

Faction Paradox Armour

start

Now, observe this armour. As new members of our family, this is the uniform you'll be expected to wear on ceremonial occasions, or, heaven forbid, if you ever have to go into real-life combat. It's the best protection you're ever likely to possess, and I should know, because I designed most of it. I'm sure you'll all have noticed the hardwired biokinetic system and the airtight layer of artificial membrane, while the more observant among you might also have spotted that the armour's framework looks a lot like bone. There's a reason for that, of course. It's because the whole suit's made out of a skeleton. You don't need to know what it was the skeleton of, but let's just say that if you run into something that's six foot three and covered in chitinous plating then you might want to think about leaving the room before it notices you're wearing one of its ancestors. It's enough to know that these are the bones of one of the toughest humanoid species known to the family, and if sympathetic magic's what it used to be then some of that strength should rub off on you.

Of course, now you'll be asking yourselves the obvious question. If these things are so tough, then how did we manage to kill them for their skeletons in the first place? Not that I want to reduce your confidence in your armour. — Godfather Morlock

The most famous and obvious “fetish” of Faction Paradox, the Faction's ceremonial armour (occasionally worn in battle, but always worn at any diplomatic conventions to which the Faction might be invited) is part weapon, part carnival costume, and as a result it's never been quite clear how effective it is in combat or to what extent it's designed for show. Certainly the Faction's agents seem to believe that the power of the armour is mostly totemic, although many would argue that it's principally designed to irritate the Great Houses.

The most obvious point about the average suit of armour is that it appears to be made out of a skeleton, and this is indeed the case, though the question of what skeleton is a difficult one. The bones' “donors” would seem to have been around two metres tall, apparently hominid in shape and yet (judging by their bloated, almost bat-like skulls) somehow bestial or even mutated. The Faction's own claim is that the suits are made from the bones of Great House agents, but Great House agents contaminated by the mutagenic biomass of the [Yssgaroth](#). As very few House agents are thought to have come into direct contact with the Yssgaroth during the first great War in Heaven, the implication is obvious. These bones were taken from another timeline, one in which the Houses lost their war and the Yssgaroth engulfed their species. Thus, the Faction's ceremonial dress is an insult not only to the Homeworld but to causality itself. The armour simply doesn't belong in this universe.

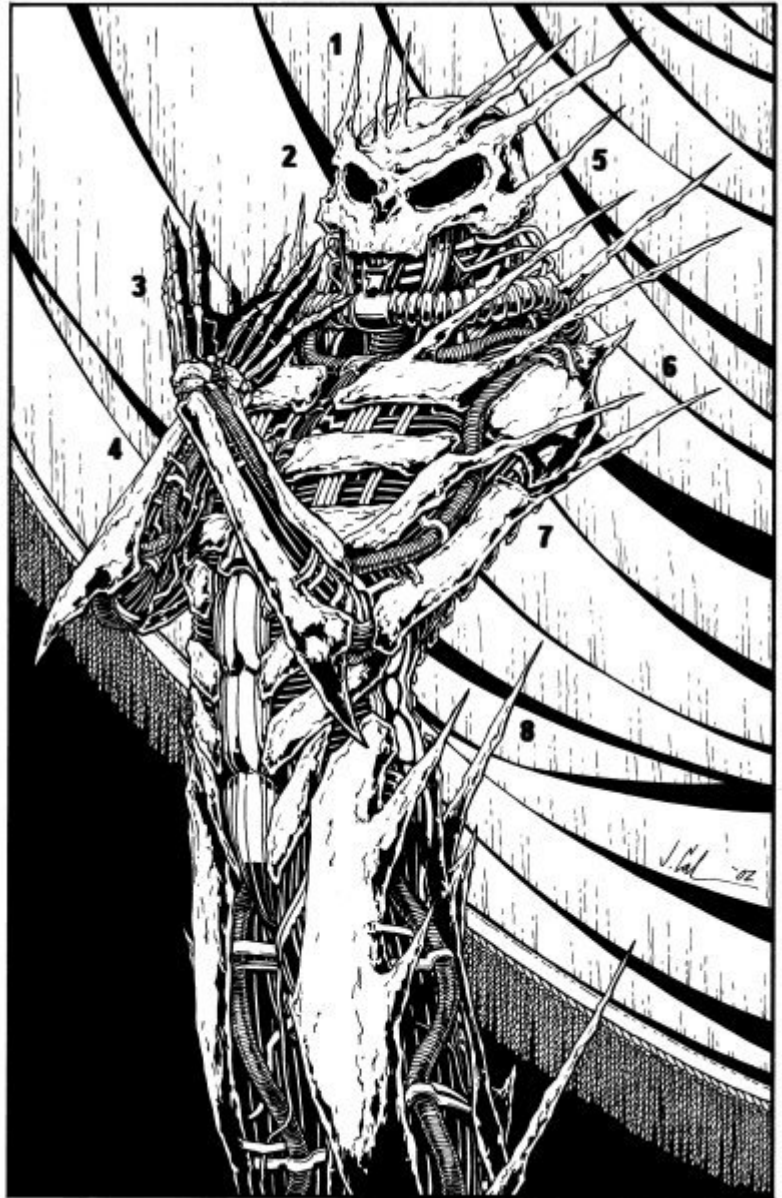
The armour isn't purely made up of bone, of course. The giant ribcage may surround the torso, but it's typically secured by black protective sealant. The skull is not simply hollowed out but divided into sections, the front section being a detachable faceplate. So powerful is the skull image that even those Cousins not issued with full armour carry a ceremonial mask for important occasions (such as, say, any entry into the Parliament of the Eleven-Day Empire), and it's possible that not all these masks are taken from the same species of giant: Cousin Belial's headpiece, for example, famously incorporated features which were almost mammoth-like. Cousins of the Military Wing stationed within the Eleven-Day Empire wear a stripped-down, lighter version of the armour which seems to be based on the remains of an altogether smaller creature (perhaps a second-generation Mal'akh?), presumably with the same totemic connections but leaving their faces free.

