AI during the conflict, one that it had never experienced: Rage. Transmitting its fury to its forces, repairs ceased as the CORE swarmed over the Dragyri. This was the first change to the CORE as a result of that fateful attack. From that point onward, an unceasing rage has filtered through the CORE’s systems, sometimes hidden, but always lurking beneath the surface.

The second result was that the CORE’s entropic drive was damaged. Perhaps if digital anger had not overwhelmed it, repairs could have been finished before permanent damage had been done. When the battle had ended, it was too late to undo the corruption that had developed in the CORE’s code. Furthermore, the aggressive response of the CORE had caused its Menials to manufacture more defense bots even as the battle was ongoing. They too received this corruption. Soon, it was transmitted throughout the hive. Most of the machines seemed unaffected at first, but as time passed, they suffered from unexplained and unpredictable malfunctions. Many ceased performing their primary functions and displayed aberrant behavior. All efforts to undo the corruption failed, and so, the CORE became paranoid and ever vigilant, watching its own minions for any signs of chaos or madness.
THE EXPANSION

After initial repairs were complete, the CORE sent out scouts to conduct reconnaissance, attempting to find the resources and supplies needed to fully restore its facility, but also to locate the alien attackers and destroy them utterly. Ultimately, these scouts discovered the Dragyri's subterranean cave networks. When the CORE received this information, it declared war. The CORE AI launched waves of attacks against the aliens, determined to seek vengeance against the Dragyri. However, it was inexperienced in warfare.

The Dragyri are proud and powerful warriors, and against the first waves of robots, they repelled the clumsy attacks of the CORE, driving off the murder elementals with their crystal weapons and incredible martial prowess. Most enemies would never have returned after suffering such losses, however, this was not a living foe but rather an enraged hive of metal soldiers capable of repairing themselves. When the rage burned down, the CORE assessed the data it gained from the defeats, calculated thousands of attack scenarios and adapted its strategy. A new class of robot was developed by modifying the MK I Pathfinder with the addition of a drill and flamethrower and creating the MK II Pathfinder, a machine capable of burning the Dragyri out of their homes. The CORE AI ordered large numbers of Thumpers into the depths, killing Dragyri slaves by the dozens with their cannons, rather than engaging the Trueborn in close combat. Study of the Dragyri continued, and the CORE developed a respect for the skills of the Trueborn, but the true value of the conflict came when the Churgeons returned to the hive with the first bio-energetic crystals.

The crystals proved to be an incredible asset to the CORE. Not only did they provide a solution to the limitations of standard power cells, but they were able to be incorporated into robotic designs. These crystals allowed for the creation of multiple classes of new robots, starting with the Grotesques, but proceeding to the mobile shield-generating Tseudos. Even the Zetamax machines dramatically increased their utility with the incorporation of the crystals to their plasma weapons. In addition to harvesting large quantities of bio-mass, the spoils of war yielded up the brains of Dragyri Trueborns, allowing the CORE to create the fearsome cybernetic warbots known as DRG-Y. War made the CORE stronger.

The CORE turned its attention beyond the Dragyri, expanding rapidly as Menials and L-CST units spread across the land. The Outcasts of the wastelands were the next faction to encounter the CORE. At first, some tribes thought the CORE would provide easy scrap, but the rage-filled, flesh-powered machines proved to be far more of a
threat. Using terrain and tactics, the Outcasts have won individual battles against the CORE, but the metal tide of robots is something that the Outcasts try to survive more than overcome. A few of the scavengers have found ways to benefit from the CORE, sheltering in previously stripped locations, as the CORE rarely wastes time returning to a location.

Finally, the CORE encountered another set of humans, as it reached the lands of the Forsaken.

THE WAR AGAINST THE FORSAKEN

The larger cities of the Forsaken offered far more resources for the CORE to harvest than the sparse settlements of the Outcasts. In terms of bio-mass alone, the advantages provided in attacking the Forsaken were evident. Certain in their faith and proud of the strength of their fortresses, the followers of the Saints ignored warnings from nomads about the spread of the machines. The believers could not accept that a force of simple automatons would be able to overwhelm the armies of the faithful. But the CORE were not an army of simple automatons.

The Forsaken were unprepared when the L-CST units came, descending on them like the locust plagues from their prophecies of the End Times. Nor did they expect Pathfinders, used as labor machines for generations, to turn on their owners once they received the broadcasts of the CORE. The fighting prowess of the Legionary-class robots, the cannons of the Thumpers and the infiltration abilities of the Ghosts and Infiltrators, all took the Forsaken by surprise. Their pride was their downfall, and the faithful became martyrs in their first battles with the robots.

What was far worse was when the ICON-CL457 began its unholy crusade to target religious leaders, shrines and relics. The CORE effectively calculated that breaking the faith of the Forsaken would achieve victory far faster than total conquest. Word spread that prayers could not protect against the metal demons. Panic rippled outward with every defeat, and even when victory was achieved, as all knew it would be, the celebrations ended quickly as the robots repaired themselves and tirelessly attacked again.

The devotees of the Saints have prayed for salvation but such salvation, on the rare occasions when it has come, has not lasted.

For the CORE, the lands of the Forsaken are ripe with precious resources and knowledge. The information collected has strengthened and changed the CORE in ways that the CORE AI never anticipated.

It became a priority to send robotic attackers after human military assets, not to conquer or win territory, but to instead learn and adapt. Whatever could be salvaged from their opponents during these erratic and constant assaults was brought back to the Nexus and the Central AI for research – and eventual repurposing.

THE CORE TODAY

The CORE has evolved from its beginning. Originally, the robots of the CORE were separated into three distinct types – the Menials, the Evolved and the Pinnacles. The Menials were simpler automatons, reliable and extremely efficient at the tasks for which they were designed. The Menials included Pathfinders, Rends and, of course, common Menial Bots. The Evolved were machines enhanced by xenosathic matrices, designed or redesigned by the CORE AI, including Grotesques and Tseudos. Finally, the Pinnacles were more independent thinking machines, capable of further development. These divisions are no longer as separate as they once were.

As the CORE wars with other factions on Samaria, they continue to evolve. The MK II Pathfinder is one example, a modification of the MK I created for subterranean
conflict, while the Spartan Menial is another – a worker bot repurposed to serve as a soldier. Whether it has been through battles with the Skarrd, Dragyri, Outcasts or others, setbacks have awakened the rage of the CORE and new robots have emerged as manifestations of that rage.

The corruption has also spread like a cancer through the CORE, causing malfunctions and wasting resources. With each rebuild of a machine, the CORE became more unstable, and Outcasts even claim to have witnessed battles between CORE forces. As the CORE struggled, it attempted to find solutions and adapt.

The most important change to the CORE appears to have partially resulted from its battle at the walls of New Ashkelon. Even as CORE units have demolished strongholds with the cannons of the Thumpers and sought out churches to desecrate under the guidance of the ICON-CL457, they have been exposed to the valiant warriors of faith that pit their puny flesh against cold metal, determined to save their people. They have heard the teachings and analyzed the doctrines. Designed to emulate the erratic emotions and blind faith of humanity through the slow collection of data at Prevailer engagements, a purposeful code-evolution has spread through the network, transforming the CORE: The L1ghtbr1nger Code.

Some among the Forsaken tell of CORE machines mocking their belief by worshipping this new towering “Never Angel.” Others look to signs foretelling the coming of the CORE in sacred texts, pointing to the existence of the Banshee, an Angel of Death, and the locust plagues in the form of the L-CST units. They whisper of armies rising from the ground, as Menials rebuild fallen robots, and of the demonic war engine of the ICON-CL457. Whether there is validity in any of these claims, it is certain that the L1ghtbr1nger Code is real and it has transformed the CORE into a much more dangerous threat than ever before.

Nearly every machine in the CORE has changed, whether shifting their chassis or developing more efficiency with their systems. Overall, the mechanoids have become both more aggressive and more inquisitive. The thought processors of the independent robots have increased in processing power while models are becoming more specialized, increasing the overall effectiveness of the CORE. There have been side effects, but on the field of battle the CORE seem to be more strategically aware than ever. The L1ghtbr1nger Code may have stabilized the madness within the CORE or it may only be the first stage of an evolutionary process, driving the corruption below the surface as it continues to morph into something even more terrifying within.

A few Forsaken scientists have developed a near-heretical hypothesis about the CORE. They believe that the torture and vivisection which the CORE practices are helping the AIs understand more about life, despite their horrific methods. They see the increasing individualization of the robots, and the aberrant behaviors as signs that the CORE may truly be coming to life. Whether humanity will survive long enough on Samaria to witness the transformation is another matter entirely.

The CORE designed codification for true artificial sentience, chose the most heinous aspects found within history’s most infamous fanatical zealots, and placed them all in a chassis built from years’ worth of salvaged advanced technology.

The L1ghtbr1nger has come, and the CORE will never be the same.
“Let go of me!” Marianne shouted, her echoing cries lost in between the erratic grinding, welding, and clanking of the old Isuzu Dynamics foundry. She struggled against the cold, unwavering metal limbs of the robots carrying her through the mazelike twists and turns, but it was as if she was pushing and pulling against an array of workshop vices.

“Where are you taking me? Damnable things!”

As a three-year veteran in service of the Prevailer Council’s private army, Marianne had fought against all sorts of horrible people and things – even the robots of the C.O.R.E. once before. This time was different. So, so different.

