

Plastic Shadokesh Test Shots





THE SHADOKESH

The Shadokesh arrived in the Milky Way about 2000 years ago, speeding like a cancer across the outer Orion arm, working their way ever closer to humanity; consuming whole system, bleeding them dry and moving to the next.

The Shadokesh have no conscience, no ability to empathize with the world around them. The Shadokesh only understand what they want or what they need and are oblivious to the joy or suffering of those around them. They possess an immense curiosity and a love for new experiences; this only adds to the view of Shadokesh being psychotic, they will twist the knife in your belly just to study the look on your face.

The Shadokesh possess advanced technology and an unmatched industrial machine. Working towards a greater cause at the sacrifice of self is deeply engrained in the Shadokesh consciousness and perhaps the only trait that keeps them from descending into an orgy of destruction and self-genocide. If there is true evil in the universe, surely the Shadokesh are the embodiment of this ideal.

Tall and slender, they move with a fluid grace, almost seeming to float across the surface. Their gestures are soft and delicate. Their outward appearance is deceptive, in a blinding flash of uncontrolled violence they will tear into their prey. Rending flesh from bone as the manic whistling of air is sucked in and out through their neck gills in a sound reminiscent to a crazed hyperventilating lunatic. This signals to the others that dinner is served.

Despite their never-ending desire for carnage, they have managed to build an impressive society, huge spire cities cover whole planets as they rend nearby systems to ash, devouring raw materials, resources and entire species to feed their insatiable need to expand.

The name Shadokesh roughly translates to "Great Clan" although this is not a precise translation, more an extrapolation of meaning.

The Shadokesh home world is roughly the size of Neptune, possessing a dense core, its surface gravity is 1.23 that of earth. Its thick atmosphere obscures the light from its distant sun, a mixture of oxygen, argon and carbon dioxide gas. Visibility near ground level is very limited. Four small moons keep the atmosphere in constant turmoil, easing only slightly above 5000m where the atmosphere begins to thin.

The Shadokesh evolved from an avian life form, primarily gliders, they could stay aloft for days gliding on the thermals in search of prey. Organized into family units called Kesh, a could range in size, from a single mated pair to a hive reaching millions in number. Each Kesh tightly bound with the ability to attune to one another once every cycle.

Shadokesh are born with four vestigial wings on their back, as these serve not practical purpose, they are clipped at birth leaving only a single bone from each protruding from the back. The first knuckle or bone is filled with fluid and serves the same functions as the human inner ear, providing a sense of movement and aiding balance. The Shadokesh range in height from eight to nine feet when standing upright and have a translucent pale skin with black stripes and blotchy spot patterns tightly stretched across a sinewy body. When angered, agitated or feeling strong emotions these patterns will change color, displaying the heightened emotional state. The large bulbous region on their face contains two sacks that emit ultra-low frequency vibrations, this paired with their large membraned ears allows them to communicate over great distance. Four small white eyes see comfortably into the ultra-violet spectrum but leaves them sensitive to higher spectrum waves.

The move to a more cohesive society was not a peaceful one; they are highly aggressive and territorial creatures, over population led to Kesh vs Kesh genocide, attacking each other on sight until ultimately, only a single Kesh remained. As the single cohesive Kesh turned its finely attuned will towards social development, huge spire cities would take shape and with them, advancements in technology. In time, the Shadokesh would reach for the stars.

Shadokesh society is built around a cast system. The top rung is reserved for the breeders and those who run the massive nurseries that create the next generation of Shadokesh. Those who produce material goods occupy the middle rung. These individuals add to the society's ability to expand and flourish. The bottom rung is reserved for those who service the producers as well as the thinkers, planners and administrators. This system tends to stifle innovation and social evolution while rewarding consumption and expansion above all else's.

The Shadokesh have no central government, no core social or military decision makers. All decisions regarding the larger objectives are made as a whole. Once every cycle, *97 hours*, all Shadokesh cease their activity to join the collective mind, the 'Great Call'. In this state, they are unaware of the world around them as their experiences, thoughts, and desires merge into a single voice. When the merging is complete the Shadokesh are changed. Their emotions, drives and desires are attuned to the new collective voice. This is the Shadokesh greatest strength and weakness. Individuals all working towards a common goal provides for unequalled efficiency. However, in times of stress the individual reverts to its primal needs and desires. This will often cause anxiety or confusion and sometimes leads to paralyzing indecision as the collective voice and the primal voice battle for dominance.

