

Knight Panther

"I swear that, while yet this body of mine draws breath, never will I suffer any person or thing bearing the mark of Chaos to live"
Excerpt from the Oath of Enrolment to the Order of the Knights Panther

The Knights Panther boast a long and distinguished history of service to the Empire. Clad in brilliant steel plate and high-crested helms, their armour is adorned in furs of exotic beasts that hark to the order's crusading days. They are the sworn enemy of the chaos-tainted and mutant, mighty defenders of purity, and the flower of Imperial chivalry.

When the comet hit, a great shard smote the Mordheim chapterhouse of the Knights. Most thought the knights all slain, but it was not so. No, the noble cavaliers suffered a far worse fate: they were twisted and changed, becoming the very things they were sworn to destroy. And so, one by one, they

have left the charred remnants of their barracks and now wander the ruins, tall figures in darkened maille, faces covered by gorget and visor, cloaks pulled close about. What do they seek?

None know for sure; some venture that they pursue a remedy for their affliction, and others say they guard the streets in twisted parody of their former vigilance, and yet others insist they simply prowl, just as their predatory namesakes, seeking only to hunt and feed...

One, only, of their number escaped the city, and, travelling by night, made his way down the River Stir, and thence at last to the Order's Grand Chapterhouse in Carroburg. The Master of the Order received him, listened to his supplications, witnessed his malady and, ever true to the Vows, granted him mercy. Before his erstwhile servant's body had even stopped twitching, the Grandmaster dispatched a claw of his most trusted knights to travel in haste and secret, and, using all their skill and guile, bring deliverance to their fallen confrères in the stricken city, and retrieve the relics of their lost house.

And thus it has come to pass that panthers stalk the ruins of Mordheim. Mysterious and taciturn, they hide their identities, cleaving to their own purposes, as likely to bring aid as they are to slay. Should two such meet, a clash to the death is sure to follow. Gold means little to them, though occasionally, in exchange for a sign of their quarry, and if it suits their purpose, they offer their services to warbands exploring the broken streets. Many a treasure hunter might rejoice to welcome so mighty an ally at such meagre fee; wiser heads wonder if there be not a different price... Still, a Warband reckless or desperate enough might just be willing to take the risk.

Hire Fee: 1 Holy/Unholy Relic to Hire and +20 gold crowns Upkeep.

May be hired: Any warband may hire a Knight Panther. Good-aligned warbands will believe they hire a True Panther. Evil-aligned warbands will believe they hire an Accursed Panther. For all game purposes, Accursed and True Knights Panther are identical.

Rating: A Knight Panther increases the warband's rating by 25 points, plus 1 point for each experience point he has.

Profile	M	Ws	Bs	S	T	W	I	A	Ld
Knight Panther	4	4	3	4	4	2	4	2	8

Weapons/Armour: Sword, Shield, Helmet, Heavy Armour, dagger. Also, the Knight has an axe or hammer (your choice).

Skills: A Knight Panther may choose from the Combat and Strength skills when he gains an advancement.

SPECIAL RULES:

Knight: A Knight Panther wears the best fitted armour and has years of training and experience fighting chaotic horrors. Therefore:

- He does not suffer movement penalties for equipping both shield and heavy armour.



- In close combat, the knight will always use his shield, and either his sword or his axe/hammer. He will use his dagger if he is disarmed of other weapons.
- He is immune to the effects of *fear*.
- For as long the Knight Panther on your roster is not Out of Action, if you Voluntarily Rout, the Knight will leave your warband, and never return. Remove him from your roster.

True or Accursed: There is a chance the Knight Panther you have hired is not what you thought. He may abandon or betray you.

In the first three games after you recruit this hired sword, you must test to see if he turns on you. At the end of every turn, roll 2D6. If the result is 3+, the Knight acts normally. If the result is a 2, the knight has *Turned*; roll on the table below.

1D6 Result

- 1-5 *Betrayed.* Starting on your opponent's next turn, and for the rest of the game, the Knight is controlled by your opponent, as if he had been hired by the opponent's warband.
- 6 *Abandoned.* The knight has found a sign of his true prey. Remove the Knight from the table. If he has any mission items, objectives or wyrdstone shards, these are left on the table at his last location.

In either case, remove the Knight Panther from your roster immediately, and do not pay his upkeep at the end of the game. Note: if you are betrayed, your opponent does not keep him after the game either, nor add him to their roster. He's gone, pursuing his own mission.

