

governments in order to justify their next military campaign. As in all things, we reap only what we sow."

—MANFRED KEYES, PROFESSOR OF HUMANITIES,
UNIVERSITY OF ALTDORF (NOW DISBARRED)

"The Skaven are real, oh yes, very much so. And they are not the mindless, evil beasts that we've been told to fear by the Grand Theogonist. You know Marquis Ludovicus, who wore the mouse-ears to the last Masquerade? That was a signal, don't you know. All of us in the group knew what it meant—another one of his fabulous parties afterwards. And one of his "little friends" made an appearance, in disguise, to deliver his wonderful party favours. Best stuff in the city, believe you me. And we danced 'til dawn."

—SIR PERCIVAL SCHWARZLUIKER,
MASTER OF THE JEWELLERS' GUILD (DECEASED)

Even those who have come to believe in both the existence and threat of these beasts can accomplish little, as they are hampered by their inability to speak out. The Witch Hunters are as vigilant as ever, the Sigmarites quick to censure, and fellow scholars quick to scorn. So they must hide their convictions behind possibilities and hypotheses—words through which the certainty of holy denial cuts like a scythe.

"From what We have read, the evidence remains fragmentary and anecdotal. We would dearly like to know the truth of the matter, but how do We separate truth from myth? Every child knows the tale of Emperor Mandred and the rat-kings, and every house-frau has heard the street-corner gossip about Ratmen lurking in every shadow. So every fragment is viewed through the lens of this myth, and every anecdote fired as much by imagination as by true observation. Whatever these Skaven may be, We cannot know them until We can see them with Our own eyes."

—DUCHESS HELGA ULRICHSEN,
THIRD IN LINE TO THE THRONE OF TALABHEIM

"I see now that I was mistaken. How could great merciful Shallya allow such beasts to exist? How could Sigmar stand their presence, or our great Emperor fail to drive them back to the Chaos Wastes? No, I was a fool, who trusted in the words of other fools. I hereby recant everything in my essay, and condemn it as the greatest heresy. May the masters of this great college forgive me, and may Sigmar have mercy on my soul."

—COLMAN SMITHERS, STUDENT AT ALTDORF UNIVERSITY

Ironically, the scholars most aware of the presence of our enemy are rarely those who devote themselves to the Ratmen's extermination. Rather, they trade and parley with them, they make deals and promises, for they have heard too often about the benefits of the so-called "Chaos Bargain." The Skavens' gift for secrecy makes them excellent spies for those who want them, and their love for Warpstone makes them easily bought by any Wizard or alchemist who has some to trade. The one saving grace of this treacherous practice is that the Ratmen always turn on their temporary employer, using him for their own needs before killing him. Thus do these loathsome men perish for their sins, having gained nothing but their own damnation. But who knows how greatly they may help our enemy in even the briefest betrayal?

"You must understand how stupid they are. For ten gold crowns they will procure the most sensitive of documents, or pull off the most difficult of assassinations. And what do they do with his gold? They wear it around their necks, for they like the shine it makes. They are canny enough to get into the most tightly-guarded studies, but they have no culture, no learning, no sense of the value of things. Truly, they are barely above beasts, and if they haven't turned and killed each other between our monthly meetings, they are just as likely to have drowned themselves by scurrying down the wrong sewer. We train our dogs and hawks to do our bidding by passing them a handful of meat, and we never once fear that they

will some day seize control of the Empire; I wager that we will more likely see a goshawk on the Imperial Throne than these stupid Ratmen ever learning a mote of strategy! So where is the danger in dealing with them? Indeed, the real danger is in not dealing with them, for who knows how many great men and great cities have fallen due to a lack of intelligence, the kind of intelligence only the Skaven can provide?"