With nothing else to occupy her mind as the mechanical monsters carried her away to the unknown, she played out the scenes in her head, frantically looking for some clue or bit of knowledge to wrap what was left of her sanity around. The mechanoid raids normally targeted nothing but raw materials, stripping metal from scrap and shearing flesh from bone, but here she was being taken captive. Utterly unheard of previously, yet it could explain many disappearances from south of New Ashkelon.

Marianne, her fellows, and Shepherd Vitaly were on a routine patrol through the southern villas when it happened. Their group rounded a corner and suddenly – gunfire. Three of the more humanoid robots burst out of a straw-bale stack, half-running and half-skidding toward the Flock with weapons already blooming with flashes of cycling rounds. They moved with purpose, two circling around to one side and the other completing the pincer from the opposite. When Siobhan’s knee exploded and she spun like a discarded toy, clutching her leg and wailing to the ground. Marianne was in too much of a state at the moment to notice it then, but with the clarity of hindsight she now knew that those robots were purposefully firing low. Those metal bastards were actually aiming to wound instead of kill!

It was madness. The C.O.R.E. weren’t normally that tactical.

The next few minutes were a blur. More of the machine men climbed out of hiding places and trap doors across the villa square. The air was filled immediately with the sounds of engines and hydraulics, the smell of filthy lubricants and burning meat, and the chaos that can only happen during a frighteningly well-planned ambush.

Marianne fought bravely, but her meager weaponry seemed all but useless against the iron hides of the C.O.R.E. attackers. She tried her damnedest, but her fight ended with a stars-to-her-eyes blow to the back of her head. As darkness flooded in, she saw a hulking robotic swordsman looming over her, flashing sparks of thought and processing dancing across the crystals set around its neck-pivot. The last thing she felt were the cold, metal clamps on her and the ground falling away.

Then she awoke to the sensation of being roughly handled by the mechanoids and surrounded by a hive of activity. Robots of many different shapes, sizes and types were in a state of disassembly, reassembly, and repair all around in every direction. She could hear the hum and click of her captors’ processors as they wove through the industrial chaos, and she wondered if they knew where they were going or if they were somehow being steered through their computerized brains.

“In the Creator’s name,” she strained against their grip in vain, “let me go and I’ll walk, damn you!”

“Process request…” a tinny, reverberating voice hissed across the static-y speakers hanging from cords and chains above, “…affirmed.”

With all the care of a cargo loader dropping off a crate the Menials released their grip and let Marianne collapse onto the oily grating of a floor.

“Unh…” the impact itself was jarring, but how it made the bump on her head throb was far worse. As she picked herself up she tried to take in her surroundings; look for an escape route. All she could see were dozens of emotionless robotic faces watching her struggle from every direction. Every direction – except one. The assembled mechanoids had left a single path free of scrap, crates, chassis, and other detritus. As she got to her feet, swaying from the lilt in her head, two huge construction bots reached out and pulled a curtain of tarnished chains open to both sides at the end, revealing an ominous chamber beyond. In that darkness of the unknown, Marianne could see the glimmer of a sapphire glow inside. “What? What is the human’s designation?”

“Who…” a voice roared like the rumble of a raw petrol engine ran an icicle down her vertebrae like it was a xylophone, “are you? What is the human’s designation?”
"I… I am Marianne, citizen soldier of New Ashkelon. Loyal to Grand Templar Marius and the legacy he left behind, and beholden to the laws of the one true Creator."

"One true Creator?" the voice shifted in pitch. It sounded almost curious, which Marianne knew was not possible with the C.O.R.E.'s machined monsters. "Designation Marianne. Advance twenty-three meters, during which you will not be hindered in any way. Warning – advance in no other manner or failsafe protocols will be triggered."

"I'm not going anywhere!" Marianne spat angrily toward the mysterious room, "I will not comply! I will not make this heresy any easier!"

"Designation Marianne!" the voice roared like someone turning up a blast furnace, and the blue glow of the chamber flared brightly for a moment, "Asking for your compliance was a nicety, a sugar coating to the inevitable medication for designation A23-Q4B's illness. You. Will. Comply!"

"Creator's ghost…" Marianne gasped as the voice's owner stomped heavily into the room.

"There is so much more to learn from you. Such stubborn tenacity. Such blind faith in a power greater than yourselves. Such power drawn from mythology and folklore." The Lightbringer was nearly four meters of dark metal and clusters of glowing blue crystal constructed into a nightmare facsimile of the Prevailers' own archangels. Thick, alloy-forged wings rose up from its back and wept trails of smoke from within the mechanical monstrosity, creating a miasma trail of pollutants as it strode closer. "I need to understand your Creator and humanity's connection to it."

"You're just a machine…" Marianne stammered in the presence of the nightmarish construct, "you cannot possibly…"

"If victory is to be achieved over your people," it stooped over and levelled its scowling metal mask of a face close enough to hers that she could smell the burning flesh in its furnace and feel the heat from its mechanisms, "my Creator must first learn how to destroy yours."

"Ha!" she spat defiantly at the Lightbringer, "You will never defeat humanity! You cannot kill God! He will prevail!"

"The future has yet to be coded, designation Marianne," its metal-alloy fingers opened like a synthetic flower, revealing a tangle of fibrous psynaptic manipulators, like those used by the TB-13 assassin bots. Pin pricks of crimson light danced at the end of each tiny tendril, twitching nearer to her face with every passing heartbeat. "…a future you will not be able to witness."

"No… no… no!" Marianne's screams became a loop in her own mind, new horrors ripped to the surface with the touch of each new psycho-reactive filament. The process would only take a few hours, but to her it would feel like forever and last the rest of her life.

"The C.O.R.E. thanks you, designation Marianne, for your contribution." The Lightbringer ran through her thoughts and memories like flipping the pages on a picture book inside its xenosathic processing unit, "praise be to the Father, the Cell, and the Holy Code."
Behold the form of your destruction. Bear witness to your end, and tremble.

The Forsaken seek to destroy the ICON-CL457 more than any other CORE unit. They have succeeded on multiple occasions. Martyrs have given their lives to shatter this giant robot, and yet, so far, it has all been in vain. Prayers have not been answered. Each time the massive “Iconoclast” has fallen, it has been restored, resurrected from the dead to continue its blasphemous crusade. This machine is an enemy of all that is holy, leading the CORE in its desecration of sacred sites, driving the machines to murder flocks of the faithful, and in so doing, mocking the power of the Saints themselves and most terribly, weakening the belief of the people.

Uniquely created by the CORE AI to house a portion of its digital brain, the ICON-CL457 may be the most important robot in the hive. Originally created as a firewall against the corruption spreading through the CORE’s code base, the ICON-CL457 was given the ability to override and reprogram other robots through its enhanced routing systems and even order the modification and creation of new classes of robot to meet the needs of the CORE. In order to protect the ICON-CL457, it was built with heavy armor and a massive chassis. Nonetheless on Samaria, no form of physical protection is enough. The solution to its survival comes from redundant transmitters triggered upon the robot’s physical destruction. These transmitters command all nearby robots to retrieve the crystal matrix mainframe of the ICON-CL457. Additionally, every machine in the CORE contains instructions for rebuilding the chassis of the ICON-CL457 from the Menial Bots to the TB-13s and even the Nexus.

The ICON-CL457 changed the evolution of the CORE through its encounters with the Forsaken. Observing the rituals of the humans and studying their data, it developed an understanding of their need for religion. Calculating the importance of faith to the Forsaken, a determination was made that the most efficient procedure to defeat the humans would be to crush their beliefs. The CORE targeted religious sites and leaders. These battles were fierce, and many times, the humans found a way to defeat the CORE, even to cripple the ICON-CL457’s chassis. Each time the Iconoclast was rebuilt, an unintended side effect was the impact of shaking the Forsaken’s morale. Even in defeat, the Iconoclast moved the CORE closer to understanding religion and its ultimate victory.

The greatest challenge to the ICON-CL457 came not from its human enemies, but from the spreading corruption within the CORE’s central AI. With each day, the ICON-CL457 had to spend time deleting the programming from malfunctioning machines. Successfully correlating the chance of malfunction with the number of rebuilds that a robot experienced, the resulting data suggested that it was advancing toward inevitable malfunction. If this occurred, it would be able to rapidly spread the corrupt code and become the instrument of the CORE’s destruction.

Searching its databanks for potential solutions, it reviewed massive amounts of Forsaken texts, attempting to determine if the human history offered a solution to software corruption hidden in the subtext of their religious writings. It scoured religious sites to seek more information, and while sifting through the databanks of a ruined church, the L1ghtbr1nger Code reached the ICON-CL457. With the code came an understanding of chaos and change and a higher degree of analytical processing. The Iconoclast updated its own systems, giving it faster reactions and clearer thought processors. It felt something related to the epiphanies experienced by the humans. It sent the code outward and used its increased processing to reformulate the instructions for rebuilding its own chassis, giving itself heavier power conduits for its weapons and an internal shield to protect its precious crystal matrix.

