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RIVALS FOR GLORY

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RIVALS FOR GLORY

"So many of these young races wear their icons of bondage proudly, but humans seem particularly adept at convincing themselves that a slave's brand means freedom."

—Kirys Ireshor, Succubus of the Beckoning Thorn

RIVALS FOR GLORY takes the Heretics to the Gloaming World of Sacgrave—the shattered ruins of an infamous pirate empire. The events here give the Heretics the opportunity to build their power and allies, or make fierce enemies. Most importantly, it is a harsh reminder that the Screaming Vortex teems with other servants of Chaos, and in each one burns the same bloody determination to fight and claw a way to the top.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The Heretics arrive to rendezvous with allies and retrieve a powerful icon: the Tyrant's Cord. However, these plans quickly go awry when they discover their allies are dead and the Tyrant's Cord has been stolen by a rival warband. First, through intimidation or bargains,

they must wring cooperation from the scavengers who live in Sacgrave's shattered towers. Then they must track their rivals through the dangerous vaults and unknown chambers of Sacgrave before they escape with the Cord. In doing so, the Heretics encounter more opportunities for ruin or reward. They also clash with the Onyx Scar Kabal—a group of Dark Eldar who have claimed the subterranean halls as their own.

Eventually the Heretics track down their rivals at the top of a massive monument, and must slay them and take the Tyrant's Cord before they escape. The difficulty of taking back the Tyrant's Cord depends on many factors: who the Heretics have angered and who they have chosen to placate, and how long they have lingered in the vaults.

RUNNING RIVALS FOR GLORY

This Compact is intended for newly-created Heretics. It can be adjusted to more advanced groups by increasing the Wounds and Damage totals of the enemies encountered. The underlying plot is suitable to most group compositions and power levels.

The expansive, unknown nature of Sacgrave's towers provides a foundation that the GM can build on. He can easily create additional encounters to stand between the Heretics and their objective, or even add entirely new objectives for the players to pursue before or after they find the Agents of Seiy.

STARTING LOCATION

RIVALS FOR GLORY's beginning location is left deliberately vague. This way the GM can set it on any world within the Screaming Vortex that his party may currently be on. However, if he must pick a world, a good starting place is Q'Sal. Q'Sal is a world of sorcerers and magicks, but is also one of the closest things to a "trading hub" within the Vortex, and it's a place that Grath would find useful for his business. More information of Q'Sal can be found in the **BLACK CRUSADE CORE RULEBOOK**.

GIVING CHASE

Much of **RIVALS FOR GLORY** involves pursuing and combating an opposing faction. As such, the progression through locations and encounters is fairly linear, because a NPC group (the antagonists) is blazing the trail. If the players are particularly adverse to this type of scenario, the GM has a few options for modifying the adventure:

Emphasise the Hunt: Because this adventure is geared towards starting characters, following the rival group's trail does not require many difficult Skill Tests or similar obstacles. However, the GM could choose to make it more challenging to stay on their heels and create additional adversary encounters if the Heretics choose the wrong fork in the path. If each successful turn feels hard-won, it makes the players feel more like the driving force.

Start with the Destination: Allow the Heretics to discover that the opposing group's rendezvous location is the Crescent Platform. This knowledge does not change the shortest path to their objective, but it presents the opportunity to plan for the rival group's approach.

Increase the Difficulty: For Heretics with large bonuses in key Skills, the GM can increase the difficulty of the Skill Tests the Heretics must make. The idea isn't to make things frustrating for the Heretics, but to encourage a feeling of relief and satisfaction that they made the wise decision to invest in those Skills.

THE SEEDS OF CONVOCAATION

As with most Compacts, the first step is to make the Heretics aware of an opportunity to further their power.

This adventure uses the NPC Palmere Grath to bring the matter to the Heretics, presenting him as an ally of relatively equal standing.

There is an alternate way to use this adventure. If the Heretics are a larger and more infamous group, they might have originally sent the now-missing servants to find the Tyrant's Cord. In this case Grath comes to the Heretics not as an equal, but as a scraping underling hoping to keep his life after this failure. This requires a bit of modification on the GM's part, but only at the beginning of the adventure. Grath must be presented differently, and the GM must either establish that the Heretics sent the servants off at some prior date, or make

the dispatching of the servants part of a previous adventure. However, once the adventure gets moving, the main thrust of the plot can be used as is.

PALMERE GRATH

Not everyone who does business in the Screaming Vortex is interested in climbing its ladder for dominance. Palmere Grath is an accumulator of wealth, not power. He is the master of a small merchant fleet that trades on both sides of the Great Warp Storms, and profits from the fact that there are very few others with the fortitude and audacity to do the same. Grath supplies forbidden relics to radical Inquisitors in the Calixis Sector and Imperial las weapons to denizens of the Screaming Vortex, scheming to ensure that neither side realises the other exists.

Some might guess that greed alone motivates Grath, but his enterprise also offers freedoms not even a Rogue Trader can imagine. In each region he has an appearance and persona suited to business there, but only the debauched countenance he shows in the Screaming Vortex rings true. Here, no act is taboo, and he can delight in indulgences unavailable even in the least civilised reaches of the Heathen Stars. Although Grath harbours a soul as black and corrupt as any aspiring warrior of Chaos, he trades on his reputation. If the merchant has ever sold a false relic or gone back on a deal, no one has lived to tell the tale. Only fools mistake his reliability for the fetters of morality; it is in fact a carefully cultivated asset more valuable than any possession he owns.

THE MISSING CARGO

The Heretics receive a message from Grath, saying that he has something of great value to offer them and requesting a meeting to discuss it. The GM should introduce Grath as a known quantity to the Heretics; perhaps they obtained items or servants from him in the past via Infamy Tests. If the group is known to work together, he contacts them jointly. Otherwise, he may reach out to the Heretic with the highest Infamy and it will be up to that character to convene with the others. Grath meets the Heretics at the location of their choosing (within reason). Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

As always, Palmere Grath is smiling when you meet him. It is not the false smile of a salesman or the genuine smile of a friend. It is the self-satisfied pleasure of a man who savours every sweet breath of air and every step in his lacquered boots. He wears a plush velvet robe ornamented with polished bone. The robe has a long train, carried by an achingly beautiful human slave who trails behind him. Three ork bodyguards complete the procession, every inch of their battered and barbaric armour a stark contrast to Grath's adornments.

An astute business man, Grath may make a preamble of pleasantries if it suits the character of his clients, or he may launch straight to his business if they are the type who grow impatient quickly. Though he can be quite eloquent, he is more than willing to get to the true matter. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Grath's smile seems to grow even larger, if possible. "I will be forward with you. The true matter is that one of my ventures has not gone as planned. I am looking to salvage what I can from the situation, thus I come to you. I think you may be able to turn my calamity to your advantage, if you're willing. Tell me, have you ever heard of the Tyrant's Cord?"

The GM can supply characters that pass a **Challenging (+0) Common Lore (Screaming Vortex) Test** with various details from the sidebar below. Additionally, Grath has meticulously researched the item and it is to his benefit to share as much information about its value as he can.

Grath located the Cord and sent hired soldiers to retrieve it. His intent was to sell it to an aspiring warlord in the Screaming Vortex. However, the *Deluge*, the ship carrying his hirelings and the Cord, was caught in the Fifth Interstice. Unable to navigate the terrible currents and stresses generated by the intersection of the Fifth Interstice and Eighth Transjunction, the ship's sorcerer-navigator crashed the vessel on Sacgrave. Grath knows better than to expect anyone capable of retrieving the Cord to do anything but keep it for himself. Therefore, he has decided to sell the only piece of the venture he still has in his grasp: the location of the crash and therefore the location of the Cord.

He informs the Heretics that he knows where the Tyrant's Cord is, but hostile parties almost certainly stand between them and it. If the Heretics ask why he doesn't simply retrieve it himself, he says only "I tried my luck at that and failed. At this point I think it better to cut my losses." Grath actually tried to recover the Tyrant's Cord four times, each expedition ending in failure.

This last expedition managed to find the Tyrant's Cord, only to crash on Sacgrave. Now Grath is convinced the venture is cursed for him, and wishes to divest himself of the whole matter. Grath's asking price for the information is several hundred souls—living or otherwise, and he discloses nothing about the location without first agreeing on a deal—though he is open to negotiation.

He is quite willing to bargain over the transaction, but has no faith that promises (except his) hold their value in the Screaming Vortex. There are plenty of other Heretics in the Vortex willing to pay handsomely for the information he offers, and Grath expects to receive his payment before he discloses the location. That is not to say that the Heretics stand no chance of deferring payment to a future date, only that they must be extremely convincing to manage it. Once the bargain is sealed, Grath says:

"Well done. Trust me—you've won the better end of this bargain. I did attempt to retrieve the Cord, but my ship, the *Deluge*, crashed on Sacgrave on the return voyage. The mercenaries I hired have a retrieval beacon. If any of them survived, you should be able to find them using its frequency."

Grath then provides that frequency. Characters with a vox and auspex can make a **Routine (+20) Tech-Use Test** to track the signal, which has a broadcast range strong enough to detect from orbit. Failing this Test does not mean they can no longer track the beacon, but that they have temporarily lost the scent. They must wait an hour before attempting again, and the GM can also have them temporarily wander off course and get into trouble.