—SIR JURGEN KUIVER, MASTER ARCHIVIST,
THE KOMMISSION OF THE IMPERIAL ARCHIVES, ALTDORF

"They are watching me now, I know. They are in the walls, under the stones, in the canals, everywhere. I do not know at which point I ceased to be the master and became the slave, but they have me fast in their chains. I need the powder every day now or my eyes weep and my hands shake. And they have me do things for them, as I once had them do for me—steal things, hide things, play turncoat to my own liege lord. I have thrice-damned my soul and betrayed my friends, my city and my empire to our greatest of enemies. Yet let me say, while I am still of firm mind and unshakeable conviction: that my damnation has not been in vain, and that the eternal torments of the Daemons is a worthy price to pay for the knowledge I have gained and the power I have mastered, thanks to the Wyrstone they brought, and the proscribed books they acquired. And if I am to die a mewling slave of the Ratmen, then my glorious creation will live on, and through it, my legend will redeem me."

—DOCTOR ANTON WIESSANG,
MASTER NECROMANCER, LAST DIARY ENTRY

FROM BEYOND OUR LANDS

"We call them La Souriscarle, these fever-rats, who brought the Mal Rouge—the Red Death—down upon us. We lost so much to them, the souls of many great knights and the beauty of our great countryside as well. And we know all too well it is you who brought them upon us: you Empire scum and you Tileans, with your filthy cities of moneylenders, thieves and whores!"

—JACQUE BICHEAU, BRETONNIAN COURT SCRIBE

"The hunting of vermin is a task for peasants, not for a knight of Our Lady."

—SIR PHILLIPE DE BLOIS, KNIGHT OF THE GRAIL

The deadly claws of the Skaven have preyed on all the lands of the Empire, and not least upon our Bretonnian neighbours. Seven hundred years after the Great Plague of IIII, the Bretons suffered their own great pestilence of Skaven design, a pox that killed more than half their population. Yet the Bretons remain even more ignorant of their enemies than the people of the Empire, for they have no scholars or learning to match ours, and their knights are a poor substitute for our witch hunters and militiamen. But just as we would scorn the ignorance of the Bretonnians, the Tilean princes scorn us for ours. For the Tileans have thrown off the cloud of ignorance altogether, and face these enemies in the clear light of day.

"Sometimes we call youse the rodonaphobi, which mean the people scared of the mice. Youse Empire peoples are like a woman, no? All on a stool, crying help me, help me, is running up my skirt, when the mice is all small and so quiet. No, no, the Skaven is no mouse, and is very dangerous thing, but youse do not look at it proper, you leap on the chair and close your eyes and say it is not there, if I do not see it. Go, go, little mouse, so I do not see how big you are or know where you are hiding! I see no mouse! I see nothing! And so the mouse live all happy in the walls, and eat all the cheese."

—CRISTO CARRAZANNO, TILEAN BAWD

The Tileans have the terrible curse of inhabiting the closest land to the great Skaven spawning ground of Skavenblight, which lies in the

Zombie Marshes. Although they have been spared the worst of the plagues, they have instead suffered the greatest share of the sorties of our common enemy. So many times have the Skaven marched against them that they have long-since forgotten the luxury of pretending that the Ratmen do not exist, and instead have devoted themselves fiercely to protecting their cities and exterminating the Skaven found within them. The Rat-Catchers of Miragliano, one of the most famous mercenary regiments in all of Tilea, are employed by the prince of that city solely to destroy the Skaven menace.

"You see these here notch-as on my bandoleer? Thas-sa means I kill twenty Ratmen. Anton, he has the dogs and they-a smell them out, then I sticks them with-a my spear, and that we-a call sollecitare—it means, the tickler, see? Because of all the barbs on its-a side, see. It kills the Skaveni very much, and then wes-a sticking their stupid little skulls on-a the town gate, as-a warning. Accorde, they always come back again, the very next night too. Theys-a never giving up, and so neither does we."