The very first of the armour suits is thought to have been worn by the Grandfather, and first seen during the Grandfather's second Audience of the ruling Houses. Faction lore depicts this original suit

as being the ancestor of them all, incredibly stylised and with its enormous cranium entirely obscuring the Grandfather's face. Even the four original lieutenants of Faction Paradox are depicted in elaborate, oversized suits, each one with the features of a subtly different species.

Some Design Notes

Though the armour of Faction Paradox is variable in form - inevitable, given that it can't exactly be mass-produced - all the suits have key features in common, with significant variations being found between coteries (or cliques or cabals) rather than between individuals: most personal customisations of the armour are purely aesthetic. The suit seen here may not exactly be average, but it contains most of the usual fixtures. Note also that different models of armour are worn under different conditions. For diplomatic (and purely ritual) occasions Faction agents wear no real armour apart from their ceremonial headpieces, while in open warfare they tend to favour lighter, more flexible, less elaborate protection. The suit seen here might be described as the armour of "standard bearers", worn on the battlefield - if the War can be said to have any real battlefields - but designed to make a specific impression. Typically the Cousin-protéges would wear this model of armour, allowing them to act as go-betweens for the Mothers and Fathers while under fire. As a result, this suit can best be described as part armour and part carnival construction, and its heavy use of skull-and-spines imagery may be more than a little tongue-in-cheek.



1. **Headpiece.** Far more elaborate than the standard ceremonial masks [see the Book of the War cover illustration]. The Military Wing tends to bring out the Faction's more exhibitionist tendencies, understandable considering that among its members ritual's far more common than actual battle.
2. **Faceplate.** The features of the armour-suits have an animalistic quality simply because of the parts used in their manufacture. Though bat-like cranial structures are most common, the wearers' habit of personalising the faceplates often make the original breed difficult to identify.
3. **Handling Gloves.** The heavier versions of the armour include gauntlets specifically designed to handle the dead-time/ deep-time resources of the Houses. Both Faction Paradox and the Remote employ heavy-duty handling gloves when collecting time-engineered or entropic materials.
4. **Ribcage.** Various kinetic dampers are set into the fabric of the suit beneath the original skeleton, suggesting that the bone itself offers very little real protection. The entire torso section is jointed at the sides of the body (allowing it to be opened and removed as a single unit).
5. **Enhancements.** In many cases sensory reinforcements will be set into the headpiece, although this practice is increasingly uncommon: in step with the newer methods of the Houses, these enhancements are now more often coded into the biodata of the Faction's recruits.
6. **Quills.** Not universal, and purely decorative. Though in general quills are only seen at the larger

ceremonial events, every full-sized suit of armour is likely to feature at least one item of personal significance to its owner, usually welded into the suit's basal structure. Feathers aren't unknown.

7. **Armpieces.** As with the ribcage, the protection offered by the bone is apparently minimal. Here the original skeletal structure is held together by at least one layer of forced-matter sealant, which not only insulates the wearer but frequently irritates enemy monitoring techniques.
8. **Spurs.** Theoretically, in close-quarter combat the sharpened edges of the larger bones can be used as weapons. Realistically, in a War of this nature close-quarter combat is almost unknown and in the field the suits are chiefly used while putting their occupants into the right positions. Most time-active battle is about placement above all else.

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