Shadokesh technology is simple elegant and efficient. Technology and all its wonders are viewed as nothing more than practice tools. One such tool, the Shadokesh world mover. When the Shadokesh learned the intricacies of travel within the Veil, they eagerly reached for new worlds, developing the world mover. A massive vessel capable of moving a quarter of their world's population through space. Upon its completion, it loomed larger in the night sky than the largest moon, without a moment's thought or reflection on this achievement, they began loading nearly four billion Shadokesh in suspended animation capsules, stacked one upon the other with all the resources they require to establish a new colony. Shadokesh move from system to system with an insatiable hunger, devouring worlds, resources and species, leaving barren rocks where life once flourished. Each new conquest a stepping stone bringing the ever closer to our galaxy. Two thousand years ago, the Shadokesh arrived in the Milky Way galaxy. Settling in the Orion arm, roughly six thousand light years from earth.

The insatiable drive for expansion was not without cost, travel through the Veil left these conquerors separated from the great Kesh collective, unable to hear the Great Call. Now operating as separate organisms from the parent Kesh, they formed new Kesh collectives. Each new collective found itself unable to return home, once separated for even a single cycle, they would no longer be in tune with the single voice, no longer recognized as family and would be treated as hostile intruders.

You cannot travel through the Veil without dipping your toe into the Void, the effects of the Void on genetic material can be gruesome. Most species can tolerate limited exposure without suffering damage, the Shadokesh are slightly more susceptible than most to the effects of the Void. This exposure has led to two genetic deviations in the Shadokesh species.

One such birth defect that destroys the ability to hear the Great Call. This defect occurs in 1 of roughly 30,000 births but at the rate the Shadokesh reproduce, the total number of afflicted is staggering. This has led to a new subclass of Shadokesh species, the Feral Shadokesh.

The Ferals:

Ferals are not simple-minded animals but separated from the Great Call they revert to their more primitive animal state and base instincts. They most closely resemble wild dogs; they will travel in packs and are led by an alpha but are far more prone to fits of blind aggression than any Teran species. The level of intelligence displayed by a Feral is dictated by when they lost the ability to hear the Great Call. Those born without the ability are ostracized from birth, thrown out into the streets to fend like animals and will behave more like base animals. Those who lost their ability to merge through injury or disease later in life will be capable of deeper thought, reasoning, cunning and communication but equally prone to their base instincts. The latter are the most dangerous and are typically hunted for sport but may inadvertently be swept up with the baser animal Ferals in the Keening.

A Keen or Keening, is the harvest of Ferals to use for sport and is a means to cull the population when it becomes a nuisance. Reminiscent of the Roman games, Ferals are made spectacle in games blood sport, against each other and against native species of conquered worlds. More recently the Shadokesh have taken to using Ferals as tools of war, dropping them as advanced forces to clean a city of its biological infestation; allowing the main force to operate without interruption.

The second genetic aberration to appear resulting from travel through the Veil is the Sokesh, genetic throw backs to the ancient Shadokesh lineage. In stark contrast to the treatment of Feral Shadokesh, the birth of a Sokesh is celebrated. They are communally raised by residence of a spire and well cared for by Shadokesh standards.

The Shadokesh do not follow a religious dogma but do practice a form of ancestor worship or veneration. Paying homage to their roots and ancestral lineage with blood sacrifices. It is not the way of the Shadokesh to recognize an individual but the expression of racial pride and superiority for all of those who have come before is a common practice. The Sokesh are viewed as living ancestors, flesh and blood monuments to all that the Shadokesh hold dear.

The odds a Shadokesh will give birth to a Sokesh is extremely rare 1 in 1,600,000. Because Sokesh are fertile at birth and they breed with other Sokesh it is unknown how many exist, but they can be seen in great numbers patrolling the skies of all major Shadokesh cities.

The Sokesh: (The Ancients)

The Sokesh are large avian creatures that possess all the traits found in primitive Shadokesh, fast, cunning and brutal. They are predators of the highest order. Preferring to remain on all fours, they are roughly sixteen to twenty feet long with four wings that, outstretched can reach thirty feet or more. Massive claws tucked back when not in use are reflected in the contemporary Shadokesh hooves.