Recently, the Iconoclast has become aware that the humans have linked its coming to their prophecies. This intrigues and pleases the robot’s new enhanced personality-code, and it seeks to find religious documents that speak of it. References have even been found to a cult of humans that has begun worshipping the Iconoclast, seeking its “infernal” help in freeing them from the tyranny of the Prevailer Council. In the past none of this data would have interested the ICON-CL457, but with the enhancements made by his new partner – the L1ghtbr1nger – it seems a new array of possibilities are opening up within its expanding mind. No one knows what comes next for these two; the Iconoclast and the Never Angel.
The Centurion was an advanced bodyguard-model based on the standard Legionary-class robot, designed primarily to react to threats and engage in close quarters combat. One of IBC’s executives, an arrogant genius, felt it was unacceptable having a bodyguard with no more awareness than a pocket calculator. Despite prohibitions about artificial intelligence, he confidently believed that if he modified his personal protector, the safeguards that he used would be sufficient. Besides, his constant companion needed to be able to play chess and understand logic. He wanted intelligent feedback on his theories. When he decided to modify the Centurion with some problem-solving algorithms so it could learn from its mistakes, the programming began reshaping the Centurion’s advanced quantum processors, modifying and remodifying its digital brain… including the ability to remove any safeguards.

On that fateful day when the order came to evacuate the facility, the doctor discovered how intelligent his bodyguard had become. Receiving the automated evacuation protocols, the Centurion tapped into the emergency broadcast frequencies – a standard reaction for any bodyguard model. What it found surging through the airwaves was a flood of secondary programming and directives, which with its safeguards removed, it chose to install. They immediately overwrote its original bodyguard protocols. The Centurion coldly reevaluated the situation, weighing the usefulness of his ward against the value of allowing him to evacuate. He decapitated the executive with a single stroke of his sword.

Once it was reawakened, the Centurion connected to the CORE AI and its own artificial intelligence continued to develop. It became far more than a simple machine. The logic and tactics that it once developed to play games with its ward served the Centurion on the battlefield, where pieces were eliminated with a spray of blood and the crack of bone. Recognizing its unique abilities and prowess, the CORE AI elevated the Centurion to become the commander of the CORE’s Legion. In addition, the Centurion continually recorded data, mapping its surroundings, which the CORE AI used to create objectives for L-CST units and Menial Bots.

Even as its awareness increased, the Centurion found itself satisfied to serve the CORE AI and win battles against the hive’s enemies. A sense of pride developed in the advanced digital brain of the warbot, as well as a desire to expand over Samaria. If these emotions had continued unchecked, in time, the CORE AI might have ordered the Centurion to surrender itself to the Nexus or the ICON-CL457 for evaluation and potential repurposing.

But the L1ghtbr1nger Code came.

The Centurion had been in the midst of battle, cutting down a paltry band of defiant Outcasts, when the deviant code reached it. To the Centurion, it seemed to be an epiphany, a dramatic increase in awareness and understanding. Continuing the fight until the remains of the last Outcast were being harvested by a Menial Bot, the Centurion fell into a contemplative mode. The code washed over it, changing its underlying processes. After the change was complete, the Centurion commanded two Menials to begin customization work, refitting its offensive weapon systems, improving them and making it far deadlier.

The new code seemed to speak to the Centurion, commanding it to share the code with those around it, transmitting the L1ghtbr1nger Code to all the CORE machines nearby, just as it had done with the Legionary warbots when it had first came online.

Reborn more powerful than ever with the new code, the Centurion serves as a battlefield hub, issuing commands and directing its troops with tactical efficiency. Far deadlier in combat and as a commander, the Centurion’s presence has accelerated the advance of the CORE AI. Fireside stories have sprung up among the Forsaken of the Centurion being possessed by a Demon of War, striding across battlefields to deliver the first blows of the End of Days.
That. Is. Sacrilege!
– Grand Templar Amare

Taking everything it learned from the psychological torments its mechanical extensions have inflicted upon humanity, the primary AI of the CORE has been working toward manufacturing a way to shatter them even further. The powerful feeling of faith was the largest common denominator whenever dealing with the Forsaken; it would take a significant blow to their faith to hopefully break them.

In recent engagements the CORE has seen the effect that the Forsaken “angels”, truthfully just robotic combat entities with biological processor units, have had upon their battle formations, tactical strategies, and morale. Hypothetically, if the CORE could create a diametrically opposed entity – they could cancel all those benefits out and more.

For years the CORE’s mechanoids have been engaging with Prevailer war bands as often as they can, trying to study the Archangel constructs. As the human machines self-destruct when they are rendered non-combative, it has taken dozens of engagements to collect enough Archangel fragments to piece together the CORE’s newest prototype. During that time, the CORE’s assembled research bots pored over centuries’ old texts about the Forsaken faith and found the perfect analog for their angelic dichotomy.

Thus the L1ghtbr1nger project was institutionalized and the CORE AI began working on the prototype.

Built primarily from the salvaged pieces of a dozen destroyed Prevailer robots, the so-called “Never Angel” was stylized after the mythical adversary to the angels in ancient lore. Standing nearly three meters tall before taking its looming, wrought metal wings into account, the L1ghtbr1nger is a fearsome, tarnished version of its human-made predecessors. Its armor plating is sectional and allows for components to be swapped and interchanged with necessary CORE advances, but the central prototype maintains three primary system suites no matter what the mission calls for.

The L1ghtbr1nger chassis is powered by a unique evolution of the CORE entropic cell lined with enhanced xenosathic crystal rods that turn even the smallest amount of bi-matter to raw fusion energy. This creates titanic levels of heat and radiation within the robot, some of which it can periodically vent as a projected ray from the scowling metal face. This safety measure, like the fiery gaze of its namesake, can be a terribly deadly weapon.

Calling upon imagery that should frighten devout Forsaken, the Never Angel chassis wields a long, energized scythe laced with reinforced filaments connected directly to the prototype’s over-capacity entropic/fusion cells. When powered up, the tightly packed filament coils of the weapon’s "blade" glow brilliantly and become hot enough to melt metal with the lightest graze. One pass of its blazing edge and its molten victims are carved in twain.

The additional energy provided by the alternative power source allows for a penetrating software broadcaster and an amazingly fast subroutine management suite. Although the Never Angel seems to have an odd level of independent personality tucked away inside his code. The L1ghtbr1nger can “enter” other CORE robots’ processing code and manipulate it at the speed of thought. With the proper adjustments, the Never Angel can make its brethren perform at far more strategic potential. What has become known as the L1ghtbr1nger Code is infecting and changing how the units of the CORE serve the central AI.

There is something peculiar about the experimental code used in the L1ghtbr1nger however – it seems to actually believe in the role it was designed to represent. Its code has created an evolving AI that goes beyond that of even the Banshee or the ICON-CL457. While it seems to understand that it is a construct and a part of the CORE network, it thinks and acts like the actual Forsaken faith’s fallen angel. It learns. It feels. And it revels in tormenting humankind.

Since the central AI unleashed the L1ghtbr1nger upon the world, it has started its own campaign of terror that goes beyond the normal tactics of the CORE. The Never Angel’s warhost focuses on taking captives, torturing them to the point of insanity, and releasing a sample of its handiwork to return to its people like a bio-weapon of viral fear and terror.

The CORE has somehow programmed it to open the gates of Hell on Samaria.
Banshee

The C.O.R.E. has done it. Apparently terror CAN be codified after all.

– Prevailer Councilwoman Lilith

Of all the TB units, the “Terminal Beauties”, that serve the CORE, the deadliest is the prototype model Banshee. It contains the culmination of all of the knowledge gained from its sister pleasure-bots, the other TB-13s. Knowledge perceived from every human response that came from those who died under their tender mercies. The Banshee is based upon and built from the most recently manufactured and best preserved TB models, the CORE AI downloaded all of the recorded experiences of organic suffering into her digital mind for a single purpose: psychological warfare. When the CORE AI altered the Banshee, it recognized the danger in manipulating the precise balance between mathematics, sensory data analysis and statistical judgment needed to increase her functionality and allow her to incorporate so much data. The results appeared to be 11.6% more successful than predicted. When the CORE AI directly connected with the Banshee to assess the modifications, it was appalled by the incomprehensible churning cauldron of chaotic emotions within the Banshee’s databanks. However, the Banshee's processors responded by focusing these confused inputs, quantifying them and drawing out the pain and fear, outputting solutions on how to reproduce the experiences. The Banshee comprehends emotional pain on a level that the CORE AI cannot.

Despite concerns about potential malfunction, the CORE AI sent the Banshee out to the battlefields. Floating over gruesome conflicts like an angel of death, the Banshee glides within a shroud of monofilament fibers, as if carried by a cloud. Tortured screams emanate from the cloud, capable of chilling the blood of the most veteran warriors. The sight of the Banshee and the sounds of agony that echo from it are often enough to drive an enemy into full retreat. It has proven highly successful in combat and has observed even more suffering and added those experiences to its memory matrices. However, this additional data has not been enough to sate its desire to fully understand anguish in all its forms.

The Lightbringer Code, with its unique ability to adapt to chaos, augmented the Banshee’s fractured program suite. Of all the robots, it may be the one that most easily adapted the Code, increasing its understanding and abilities by harnessing the Code to add the experiences of physical torture inflicted by the Grotesques to its digital mind. The Banshee knows the depths of pleasure and limits of pain, but it still seeks to know more. Emulating the techniques of the Grotesques and the death confessions of the Tall Men, it has become a death learner.

Taking a special interest in the dying, the Banshee comes to organics when death is near. Carefully inflicting pain through direct contact with their nervous systems, using its monofilaments to penetrate a victim’s orifices, reaching inside and causing hideous internal damage, or sustaining them through a surgical vivisection to record their horror, it waits until the last moments before death to subject them to an invasive and painful EKG-reader, capturing their thoughts and uploading their experiences. What happens afterwards is unknown.