Nemesis: The Knight experiences the effects of *hate* for other Knights Panther. If your opponent also has a Knight Panther on his roster, disregard the 'True or Accursed' Rule. In your turn, your Knight Panther must move/run/charge at maximum speed towards your opponent's Knight Panther, and engage him in close combat. You have freedom to choose whether to take risks such as climbing or jumping. If he is charged by another model(s), he will fight these normally, until he is able to move again towards the other Knight Panther. You must direct all his attacks against your opponent's Knight Panther until one or other is put Out of Action. After, if your knight survives, he will act normally.

If the game ends before one or other Knight is put Out of Action, continue to resolve their combat until one is put Out of Action. In the case that they have not yet met in close combat, place them together and roll to see who charges.

If put Out of Action by another Knight Panther, your Knight is automatically dead. Do not roll for this. If your Knight survived, you no longer need to roll for 'True or Accursed' in future games; mutual trust has been won.



This original Hired Sword for the Mordheim tabletop skirmish game was designed, written, illustrated, and laid-out by Farlane Whitty, based on material produced by Games Workshop. Many thanks to: Gregg Alan, for painting my conversion so perfectly, and for pictures with his beautiful warbands and terrain; to Ewan Smith, Joe Gilday, Gregg Allan, and Craig Clowsby for helping test the rules; and to Brendan Whitty and David Ross for story chat, and casting expert eyes over the prose.

Captain Wens Siegfried knew who approached without turning. The thud-step of Sergeant Hauer's wooden leg on the tavern's creaking floorboards was audible over the chatter. "Well, what's the butcher's bill?"

"Boris will be fine, but we had to take both Kymes's arms, sir. And Hans won't last the night." the Sergeant said, still wiping his calloused hands on a rag and dropping himself onto the rickety stool. In the weak light cast through grimy windows, Wens could see that the rag, once a rich yellow colour, was stained crimson-brown. He remembered the feeling of pride, the thrill of aspiration when he bought bolts of the rich heavy cloth from the markets of Marienburg to outfit his band of fortune-seekers. The memory seemed distant, though it was barely two seasons old.

"Well, that leaves five of us left fit to bear arms, and likely suicide to go back in at that." He reached for the bottle of cheap brandy, wincing at a jolt of pain from the ragged gash in his shoulder. Hauer, too, bore a long, evil wound above his right eye. He'd seen small cuts left by the ratmen before, aye, seen them turn to festering putrefaction in hours, and bring the toughest Midenheimers to the gates of Morr. He took another long draw on the bottle and spat half the mouthful onto his open wound, then slid the bottle over the table.

It was just so damnably frustrating. If it hadn't been for those accursed Skaven attacking when they had, he would have had the secret temple's door open, and the treasures inside would have been theirs. Still, he doubted very much the surviving rat-creatures knew the secret of the portal's opening; the crazed old cleric they had rescued from a band of chaos worshippers had not survived to tell his tale to any others. Wens just needed a few more half-capable bodies.

"Can we put some of the coin from the last haul to bring in some more muscle?" ventured Hauer, arriving at the same conclusion.

"What coin? What we haven't spent on stale bread, flea-ridden beds and piss-poor brandy, we've spent on the damned Flogstock Alley toll, which, my old comrade, we cannot now afford again. We needed into the temple, needed the treasures inside. And next time we'll have to take the difficult way round."

"So, what now then, cap'n?" Before Wens could think of an answer, the tavern door clattered open and a tall, armoured figure stood framed against the watery Ostermark sun that hung over Cutthroat's Haven. The low murmur faltered, and the door creaked closed behind him, as he stalked into the tavern's smoky interior, and towards the startled barkeep. Wens couldn't hear the conversation that passed between the knight – for knight he clearly was – and the landlord, but he watched with growing interest as the publican gestured with pointed finger in his direction.

The knight turned and approached the alcove where Wens and Hauer sat. The fur of a beast Wens did not recognise mantled his shoulders, a long sword hung sheathed by his side, and on his back was slung battleaxe and shield. His plate mail, though not as ornate as Marienburg fashion preferred, bore the scars of long use and Wens recognised its austere quality. A leering monster formed the crest atop the knight's helm.

"I hear you are looking for fighting men." Wens could not see his mouth past the high iron collar of the knight's bevor, but

the voice was mild, the accent refined. He did not sound like a killer, and though the knight looked impressive, but Wens had seen more impressive-looking warriors head into the cursed city than come out of it. But no, there was something about this man. It was the eyes. Wens knew not why, but they sent a chill down his spine.