The Sokesh are the only members of Shadokesh society who are allowed free will and free reign; their actions are not dictated by the Great Call, they are feared and revered and allowed operate with impunity. The Sokesh make themselves at home amongst spire cities. Having a Sokesh take make a nest on your balcony is a great honor but not without its dangers, it may decide that you or a member of you Kesh is on tonight's menu. It is best to keep your honored guest content and well fed.

Frequently a Sokesh will adopt a pack of Ferals, acting as their alpha, this can be a particularly dangerous situation for the participants of the Keening when they unknowingly kill a Feral associated with a Sokesh pack or Kesh, it is not uncommon to have a Sokesh to find its way to the arena and reclaim their Kesh member or distribute retribution for a fallen Kesh.

Every cycle the Sokesh will join with the Great Call but they are not attuned to the Shadokesh. When the Shadokesh enter the Great Call, they can see the other member of their Kesh; dots of light merging in an abyss of darkness, but always there are dim lights, those who stay along the fringe of perception, these are the Sokesh. They can hear the Great Call and feel its push and pull but never attune to its will. The Sokesh will emerge with an understanding of the new cycle but are not slaves to the collective will.

The relationship between Shadokesh and Sokesh is a complicated one, although not a slave to the collective will, they are influenced by its call and will behave in a manner that is sometimes unpredictable. Sokesh will frequently join a Shadokesh mission heading off world. They will simply walk onto the departing craft and make themselves at home, often laying claim to a cargo bay and its resources. Upon arrival at their destination, they will leave the ship and either join with the operation or wander off to follow their own destiny. This odd behavior occurs frequently enough to warrant extra supplies be prepared for every mission to accommodate any uninvited guests.

When a Sokesh and its Kesh of Ferals decide to aid a Shadokesh mission, they are surprising efficient, taking up defensive or offensive positions intuitively, they will work in closely with the Shadokesh and shift tactics to best suit the situation. Having a Sokesh escort is not only seen as a good omen but a true tactical asset. Sokesh do not break when pressure is applied, instead becoming even more dangerous, and more blood thirsty, they will fight to the bitter end. This is particularly true of the Ferals when defending their alpha Sokesh, a fallen or injured Sokesh will send their pack into a frenzy, making them just as likely to attack a Shadokesh as any other target that presents itself.

Sokesh rarely fright amongst their own kind, but like their true ancestors, they are extremely territorial. When the pressures for food or other resources becomes too great a Sokesh will attempt to relocate, If there is not unclaimed territory, conflict is imminent. Entire spires shut down, Shadokesh hiding behind barricaded doors as the bloody altercation is allowed to play itself out.

SHADOKESH EISENKERN WAR

Ardinium: A rare, naturally occurring mineral that neutralized the effect created by tears in the Veil and the radiation leaks created by Void space incursion. Ardinium is used to shield Iron Core Reactors, sensitive electronics and more recently it has been introduced as a component in building materials to shield the occupants and equipment to mitigate exposure to the occupants.

Ardinium Oxide: When Ardinium is exposed to the Void or the energy of an Iron Core Reactor it develops a purple blue crust of oxidization. This material when properly processed and when enough charge is applied will repulse itself from a non-charged object or attract itself to a like charged object much in the way a magnet pulls or pushes. This is the base material all TR bands are constructed from. Without this material the Huge Leviathans would not be possible.

The Shadokesh care little for human society, until recently they have been completely indifferent to the plight of humanity thrive or fall, humanity is viewed as nothing more than another animal species hardly worthy of distinction. This view has changed drastically, the shift in this attitude came when the Shadokesh realized that three of the major worlds in the Eisenkern Empire contained vast quantities of Ardinium, the key component used in all Shadokesh technology. This awareness came when the Eisenkern Empire launched its first retaliatory offensive strike against a Shadokesh rim world in response to a cleansing of one of the Eisenkern border colonies. The Eisenkern Empire landed on Saxous Prime, fielding twenty Leviathan Mortis and handily took the Shadokesh settlement.

Scans of the new human technology reviled their origins as simplistic copies of Shadokesh technology but what intrigued the Shadokesh was the number of Leviathans far outstripped the number of walkers lost in the minor engagements with the primitive humans. This could only mean that the humans had discovered Ardinium, and a lot of it!