PYURULTIDE AND THE TYRANT'S CORD

Pyurultide is one of the many worlds that drift through the Screaming Vortex. Placing dates on the events of the past is futile for a world so warp-infused, but—whether a day or a millennium ago—Pyurultide was a world locked in conflict. The gods Nurgle and Slaanesh fought for dominion over the educated and technologically advanced people of the planet.

Pyurultide has continents but no oceans. The gaps between land masses writhe with a sea of insects and vermin. Nurgle's influence was strong along the coast where this foulness lapped against the land, and here he had many followers. But the inlanders built magnificent spires that climbed above the blighted land. Driven by the desire for perfection, they built ever grander and more terrible towers. At the height of the inlanders' power it was said their chaotic structures ascended without human intervention, eventually penetrating some dark heaven, where they entrapped angels whose tears coated the horrible spires.

At the centre of the inlanders' spiralling sky empire was a dynasty of brilliant rulers, who held their people together through iron will and a horrible charisma. However, the Pox Tribes below eventually found a way to infect the flesh and then the loyalties of the high rulers. The instant that their hearts turned from Slaanesh, it is said the spiteful Prince of Desire smote their towers to ruin. The Pox Tribes consumed the survivors of the fall, and the Tyrant's Cord—the symbol of the rulers' dynasty—was lost.

Now Pyurultide is consumed by the unending biological warfare of the Pox Tribes. Each tribe carries its own strain of contagion, which defines its culture like a patron saint. With religious fervour they cultivate even more virulent strains of their disease of choice, and then use it against neighbouring unbelievers. Still, in the shadows of hospice cities and the phlegmy whispers of the dying, the legend of the old sky empire lives on. The gilded remembrance of the Dark Princes' reign only grows brighter the longer they live in disease and decay, but a return to Slaanesh's 'glory' is hopeless as long as the Tyrant's Cord is lost. If a leader were to emerge wielding the Cord, hundreds of thousands of Pox Warriors would follow him—in rebellion against the Plague Lord, or anywhere else the new Tyrant chose to lead.

In fact, over the past millennia the Tyrant's Cord has come to be synonymous with rulership on many worlds in the Vortex. The Heretic to recover it could be known as a great leader. In addition, the Tyrant's Cord is suffused with warp-spawned energies and proves a great boon to the one who wears it. More on the Tyrant's Cord can be found on page 8.

GRATH'S PRICE

Given that the resources at a Heretic's disposal are caught up in his Infamy score, it may be difficult for players to envision trade of tangible goods in the Screaming Vortex. Unlike more civilised areas of space, there is not a standardised currency. In general, if the GM envisions a situation where an Infamy Test is not appropriate and needs a commodity of exchange, he can always fall back on souls—whose consumers range from daemons and Dark Eldar to the technocrats of Q'sal.

There are two options for Grath's Price, each perfectly reasonable for the GM. The first is the Heretics obtaining the souls then sacrificing one Infamy (decreasing their Infamy characteristic by 1) to call in enough favours to provide the souls or something of equal value.

The actual obtaining of the price is something that can be represented via roleplaying or even a simple narrative on the GM's part, and may end up being the equivalent of this price in other goods or services. Figuring out what exactly the price entails shouldn't be something the GM and players spend too much time on. The important aspect is that the Heretics have paid Grath's price, and thus their Infamy decreases slightly as his increases, a mechanical representation of the way reputations shift slightly when the Heretics are forced to agree to Grath's demand.

The second option, if the GM does not want to require the Heretics to sacrifice Infamy, is that they agree to owe Grath a favour. Such a bargain is not as cavalier as it seems—Grath has them swear to honour their pact in the eyes of the Architect of Fate, a brief ceremony which bonds a sigil into his own flesh. From then on, Grath can redeem the favour at any point, and if the Heretics do not agree to it, they incur the displeasure of greater powers (gaining 1d5 Corruption from a Failing, and losing 1d5 Infamy). The GM can stress that this is a serious deal, and in fact some very amusing bargaining and roleplaying can come out negotiations with Grath. (Grath's favour does not come up again in this adventure, but provides an excellent plot hook for something later on).

Finally, there are any number of other rare commodities that Grath might accept, and the GM can use them instead. Possibilities include an Onir from Xurunt, two Pyromancers of the Flaming Tombs, or a large sum of Imperial Thrones (perhaps wrested from a Rogue Trader vessel passing through the Maw). Depending on the results of their previous Compacts, they might also have alternative assets and artefacts to offer up, or collateral that Grath can hold in lieu of payment. Unless the Heretics have such an item in hand, obtaining it becomes a secondary objective that they must first carry out before the rest of the Compact. In addition, the GM can have each Heretic make a **Challenging (+0) Infamy Test** after paying Grath's price. Success means that Heretic's reputation has withstood this small slight, and it does not decrease.

THE AGENTS OF SEIYR

"I'd fight anything for my masters. But I wouldn't fight her."

—Sorax Three-Dooms, now deceased

Seiyr the Bereft is one of the innumerable contenders for dominion over the Screaming Vortex. Like many of the region's competing warlords, facts and rumour about Seiyr are hard to separate. There is something fundamentally inhuman about Seiyr's androgynous countenance, with nearly as many stories attributing a male gender as female. Supposedly, Seiyr bargained the lives of her world's billion inhabitants to the Ruinous Powers in exchange for their gifts. When the daemons came to claim their due, they wrought such devastation on the planet that it cracked in two. Some speculate that Seiyr never even survived that cataclysm, and is no longer a person at all, just a namesake that a group operating from her shattered home world has adopted.

Whatever Seiyr's nature, those acting in her name have been leaving a trail of devastation and plunder throughout the Gloaming Worlds for over a decade. Many of their assaults have defied reason: provoking the Orks of Berin for no apparent gain, or bypassing colony planets ripe for harvest to engage Imperial battalions head-on instead. The one common thread to Seiyr's conquests seems to be archeotech.

If the merest whisper of a technological find drifts through the Vortex, it is almost assured that warriors claiming Seiyr's patronage soon descend upon the location. In fact, many Explorer Magi invoke her name with the same bile and revulsion they would a daemon's.

The Tyrant's Cord is not archeotech, but Seiyr the Bereft has a purpose in mind for it. That is all her agents were told, and that she desired the relic was all they needed to know. A group of four Heretics brokered a deal of betrayal with Palmere Grath's men. Had the *Deluge* not crashed, the Tyrant's Cord would have been delivered safely into their hands. But the warp's fickle currents had other plans.

RUBIS

Rubis was born as a menial on a Forge world. Her early life was characterised by a conflicting fascination and hatred of the ruling Tech-Priests. Refused admission to the machine cult, she eventually found an outcast Magos who taught her heretical and pragmatic ways to impose her will upon machines. The rituals Rubis knows do not seek to placate or honour machine spirits, but to force them into her service—often by scarring them with blasphemous modifications and contaminating them with unorthodox circuitry. Rubis is very familiar with the universe beyond the Screaming Vortex, though she fled into the Vortex so long ago that any traces of her formerly Imperial heritage are long-vanished.

Rubis leads the warband. She makes an art form out of brutal honesty, choosing words and facts that cause the most discomfort when she speaks. She is driven by the hunger to

collect knowledge—the more protected and heretical the information, the greater her longing to possess it. Nothing infuriates her more than a secret that she cannot discover, and she takes the greatest glee in unearthing forbidden lore.

CYRION TAAL

Taal was born on Messia. He is one of the Vortex's many denizens with the ability to touch the warp, but one of the few with the discipline to control his powers. Cyrion's abilities manifested at a very young age, and before he turned ten, he was the terror of his drill rig. They lived in fear of his tantrums and gave in to his every childish whim, because his ability to sense and hold off the planet's mutant hordes gave their rig a huge advantage in the drilling competition for raw promethium. With the help of his powers, the rig grew rich and powerful, and the most decadent Calixian nobility was not more spoiled than the boy prince Cyrion.

However, eventually Chaos saw fit to teach this boy that there are a great many powers he cannot bend to his whim. One night on the dark side of Messia, Cyrion's psychic powers invoked a terrible backlash that left the drill rig and his surrogate family inside it in smoking ruins. Cyrion himself lost an eye and barely escaped with his life. After this setback, he departed Messia to build a future more befitting a young man of his power and intellect. Years traversing the Vortex have taught him to restrain his narcissism, but in his heart he knows that the real purpose of other beings is just to fulfil his desires. One day he will become powerful enough to make them realise this, and regain the adulation and influence of his childhood.

KRAYTH

Krayth never speaks of it, but he was once a Battle-Brother of the Flesh Tearers. Ironically, it was his attempt to overcome his Chapter's overpowering battle lust that led to Krayth's fall. He always despised the lack of self-control that his flawed gene-seed imposed on him. As he grew older, he became devoted to discovering a cure, or at least protection from this flaw. After many years, a trail of false promises led him into the Screaming Vortex and finally to Seiy. By the time he concluded that there was no cure, he had already slaughtered so many loyal servants of the Emperor that he saw no going back. Betrayed by his genetic legacy and with no more home in the Imperium, he bitterly betrayed his heritage in turn.

Krayth now harbours a burning resentment for the Emperor who made him with flaws he cannot escape, and for all of the Emperor's works. Although he despises the base, weak nature of most of the wretches in the Screaming Vortex, they are allies in his great crusade of revenge. More than one of his comrades is curious about his origin, but they have also been witness to the painful end awaiting anyone foolish enough to broach the subject with him.