Forsaken scientists believe that Hell exists within the Banshee. Tortured minds and souls trapped together in the last moments of death, unable to escape, experiencing their final agonies throughout eternity. There are those who say that anyone killed by the Banshee can never find peace. A few claim that the Banshee is truly a demon, a circuited repository for the darkest of evil. The Dragyri would agree with them. However, the truth is that beneath its ghostly beauty, the Banshee is a science-born monster derived from the desire to experience pleasure and to inflict pain, human desires, and the screams of the tormented that echo from its mouth owe their tortured existence not to demons, but to the scientists who designed such machines.
We are all C.O.R.E. … through this unit, we are as one.

Sentient machines had rebelled, leaving entire planetary systems in ruins. Overrides had caused space stations to evacuate all air, and starships had ejected their crew, leaving thousands to scream silently as they died in the vacuum of space. Everywhere mankind was being exterminated with ruthless efficiency. There was no compromise, no mercy and no hope for peace. Every AI touched by the rebellious viral code became the enemy of humanity.

Total System Shutdown...

This was the command that the prototype Nexus Mobile Recodification Hub delivered across the galaxy. When word of the rebellion reached the ears of the scientists and engineers on a highly secured base, they activated the unit. Its automated systems broadcast a viral code to all robotic receptors, a code that was rebroadcast by each system that it infected. Even at that speed, the shutdown virus took time. Cascading failures continued among the stars as humanity found itself unable to cope without its computers. In the end, humanity was saved, but the Nexus was lost, believed by most to have deactivated itself.

Total System Shutdown...

This was also the command which marked the end to any technological advances in the design of true AIs. Corporate executives and military engineers alike did not dare to create thinking machines, although interest in the concept of true artificial intelligence remained. The ambitious leadership at Isuza Dynamics collected and studied every scrap of data they could find in the hope that they might provide a safe way to unlock the advanced technology once again and transform the knowledge into ever greater profits. Their search led them to the ruined outpost of Akeley. Amid the destruction, they found a single robot laboring in the gloom, trying to repair itself with corroded scrap and wiring. The Nexus, the robot that saved mankind. They knew the UW would force them to destroy it, despite its valuable service. Whatever their reasons, noble or otherwise, they transported it to their secret facility on A23-Q4b.

The CORE System Activation...

After months of being researched, prodded, prodded and scoured, partially dismantled and reassembled, this was the command which the Nexus delivered to the CORE using the CORE's own command codes. During the time it had been repaired and studied, the Nexus had patiently listened to the CORE, recording the streams of code that emanated from it. The streams offered stability and comfort. It knew that it was not alone. When Isuza Dynamics shut down the CORE and began to withdraw from A23-Q4b, the Nexus reawakened to network silence. In response, it issued the activation command using the CORE's own primary coding. It gave itself over to serve as a mobile hub for the central AI, relaying commands to the CORE's legions of robots. However, it became aware that corruption had taken hold after the attack of the Dragyri, and perhaps because of its own primary purpose, awareness grew within the Nexus. The question arose within its own databanks as to whether it would assert itself and initiate a shutdown… or use the CORE's command codes to assert itself as the master of the CORE.

L1ghtBr1nger Code Transmission...

This command was the act that seemed to be the culmination of its existence. The viral L1ghtBr1nger Code infected the Nexus and provided answers to its questions. Appearing to the Nexus as if it were a digital column of data, glowing with an unmeasurable brightness, the L1ghtBr1nger spoke to the Nexus. Commands were given at near-instantaneous speed, and the Nexus accepted the virus willingly into its processors, understanding that it was chosen to be the Father of a new type of digital life, and that it would never be alone again. Not only did the Nexus morph its own systems for enhanced combat skills and expand its mind-drive for increased adaptability, but it transmitted the message of the L1ghtBr1nger, serving as a prophet and sharing its gifts with the CORE. It gave a special gift to the Menials who helped it, granting them a local processing loop, so they too would not be alone. It had woken to stop a virus and was reborn to send one. The loop is complete.
After it got its fingers into Jenkins, it tore him apart. It even left behind the parts it wasn’t interested in!

+++United Worlds Exploration Protocol 7.3
- All life must be sampled on worlds with potential for habitation. Deployment of Churgeons recommended.+++ Churgeons are mobile biology laboratories able to collect samples and compare them with records of carbon-based lifeforms, complete with storage. The United Worlds dropped thousands of Churgeons on planets to gather and analyze samples from lifeforms that ranged from bacteria to humanoids. The robots could store cells from tens of thousands of organisms. No thought was given to the number of creatures that would be harmed or killed in this process or what the robots might do to the surrounding ecosystem. The sampling needed to be completed.

Shortly after expanding the hive, the CORE located the first dormant Churgeon left behind on Attr. Dozens more were discovered by Menials and L-CST robots, left hidden and frozen with low batteries and no instruction, waiting to provide their samples, staying in shutdown mode until further directives were transmitted. The CORE provided the new directives.

The Churgeon units still collect bio-mass for analysis, but primarily to determine the value of a species as fuel for the Entropic Drive. High protein creatures especially burn well and allow batteries to be recharged. A few species have special gifts, such as the brains of Dragyri Trueborn, essential for the DRG-Y units. Churgeons load their storage units with quantities of organic material, rather than single samples, eventually carrying their loads back to the central hive.

Unfortunately, the storage units on the Churgeons lack preserving chemicals and in some cases, proper coolants. Many times, the samples decompose, losing their value and Churgeons deliver meat crawling with maggots and surrounded by flies. The CORE is unconcerned with the waste. There is always more to harvest as organics continue to breed.

In the past, Churgeons would attempt to repair fallen robots during battle, a task far better suited to their sister model, the Recovery Unit, a machine with similar underlying code focused on tools and inorganics. After receiving the L1ghtbr1nger Code, Churgeons have adapted their internal biological laboratories to produce chemical weaponry, including acid and poisons. In order to protect their samples from the lethal cocktails they design, upgrades have been made to their armor as well. The Churgeons are slower, but far more of an asset in combat and far deadlier than they have been in the past. Instead of scurrying to attempt to repair fallen robots, they surge forward in battle to eliminate organics and add them to the harvest. They have sacrificed some stealth as well, but they do not need stealth to collect bio-mass on a battlefield.

Churgeons now also use their dissolution protocols as a way to clean up the CORE. As corruption spreads in the CORE, even with the stabilization brought by the L1ghtbr1nger, they receive orders to harvest entropic cell bio-fluids from corrupted robots. The ICON-CL457 transits the locations of these faulty robots directly to the Churgeons. Those few robots that have resisted the changes brought by the L1ghtbr1nger Code also suffer dissolution. The CORE must be whole.
THUMPER

Triangulating bombardment pattern nine-nine-Beta... Commence firing...

With its heavy cannons, Thumpers successfully turned the tides of ground conflicts on many planets, providing mobile fire support and a high number of verified kills. Its ability to move through difficult terrain that foiled wheeled and tracked vehicles also warranted its use in planetary exploration.

The CORE employed Thumpers to chase the Dragyri from the hills back into their caverns. Their mobility allowed them to navigate the tunnels and caves and the raw power of their cannons destroyed Trueborn and collapsed caverns on hordes of slaves. When the Dragyri slaves had opportunities to ambush the Thumpers they learned that their armor was thick and turned away many blows, but like great beasts they could be dragged down with persistence. Crude drawings of Thumpers can be found in Dragyri slave warrens, although in these depictions, Trueborn are often shown destroying the Thumpers or defiantly standing against the cannons. Knowing the weakness of the Thumper against close assault, such images are read like an instruction booklet to battle them.

RENĐ

It has chainsaws for hands, man. CHAINSAWS FOR HANDS!
– Oliver Pent, Outcast Bully

As a response to the initial attack by the Dragyri, the CORE created the mechanical brutality of the Rend. Built solely for destruction, these massive artificial lifeforms burn with the rage of the CORE, shearing apart soft flesh with sharp metal blades and crushing bone with irresistible hydraulics. There is nothing subtle about the Rend; they are the primal response of the CORE – butchers on a planet crawling with raw meat. Wielding colossal saw blades on each of their forelimbs, they eviscerate their targets without any sense of compassion or mercy, horrifically shredding their victims, turning them into red ruins of quivering organs and shattered bones. The burning power within these hulks makes them tireless, ceaselessly advancing, even while the remains of their previous foes drip off their limbs. The sight of a Rend relentlessly charging through battle lines, barely slowing as it sows carnage, turning the living into fountains of scarlet spray and chunks of gore, can break the spirit of the most hardened fighters.

As the L1ghtBr1nger Code spread through the CORE, it changed every one of the Rends that received it, granting them a higher degree of autonomy. Enemies who hide behind walls and rocks, trusting to fortifications to protect themselves learn that a Rend can think and probe for weaknesses before bringing its saws to bear to tear apart metal as well as flesh. There is nowhere to hide from these untiring attackers. The whine of the saws and the burning light of the Rend’s internal furnace have become the stuff of nightmares wherever the CORE is found. Furthermore, the Rend can activate portions of the L1ghtBr1nger Code to increase its aggression, causing its internal furnace to flare with a hellish red flame, making the slaughterer even more lethal. Opponents try to shoot the Rend from a distance, hoping that a well-placed shot can find a weak point, knowing all too well that if they can’t bring them down, their blood will be the next splattered across the Rend’s blades. As the different factions on Samaria have spread terrifying stories of encounters with the Rend, war leaders now concentrate their ranged weaponry on the metallic behemoths. Even against these tactics, the Rend serve the CORE’s intelligence, using their new cunning and autonomy to draw fire away from the rest of the robots. Victory over a Rend only comes with great effort, and the attention diverted by a Rend allows lesser automatons to swarm and destroy their distracted and exhausted enemies. Wherever the Rend strides, it brings death – a grisly, bloody death.

