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Astarii Dynasty

LONGNU AND XIAORUN

Undying Legions

THE HOLLENBRAND RIDE AGAIN

Realms of Mayhem Northern Reavers

IRON, FLESH AND LATITUDE

THE WORLD IS WRITTEN IN BLOOD AND MEMORY



ASTARII DYNASTY

LONGNU AND XIAORUN

Among the Astarri, power rarely appears in its rawest form. It is ordered, housed, given rite and bearing before it is ever unleashed. That instinct runs through their courts, their warfare, and their understanding of rank. Strength is not admired because it is loud. It is admired because it can be contained without breaking its vessel. That is the ground on which Longnu stands, and it is why her place in Astarri lore cannot be reduced to lineage alone. She belongs to the court by birth. She exceeds it by what she carries.

To understand Longnu, one must begin with Xiaorun, the Jade Tempest, and with the older sacred order that made him so valuable. To the Astarri, a Guardian belongs to an order above kings, beasts, and spirits: a divine intermediary through which sacred intention enters mortal life. It is a source of legitimacy, continuity, and metaphysical order, revered not as symbol alone but as living authority. Xiaorun was not the Astarri Guardian itself. He was a dragon bound to that power, his bond allowing the Astarri to perceive, invoke, and embody something of their Guardian's presence within the visible world.

That bond made him more than a magnificent creature of war. It made him a living threshold. Through him, the Astarri preserved contact with something at once religious, political, and martial.

Such a relation could

not easily be studied from outside, and still less reproduced. It had to be inherited, endured, and understood from within the disciplines of a people shaped to bear it.

That was precisely what drew the elves of Silvermoor to him.

Their crime did not arise from cruelty alone, nor from the ordinary appetite for dominion. The elves of Silvermoor had long ago lost their living bond to their Guardian, and with that loss something in their power had narrowed. Their arts remained refined and formidable, yet they no longer possessed the same immediate continuity with the sacred source that had once anchored their civilization. Longnu became useful to them for that reason. They understood that Xiaorun would answer where court, ritual, or treaty would not, and so they held her fast in order to draw him into their reach.

So they took her, and through her they took him.



Xiaorun came as they had hoped. He did not arrive as a creature to be hunted down in open war, but as a sacred force compelled by loyalty, charge, and the need to reclaim what had been seized. That was the opening Silvermoor required. Once he entered their hands, the arcanists did not seek a quick execution. They kept him alive because death alone would teach them nothing. What they wanted was to study the relation between dragon and Guardian, to force open the living mediation they had failed to restore through their own inheritance.

Longnu witnessed what followed. Xiaorun was subjected to prolonged magical torment, not for spectacle, but for knowledge. They treated him as something to be opened, measured, and read by force, reducing a sacred relation to experiment. In their hands, reverence gave way to extraction. The process did not give them mastery, but it did ruin the body they had captured.

That ruin became the turning point.

Xiaorun understood that if he died there as broken flesh, Silvermoor would claim not only his end, but its meaning. They would say the old relation had yielded at last to study, that what once stood beyond their reach could now be reduced to method, spoil, and precedent. He denied them that conclusion. At the point where his captors believed the experiment had nearly spent him, Xiaorun abandoned his failing body and passed

into Longnu. What entered her was not a relic, nor a dying ornament of sacred power. He endured within her, conscious and unspent, carried forward in living flesh after his own had been destroyed.

The arcanists believed they had reached an ending. At most, they saw failure, collapse, and a subject lost at the threshold of usefulness. What they did not understand was that the decisive act had already taken place.

The Astarri are human, yet born of an ancient giant-blooded lineage. For centuries many stood taller and stronger than ordinary men, their stature sustained by the closeness of their Guardian, who dwelled in the peaks of Tiānqiántíng

Longnu survived and returned to the Astarri court, but not unchanged. What followed was not immediate revelation. It required restoration, restraint, and the severe disciplines by which the Astarri make power bearable without surrendering to it. Only after that interval did she return with their armies to answer the affront done to both her house and their sacred order.

The first full manifestation did not come in captivity, but in war.





LONGNU, THE ETERNAL PRINCESS

Noble, mysterious, and forever bound to the spirit of a dying dragon, Longnu carries within her an ancient and terrible power. Graceful in bearing yet fearsome in battle, she is both a symbol of imperial majesty and a vessel of draconic wrath.

XIAORUN, THE JADE TEMPEST

The mighty dragon whose spirit became forever entwined with Longnu now takes form in all his glory. A majestic and terrifying presence, Xiaorun is a creature of storm, fury, and ancient power—an unforgettable centerpiece for any army or adventure.