LOVEN VALSTOR

Loven Valstor was formerly a member of the Death Shadows, a Chaos Space Marine warband. During his early years he clashed repeatedly with his unit's commander whose cautious tactics limited Valstor's potential as a neonate sorcerer. He was scouting the periphery of the Ultramar system when Hive Fleet Behemoth fell upon the Death Shadows' base of operations.

The Tyrant's Cord

Although it may come into the players' possession before they complete their Compact, the Tyrant's Cord begins in the keeping of Rubis. The chain is formed by jagged, misshapen links of different metals, and bears many hooks for fastening to the flesh of the bearer. In order to provide any benefits, it must be visible and fastened directly to the body—meaning it is not effective with sealed power armour. When correctly worn and displayed, the chain confers the following benefits: +5 Strength, +10 to Command and Psyniscience Skill Tests, Immunity to poison and disease. Additionally, if the chain is worn around the arm, the bearer can use it as a Best Craftsmanship melee weapon with the following profile (Melee; 1d10+4 R; Pen 0; Crippling [5], Tearing, Unwieldy). The additional damage from the Craftsmanship is included in the profile, although remember the player also gains +10 to hit. It also cannot be destroyed by a power field.



COMPETING TERTIARY OBJECTIVES

The GM should consider whether conflicting Tertiary Objectives are appropriate for his group and/or players. On one hand, the forces of Chaos are incredibly treacherous and divided in their loyalties. Conflicting goals and opportunities for minor back-stabbing are very appropriate to the themes of **BLACK CRUSADE**. On the other hand, some players dislike competing with their friends and would prefer to focus on NPCs. Additionally, if the GM creates conflicting goals, he needs to make sure they don't routinely escalate into open combat that results in character death and the derailment of the campaign. Whether conflicting or not, Tertiary Objectives give each character a personal stake in the adventure.

If the GM is using competing Tertiary Objectives, tasks like the retrieval of lost lore, tech, or artefacts where only one character can reap the benefits, lend themselves to becoming a competition. Even in these cases, the GM will usually want to limit the number of characters whose Tertiary Objectives conflict on any one issue, unless his goal is to have that task overshadow the original Primary Objective.

In the wake of this great disaster, Valstor lost contact with the rest of his warband. Rather than seek them out, he saw the opportunity to finally push the boundaries of his power and began to seek those who could instruct him in the real secrets of the warp. Although he has had contact with no other Death Shadows, Valstor knows his warband is too strong and too subtle to have been shattered. Somewhere they bide their time and will re-emerge. When that happens, Valstor intends to be ready; he will return bristling with power to claim his rightful place high in the Death Shadow ranks.

FORMING THE COMPACT

RIVALS FOR GLORY presents an Undertaking—a Compact with a small scope that can be completed in a relatively short time frame. The Primary Objective and probable Secondary Objectives are presented below.

- **Primary Objective:** Recover the Tyrant's Cord.
- **Secondary Objective:** Earn the respect of the Weeping Halls' denizens.
- **Secondary Objective:** Survive the towers of Sacgrave.
- **Secondary Objective:** Defeat the rival group of Heretics.

TERTIARY OBJECTIVES

By their very nature, Tertiary Objectives must be tailored to the motivations of individual characters. Below are some possible Tertiary Objectives appropriate to various Archetypes. Many of these objectives will not come into focus until the Heretics reach the Weeping Halls, so the GM may want to delay the discussion of Tertiary Objectives until after the group arrives on Sacgrave. The GM is encouraged to collaborate with his players regarding their own Tertiary Objectives. Each Tertiary Objective has several Lore Skills associated with it. The GM can require Heretics to make any number of **Challenging (+0) Tests** based on these Skills. If they succeed, he can give the succeeding player the Tertiary Objective, to complete or not as he chooses.

Some of the Tertiary Objectives are specifically personal, however, and if the GM decides they are a part of a Heretic's history, he can have the player learn about the Objective without testing.

- The Heretic has heard of a fabulous Genetis Lab hidden on Sacgrave near the still-inhabited regions. Its masters were famous for their twisted creations, and if he could capture a live specimen of their work it would be a great mark of status, subject of study, or bargaining chip. (Scholastic Lore [Beasts, Chymistry, Legend])
- The Heretic has heard of a Genetis Lab hidden on Sacgrave, and wishes to recover the records for his own researches. Once he has done so, he must ensure no samples or information fall into anyone else's hands, so that the information retains its maximum value. (Scholastic Lore [Beasts, Chymistry, Legend])
- The Heretic has heard of a genetic abomination (the creatures in the Genetis Lab) that roams Sacgrave, and wishes to seek it out in single combat. This Objective is particularly good for Khorne worshippers. (Scholastic Lore [Legend])
- The Heretic has a history with one of the individuals from the rival warband. In the Weeping Halls he recognises his target's description and is driven to settle an old personal score. (Common Lore [Screaming Vortex])
- The Heretic has had past dealings with the Onyx Scar Kabal and owes Beylix Ireshor (see page 16) a favour. If the Heretic delivers the Ashes of Ynesth, his debt is paid. If he does not, the Onyx Scar will become a serious obstacle to his future endeavours. Likewise, due to his debt, he cannot kill Ireshor or see him come to harm. (Forbidden Lore [Xenos, Pirates])
- The Heretic was viciously double-crossed by the Onyx Scar Kabal in the past. Now he has the chance to seek revenge—by slaughtering Beylix Ireshor and his cohorts. (Forbidden Lore [Xenos, Pirates])
- It is rumoured that the towers of Sacgrave hold an ancient Daemon weapon that the Heretic wishes to retrieve. It lies behind a false wall marked by an ancient symbol which the Heretic has a tracing of. (Forbidden Lore [Daemonology, The Warp], Scholastic Lore [Legend])
- An emissary of the Heretic's patron god appears to the Heretic and claims that his deity—for his own capricious reasons—demands that the Tyrant's Cord be destroyed as a sacrifice. Alternatively, the sacrifice could be the Ashes of Ynesth or a certain Daemon weapon hidden behind a false wall. This second option should be chosen if the GM wants to interject a note of rivalry into the game. (Any lore listed previously for these objectives).

TABLE 1-1: THE PIRATES' LEGACY

DoS	Result
0	Sacgrave was once home to an empire of pirate kings. The Eldar eventually toppled their rule and desolated the planet.
1	The pirates of Sacgrave were famed for the excess of plundered wealth they had accumulated. Legend says that the majority of this wealth escaped with the survivors on the <i>Kasserkratch</i> . Fortune seekers endlessly venture into the deep vaults of Sacgrave, but few ever return.
2	A paltry civilisation exists in the ruins of Sacgrave. Hundreds of small factions constantly scabble for dominance, but no one has emerged as the rubble's king. The ruins far predate the pirate empire; many suggest that it is not old traps of the pirate kings that doom so many would-be profiteers beneath the towers, but the dark and timeless secrets of the planet's original rulers.
3+	The character knows the names and descriptions of dozens of the petty leaders of Sacgrave, including Shadow Liege Vycraft (a title no-doubt intended to invoke the infamous Shadow Margraves that used to rule the world). Vycraft is said to possess a cache of valuable navigational charts—ironically useless to a man who does not possess the means to leave Sacgrave.

- Shadow Liege Vycraft is rumoured to know the locations of dozens of planets lost in the Screaming Vortex. If these worlds are indeed unknown to most of the Vortex's denizens, many should be ripe for conquering if the Heretic can but learn of their locations. (Alternatively, the Heretic could have a personal reason to kill the Liege.) (Common Lore [Screaming Vortex], Forbidden Lore [Pirates, The Warp], Scholastic Lore [Astromancy])

PASSAGE TO SACGRAVE

Chapter II in this kit presents several options for how a group of Heretics might move through the Screaming Vortex. The GM can choose one of these options or create his own for how the Heretics reach the planet. The journey provides an opportunity to review common lore about Sacgrave and potentially for the Heretics to scheme with one another regarding their Tertiary Objectives. Depending on the chosen method of transport, it could also offer interesting roleplaying opportunities.

Table 1-1: The Pirates' Legacy presents varying degrees of information that may be known or learned about the characters' destination. It does not require a specific Skill. Instead, the GM should choose an appropriate Skill based on how the Heretics are gathering their information. Common Lore (Screaming Vortex), Inquiry, or even Intimidate are all options.

Warp space is particularly tumultuous near Sacgrave, and if the Heretics reach it via the void, their arrival includes near collisions with drifting debris and the planet surface itself. The planet has no orbital defences save the difficult approach, and no voxes hail visitors. So long as the Heretics are relying on some sort of voidship to travel to Sacgrave, the ship remains in orbit and sends the Heretics down in a shuttle.

The beacon's signal emanates from a lilting collection of towers whose basalt exteriors appear to have melted and re-crystallised in hexagonal tiered columns. The gargantuan edifices lean drunkenly upon one another like toppled dominos. Characters who succeeded by 3 or more Degrees of Success in any Tests for information on Sacgrave may recognise this area as the Weeping Halls, the domain of Vycraft. The shuttle sets down on a hard-packed plain of shattered basalt rock outside the towers. From there the Heretics must walk roughly a kilometre through a constant rainstorm to the entrance of the Weeping Halls. The storm constantly flashes lightning in strange hues, greens, blues, and eye-crippling violet.

When the Heretics near the exterior, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

As you approach the collection of massive towers, you catch glimpses of what may have once been doors or windows—now covered by the jointed columns of igneous rock. The lone point of entrance is visible from far away: it is a massive opening that could easily accommodate a Warlord Titan. A grilled portcullis stretches across the entrance. The rock flows have fused it shut, but it poses no real obstacle to anyone on foot. Each square in the grid is over a metre wide.