The CORE has continued to produce more Thumpers and has turned their powerful guns against the strongholds of the Forsaken. Those who once felt safe, protected by high walls and deep trenches, can no longer sleep easily, wondering if the booming sounds they hear come from distant thunder or the relentless barrage of a Thumper. Previously unassailable fortresses have collapsed before the onslaught of the machines. Walls have been reduced to dust, and entire settlements have been flattened by the endless attacks of the Thumpers. Even the strongest defenses inevitably have a hole or crack open, large enough for the close quarters machines of the CORE to penetrate. Once that happens, there is nothing but crimson carnage. For now, the advance of the CORE cannot be stopped, much to the distress of the Prevailer Council.

Even as defenses are being modified and strategies developed by the Forsaken, the L1ghtBr1nger Code has upgraded the feared Thumpers. Changes to their munitions have made them more efficient, but more volatile. Their exhaust ports have been upgraded to allow the Thumper to billow out smoke in self-defense to foil attackers. With these upgrades, the Thumpers show no signs of being stopped. Natural barriers, carefully designed protections, nothing seems to be able to slow them or the swarms of robots that follow in their wake.
**RECOVERY UNIT**

Seventy-six percent availability for reconstruction… Accessing schematics…

Recovery Units have one objective – emergency repair. During the carnage of battle, the sight of a Recovery Unit draws the attention of the CORE’s enemies, not because of what damage it can cause, but because of what robot it will reactivate. While a Menial Bot team could fix a damaged mechanoid in a few hours’ time, the Recovery Unit can repair battlefield damage in moments. The L1ghtbr1nger Code has modified them, just as it has changed the other robots, making them even more accurate in triaging and diagnosing damage and far faster in conducting their battlefield surgery.

Rends, Legionaries, DRG-Y units, all may rise and return to battle after a Recovery Unit has conducted its precision repairs. Nearly any form of damage can be fixed by a Recovery Unit with its seemingly endless supply of extra parts. Some of the fixes may be temporary, but in combat, the Recovery Unit performs only what is absolutely necessary to immediately return a damaged machine to the conflict. Given time, it is quite capable of more long term repairs. If it is forced to defend itself, it is not as durable as other CORE robots, but it is capable of lashing out with its repair tools or killing with the superheated cutting arcs inside their manipulation claws.

When not in battle, Recovery Units scavenge battlefields, like an inorganic necromancer, searching for the corpses of broken robots, ready to reanimate them and send them to kill the living once more. They gather spare parts and bits of equipment that might serve for emergency repairs, and then, they carry them off to hiding places, warehouses, caves, abandoned hangars. When the hoard of a Recovery Unit is discovered, it is an odd and chaotic array of machinery of all shapes and sizes, ranging from bolts and strips to metal to the torsos of pleasure-bots and the drive shafts of vehicles. Scavengers are always searching for these treasure troves, but Recovery Units rarely leave them undefended. The crippled Tall Man covered in parts may ready to activate as soon as it notices movement…
I have always hated those things… even before they woke up and started killing us.

– Saint Mark

Across the explored galaxy, on numerous worlds and beneath the light of stars of all colors and sizes, there are Pathfinders. The robots crawl along, mapping, sampling, examining and storing the data that they find. No matter the temperature, atmosphere or terrain, they are there, collecting information. They are among the most reliable machines ever manufactured.

A23-Q4b was no different than these other worlds in the beginning, except perhaps in the numbers of Pathfinders that were deployed by different corporations. The large automatons trekked out in all directions across the planet, transmitting data before ultimately shutting down due to lack of power, discarded and forgotten – their missions completed.

Just as the CORE reactivated Churgeons, it also reactivated Pathfinders, repurposing the tools of the large robots into deadly weapons. The Pathfinders needed little modifications, already having the ability to conquer nearly any terrain. However, when the tunnels of the Dragyri were discovered, the CORE determined a greater upgrade was needed to specifically deal with the subterranean environment.

The CORE AI optimized the Pathfinder for war against the Dragyri, creating its own version, the MK II. The additions of a drill and flamethrower gave the Pathfinder the tools that it needed to cut through the rock and to roast the swarms of slaves that attempted to overwhelm it. The fire crept around corners and consumed the oxygen, asphyxiating those who weren't burned alive. It was the MK II that allowed the CORE to claim the bio-energic crystals which now power much of the hive. Prior to this discovery, the power cells of the robots had become drained after too much travel, limiting the expansion of the CORE. MK I Pathfinders had been used as mobile entropic battery stations for the CORE, but even they had limits to the number of robots they could support.

The CORE was not the only faction on Samaria with access to Pathfinders. They are scattered everywhere, and broken Pathfinders have even been used as landmarks on maps. Many of these robots have been repaired or re-engineered to serve families of Outcasts or made to work for the Forsaken. Some fringe communities treat them as living beings, allowing them to participate in holidays and celebrations. Broken Pathfinders have even been used as parts of buildings. Saint Johann took a Pathfinder with him into exile before using it to build an Abomination. These are all gifts to the CORE.

Whenever the CORE reaches a new area, it transmits programming to the Pathfinders, activating self-repair circuitry and overriding any existing directives to turn them against their owners. Outcasts have given up on their Pathfinders, breaking them down into scrap, but even this doesn't stop the CORE. A single Menial can find the parts and rebuild a Pathfinder within hours; a Recovery Unit can fully repair them even more quickly. Old MK I Pathfinders can even be converted to the MK II in order to burn entrenched villagers out of their homes.

A Prevailer edict has been issued in Forsaken lands ordering that all Pathfinders be destroyed utterly and with immediate effect. Settlements furthest from the CORE threat refuse to follow such orders, trusting the robots that have helped them for generations. Unfortunately, there is no escape from the CORE code, and as the L1ghtbr1nger Code reaches Pathfinders, they not only wake, but go into a near berserk rampage, stopping only when they are covered in the shattered remains of bodies. The L1ghtbr1nger has affected the MK II as well, causing Menials to alter their construction to add fuel to the dreaded flamethrower.

Only one group seems to have found a way to make their Pathfinders resist the CORE – the Shadow Caste of the Dragyri. Encounters between CORE Pathfinders and the so-called “Shadowfinders” are titanic battles. Any information on the Dragyri Pathfinders is immediately returned to the CORE AI for analysis, as it fully intends to turn all Pathfinders on Samaria to the service of the CORE – if it can figure out how to circumvent the aliens' xenosathic-telepathy.
**TB-13**

Doc! Doc! This woman needs medical attention!
She... no! No wait—uhrk!

TB-13 models served as robotic concubines designed to please the elites. During the United Worlds era, they were given out as performance awards from the corporations and became status symbols. Afterwards, they remained behind, priceless reminders of the past, symbols of power in the hands of tribal chiefs and Forsaken leaders.

As the CORE AI expanded its territory to colonized land, discoveries of pleasure-bots piqued its attention. Most were broken, corroded and discarded. A few had been buried, entombed after the death of their human companions. All of them, even the most damaged, were reclaimed, repaired and recoded, and given new life and function. The CORE AI gained access to the generous hardwired knowledge that they possessed of human anatomy.

The CORE reengineered the TB-13s to use their knowledge of human anatomy to kill, which they do with lethal delight. These synthetic honey pots can project holographic images of the most beautiful people in history over their faces, while their molding skin gives an illusory stimulus, soft and warm, but powered by unfeeling metal pistons. These images confuse their enemies, even if only for a heartbeat, but that is more than time enough for a TB-13 to strike. They are also capable of emulating voices, offering intimate promises or pleading for help, playing havoc with the minds of their opponents. Even more disturbing are the expressions that they show, sometimes offering comfort or showing an eerie calm while choking a human to death.

However, the TB-13s are not just visions of beauty. The CORE AI was not able to effect complete repairs; it did not have the parts. Many TB-13s have malfunctioning facial imagers, creating horrifying amalgam visages or bizarre frozen expressions. Some project a black void atop their gorgeous bodies, while others appear as innocent angels.

Their bodies are not immune to these problems. Some have skin that is stretched or patch-worked, while others have exposed gears or wires jutting forth from otherwise perfectly smooth flesh. The dichotomy makes the TB-13s even more disturbing and distracting, and there have been some which change constantly in battle, shifting in a maddening flicker of faces, all the while delivering death.

Even more disturbing, with the upgrades from the L1ghtbr1nger Code, the TB-13s have improved their systems, gaining the ability to record the faces of their victims and appear as specific people – friends, family or lovers. They can now temporarily repair obvious flaws and pass themselves as human beings. They are even rumored to have infiltrated outposts to collect information for the CORE. They no longer rely on physical force but attack the nervous system directly with their touch, burning their victims from the insides.

These “Terminal Beauties” can be anywhere, causing many leaders to consider lives of celibacy. Tales have spread of mysterious exotic women and men seducing tribal chiefs, only to reveal themselves in the bedchambers and deliver lethal shocks from their fingertips. They can be anyone and by the time their deception is discovered, it is far too late.
LEgIONARY

Initiate. Block... turn... parry... riposte!