There, before witnesses, Xiaorun took corporeal form through Longnu. The body destroyed in torment was not restored in any simple sense, nor was Longnu reduced to some easy tale of transformation. What the field revealed instead was more unsettling: that Xiaorun still endured within her, and that through her he could again be given terrible shape. From that moment, her place could no longer be described in ordinary dynastic terms. She was not only princess, heir, or survivor. She had become a military necessity and a political unease, needed by the court precisely because no courtly language could make her fully safe.

Her new status changes how the court sees her, but war reveals the harder truth. A sacred burden may be carried in living flesh, yet the field asks more of Longnu than endurance. She enters battle as an Astarri commander. She places troops, reads the ground, judges distance, and holds the line to the discipline expected of her people. Her

first duty is command. To those who fight under her, her presence means steadiness, timing, and the visible assurance that the line still knows its purpose. So long as the fight can still be decided by formation, timing, and pressure, she leads as any great captain must, through rank, training, and composure under strain.

That is what makes her dangerous. Longnu keeps Xiaorun from the ordinary rhythm of battle. He is no banner raised at every charge, no answer spent on lesser threats. She keeps him in reserve while the army still holds. The Astarri advance under measured order, not frenzy, and Longnu preserves that order for as long as it can still win the day. Only when the field begins to slip, when the enemy presses too deep, when a flank buckles or the line nears fracture, does she accept the greater risk.

At that point she must expose herself.



To allow Xiaorun bodily form is an act of decision, not reflex.

It places Longnu at the center of the battle's most dangerous moment, when command, sacred charge, and personal peril collapse into one another. The choice carries danger for her as well, because she must stand where the pressure is greatest and hold fast while that force passes through living flesh. Through her, Xiaorun is given corporeal shape again, enough to strike, break, and alter the terms of the fight.

Once released, the field feels the change at once. Enemy ranks that could endure cavalry or disciplined infantry find themselves unable to hold against draconic violence turned loose at close range. Siege engines become splintered wreckage. Flying machines that entered the battle with confidence lose height, formation, and nerve under an assault they were not built to survive. Dense formations, so reliable against ordinary arms, discover that ordered resistance means little when something older and more destructive comes down through their center. Engines built to batter walls or pin advancing troops become targets in their own right, broken before they can decide the battle.

On the field, Longnu's role becomes unmistakable. She commands, and when command alone no longer suffices, she becomes the point through which the army's most feared reserve is committed. That makes her a commander and a threat of rupture at once, the figure an opponent must watch before the line gives way.

Power of that kind unsettles the order around her. The court requires her because no other hand can direct that force with equal legitimacy. For the same reason, she remains unsettling. A princess who can lead an army is familiar enough. A princess through whom a

ruined dragon can return to war is something else entirely. She is too necessary to ignore, too marked to domesticate, and too consequential to be reduced to ornament.

Xiaorun's continued place in Astarii memory follows from that severity. Silvermoor took his body, but failed to possess the meaning of his end. What survived in Longnu remained too active for mourning alone. It stayed dangerous, and capable of returning at the decisive hour. Every later manifestation carries that history with it. The enemy thought they had reduced a sacred relation to experiment. Instead they created the condition for its reappearance under Astarii command.

Together, they hold such weight within the faction's imagination because they gather rank, war, inheritance, ritual, and danger into a single figure on the field. Longnu bears strategy, discipline, and courtly legitimacy. Xiaorun bears terror, memory, and the violence of a power that was not ended when its first body was destroyed. In that union, they form a military and symbolic center the Astarii can rally around, even as that same center remains difficult to name without unease.

Their story endures because it gives continuity a cost. What was saved did not return untouched. It returned through risk, command, and flesh willing to bear more than flesh should bear.

Longnu stands because Xiaorun chose her. Xiaorun endures because Longnu permits him return. Between them, defeat was refused, and what should have passed into loss still enters battle under Astarii banners.

That is the moment the court fears, the army follows, and the enemy dreads.





UNDYING LEGIONS

THE HOLLENBRAND RIDE AGAIN

Ancient skeletal cavalry returns to war, charging with lances or swords and shields raised. These deathless riders bring speed, discipline, and cold terror to the battlefield. The lords of the deathless cavalry now ride with full command. With ancient standards, cursed champions, and grim heralds.