The beacon's signal is up and westward, through the gate and a gradually rising series of steps and corridors weaving between cyclopean buildings and columns. Soon, the Heretics find themselves in the Weeping Halls.

THE WEEPING HALLS

"I'd sacrifice a thousand slaves to the Ruinous Powers if it would stop this blasted rain!"

—Karixtal Haseth, stall-broker

Quartets of guards clad in scuffed, scratched, and oft-patched flak armour and bearing lasguns keep watch at the top of the stairs; they make no move to keep the Heretics from entering and ask no questions. Beyond them stretch the Weeping Halls—a drenched corridor of trade and dwellings.

The corridors stretch around the towers and fortifications, forming streets and pass-ways the locals refer to as corridors. Overhead, Sacgrave's storms continue to rage. Low thunder rumbles constantly through the corridors, and an endless rain gives the Halls their name. The water runs down the carved walls and cascades over the tall steps, coalescing in a shallow river that drains into oblivion through the fractured floor. Crude steel poles stand scattered through the halls. Every few minutes a streak of electricity makes crackling contact with these makeshift lightning rods, scattering blue sparks.

Mismatched structures that double as places of both commerce and residence stretch on for miles. The following are a few archetypal examples of what the Heretics may encounter in the Weeping Halls.



COMMODITY STALLS

The majority of the Halls' inhabitants appear inured to the endless rain, and they work beneath it without comment, as oblivious to the constant drenching as the stone walls. Most trade stalls here are scarcely a step above an underhive flea market; the vendors are a collection of scavengers, craftsmen, and mediocre technomats who operate on a barter system. (If it becomes relevant, use the Administratum Agent profile on page 363 of the **BLACK CRUSADE RULEBOOK** for the locals, increasing both Weapon Skill and Ballistic Skill by 5.)

Clouds of vapour billow from enclosed forges where men smith weapons and armour; off-world trinkets and technology are displayed beneath waterproof glass; strange, almost-appetizing smells waft from covered pots. The poorest stall is just a rain-soaked man waving hand-stitched curse bags, while the most opulent occupies a crypt-like obsidian structure protruding from the wall. Steam rises off the dark surface from without; within several vapour lamps fill the space with dry warmth, making it one of the few respites from the relentless damp.

Each Heretic can make an Infamy Test to obtain an item while in this area (which counts as an Outpost) if he so desires. This may represent trading on his reputation, or arranging an exchange of something that is of no value to the character but a novelty on Sacgrave (spent bolt casings, a roll of clean bandages, dry socks, etc.). Since the region is fairly destitute, the GM is welcome to rule that any items that are Extremely Rare or rarer are simply not available.

THE TREASURE TRADE

The promise of undiscovered treasure draws an endless line of fortune-seekers to Sacgrave, and its inhabitants are more than willing to capitalise on it. The Weeping Halls are packed with hovels, tents, and other dwellings constructed out of whatever material their owners could find. Many make use of niches and caves carved into the basalt walls, barring the entrances with adamantine hatches recovered from wrecked ships. Nearly every dwelling, stall, or doorway is festooned with strange sigils and charm symbols. Some are gracefully etched in gold and silver, others in multi-hued paint, while some have been crudely hacked into a surface or even primitively painted in crusted blood. These are signs and totems extorting the favour of the Dark Gods or imploring them for mercy, even imbuing the occupants with a measure of their power.

At the entrances to many of these dwellings, scarred, tattooed and mutated members of the Hall's populace wait, ready to sell their services or knowledge to would-be treasure seekers. The following are some of the encounters the Heretics can have as they make their way through the Halls.

Abruptly, your vision is blocked by a piece of cracked, brown parchment. Faded ink outlines interlinking chambers with names like 'the Treasury' and 'Pirate Reliquary.' "Don't go below without a map, sir. This will show you all the old Shadow Margraves' secrets." a hunched and rotund individual—his exposed skin covered in boils—sneers. "Blessed by the machinations of the Architect of Fate this is. Guaranteed to guide you to where you don't want to go!"

For a place obsessed with maps, obtaining an accurate map of the Weeping Halls has proven impossible. I have done my best to sketch a map of the area without the help from Mycroft, damn him!

The Weeping Halls

Many of the larger structures cannot be accessed. Who knows what secrets lie within?



The Shattered Stone Wastlands

TABLE 1-2: LOST TREASURE

Roll	Result
1	Gold Amidst Brass: The information is actually genuine (unbeknownst to the seller). The Heretic learns the location of the Hidden Trove (see page 21).
2	An Obvious Fake: After a few minutes of contemplation, the Heretic recognises the absurdity of the map or directions. He is not in danger of trying to use it as a reference in the Vaults.
3-7	Common Trash: The information seems legitimate until the Heretics enter the Vaults. There, it quickly is revealed as false, but not before it leads to a few wrong turns and reason for ridicule from the rest of one's allies.
8	A Perfect Forgery: This document or item is useless in the Vaults, but it is such an old and well-done forgery that the Heretic can convince someone else it is genuine if he wins an Opposed Deceive vs. Scrutiny Test, with the forgery's quality conferring a +10 bonus to Deceive. What they get out of this is up to the GM, but should be no more serious than bartering for supplies, weapons, or ammo.
9	Beaten to the Cache: Once upon a time this information led to something, but it has been copied and resold so many times that everything of value was plundered long ago. However, the directions through the Cadentia Vaults are still correct. This confers a +10 Bonus on all attempts to follow the Agents of Seiy.
0	Red Herring: It almost seems that someone with a malicious sense of humour constructed this information to be intentionally misleading. If the Heretics try to rely on it to navigate the Vaults, it imposes a -10 penalty on all attempts to follow the Agents of Seiy.

"Going to the Vaults?" bellows a wiry man in the uniform and armour of an Imperial Guardsman, each Aquila carefully and thoroughly defaced. "My company stumbled across the Berth of the Kasserkratch when she remained on this world. The docking arms are covered in abandoned treasures from a hundred worlds!"

A young woman in a drenched white dress begins walking beside you. "The only thing that could bring someone as fine as you to these shabby halls is the promise of treasure." She holds up a small round crystal, its interior flickering with bruise-coloured light. "This promises to reveal your heart's desire, for a price."

A Heretic may use his attainment Infamy Test to barter with one of these solicitors if he wishes (Availability here counts as Plentiful). The GM should roll secretly on **Table 1-2: Lost Treasure** to determine what the Heretic actually acquired; the effect only becomes relevant if the purchaser indicates he is going to try to make use of the information. If more than one character successfully obtains items from the Lost Treasure Table and they compare information, the instructions are blatantly contradictory (even if they are all legitimate).

SLAVE COLUMNS

The other local enterprises are diffused throughout the sprawling halls, but the slave trade all concentrates in one mournful centre of despair and blood. The Slave Columns are five massive basalt pillars that have survived the stresses of time and war. Each of the rough columns is over ten metres in diameter and they are spaced in a wide line. The slaves—prisoners from enemy warbands, criminals, those who made poor wagers, and chattel brought for trade—are chained neck to neck in a continuous human snake that winds between four of the pillars.

The fifth column is different. Instead of a mass of humanity, dozens of caged creatures ring the dark stone. Some hold mutants from Sacgrave's warp-ravaged exterior, while others hold Death world predators and the kinds of twisted beasts that only a Chaos-infused rift like the Screaming Vortex can spawn. Hound Triplods, Heratex Blood-spines, and all manner of other terrifying creatures can be purchased here, for a price. Some of the beasts also get sent to the Shearing Pit for blood sport.

Except for the growls, hissing, and spine-chilling howls from the cages, the Slave Columns are a quiet affair while bargaining takes place. Hard-eyed men listen to the buyer's specifications and then softly haggle over the price for a number of "links" fitting the profile, or grade potential merchandise by inspecting teeth and feeling muscle. However, when a sale is made, the Weeping Halls suddenly fill with the sound of moans and scraping metal. Only the most impatient slaver bothers to retrieve individual slaves from the continuous loop of living merchandise. Instead, with shouts and cracking lashes, they set the great chained beast into laborious motion. The slaves wind through the columns, stumbling, splashing, and scraping, until at last the desired portion of the train reaches the column master. Then calm descends until the next deal is made.

THE SHEARING PIT

The Pits are a simple collection of stone slabs, some protected by awnings, most exposed to the constant rain, occupying a long thoroughfare off the Weeping Halls. At the far end, near a sheer basalt wall, is a crater blasted into the road-way. Long ago an Eldar beam weapon shattered the stone and fused it into a pit. The "Shearing Pit's" edges are still lined with jagged and broken shards from where the intense heat fused the rock to glass.

With the Shadow Liege's tacit approval, various violent individuals, mercenaries, sell-swords, and warbands set up camp here. They are joined by some of the rougher inhabitants of the Weeping Halls, as Vycraft provides a steady supply of drink to those who linger, as well as a constant opportunity for blood sport in the Shearing Pit.

A healthy distance away from the stone slabs and the Shearing Pit is a curious collection of six corroded fifty-gallon promethium drums ringing an ornate and truly ancient lightning rod. The rod is twenty metres high and almost a metre in diameter. Leering human faces and squat, feral quadrupeds chase one another up the metal column. The drums are full of a locally brewed amasec, as strong and rough as cleaning solvent.