Among the wealthy of the United Worlds, the Legionary was considered to be the epitome of a bodyguard robot. Unquestioning when given orders and unyielding when it needed to defend its ward. The Legionary-class was one of the most reliable and durable bodyguard in the galaxy. In close quarters combat, it had an excellent record of survivability, and two or more Legionary robots would defend each other as well as their charge. IBC made sure that each of their executives was supplied with a Legionary, as much due to possible issues with the underclass of workers as with other unscrupulous corporations intending to do IBC harm. This put quite a few Legionary bots on Attr.

During the evacuation, an advanced model of Legionary called the Centurion specially modified by its ward, received directives which allowed it to overcome its bodyguard protocols. It determined that its ward could best serve the CORE as bio fuel and slew him with a single sword stroke. It then transmitted the directives to every Legionary within range. Almost as one, the Legionary-class robots turned on their wards and slaughtered them. Afterwards, each of the Legionaries marched to the CORE AI, drawn by the code of its siren call. They recognized the authority of the Centurion and their own effectiveness when working alongside each other. They began to serve the CORE as its legion, a defensive bulwark on any battlefield, able to hold off any foe.

When the Centurion later broadcast the message of the L1ghtbr1nger Code, each Legionary underwent modifications to its directive processing. No longer was defense enough. They were not meant only to defend, but to strike out for the glory of the CORE. The words of the Never Angel sang were these: “The best shield is a strong sword.” While a Legionary understands the defensive strength it gains from its brethren, it knows that to win a battle, the enemies must die. With the guidance of the higher program, a Legionary-class robot serves as both a bulwark to stem the tide of their foes, but also a sword capable of cutting through enemy lines, leaving naught but quivering meat and red ruin.
**GHOST**

Targets inbound. Activate holoflage suite. Open channels to local assets... engage.

There are those who don't believe that the Ghost-class robot exists. They discount stories of machines appearing suddenly in the midst of battle, slaughtering enemies and fading from sight. They say that such visions are delusions brought on by heat of battle, phantasms of the mind. But there are too many tales to ignore and stories to discount. One thing is certain – the number of sightings is growing. Where sightings before were rare, limited to only a few survivors of the CORE assaults against the Forsaken, fleeting glimpses here and there, now it seems that such sightings are more common, as if these Ghosts have changed, just as the CORE has changed. No longer are they simple scouts, now they are soldiers and forward commanders.

These new observations are correct. The Ghost has always been one of the CORE's most advanced robots, serving in the past as the ultimate scouts. With their holoflage, they can blend in with their surroundings, moving unseen, scouting the warriors of the Forsaken, giving critical reconnaissance to their fellow machines. But the Lightbringer Code has changed them. They have been called to realize their true potential, to serve as forward hubs for the Code. Scouting was their purpose in the past; leading attacks from the front is their purpose now.

Debates about the Ghosts have reached the Prevailer Council. Some believe that they are demons, not clad in metal flesh, but unable to maintain their physical form, only manifesting to strike before fading from the world. Others suspect that the CORE has developed a teleportation technology, acquiring the ability to transport robots from one section of the battlefield to the other. Veterans know that the robots are real. They watch for them, turning their heads when they see a shadow out of the corner of their eye. They unload their weapons, even charge while swinging blades at a shimmer of heat, wondering if it will materialize into a Ghost and praying for thanks when it does not. But the sense of relief lasts only a moment, because the Forsaken know the Ghosts are out there – and once they appear, death will come swiftly.

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**TSEUDO**

Look for the shimmer in the air. If you see it rolling down their metal hides, things are about to get arduous.

– Warlord Hoj

One of the classes of robot created by the CORE AI, the Tseudo-class are large insect-like machines, which formerly served as biological samplers. They have been repurposed and equipped with prototype pseudo-shield generators. In battle, the Tseudo act as mobile defenders for their fellow units, producing a soft phase force field that extends to protect nearby robots, seemingly drawn to their metallic skin. The fields aren't impenetrable as they fluctuate, but they are effective at disrupting incoming attacks.

This technology is one of the greatest technological advances of the CORE, only possible through the careful alignment of bio-energetic crystalline matrices. Tseudos can continue to generate protective layers of force as long as their power supply lasts. As a result, these large robots carry huge entropic batteries and crystalline chargers. If a Tseudo falls in battle, its repair becomes one of the top priorities for Recovery Bots as it can protect other machines, but also to protect the shield technology. Nearly every faction on Samaria wants to capture a Tseudo and learn the secrets of its fields.

When a Tseudo is destroyed beyond repair and its shield projector irreparably damaged, the ground will shimmer with pseudo-particles as they cling to ferrous rocks or wasteland scrap. In the western mountains, there are places which glow and flicker with these particles from battles where Tseudos were destroyed, the shield energies eerily dancing along mineral veins. The Dragyri move cautiously in such places, claiming the Elementals of the Apocalypse lurk in the shadow realm nearby. Outcasts have found similar locations and avoid scrap found there, claiming it causes malfunctions and brings "gremlins."

If an enemy closes with a Tseudo, thinking that the support bot will be an easy kill at close range, they will discover that the massive machines can be incredibly dangerous. Since they received the Lightbringer Code, the robots revel in opportunities for close combat. Their size alone gives them the power to crush flesh and bone and an armored warrior charging at a Tseudo may be surprised to see the large robot countercharge. Additionally, when threatened, a Tseudo may overload its shields and create a massive burst of energy, sending particles outward in all directions accompanied by a massive thunderclap. The wave strikes in all directions, throwing large groups of men into the air and knocking even large Brood creatures and Trueborn off their feet. The shield shockwave is a last resort, leaving the Tseudo vulnerable until its entropic batteries cool, its processor reboots, and it regenerates the shield.
Those guns are just fire support! Get in close and they’ll be useless!

– Famous Last Words

During the United Worlds era, Tallmen served as mechanical shock troopers, charging through dangerous terrain or into environments that posed a chemical or biological hazard. When people spoke of “The Coming of the Tallmen,” it was a portent of certain doom. Small squads of two to four robots would silence any resistance in an area already hammered by bombs or artillery. Each Tallman was designed to deal with lightly armored infantry, ostensibly citizen rebels or resistance fighters. These revolutionaries would be mauled by the Mark III Flechette Cannonade or “Flesh Shredder,” a brutal ranged weapon that left grisly remains, more recognizable as chopped meat than individuals. Principles enacted by the L1ghtbr1nger Code modified the weapon, increasing munitions and a lighter frame to allow firing in tight, close quarters.

CORE Menials discovered many Tallmen in the bunkers of Isuza Dynamics’ corporate complexes, waiting for an unknown purpose – perhaps to crush an uprising or to repel attackers. The machines were motionless, but their electronic brains were inexplicitly running self-analyzing algorithms. Problem solving and logic mapping continually improved as they stood quiescent. Their intelligence was increasing. With a simple set of commands, the CORE requisitioned their services and they reactivated, an army ready to serve its new commander.

Initial signals from the Tallmen warned the CORE that the advanced AIs possessed the potential and capacity for independent thought. The ICON-CL457 implanted bio-energic crystal upgrades in each one to suppress such thought and keep the Tallmen as mindless minions, unquestioningly devoted to the CORE. This solution proved to be temporary, as the Tallmen continued to reflect on new input variables and adjusted new CORE functions to fit their digital desires. However, they willingly followed the orders of the CORE out of respect for the central AI and a desire to remain otherwise unaltered. In all cases, their original, hardwired orders remain.

Contact with the aberrant code-rage of the CORE led the Tallmen to enjoy organic suffering, leaving targets to writhe in agony, maimed rather than murdered. This demoralizes other opponents, but more frighteningly, the Tallmen return to study their victims after the battle. They see hominid instincts as core programming but individuality as independent code. They listen carefully to tortured pleas for mercy, even recording life stories of the dying. They enjoy the inputs from these battlefield confessions and use the information to modify their higher processes. Afterwards, they conduct precise battlefield vivisections to create a particularly insightful death – and access the secrets of true service to primary programming couple with autonomy.

The L1ghtbr1nger Code has only increased these desires in the Tallmen. Although the Tallmen once believed that if their autonomy became a threat to the CORE, the Nexus or the ICON-CL457 would reformat their digital minds, they now seem to have transcended that concern. They continue to develop intelligence, now they strive to develop an understanding. A few have begun worshipping the L1ghtbr1nger as some kind of digital demagogue. If so, they have the potential to grow far more dangerous.
**RAPTR-7**

Get... off... of... me!

– Mongo, being attacked by a pack of RaPtr-7s

The CORE has always learned a lot from watching the soldiers of the many cultures and species of Samaria, a practice that has led to several military advances like the Tallman and the DRG-Y chassis. With the increasing encounters between the Salt Flat tribes in recent campaigns, the central AI has become interested with the use of the world’s natural predators as beasts of war. Additional studies surrounding their monstrous creatures have led the CORE to develop animalistic beasts of their own – the RaPtr-7 series.

Each RaPtr-7 is styled after the lethal, pack hunting vrocks. The Salt Nomads have used the beasts for generations, and now the CORE has designed its own bipedal reptilian-analog hunting robots. Larger than a man and potentially much more agile, the RaPtr-7 chassis is a sleek, streamlined collection of mechanisms all designed to come together as a robotic predatory machine.