Sir Wilhelm Hollenbrand inherited a small county when his father, Frederick, was killed in battle in the king's service. His legacy was a wounded banner, tired borderlands, and the burden of restoring both rule and reputation.

In his first years as lord, Wilhelm did what lesser men rarely manage. He brought order to his lands, settled disputes, repaired the accounts, and turned a fragile holding into a stable one. Revenue returned. Loyalty hardened. Grain, iron, horses, and silver began to gather under one hand. The peace he built was real, but it was never innocent. Administration was only the first stage of war.

Frederick's death did not remain a private grief. It became a debt of blood carried by the whole house. Wilhelm did not rush toward revenge in anger. He prepared for it. He governed first, then

gathered strength. Every measure of stability he restored, every reserve he built, every rider he armed served a single end. He was preparing an answer.

When he finally marched, the campaign seemed to confirm his judgment. His banners advanced. His men believed they were riding behind a lord of uncommon resolve. The Hollenbrand name, diminished by loss, began to recover its weight. Each success pointed toward a final battle that would settle the matter and close the debt left by Frederick's death.

That expectation failed at the edge of victory.

Wilhelm had raised enough men to defeat the living enemy before him, but not enough to defeat an army that no longer depended on the living alone. In the last campaign he discovered too late that the enemy's strength did not end with the bodies still drawing breath. Their dead also returned to the field.

Fallen soldiers
rose again in service to
another will, without fear,
without exhaustion, and
without mercy. What had seemed
a war of men became something
colder, a contest in which every
corpse could be added back into the
count.

Only then did Wilhelm understand
the true shape of his mistake. He had
prepared for a mortal war against a force
that had already stepped beyond mortal
limits. His lands were ordered, his
treasury sound, his cause just, and none
of it was enough. Discipline, courage,
and good governance still mattered, but
they no longer governed the field.

Wilhelm did not withdraw. He pressed
on, fought beyond reason, and drove the
charge almost to its end. He fell while
victory still seemed visible from the saddle.

His death did not end the history of House
Hollenbrand. It changed its form.
Among the Undying Legions, not every dead
warrior is raised. The grave preserves rank as
much as it preserves bone. Only those of high
station and exceptional worth are called back to
service. In death, hierarchy remains. Command
remains. The discipline of war survives the body
that once carried it.

So Wilhelm
returned. So too did
Frederick.

Now father and son ride again
beneath the extinguished banner
of their house, leading a cadaverous
host in the service of a war that
refused to release them. Their line,
once marked by loss, has become a
harsher emblem of continuity. They no
longer rule fields, tenants, or walls. They
rule obedience. They no longer defend
an inheritance. They embody its last and
most terrible persistence.

In them, the Crypt Knights are seen
clearly for what they are. They are
undead nobility returned to war, rank
preserved beyond death, memory of
command mounted once more in iron
and bone. Even their skeletal steeds reflect
the same cruel principle. The finest riders
are matched with the finest war-beasts, as
if death itself still observes the standards of
blood and station.

There is something especially grim in the image
of Wilhelm riding beside Frederick. Not because
father and son appear monstrous, but because they
remain recognizable as a legitimate continuity of
house and lineage. Blood, inheritance, duty, and
command endure together. What should have
passed into memory has instead been forced back
into service.

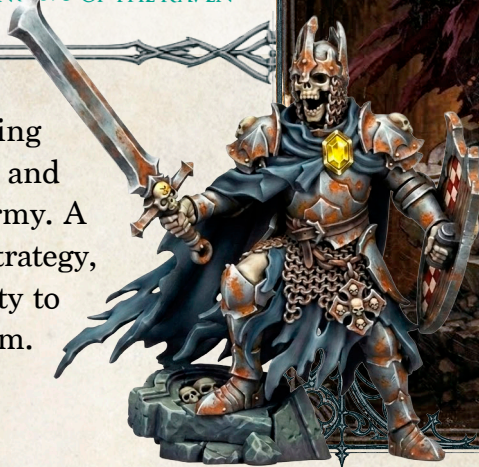


MAELDAR, THE LICH KING

*I saw cities fall that thought they were safe behind their walls.
I saw black banners wave in lands that swore not to kneel.
There were no screams when they arrived, only the sound
of bones on the endless march.*

FRAGMENT OF THE VALCOR ARCHIVE - ANNO 873 OF THE RAVEN

The dark mind behind the Undying Legions, Maeldar binds bone and shadow into an unstoppable army. A master of necromancy and cold strategy, he is both general and grim deity to the dead that serve him.