Thick, luminescent bolts of lightning strike the rod every so often. When this happens, the occupants of the Pits shy away from the deafening blast and blinding flash of light. When it

fades, there is a rush to top off mugs with the freshly heated brew, followed by a raucous toast "to the Liege's health!" On occasion, some poor fool strays too close to the device when a bolt hits and the electricity flash-chars him into a smoking chunk of meat. In this case, the inhabitants laugh derisively at the dead's misfortune and the Liege's Ogryn slaves haul the body off to the beasts at the Slave Columns.

Vycraft's Ogryn keep the drums filled with amasec, and he sends broken or rejected slaves from the Columns to fight to a bloody demise in the Shearing Pit. Occasionally one of the mercenaries takes up a challenge of combat in the Pit as well, fighting either slaves or other warriors. These fights are always to the death, either on the blades of the foe or the jagged shards lining the edges, and the bottom of the pit is a constant inch-deep soup of blood and viscera.

For Vycraft, the Shearing Pit and its attendant facilities provide an invaluable purpose. The drink and bloodsport placates some of the most dangerous individuals in his realm, ensuring they do not become restive and turn to combat him (and perhaps even engendering a feeling of gratitude).

MERCENARY BANDS

Groups of warriors for hire are easy to spot in the giant corridors. They range from handfuls of brawny men with iron daggers to well-organised mercenaries with flak armour and las pistols.

These groups do some business as bodyguards for the fortune seekers, but their primary employment is in the constant territory wars between Sacgrave's inhabitants. The Liege sees to their basic needs, and in exchange they protect the Halls from the Scabscale Abominations without and go to war with anyone who challenges the Liege's rule. The large majority of the mercenary bands are human, but not all. A tangle of knotted ropes and debris hangs from arches and shattered balconies high above the main floor. Here, several Kroot make their home, and their services are also for trade. (If the GM has access to other source material, he may also wish to include other exotic alien races for hire.) The Weeping Halls are completely devoid of greenskins; it is a rare to find both Kroot and Orks in one location in the Screaming Vortex unless they are at war. The racial enmity bred on Berin and Asphodel sees to that.

The Levincenders

Both the most feared and most recognisable of the human mercenary groups are the Levincenders. Their founder bargained for the services of a Tech-Priest, who built two dozen mysterious apparatuses that define the group. Each device is dozens of metres of coiled alloy that the Levincenders weave around their bodies, fastening the emitter-tipped ends to their hands. With practice, one can use this electromagnetic array to siphon energy from the Halls' frequent lightning strikes and redirect it like a weapon. What no one—including the Levincenders—knows is that the coils generate a low-intensity feedback that slowly poisons the wearer. The life expectancy of a Sacgrave mercenary is short, so no one has yet to notice that none of the Levincenders live more than a decade. The group's members play to their reputation, covering their bodies in flickering electroos of lightning bolts.

THE LIEGE'S FORTRESS

The current ruler of the Weeping Halls, the Shadow Liege Vycraft, enforces his rule from his "fortress." He stays just across from the Shearing Pit, in a series of enclosures made from salvage taken from the hull of his wrecked voidship. The re-assembled salvage is a makeshift villa of gothic arches and broken gargoyles. However scrap-shod the appearance may be, the ominous snouts of heavy bolter turrets remind the inhabitants of Vycraft's authority.

SHADOW LIEGE VYCARAFT

The violent atmosphere and warp storms surrounding Sacgrave pull a great many ships to their doom in its turbulent skies. Vycraft was once the captain of such a vessel—a stolen Imperial Navy frigate dubbed the *Second Fire*. After its destruction, Vycraft's struggle to control a small piece of Sacgrave began as a way to buy his way off the planet and return to piracy. However, the means eventually became the end. As his power and infamy grew, Vycraft gave up aspirations of returning to the void and embraced his role as a Liege of the Weeping Halls.

Vycraft keeps his place atop the rabble with a combination of force and guile. He selects only men of low ambitions and plodding loyalty for his personal guard. Each one is distinguished by a pendant of glass taken from the cathedral of the *Second Fire*. Vycraft deals with dissenters swiftly, mercilessly, and publicly. However, the rest of his rule is an illusion of freedom. Gestures like the Pit and the occasional staged entertainments create something to lose if enemies should take the Weeping Halls. Vycraft has found that mugs of amasec and the blood of slaves secure mercenary loyalty far better than any bribe, and at a fraction of the cost. Meanwhile, the Liege stockpiles the proceeds from his slave columns, and takes a cut from every commerce stall in exchange for shelter in his Halls.

Those in favour with Vycraft can also use his slave hoist to come and go from Sacgrave's surface. This exterior platform extends over the edges of the walls and runs down to the plains outside the Weeping Halls, and has long ropes that can connect to the chain of slaves. The column masters spur them into motion, and they power a controlled ascent and descent down the side of the ruined tower. The primary advantage of this is that the Shadow Liege has a way of entering and exiting the city without passing through the main gate.

The Liege is very careful about his personal safety, and always endeavours to be accompanied by trusted bodyguards. He is always accompanied by a cadre of mercenary guards (use the Imperial Guardsman from page 364 of the **BLACK CRUSADE CORE RULEBOOK** in a Magnitude 25 Horde). Beyond them, he is protected by two Alchimeras (see page 25).

THE ONYX SCAR KABAL

Each member of the Onyx Scar bears a ritual scar with a large sliver of deep black stone set in the wound. The Kabal believes this impedes the speed at which She Who Thirsts can consume their souls. The Dark Eldar's knowledge of the webway allows them to come and go throughout many locations in the Screaming Vortex, and Sacgrave is just one such point that the Onyx Scar Kabal frequent. To the humans, their presence is just one more unfathomable whim of the fickle race, and the Onyx Scar prefers

THE LIEGE'S ALCHIMERAS

Liege Vycraft maintains his safety in the form of two psy-bound Alchimeras. These creatures are the remnants of some of the old Shadow-Margraves' experiments when they ruled Sacgrave. Some of the experimental laboratories are still intact deep beneath the planet's surface, and in them are horrors waiting to be unleashed. Long ago Vycraft found one such laboratory with two Alchimeras trapped in stasis. He took them to the surface and psy-bound them to his will. Now he keeps them hidden in an antechamber next to his throne room, waiting for any would-be assassins to make their move.

If the Heretics attack the Liege, they must fight his Alchimeras. If not, they may never know the Alchimeras exist, though they are likely to run into more when they venture into the Painted Ziggurat.

to keep it that way. However, in truth the Dark Eldar have two reasons for their foothold on Sacgrave. The first is convenience; a number of viable webway passages lead to Sacgrave. This makes it an easy place to acquire slaves. The second reason is a secret closely kept. One of the many trophies hoarded by Sacgrave's old pirate kings was an ivory chalice reported to contain the Ashes of Ynesth. Ynesth is one of the ancestors that the Dark Eldar revere as a Dark Muse, and her ashes would have both symbolic and pragmatic value as a relic—if they could be located.

The xenos keep an aloof distance from the humans, and the humans in turn give them an even wider berth. Nearly everyone at the Feast can recount the gruesome fate of a solicitor or mercenary ever foolish enough to approach the Dark Eldar with his wares, for the Dark Eldar are fickle, capricious, and prone to murder. The shadowy, graceful beings often linger near the slave columns to bask in the ambient misery, and occasionally trade items of their baffling and deadly technology for a few links of slaves. These most unfortunate of unfortunates are then spirited away to suffer for the Dark Eldar's private delight.

A BLOODSTAINED SIGNAL

The vox beacon leads down the Weeping Halls, past a kilometre of stalls. Eventually the Heretics find themselves in the deserted environs of Sacgrave, a region only nominally controlled by the Liege. Here titanic and broken colonnades of basalt stretch to the storm-wracked sky, their shattered tops almost invisible against the pouring rain. Between them run wide and open thoroughfares, the surfaces covered in rock chips. The inhabitants of the Weeping Halls do not venture into this part of Sacgrave, and the GM should emphasise the deserted and quiet nature of the region the Heretics wander through.

So long as the Heretics continue to pass their Tech-Use Tests to locate the beacon, they never become seriously side-tracked. After travelling a good five kilometres along winding paths amongst the basalt columns, they find what they are looking for.

One of the columns has been shattered by a ferocious impact, and its shattered remains fill the thoroughfare. Amongst the debris is the source of the signal; one of the legendary Golden Ships of Q'Sal.

These sleek, predatory vessels are manufactured on the sorcerous world and highly sought after in the Screaming Vortex, as they are far smaller than most ships used to traverse the warp. However, their small size comes with a price: not only are they almost completely unarmed, the warp-spawned sorcery that binds them together and daemonic gifts that allow them to function unravel once outside the warp storms, leaving nothing but dust and the bodies of those unfortunate enough to ride them. Therefore, these marvellous vessels are used solely within the pseudo-reality of the Screaming Vortex.

This vessel, however, will never fly again. In its attempt to land, it must have crashed bodily into the basalt pillar, and now its several hundred metre length lies atop the debris, completely filling the thoroughfare. As the Heretics duck under the towering prow, they can see the name *Deluge* inscribed on the side in spidery script. In addition, anyone who passes a **Challenging (+0) Awareness Test** scents blood on the air.

The hatch has been blown open, likely with a melta-bomb. When you step through the hatch, blood laps at your feet. Five dismembered and partially destroyed bodies in light flak armour lie strewn on the deck in the airlock and the passageway beyond, their faces fixed in various expressions of pain and horror—those who have faces left, anyway.