The Shadokesh set out to map and scan Eisenkern space, sending drones to every corner of the Eisenkern empire. They found three worlds at the core of the empire brimming with Ardinium. The

ore so plentiful that the primitive race was using it in their fabrication of buildings and other structures as plating in their steel reinforced concrete and even mixed into the concrete itself. If a Shadokesh could be offended surely, they would have been, at such an egregious display of excess. Fortunately for humanity, the Shadokesh are incapable of feeling such an offence. Unfortunately, this did not change or soften the outcome, the first Great Call after the analysis was concluded, decided humanities fate in the blink of an eye, extermination and reclamation of all settlements containing the precious resource.

This would be the start of the great purge. Settlement after settlement was methodically sacked and its once proud cities rendered for the minerals they contained. Only a tide of Iron would halt this onslaught, a luxury the Empire did not have. Leviathan construction had not yet reached its peak and the Mortis needed refinements and a more robust design. The Crusader class was still in its infancy and not yet available in any quantity that would change the outcome. The Eisenkern Empire would not simply lie down and die, they would fight to the last, they needed time, time they did not have. A major hitch in the Shadokesh plan came when the Shadokesh met with a Dhar-Hazier Queen and her envoys and decided they were of no use or threat to the Shadokesh Empire and were promptly dispatched. This miscalculation may be the only reason the Eisenkern Empire still exists. The Dhar-Hazier Clans declared open war on the Shadokesh Empire, as genetically altered and tailored soldiers and equipment flooded across the border into Shadokesh space, they quickly realized that their efforts would need to be turned towards another front, the Dhar-Hazier were a far more formidable foe than originally anticipated.

SHADOKESH TECHNOLOGY

Shadokesh Walkers

The Shadokesh use walkers primarily as tools, flexible extensions of their own physicality, mining, building and subjugation devices, only more recently have they been primarily used as weapon platforms. Shadokesh walkers are faster, more agile but more susceptible to damage, their shielding provides them with an equalizer against the more heavily armored Eisenkern Leviathans.

Shadokesh Reaper

A gravitic craft, used to transport troops to a planet's surface and act as a means to transport materials back to an orbiting ship via a gate (tear in space) Often use on conjunction with Harvesters to strip-mine Eisenkern cities for materials, minerals and biologic materials.

Shadokesh Harvester

Harvesters are autonomous drones, each designed to harvest specific materials. The smallest is the bio-harvester, used to collect samples of indigenous life or clear an area of infestation. The next class

of Harvester was designed to collect minerals for processing and the largest Harvester was designed to destroy structures, allowing the other Harvesters to more easily accomplish their goals.

LEVIATHAN'S AND THEIR USE IN WAR

What is a Leviathan, why build a large walking target, what tactical purpose could such a device possibly serve?

Leviathans are weapons of terror, they are tools of distraction and a means to bolster morale. Leviathans were designed to hold city blocks, a statement, "Here I am, I own this, come and take it" They are anything but subtle.

The Eisenkern Empire developed the Leviathan because it was the perfect tool to fit a need. It could go toe to toe with the Shadokesh walker. The Shadokesh primarily target cities as this is where they find they resources they are after, the soldiers faced with the towering Shadokesh walkers needed to be bolstered, not just in firepower but in steadfast will. Even the brave Eisenkern forces would crumble under the sheer terror of a Shadokesh walker rampaging towards their lines. The Eisenkern trooper needed a big brother that could beat the snot out of the neighborhood bully.

Very early conflicts with the Shadokesh led to some unusual observations of Shadokesh behavior. The Shadokesh, when unchallenged will go about their work tearing down buildings and rending resources with little regard for the occupants or soldiers until they are deemed a threat. This stems from the fact that the Shadokesh do not perceive humans as a true threat, more as a nuisance to be swatted when it becomes annoying. This would give precious time for the Eisenkern troopers to maneuver. This also left the citizens some options for egress before all hell would break loose.

The act of remaining oblivious would soon end as the Shadokesh began to understand human tactics, in response the Shadokesh began annihilating a city's population by releasing feral Shadokesh to clear out a city before they would begin work. Essentially, allowing the Feral Shadokesh to reap the city of its biological infestation, allowing the core force to concentrate on the work at hand. This could not be allowed to continue, they needed to find a way to distract the Shadokesh so that the citizens could clear the city and the soldiers could concentrate on the Shadokesh without fear of inadvertently killing friendlies.

Assaults by infantry and armor only peeled layers from the Shadokesh forces, just enough to deal with the perceived threats. The Eisenkern forces needed a larger hammer a weapon that could not be ignored, the Leviathan was that tool.