The knight was unstoppable. His pace barely slowed as he raised his shield and deflected an iron-topped club swung by a great goat-headed beastman. Before the creature could recover its balance, an axe flashed in the stuttering torch light, severing the beast's spine. The blade caught in the heaving bulk of the dying goat-thing, but letting go the axehaft and drawing his sword in one fluid motion, the knight parried a spear thrust from a hideous three-armed mutant, and with the riposte, struck off its wild-eyed head. He strode on towards the end of the vaulted passage, and the source of the chanting voices.

It had all gone so smoothly since the mysterious knight – Von Streit, he had called himself – had taken up with them, reflected Wens as he reloaded the rifled barrels of his duelling pistols. No one had challenged them in the ruins, and all had been exactly as the mad priest's ravings had foretold. The secret door, a descent by spiral stair, a long corridor, and then the old temple. They were at the end of the subterranean hallway now. Behind them lay a bloody path of ruin that they had wrought from the bodies of this godsforsaken band of cultists and mutants. Alas, Gruber and Fritz lay amongst them. Only three remained of the band he'd led from the City of Gold. Gods willing, he'd have coin aplenty soon enough, aye, and good red wine to toast their memory.

In front of them stood a great portal, its pillars and lintel formed into the maw of some giant fiend; the timber of its leaves were blackened and studded with many iron nails. The noise of guttural chants that had grown as they fought their way down the corridor had ceased suddenly and all was eerie quiet. But something else was coming through the door. The

Marienburger Captain had been in Mordheim long enough to recognise that foreboding, that crackle in the air that set your teeth on edge and put your hairs on end: Wyrdstone.

“Well, gentlemen, are you with me? Shall we go make our fortune?”

“Aye!” cried Hauer and Boris together. Von Streit said nothing, but his eyes glittered in the torchlight. The great door swung open.

The chamber beyond was circular, and many-pillared. It was illuminated by hundreds of candles, set all around the walls and pillars, and here-and-there about the stone floor. Their flames seemed to whip and swirl, although the air was still. In the centre of the chamber was an altar, rough-hewn, and on it a great brassier burned with a green fire. Wens could see that instead of coals, there were great shards of wyrdstone, and he watched with growing horror as a leering face appeared in the clouds of fire and smoke that swirled around the high ceiling and then dived down into the upturned face of the man that stood before the altar. He was dressed in robes similar to the cultists, only richer. The man convulsed and turned on the spot, and, as he did so, Wens could see an expression of sudden, frantic terror grow upon his features. Wens almost pitied him in that moment. Then spasms ripped through him, robes shredded and fell in bloody tatters about him as his body grew and distorted, new limbs and appendages bursting from the increasingly muscular and misshapen torso. As the metamorphosis slowed, the abomination turned its head to glare at the intruders, horns sprouting from its brow.

In that moment, Wens knew he looked into the very eyes of a daemon.

“Possessed!” he cried, and aimed both pistols at the infernal being. It moved with unbelievable speed. Before the pistols’ report had echoed off the far end of the chamber, a great claw-ended arm sent Wens tumbling through air and crashing into a column. The last thing he saw before slipping into darkness was Von Streit stalking towards the monster.

Wens came to. His head was agony. Across from him lay the disembowelled corpse of Hauer. He turned his head and saw Von Streit, his fur-cloaked back to Wens, his shield rent, but his sword still in hand. Facing him, the possessed beast was bleeding, black ichor dripping thickly from numerous wounds, and it was diminished in size.

“You cannot defeat me!” the creature spat. In answer, Von Streit said not a word, but raised his sword once more, and with all his weight behind it, plunged the blade into the beast’s chest. The man’s head – for in that moment, a man once more he appeared to be – snapped back and a stream of vile black corruption spewed into the air. Then the cultist slid off the knight’s sword, onto the cold floor.

Wen’s heart sang, and he began to struggle to his feet. Then, Von Streit turned to look at him, and Wens’ exultations died, still-born in his throat.

The knight’s gorget and face mask had been sheared away, but it wasn’t the face – a face that echoed the hideous crest above – which forced the whimpered “By Sigmar!” from Wens’ lips. No. It was the eyes. He knew now what he had seen in them before.

“No, not Sigmar, I think” spoke the knight, softly.