A quick search of the ship reveals dozens of dead, some obviously slaves who ran the *Deluge*, the rest additional mercenary servants of Grath. On the bridge, their leader lies crumpled in the command throne, hand still wrapped around the controls for the vox transponder.

An **Ordinary (+10) Medicae Test** reveals additional detail about how the men died, but it doesn't explain much. Their wounds are from a combination of fire and blades, blunt trauma, and a massive energy weapon. The deaths took place about three hours ago. The amount of time elapsed can also be estimated by passing an **Ordinary (+10) Medicae Test**. This also allows the character to approximate from the spacing of the corpses that there were four attackers. If he passes by two or more degrees of success, he finds a few streaks of blood that appear to belong to the attackers (Cyrion and Valstor—should it become relevant).

FINDING THE TRAIL

The bodies are fresh and it stands to reason that whomever attacked the servants had to go through the Weeping Halls to get to the *Deluge*. Either way, travelling back to ask around is a logical next step. However, the Heretics quickly discover that the well of information is inhospitably dry. Whatever method of questioning the Heretics use, no matter if they succeed or fail on the relevant tests, they get nothing of use from the locals save the following responses:

- "The storm above has been terribly fierce today. I doubt I would have heard a battle if it broke out on my steps."
- "Off-worlders come through here all the time. I don't really pay them much notice. All I know is that a ship came down in the columns to the west a fortnight ago, but I don't know nothing about the crew."

- “I keep to myself. Better not to remember anyone you don’t need to.”
- “I don’t know anything and you should thank me for it. Answers can only lead you to pain and death. You’re better off if you just leave.”
- “You can kill me, but the ones that did this will do worse than that if I speak of them.”

However, an **Easy (+30) Scrutiny Test** during any of these interactions discerns something else: everyone is utterly terrified. Perhaps of the Heretics, but more so of something else.

Through their own conclusions or because someone out and out tells them, the Heretics eventually realise that whoever killed Grath’s men and took the Tyrant’s Cord has cowed the entire populace into silence. The most obvious way to overcome this is to make the Weeping Halls more afraid of themselves than the absent killers. This is such a fundamental way of life in the Screaming Vortex that the GM should feel free to suggest terror tactics if the players don’t think of it. The Heretics can establish themselves through some of the encounters below, and/or come up with their own plans for forcing answers out of the residents of the Weeping Halls. When the GM feels the Heretics have sufficiently earned their information, see The Greater Evil, page 19, for the information available to them.

If the Heretics devise a brilliant plan to find the Tyrant’s Cord without loosening local tongues, the following encounters become optional ways to increase the players’ Infamy. After all, it does not bode well for their reputation if they leave the Halls in awe of some other faction.

ENCOUNTER: THE TRAITOR’S DUE

If the Heretics near the slave columns after seeing the bodies in the makeshift tent, anyone who passes a **Difficult (–10) Awareness Test** spots a few men in the slave chain wearing bloody uniforms identical to those of Grath’s murdered men. The GM might also allow a character with the Total Recall Talent to make an **Ordinary (+10) Intelligence Test** as soon as they have been in both locations. There are a total of five such survivors in the slave chain, all near one another. It seems that whoever defeated them sold the viable survivors to the column masters. However, they took the precaution of cutting out the men’s tongues first.

The Heretics still might find ways to extract information. Telepathic psychic powers, or simply procuring writing implements and parchment are two obvious ways to communicate with the survivors, though a GM should allow any clever idea on the Heretics’ part to succeed. The survivors were all simple soldiers, unaware of their situation’s complexities. Unlike the local populace, they are more than willing to inform on the people that mutilated them and sold them into slavery. Below is a summary of what they do know:

- The *Deluge* was on its way back from Pyurultide. It crashed on Sacgrave over two weeks ago. Those who lived took refuge in the crashed ship. However as days passed they sought supplies and entertainment within the Weeping Halls.
- Yesterday, their commander received a vox from someone in orbit. He had the men all gather in the *Deluge*, and told them to be ready to leave.
- This morning they met with two Space Marines, a human male, and a Heretek. Whatever bargain these people had with the commander, they did not honour it. Violence

erupted, and the three surviving soldiers were knocked unconscious early in the fight. They awoke here in chains.

- They have no information on where their attackers went.

If the Heretics want to acquire the men as slaves, it requires an Infamy Test at +0 (Average Availability, Minor Amount). Use the Cult Zealot Profile on page 360 of the **BLACK CRUSADE CORE RULEBOOK** if necessary.

ENCOUNTER: PECKING ORDER

While hardly original, picking a fight with the Halls’ most formidable warriors is certainly one way to intimidate the locals. The GM may also decide that the Levincenders start trouble with the Heretics in their own display of power. The Levincenders can easily be found at the Shearing Pits, or with a little more patience in other locations throughout the Weeping Halls. An even combat would pit them against the Heretics one for one for human Heretics, and three to one for Chaos Space Marines; the GM can adjust the difficulty of the fight by having more or less present if a fight starts.

Each Round of combat, the GM should roll a d10. On a roll of 10, lightning strikes a nearby rod, enabling the more dangerous mode of the Lightning Casters. However, if there are at least two Chaos Space Marines in the group, the GM should have lightning strike automatically on the second Round of combat, and on a 8-10 during each round thereafter. The Levincenders are not stupid, and when their Lightning Casters are “charged” they direct the fire against Chaos Space Marines whenever possible (it’s their most reliable way to eliminate them). The Levincenders are popular, and a crowd is bound to gather and cheer for them. However, if their local heroes start to lose, the crowd falls deathly quiet. If the Heretics are victorious, for a long moment the weapon smiths and map hawkers are silent. At the first word or harsh glance from the Heretics, they scatter like leaves in a storm.

ENCOUNTER: DARK ELДАР LORDLING

Beylix Ireshor does not lead the Onyx Scar, but he is the ranking noble on Sacgrave and is charged by his Kabal with finding the Ashes of Ynesth. Truthfully, this hopeless task is tantamount to exile, and Ireshor knows it. He alternates searching the vaults with brooding over his wretched fortune. However, ennui inevitably pulls him into the Weeping Halls for a taste of pain and a reminder that at least he does not live in this squalid downpour. The humans’ fear provides momentarily relief from his irritation, but the hunger for more always returns.

Ireshor would love nothing more than to carve through the halls of humans until their blood runs heavier than the rain and their screams echo louder than the thunder. Unfortunately for him, however superior his Kabalite warriors are, they are outnumbered hundreds to one by Liege Vycraft’s rabble. Ireshor is sure this too is a part of the deliberate slight on his family. Like all true born, his ego is swollen with self-entitlement, and that arrogance is only magnified around humans. Should Ireshor be stalking the Halls while the Heretics are present, his tall, graceful silhouette is hard to miss, doubly so for the way everyone makes a large empty space for him to pass by. If any of the Heretics fail to do the same, he picks one as the

target of his ire. In a sibilant and highly accented voice he says “Your stench offends me creature. Apologise.”

Ireshor’s intention is to pick a fight with one of the Heretics, not all of them. If his foul temper pulls more enemies than he can handle, he attempts to flee. If the Heretics kill the rash lordling, he sacrifices enough Infamy to escape with one Wound. This might manifest as a last-minute rescue by another member of his Kabal, or simply by the Heretics thinking they have killed him when in fact they have not. The Dark Eldar have arcane sciences that allow them to resurrect their dead kin from the smallest scraps of their original body, and Ireshor has a deal with a Haemonculus to ensure this happens if he dies.

ENCOUNTER: THE LIEGE’S FAVOUR

Liege Vycraft knows very little about the parties who killed Grath’s men, but if he proclaims support for the Heretics, it will end their troubles with the close-lipped locals. Conversely, if they run afoul of him, the rest of their time in the Weeping Halls is endlessly interrupted by guards and mercenaries looking to gain his favour.

The Shadow Liege does not adhere to formality, and if the Heretics decide to speak with him they can approach his enclave in the ruins salvaged from the *Second Fire* directly. One of the Liege’s personal guards goes to check with his master for a moment, and then leads the Heretics into the Liege’s stateroom.

You enter a stateroom that could easily be on the interior of a void-faring cruiser. The carpet and upholstery is plush; regal portraits hang on the panelled walls, and induction braziers burn away the lingering damp from outside. Vycraft’s epaulettes lend a naval cast to his appearance, but he is otherwise dressed and armoured practically for the cutthroat culture of Sacgrave. Blue veins stand out on his skin, and his burnished gold eyes reflect the lamplight unnaturally.

Vycraft does not beckon the Heretics closer, but instead waves them to stay near the door where a pair of guards remains, keeping himself separated by a safe distance. He is eating from a traditional meal case—a wooden box that is open only on one side, thus keeping the contents dry when exposed to rain. His golden eyes flicker over the group, seeming to linger slightly longer on any of them with psychic potential.

Vycraft lets the Heretics speak first, continuing to eat as they do. Whether they are direct or subtle, he assumes they wouldn’t be in his stateroom if they didn’t want something from him. Naturally, he wants something in payment first. When they are done explaining their purpose (assuming it wasn’t something utterly preposterous or dangerous to the Liege), he gestures that another meal case be brought for them. The contents resemble flatbread and taste like olives. Then he speaks for the first time:

“I can help you. The question is, why should I help you?”

He pauses a moment to see if they interject an answer. If they don’t, he continues:



“Now, I have no reason to impede you either. But if you want any favours—you should know well enough that nothing is free. I have many problems to deal with here in my enclave, and unless I benefit from aiding you, I don’t see the need to potentially involve myself in more.”