—NICOLAS DE LAMPEDUSA,
TILEAN MERCENARY, RAT-CATCHER REGIMENT

From what I have gathered, the southern Estalians have suffered little contact with the Ratmen. The same, I believe, holds true for our Elven neighbours, wherever they may lurk. I have only met a handful of Elves who ventured from their forest homes, and they claimed the Skaven did not and could not enter their hidden cities. Perhaps it is the roots of the magical trees in which they make their homes, reaching down into the earth to block the ever-spreading empire beneath. If the Elves would only share their thoughts on the matter, we might find a great weapon to use against the Ratmen, but as always, the Elves keep their own counsel.

"Of course we fight them, and we slay them, without mercy. They are creatures of Chaos, are they not? But we do not fear them, for they never enter our forests. Such things of the underearth are better left to other things of the underearth. It is a matter for the Dwarfs, who no doubt have much in common with this enemy."

—ARIEL BRIGHTMOON, GLADE GUARDIAN OF LAURELORN FOREST

"Our duty is clear. If you cannot stand against them, then we will take a force and destroy these rat-things that prey upon you. Make way."

—LORD ADANA, SWORDMASTER OF HOETH

The Norsemen and the Kislevites tell legends of the Ratmen, and there are many in those nations who are aware of the Skaven menace and who do battle against them. I have also met many Halflings who know of the dangers and do not shirk their duty, despite their small stature. However, there is no stauncher supporter in our efforts against the Skaven than the Dwarfs. They battled the Skaven for thousands of years before the coming of Sigmar, and the Ratmen are below only the Greenskins in their Book of Grudges. We can look to the Dwarfs for aid in our struggle, yes, but more importantly can look to them as a guiding example. Let their courage and tenacity at crushing this menace be an inspiration to us all.

"There's a legend that the Skaven are all descended from Skavor, the son of Gazul, cousin to Grimnir. Skavor, like Gazul, was younger than his brothers and lacked the skill for working stone or shaping metal. He was rightly exiled for this, so he went away into the deep-earth and learnt how to shape his flesh instead of shaping metal, turning himself into a hideous rat-beast and swearing revenge on his blood-kin. And this is why the Dwarfs fight the Skaven as hard as we fight the Greenskins, though the Ratmen have wreaked far less damage upon us: because many of us believe that the Skaven came from our blood. We fight them not just to settle our grudges, but to shed our shame."

—THURIN STRONGBLADE, RUNESCRIBE OF KARAK ALNOR

"We've heard tell of these Humans who don't think the Skaven exist. That's Humans for you. But all it really amounts to is fewer



troops to help us hold back these mud-sucking bastards. If you're not picking up a weapon, y' part of the problem, son, and if you get in my way, I'll treat you no different to them rat-faced scum."

—BEHRAM GUNDARSON, DWARF SKAVEN SLAYER

SIGN AND SPOOR: TRACKING THE SKAVEN

It is well said that in order to best fight your enemy, you must know your enemy. But in this world of ignorance and superstition, and against an enemy which relies so greatly on stealth and subterfuge, it can be difficult to know if you have even encountered the Skaven at all. It is easy to jump at shadows or, contrarily, to miss their actions altogether. If you would wish to learn more of your enemy, you must know them by the trails they leave behind.

"If you want to know for sure that the Skaven aren't Beastmen, then be sure to stand in the middle of a village that's been rat-bitten one day. The Beastmen are deadly, and they've created their share of desolation around the Empire, but the Beastmen are creatures of destruction. That's all. They go through somewhere, and you'll know it. It's worse than the Ogres—they smash everything to pieces, knock down houses, tear people apart, and leave nothing but death and chaos behind. The Skaven aren't like that. When they take a town . . . well, they wait. They plan. They gather their numbers. They come in a swarm, and they come in the dark, and they are upon you before you even know it. I've seen towns left empty with not a single bit of shale shaken from the rooftops, not a spear lifted from the wall. And who they don't kidnap for their mines, they eat, so there's nothing left but a few splotches of blood and that unholy smell to say anything happened at all. It's unnatural, and damn disturbing—a whole town of goodly folk, just vanished without a sign."

—BEHRAM GUNDARSON, DWARF SKAVEN SLAYER