GRAVE KNIGHTS COMMAND GROUP

The lords of the deathless cavalry now ride with full command. With ancient standards, cursed champions, and grim heralds, this command group brings even greater dread and authority to the Grave Knights.



CRYPT GUARDS

Silent and relentless, the Crypt Guards are the eternal protectors of cursed tombs and forgotten kings. Clad in ancient armor and driven by an unbreakable duty beyond death, they stand as a grim wall of steel and bone.



GRAVEBORN RAVAGERS

Twisted, winged horrors born from death and decay, these ghoulish abominations descend upon the battlefield with savage speed. Bestial, vicious, and nightmarish, they are the perfect hunters of the Undying host.

IRON, FLESH AND LATITUDE

From the frozen wastes come the Northern Reavers, brutal marauders who live for battle, plunder, and glory. Hardened by the cold and driven by savage fury, they bring raw aggression and wild northern strength to the armies of Mayhem.



For a long time, the visual idea of the barbarian has relied on the same familiar vocabulary: bare torsos, heat, dust, sun-hardened skin, and a kind of violence reduced almost entirely to instinct. It works, but it also narrows the field. Entire factions end up feeling built from a single temperature, a single landscape, and a single expression of brutality.

This northern reinterpretation breaks from that pattern.

The first thing that changes is not the weapon or the attitude, but the climate. Barbarism here no longer feels scorched by the desert. It breathes cold air, iron, wet timber, fur, and a harsher kind of war. The ferocity remains, but it reads differently. It no longer

feels like shapeless savagery. It feels like hardness born from a specific land, and from a culture that has endured by resisting.

That visual shift opens up far more room for an army. It allows Realms of Mayhem to build forces that do not always depend on the same inherited imagery. Any player looking for something more northern, heavier, or rougher finds a clear path here. And the shift is not only aesthetic. It also changes the internal narrative. These warriors do not seem to come from the same world as the classic barbarian of sand and exposed flesh, even if they share the same factional root.

The silhouette changes as well. Where other barbarian takes lean on exposed



muscle, speed, or immediate aggression, these figures place more weight on cloaks, hides, layered mass, and the feeling of exposure to the elements. The miniature conveys not only strength, but setting. You can tell where it comes from before you know its story. That gives it far more value as an army piece.

That is why this revision matters beyond simple visual novelty. It broadens the thematic range of the faction. It shows that Realms of Mayhem can sustain distinct visual branches without losing coherence. Barbarism does not have to look the same in every incarnation to remain recognizably barbaric. It can move toward the northern, the tribal, the ritual, or even the near-feudal, so long as the internal logic remains intact.

*We do not fear the cold and death...
We fear oblivion.*

OLD NORTHERN PROVERB

That, in the end, is the real success of these figures. They do not reject the barbarian imaginary. They shift it. They cool it. They make it wider. In doing so, they make room for armies with more character and less dependence on a single visual cliché.

Seen from the archive, these miniatures are not just an interesting variation. They are a useful correction. They remind us that a strong faction is not one that repeats the same image forever, but one that can expand without breaking.

Barbarism does not disappear here.

It simply changes latitude.

UNDER THE SIGN OF MAYHEM

For many barbarian tribes, Mayhem is not an abstract corruption but a system of proof. It rewards strength in a language they already understand: victory, plunder, fear, survival. A chieftain who brings ruin to his enemies returns with more than trophies. He returns with signs of favor. The dark powers do not ask these tribes to abandon their way of life; they sanctify it, sharpen it, and promise that every raid, every burned hall, every broken oath may become an offering. In such a world, devotion grows naturally from violence. The strong are elevated, the weak are spent, and destruction becomes both livelihood and liturgy. To outsiders, this may look like mere savagery. To the tribes themselves, it is order of a harsher kind: a pact in which hunger, ambition, and faith all point toward the same blood-dark horizon.



THEN: Desert Barbarians | NOW: Northern Clans



Warm and dry skin, lightness, simple and fast equipment. Speed is a favor and heat is a test.

Children of the cold and the mountains, strength, resistance and sworn rituals. The cold shapes the iron and the soul.

COLOR PALETTE AND MATERIALS



A palette does not always need to be rebuilt to change its character. Sometimes a single substitution is enough. By replacing yellows with reds while keeping the rest of the scheme intact, the temperature can remain warm, but the result shifts completely. The same model may feel harsher, deeper, more martial, or even better suited to a winter setting, where red becomes contrast rather than heat.

*Children of the cold and the mountains, tempered in ice and iron.
United by blood, guided by ancestors.*



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