Vycraft is perfectly willing to help, so long as he receives something in return. Should the Heretics show any interest in dealing, he continues.

“A man in my position always has more vermin to exterminate than he can get around to. If you take care of a problem for me, I’ll help you with yours.”

If the Heretics care to listen, Vycraft explains that mutant abominations, which he calls “Scabscales,” are one of the most persistent enemies he has to deal with. Scabscale abominations are ubiquitous on Sacgrave. While they are an environmental hazard that can never really be eliminated, if a band of them gets too close to an inhabited tower, it is always the precursor to an attack. Once half a dozen Scabscales fixate on a target, they somehow attract other mutants to join them. Eventually a small encampment becomes a large warhost, and then they set upon the nearby settlement in a feral mob.

UNWANTED COMPETITION

This encounter assumes the Heretics wisely do not reveal that they are on Sacgrave to recover the Tyrant's Cord. If Vycraft learns this valuable artefact is within easy reach, he attempts to take out the Heretics so he can pursue the Cord himself.

Such a forerunner camp has recently been spotted to the northeast of the Weeping Halls, deep in the basalt colonnades and beyond the crashed *Deluge*. The Scabscales would notice a large force approaching and scatter before it could engage them, but a few capable individuals might be able to eliminate the entire group before they can grow into a substantial problem. If the Heretics will take out the abomination camp, Liege Vycraft is more than willing to help them chase their killers (or whatever task the Heretics have outlined to him). True to his word, if the Heretics reject his proposal, Vycraft has better things to do than make an issue of it (unless they're disrespectful with the refusal—in that case see *The Liege's Displeasure*).

The Liege's Collection

Being a victim of Sacgrave's violent warp storms, Liege Vycraft knows firsthand how many ruined vessels litter the planet's blackened surface—that is, a great deal. The hulks range from pirate vessels left over from the great battle against the Eldar millennia ago, to more recent additions such as the *Deluge*. Even though he no longer scouts the wreckage for components that might bear him back into the void, Vycraft has developed a taste for something else often found in crashed ships: star charts. Such documents have little value to most of Sacgrave's population, so even the charts not recovered by his own minions are still often bartered into his possession.

If one or more of the Heretics want to try "borrowing" from the Liege's sizable collection, they first have to get inside his stateroom. As noted above, walking through the front door is an option. However, they need a distraction or a good lie if they're going to take anything without being noticed. Otherwise, they will first have to get into his compound undetected (an Opposed Stealth vs. Awareness Test if trying to sneak past the Liege's personal guards). Anyone discovered trying to steal from Vycraft quickly finds himself beset by several guards. The guards can be approximated with the Imperial Guardsman profile on page 364 of the **BLACK CRUSADE CORE RULEBOOK**.

TABLE 1-3: WARP CHART THEFT RESULTS

Quantity Stolen	Reward	Risk
A few documents	10% Chance of 1 Infamy	The Liege does not notice the theft for months and does not suspect the PCs.
A few folios	1 Infamy	The Liege notices the theft within 2d10 hours.
As much as the Heretic can carry	2 Infamy	The Liege notices the theft within 5d10 minutes.

Assuming a Heretic is able to get to the documents without incident, he faces a decision: how much does he risk taking? The more star charts he appropriates, the better his chances they contain information of value. However, the Liege is going to notice several stacks of missing documents much faster than a handful of individual maps. When he does notice, his suspicions naturally go to the off-worlders who just arrived in the Halls. See **Table 1-3: Warp Chart Theft Results** for the different risks and rewards. Any Infamy gained is in addition to what a character with this as a Tertiary Objective may earn.

The Liege's Displeasure

There are any number of ways the Heretics could run afoul of Liege Vycraft: the wrong turn of phrase, a botched theft, a successful theft. If this happens, the Heretics are hunted relentlessly until they leave the Weeping Halls. Human and xenos mercenaries, Vycraft's guards, and the Levincenders are all possible groups the Liege might employ. Like most rulers in the Screaming Vortex, once Liege Vycraft has been crossed, there is no going back—as long as he is alive. Should the Heretics kill Vycraft, the attacks against them immediately end. However, a bloody succession war erupts; this should only be a minor inconvenience for the Heretics, since killing the Liege is more than enough to frighten answers out of the populace.

THE SCABSCALE ABOMINATIONS

The twisted creatures who dwell on the warp-ravaged exterior of Sacgrave were once men—frightening testaments to the fate of anyone who cannot find shelter from the malignant environment. Each abomination is a unique corruption of the human form—mutated again and again by the planet's fierce storms and close exposure to the tides of the warp. However, they do share a few common traits. Most have thick, scarred, shingled skin that keeps them alive in the harsh tempests. Those not born or gifted with jagged predatory teeth, grind theirs to be so. Lastly, every Scabscale has bloodshot eyes; this feature is not supernatural, but the result of a lifetime of sleep deprivation from living in Sacgrave's constant storms.

Like most mutants, the Scabscale abominations retain human intelligence. However, they seethe with hatred and envy for the pink, soft-bodied people who live in comparative paradise safe inside the ancient towers. When they attack the Weeping Halls or any of the countless other settlements on Sacgrave, they do steal and plunder, but theft is only their secondary motivation. These assaults are first and foremost a way to vent their rage.

Pursuing the Scabscales

If the Heretics agree to hunt the abominations, they can take the slave hoist down to the surface. Reaching the camp requires delving deep into the wilds of the basalt colonnades beyond the Weeping Halls. Here the terrain is rougher, with raw stone outcroppings as common as the colonnades, broken up by vast stretches of ancient bombardment craters and shattered stone.

The warp storm has the benefit of masking the Heretics' approach, and they have little difficulty finding the Scabscale camp atop a stone outcropping. The abominations charge the Heretics on sight. There should be 6 to 8 enemies using the Mutant Devotee Profile on page 360 of the **BLACK CRUSADE**

RULEBOOK. If there is one or more Chaos Space Marines in the group, the GM should form a magnitude 30 Horde, increasing their magnitude by 5 for every Chaos Space Marine beyond the first.

If the Heretics want to do anything other than fight the Scabscale abominations, it is not impossible, but first they must survive the mutants' initial bloodlust. Starting in the second Round of combat, a Heretic can use a Full Action to make a **Challenging (+0) Command or Charm Test** instead of attacking to try to convince the abominations to stand down. He gains +10 for each visible mutation that he has. By the fourth Round, the mutants may begin to invoke their Frenzy Talent. After this point, words are meaningless.

If a Heretic succeeds on the above Test, any Scabscale that has not taken damage during the combat pauses to hear what the Heretic has to say. The abominations don't know a thing about the rival Heretics or the Tyrant's Cord, but they can summon large numbers of their brethren if for some reason the Heretics want to bring bloody pandemonium to the Weeping Halls.

THE GREATER EVIL

The GM can begin to share information from this section whenever the Heretics start to earn fear and respect in the Weeping Halls. The information needs not come all at once; it could be distributed a piece at a time. If the GM provides one or two reports every time the Heretics make an impression, they can continue to intimidate the populace until they are satisfied with the answers they get. They may plunge into the Cadentia Vaults as soon it's mentioned, or the characters may not leave the Weeping Halls until they have detailed descriptions of every one of the rival agents. Below are examples of what the Heretics hear once people start talking:

- "I've only seen one other group of off-worlders recently. Four of them got here yesterday, but I don't know where they are now."
- "They were a formidable looking lot, much like you. I heard they spilled a lot of blood before they left."
- "I heard rumours that they found a hideout not far from here, the Painted Ziggurat. However, how they got in, I don't know. It's been sealed since the bombardment."
- "They headed down into the Cadentia Vaults. The whole planet's honeycombed with vaults and passages, the Vaults are the upper levels. But don't think that because they're close to the surface they're any safer."
- "There was a Tech-Priest, one of them Heretek sorts. She bought a lot of maps."
- "The man who was with them was a sorcerer. He made chains rise up from the ground and choke the life out of people. I don't know what's worse—what he did or why he did it: just to take their rain shield."
- "There was a Space Marine carrying a staff. He was dark—midnight blue armour, coal grey robe."
- "The other Space Marine was in red and gold. But his power armour didn't have any symbols, and no one ever heard him say a word."

By the end of the conversation, the Heretics should know that the group that took the Cord fled into the Vaults, maybe headed for the Painted Ziggurat.

Tools of the Hunt

The Weeping Halls have many resources that could aid with the Heretics' chase. With the appropriate Infamy Test they could hire mercenaries for additional muscle or a guide to the Cadentia Vaults. If the Heretics lack the skills to effectively track their quarry, the guide could also fill that gap, or they could acquire a hunting beast from the slave columns. These may range from regular canids to the disturbing insectoid Hound Triplods, and provide a +10 bonus to any Tests made to pick up the trail.

THE CADENTIA VAULTS

While Sacgrave's surface is covered with colonnades, pillars, and gigantic fortress-constructions, partially shattered by the long-ago war with the Eldar, beneath is a world of warrens and tunnels. The Cadentia Vaults are part of Sacgrave's upper vaults. The inhabitants consider the upper levels less dangerous than those lower down, but to think them safe would be a grave error in judgement. The pirate empire's pets and pit beasts, experiments and prisoners, and every creature to crawl from the void or warp since Sacgrave's fall all walk the planet's vaults. None confine themselves just to the lower levels. As the Heretics enter the Cadentia Vaults, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

From the Weeping Halls, the fastest way into the Cadentia Vaults is yet another crater dug deep into the ancient fortifications the Weeping Halls inhabit. As you stand on the lip of the crater, you can see the cause; an Eldar torpedo smashed into the base of a fortress wall but failed to detonate, leaving a long, shattered tunnel with its passing.