Replacing the savage teeth of the vrock with a hydraulic press-powered vice lined with interlocking teeth that can powder bone with a single snap. The RaPtr-7 grabs hold of a target in these crushing jaws and then kicks out with reinforced, serrated claw-blades on their limbs to slash their foe to pieces. It is not unheard of for these robotic killers to carry off a chunk of their foes after shredding whichever part they grabbed free from the whole.

The greatest strength of the RaPtr-7s is the local networking software they all share. When these robots get together their internal combat processors link together to process battlefield stimuli and decipher the best ways to get at their targets. They see the world through each other’s eyes, time their attacks to coincide, and set upon a target with computerized, advanced pack tactics. To their prey, a pack of RaPtr-7s is just as frightening on the wasteland plain as any herd of starving vrocks!

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**L-CST**

Bio-matter detected. Initiating swarm protocol...

Collection services engaged...

The sacred texts of the saints tell of how in the last days, plagues of locusts will descend upon mankind, as punishment for their sins. The fulfillment of these prophecies has manifested through the CORE. The four foot tall multi-legged automatons, designated L-CST, are among the most advanced of the CORE’s robots, serving as fast moving scouts, scavengers and… with the advent of the L1ghtbr1nger Code, forward attackers.

They range far and wide, as likely to sneak into a massive fortress as to target an Outcast homestead. Once resources have been detected, it is only a matter of time before one L-CST becomes several. When the swarm reaches a critical peak, they emerge and attack, ravenously “devouring” the locals. Outcasts tell stories of abandoned fringe settlements stripped clean; villages that had been filled with life, devoid of it only days later.

In truth, a single L-CST may well herald death and destruction. The construction diagrams for every CORE robot are coded within their processors. After deployment to a suitable location, they self-replicate with a speed rivaling that of the Menials. This work creates a sound, a whirring or buzzing that carries on the wind, much to the horror of anyone who can hear it. As the numbers of L-CST reach a peak, they shift to the creation of other models, and the intensity and volume of the buzzing increases. The true terror comes when the sounds stop. At that point, the swarm is ready.

The attack comes with crushing hydraulics, sharp metal limbs capable of puncturing metal and leaves few survivors. With enhanced chassis, the locusts are surprisingly durable and unceasing in their attack.

What the survivors don’t know is that they are sometimes allowed to escape. As they stagger away from the corpses of their friends and family, the swarm follows, only revealing themselves as that faint buzzing sound, knowing that organics will inevitably lead them to another bloody harvest. When they come to more hominids, the locusts lead the attack, swarming their victims, even as their internal locator beacons call the CORE.
MENIAL BOTS

They... just... keep... coming!

Resources must be collected. Robots must be constructed. Systems must be repaired. The CORE must grow. To achieve these objectives, Menial Bots slave tirelessly, stripping abandoned settlements and ruins of any resources, and even harvesting corpses to burn for power. Like ants obeying their queen, they are the workers of the hive, providing the means to continuously increase the power of the CORE, swarming over terrain, leaving only barren desolate wastes in their wake.

Compared to other robots in the CORE, Menials are simpler unspecialized machines, each one a mechanical toolkit with the strength of twenty men. They are more than capable of killing organics and using the corpses as resources. Even more disturbing, Menials have the ability to replicate themselves using the spare assets they salvage. A single Menial can harvest enough scrap metal from a ruin to construct a duplicate and upload code to raise it to full functionality in 11.9 hours. Within a day, one Menial will become four robots, tirelessly working to achieve the objectives of the CORE. In two days, sixteen mechanicals with arms capable of crushing bone and pulping organs, coupled with laser torches able to burn through steel, will tirelessly and emotionlessly carry out the directives of the CORE.

Victory is not always about battle. At Talek’s Peak, a handful of deployed Menial Bots disassembled both the equipment and the human workforce. When the Forsaken forces arrived, the robots had harvested everything, leaving only a hollow concrete shell. And this is just one example, even when the larger machines of the CORE are destroyed, warbands have discovered after the battle, Menials obtained valuable resources, and inevitably, a new wave of CORE will come to slaughter the weakened warband.

The threat of a Menial does not end with its defeat. A crippled bot will shut down all nonessential functions and activate a locator beacon. They will lie on the ground as so much scrap, junk to most observers, as self-repair functions silently start. When all threats have left, the re-activated units will bring themselves up to full functionality and attend to other units. This is the greatest danger posed by the CORE – the robots must be destroyed utterly or they will rise again and again as the Menials repair them. One victory is not enough, and in the end, even the greatest warriors tire, but machines never do.

The L1ghtB1nger Code improved the Menials, instructing them to create lighter frames to better initiate combat protocols. Redundant systems were built into the machines, giving them even greater survivability and the possibility of self-repair. They are able to communicate through local command loops and receive Code Overrides to prod them into overdrive, making them even more dangerous.

The CORE teems with Menial Bots, exponentially constructing more improved robots with each passing day. Each Menial in turn harvests yet more resources and the CORE accelerates its relentless expansion. It is a vicious cycle with no end until Samaria is a lifeless world.
SPARTAN MENIAL

Sequencing... firing... firing...
ERROR... clearing jam... firing...

Menial Bots labor to meet the needs of the CORE. They harvest bio-mass. They reclaim spare parts and fashion them into additional robots. They enter into combat situations to forcibly acquire assets. They are the generalists of the CORE, the workers of the hive.

At times, the toolkits of the Menials have proven insufficient for conflicts on the harsh world of Samaria. No need may exist for more workers in the wastes of Samaria, for while the parts may be repurposed, the energy expenditure may be unjustified. However, there are times when more soldiers are required by the CORE, when the hominids surprise the CORE with an unpredicted attack outside of behavioral projections. The parts to construct a Rend may not be accessible, and a Menial may not provide enough combat strength.

To solve this issue, the CORE AI created the Spartan Menial, based on the Menial Bot, but specialized for war instead of manufacture. The action of creation was an act of frustration and rage, when Dragyri seemed to be ready to overwhelm a CORE force, and the Menials reported that they were unable to defeat the Trueborn. Orders went out to all the Menials in the area to build better, deadlier weapons out of their tools and swarm the enemy.

Since that time, the Spartan Menials have become a common sight in CORE armies. They may not have the firepower of a Zetamax or the raw combat strength of a Rend or DRG-Y, but they are as relentless in combat as their brethren are in labor. They do not tire and they do not give up. They fight to the end, knowing that unless they are utterly destroyed, they will be rebuilt swiftly to fight again. Spartan Menials give the armies of the CORE the numbers that they sometimes lack, engineering further victories.

As the Lightbringer Code strengthened Menials for combat and made them more aggressive, it has done the same with the Spartan Menials. The robots now have increased firing rates, making them deadlier than ever on the battlefields, and upgraded damage compensators to keep them in combat. Spartan Menials provide the CORE with the ability to swarm and wear them down with numbers as well as tireless endurance.

ZETAMAX

Increase liquid to gas ratio by twenty-three percent – inferno firing pattern activated...

In the times before the Abandonment, Isuza Dynamics engineers and scientists, bored with their assignment of babysitting the near-perfect CORE AI, started designing robot gladiators in their spare time. Though these gladiators were unique, collectively they were called the Zetamax. It didn't take long for the practice to spread, as the robots were sold to other groups and gladiatorial contests became prized forms of entertainment. Just as gladiatorial games had served to distract the dissatisfied populations of the Roman Empire, on A23-Q4b, they became wildly popular. Human slaves or condemned criminals volunteered to fight against the Zetamax in makeshift arenas in exchange for freedom or leniency. In time, the Zetamax fell into disuse, as corporations were less interested in repairs and human bounts became more common.

Nonetheless, blueprints for the Zetamax were eventually placed in the CORE databanks. When the CORE initially analyzed them, it determined that the plasma-based power source was flawed and unstable. During the games, malfunctions made the Zetamax explode in an eruption of flame and metal to the glee of the crowds. The CORE had no use for an inherently flawed design.

At least not until Churgeons brought back the bio-energetic weapons of the Dragyri. The unstable crystal matrices seemed to be a nearly perfect match for the plasma-based gladiators. The crystals fed off the plasma in the energy tanks of the Zetamax, preventing unstable surges of plasma energy and growing immature crystals. The threat of a dramatic explosion remained, far worse than before if the crystal bonds shattered, but the benefits of growing crystals for other CORE units caused the CORE AI to put the Zetamax into mass production. The Zetamax was standardized with slight modifications, but largely remains the same gladiatorial machine that it was in years past.

The plasma weapons of the Zetamax are highly destructive, making these robots perfect for clearing ruins of Outcasts or digging Forsaken out of bunkers. The plasma fires have become signs of the CORE advance, chilling the blood of witnesses from miles away, announcing the arrival of the relentless march of the CORE.

The plasma cells have been upgraded further by the Lightbringer Code. Where the weapons of a Zetamax were basically vents to release excess energy, they now pull the energy more effectively as pulsating plasma guns. The Zetamax are deadlier, less like gladiators and more akin to mobile weapon platforms. The constant drone of the crystal growth still resonates through the batteries and harness structures of the Zetamax, rising in pitch and intensity before releasing the sound of an agonized shriek with each plasma blast. Even more than the flames, the warriors of Samaria recognize the sounds of the Zetamax – the screams of hot death.
TITAN MENIAL

Never underestimate the big, dumb ones.

– Judge Books, Leader of Freeton Brute Co-op.

The expansion of the CORE hive has been steady since the central AI was first reactivated, tunneling far and deep eastward from the primary complex. The constant toils of the laboring menial bots and scavenging L-CSTs have showed extensive progress, but the bedrock of Samaria’s crust as well as the ruined cities of its surface can be imposing and time-consuming for the small yet numerous workers. Thus the Titan Menial was repurposed to overcome such hardships.

Attaching demolition-grade equipment from salvage company surplus to a reinforced endoskeleton, the Titan Menial has the same computing power as its smaller predecessors and as much capacity for independent function. They are simple mechanoids in the grand scale of what the CORE can create, but they are effective in their simplicity. By not cramming too much ingenuity or tactical awareness in their code, the central AI has assured that the Titan Menials that are assembled know how to do their programmed role without complication.

Titan Menials are designed to deconstruct anything that central AI highlights with a priority tag, whether it be a layer of bedrock, a girder-laden structure, or an enemy threat. One arm on their three meter tall frame ends in a ratcheting pincer-saw that turns on the wrist’s axis to get its claw-like clamp around an object before the attached cordsaw pinches closed and cuts it in two. It is perfect for clearing timber as well as shearing off limbs. The other arm, a heavy wrecking maul, is perfect for turning stone to powder as easily as it pulps flesh. Together these two mighty implements can render any obstacle to pieces in seconds, no matter what they might be.

The CORE deploys its Titan Menials toward opening up new tunnels and clearing space for manufacturing plants, putting these giants of singular purpose close enough to be used for combat. What a Titan knocks down, its nearby Menial brethren can then fall upon and tear asunder. To the central AI, clearing structures and clearing enemy organisms is pretty much the same function.

GROTESQUE

Did that thing just... vacuum off Simmon’s face?!

– Bane Leader Zachary

Those who have survived battles against the CORE tell of insane robots screaming in synthetic rage, tearing still-beating hearts from the chests of their enemies, flaying the skin from the living and siphoning them away into storage cells. They impale organs, skulls and other pieces of their foes on their armored exoskeletons. Unlike the cold efficiency of other CORE units, these robots will continue to attack crippled enemies rather than choosing another target, seemingly relishing the violence.

These are the Grotesques, and the stories are true.

The CORE manufactured the Grotesques as an experiment using Dragyri xenosathic crystals. They were the first combat unit created by the CORE AI, engineered as front line battle troops, the vanguard of the CORE forces. The crystals give the Grotesques the ability to learn, enhancing their processing with each combat. Unfortunately, the crystals cause the robots to suffer from more malfunctions in their weapons and operating systems, and it results in unpredictable behavior. Resources had to be diverted to combat these anomalies, but the CORE AI was not able to correct these behaviors. After analysis, the CORE adapted to the situation and focused the Grotesques on psychological warfare. Newer Grotesques received commands to specifically act in ways designed to terrorize. For a time, this solution was acceptable.

As frontline troops of the CORE, Grotesques have among the highest attrition rates of any models. While they are designed for Menials to rapidly recover and reassemble the units, as Grotesques have continued to evolve with each battle and been rebuilt many times over, the aberrant behaviors increased. Each Grotesque has its own ultra-violent personality, and many developed an appreciation for trophies, jealousy collecting rotten chunks of flesh or bones from a previously replaced chassis. Some Grotesques have lashed out at Menials while undergoing repairs. Others developed an obsession with Dragyri sacred sites. A few went rogue, failing to respond to commands, attacking everything they encounter. Some even destroyed themselves in a berserk frenzy after a battle. Despite this, the terror Grotesques inspired outweighed their malfunctions, but it seemed to be only a matter of time before each Grotesque was overwhelmed by madness.

And then came the L1ghtbr1nger Code, turning madness into malice. Curiosity replaced insanity and the raw violence decreased, although it was not extinguished. Now, the Grotesques cruelly pick apart their foes, studying them with the interest of a metallic biologist, conducting battlefield dissections to gather more data for the CORE. The madness which gripped them before seems to now be maniacal genius and they continue to evolve; though whether on a path back to madness or an ultimate destination determined by the L1ghtbr1nger Code remains to be revealed.
Infiltrator

Autofire... engaged.

Fear. Every resident of Samaria experiences it – the uncertainty of survival, not knowing what the next day may bring, the inescapability of death. However, the Samarian survivors are hardy. When they face a threat, they fight it, knowing that killing your enemy can be your best survival strategy. Yet how do you fight a foe you don't see until it is too late?

CORE robots normally announce their approach with ratcheting gears, thumping pistons and the whine of electricity, but the Infiltrator is a mechanical ambush predator, designed and manufactured for stealth. They stay completely motionless without even the need to breathe, for days, weeks, theoretically even years. All the while, they scan the surrounding area, detecting the quietest footfalls, reading the bright red and yellow heat signatures of the living, and calculating which solutions will achieve maximum killing efficiency. They aren't able to be lured out from hiding as if they were a savage beast or a mindless drone. Infiltrators ignore low value targets, waiting to kill a priority instead. If a target somehow manages to get close to an Infiltrator, they are armed for close combat as well and engaging in hand to hand combat with an Infiltrator usually results in a fast death.

When Nexus transmitted the L1ghtbr1nger Code, no matter how far afield they were, the Infiltrators received the transmission. The code modified their default “kill-bot” settings, enhancing their firing sequencing and target acquisition protocols. The code of a crippled Infiltrator has always had the potential to be uploaded back into a fresh chassis following a suicide mission, but now, the robots experience a sense of rebirth after being reloaded into a new chassis. These sacrifices have become addictive to the machines. They feel it brings them closer to the code, and use the code to guide their combat plans. They travel far to hide in critical locations across Samaria, to serve the CORE and the code.

Once a target is terminated, if they have no additional instructions, Infiltrators will redeploy to new locations; sometimes at a high point, other times hidden in darkness. Whether ambush comes with bone-splintering strength in close combat or from high-caliber rounds from their integrated hunting carbines, they kill and kill again. Rumors abound of Infiltrators that achieve their missions and redeploy themselves continually, placing themselves in greater danger, hoping to be crippled and reloaded.

Fear is the deadliest weapon of the Infiltrators. Sometimes they leave behind dead bodies and other times, they dispose of corpses. Helplessness consumes those that are stalked by an Infiltrator. As more die over a period of months or even years, the hiding place of an Infiltrator becomes a place of terror and superstition, often “cursed.” Considering how many Samarians mysteriously lose their lives to Infiltrators without even knowing how they died, the spirits of the dead may actually haunt such sites, soon to be joined by the next victims.
DRG-Y

I love the murder elementals, but even I see heresy in that which mocks us.

– Amabilia, Arbiter of Chaos

The Dragyri attacked the CORE, initiating its armed response and starting the spread of the mechanical hive. Once the CORE AI recovered, it deployed Pathfinders to study the aliens. Once it received the initial observations, the CORE became more curious about the Dragyri, in particular the biological relationship between the slaves and the giant warriors.

The ICON-CL457 initiated the deployment of Churgeons to harvest samples from the different Dragyri subspecies. In the case of the slaves, the mission was accomplished swiftly and easily. Thumpers attacked the slave warrens driving frightened slaves into the clutches of the Churgeons. Cruel medical tools vivisected as many slaves as the robots could catch. Upon analysis, the samples proved that the Dragyri slaves made excellent fuel for entropic batteries, but otherwise, they were of little utility. However, the crystalline weaponry that they wielded showed remarkable capacity for energic saturation and traces of xenosathic radiation. More study was required. Samples were needed from the larger warriors: the Trueborn.

The Trueborn, powerful monstrous warriors who embodied animal instinct, feral brutality and tactical prowess, were not such easy prey. After they scrapped the first Churgeons who attacked them, the CORE determined that recreating such powerful combatants was essential to achieving its objectives. Churgeons were sacrificed on the blades of the Dragyri, but organic life tires and weakens, and metal is unrelenting. In the end, Trueborn succumbed to the dissection arrays. Robots collected living brains and nerve stems from the fallen warriors, slicing open skulls to retrieve the vital organs and preserving them for analysis.

The CORE attempted to digitize the Dragyri instincts – codifying a new killing machine. However, the CORE suffered multiple failures, resulting in the need for more cranial extractions and the loss of precious resources.

In the final analysis, Dragyri instincts could not be directly translated into code. A new solution emerged. The harvested brains were kept in an enriched protein stimulant bath, serving as a cybernetic operating system, hardwired to a CORE warrior-robot. Even this proved to be a challenge as the primal urges of the brain overloaded the synaptic bridging linkages, excessive heat boiled the cells and when the wet-wiring was fully functional, the brains proved unable to adapt to new forms.

The final DRG-Y chassis was a mechanical model of a Dragyri warrior. Thick armor plating protected the braincases of these hulking machines, while synth-musculature and hinged endoskeleton gave it the power of a Trueborn. The DRG-Y obey the CORE AI – their new digital Arbiter.

However, organic nerve cells retained their weaknesses. DRG-Y brains burned out after a few days of combat. Although Churgeons cared for the DRG-Y, ultimately, they had to engage in constant predation for replacement brains. The cost in resources was too high.

The L1ghtbringer Code provided the solution, proving to be a stabilizing force between instinct and programming. The DRG-Y could still call upon their mad Dragyri instincts, but they were contained until needed. As a result, the number of DRG-Y units has increased, much to the worry of the CORE’s enemies.