You descend down through the crater and the tunnel, working your way through the torpedo's shattered body at the far end, and drop through a hole in the floor into a half-collapsed passage way. A long corridor stretches before you, dank, musty, and cold.

If any of the Heretics have the Survival Skill, they can use it to follow the trail of their quarry. Otherwise (unless the characters recruited help for this purpose) the GM can allow creative uses of other Skills such as Navigation, Logic, or psychic powers.

This section contains various encounters that the GM can present in any order, although the Unwelcome Gift encounter works best if it is the last encounter in the vaults. Depending on the desired pace, the Heretics may have to pass directly through each of these locations, or they may be optional points of interest along the trail. The GM should also note that while most of these encounters have the potential to turn into a combat, they do not have to. The GM may wish to avoid letting too many of these encounters become fights, lest it grow tedious and the Heretics become too injured to finish the Compact.

LOCATION 1: THE RELICS OF WAR

This room appears to have been carved by relatively recent inhabitants, as the door is in something resembling a human scale. The hinged metal door is heavy and locked, requiring a **Routine (+20) Security Test** to open. The room behind it appears to be some sort of weapons depot. Virtually everything within is broken, and in many cases deteriorated as though from a millennium of neglect.

Broken bolters, bladeless sword hilts, and rusted armour litter the large room. If the equipment was in working order, it would be enough to arm close to a hundred men. Looming in the centre of the wreckage is the most frightening and derelict weapon of all. The large brass body is covered in a web of fractures and nearly black with soot and corrosion. However, there is no mistaking the profile of a Juggernaut.

The daemonic construct is more functional than it appears. If any of the Heretics makes the mistake of drawing too close, their life force draws the daemon back from centuries of dormancy. Fires suddenly flare to life behind its empty eyes. After its long sleep, the beast is ravenous for combat. The Juggernaut profile can be found on page 355 of the **BLACK CRUSADE CORE RULEBOOK**.

LOCATION 2: THE KABAL ENCLAVE

The Onyx Scar Kabal linger like vultures on the periphery of clashes between Sacgrave's warring factions, but the swift deaths of brutal battles only take the edge off their eternal hunger. Their enclave provides a haven where they can wring suffering from slaves and captives in a much slower, more satisfying manner. They chose this location because it houses a webway portal, giving the Dark Eldar even more reason to be territorial. If the Heretics stumble upon the enclave, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

All at once, stone and ruin gives way to blood and blade, as you pass through a portal and find yourselves in a large, cleared room. Twitching bodies caught somewhere between life and death hang from the walls between gleaming instruments of pain. The graceful arm of some xenotech device arches over most of the room, and several Dark Eldar look up from their sport. They glare and reach for their weapons.

Characters with Forbidden Lore (Warp or Xenos) can make an **Ordinary (+10) Test** to recognise the xenotech device as an inactive portal. If the Heretics did not defeat Beylix Ireshor earlier, he is there with his Kabalite Warriors (see page 373 of the **BLACK CRUSADE CORE RULEBOOK**) and they immediately attack. If the Heretics' group is entirely comprised of Humans, then Beylix Ireshor is accompanied by four Kabalite warriors, and one Mandrake who attempts to hide from the opposition until the third Round of Combat (an opposed Stealth Test), then attacks the Heretics. If the group has at least one Chaos Space Marine, increase the number of Mandrakes to two, both of whom attack the Chaos Space Marine exclusively. If the group has two or more Chaos Space Marines, keep the number of Mandrakes at one, but replace the Kabalite Warriors with a Magnitude 25 Horde of Kabalite Warriors.

However, if Ireshor had to run from the Heretics once already, he is not nearly as eager to engage them a second time. Instead he gestures for his warriors to stand down. Alternatively, if the GM wishes to avoid combat here, Ireshor can open with negotiations. Read aloud or paraphrase the following (if the Heretics have already met Ireshor, then some substantial paraphrasing might be needed).

A white-haired Dark Eldar lordling with an extremely arrogant expression gestures curtly, and his fellows lower their weapons. "Humans," he sneers. "So good of you to come visit me here in my palatial estate." He gestures to the bare stone and flayed bodies.

"I have heard rumours that you seek a group that has passed into the vaults," he continues with a hiss. "You'll not find them here. However, you've proven yourself competent for a band of primitives. I too have something I seek in these vaults, a worthless relic of some sentimental value to my people. Perhaps we can seek together."

Ireshor is speaking of the Ashes of Ynesth. The last thing he needs is for these humans, who he cannot seem to best, to stumble upon his precious relic; he is less than confident he could take it back by force. He also has something substantial he can offer the Heretics if they're willing to negotiate. The Kabal has a pair of Ravagers amongst their assets on Sacgrave. These gunships could provide insurance that any transport coming to retrieve the Tyrant's Cord doesn't make it. The same deal is presented if the Heretics defeat Ireshor and his warriors here and now; at the last moment he attempts to belay his demise by bargaining. If they accept Ireshor's offer, he sends a Kabalite warrior, Soreth the Cruel, with them to watch for the Ashes. The group's Anointed can control Soreth (use the Kabalite warrior profile on page 373 of the **BLACK CRUSADE CORE RULEBOOK**) during any future combats as though he were a Minion (but not for other purposes).

LOCATION 3: WISDOM OF THE DEAD

At first glance this chamber appears to be a macabre reliquary of some kind. Its shelf-lined walls hold an assortment of skulls, desiccated hands, bones, and other sundry remains. Several similar items are displayed throughout the room on pedestals. An indistinct murmur seems to permeate the air.

Looking closer, not every item is taken from a corpse. The chamber also holds such oddities as a lock of hair, trapped breath in a crystal vial, and tears in a goblet. Slowly the susurrus sorts itself into hundreds of overlapping whispers—one for each item. This room is a repository of lore, a library of voices instead of books.

Anyone who picks up an object feels himself suddenly inundated with knowledge on a particular subject. The knowledge is random; a finger bone imparting knowledge of the warp may sit beside a leathery patch of skin cataloguing the history of a dead world. If a Heretic tries to take an object out of the chamber, it goes silent as soon as it crosses the threshold. However, if anybody holds one of these repositories for more than a few minutes inside the chamber, he feels a strange tingling presence beginning to creep over him. The strange intelligences of these remains long for freedom, and given the opportunity try to occupy a small portion of the Heretic's mind as a vehicle of escape. This could be considered a beneficial arrangement for the Heretic; should they wish to, each Heretic can host one "spirit."

The hosting process grants the Heretic 1d5 Corruption Points, and a single Rank in any Common, Forbidden, or Scholastic Lore without paying any Experience Points. However, the knowledge is imparted at random by the GM. The GM can roll randomly to determine this, or use this as an opportunity to give the Heretics Lore Skills that he feels are important in future campaigns.

LOCATION 4: THE HIDDEN TROVE

A twining xenos rune marks a square stone in the ruins. If any of the Heretics have learned of the hidden vault, they recognise its symbol as long as they spot it with a **Routine (+20) Awareness Test**. Unfortunately the stone seems to be all that stands here—no door or room that might contain the treasure the rune is supposed to mark.

A closer inspection of the stone reveals some sort of tiny pattern etched in a band around the stone. Unless the Heretic can read using his sense of touch, he must find some way to discern the markings. Filling the crevices with a dark material like dirt or blood, or making a rubbing, are all options.

The pattern is in fact a series of arcane symbols that dictate a brief ritual of special conjunction. Correctly interpreting the inscription requires an **Ordinary (+10) Forbidden Lore (Warp) Test**. If the ritual is successfully performed, each participant gains a Corruption Point, and the marker stone dissolves to reveal a deep recess in the floor. Precisely what it contains is up to the GM and should depend partially on which leads he chose to throw out. Two of the most obvious choices are a Daemon weapon, or the Ashes of Ynesth, contained in a small and unmistakably xenos-origin jar.

If the GM wishes to use a Daemon weapon, the following weapon is provided. The Kirn-Knives of Hataxis, a pair of long-bladed flensing knives, rest in simple leather case. The Kirn-Knives are two weapons possessed by two Blue Horrors split from the same Pink Horror. Now, each is bound in a separate blade, forever denying them the chance to re-merge. Each of the Kirn-Knives is a Daemon weapon with the Illusory and Impossibly Sharp Attributes: (Melee; 1d5+3 R; Pen 0; Balanced, Warp Weapon, appears normal unless observer passes **Hard (-20) Awareness Test**, inflicts a -10 to all Parry or Dodge attempts to avoid it). However, should two different individuals each take one of the Kirn-Knives, they must each pass a **Hard (-20) Willpower Test** every 24 hours or be overcome with the desire to hunt down the wielder of the other knife, kill him, and take the weapon (as the two Blue Horrors drive their wielder to re-unite them). Even if the wielder passes the Test, he's infused with an irrational hatred for the other bearer.

The Heretics can also try to bypass the protections with brute force. Powerful explosives or a melta weapon can eventually pry the marker stone off the floor. However, this disruption of the seal tears a temporary rift in realspace. Everyone in the vicinity gains 1d5 Corruption Points, and the GM may also decide a swarm of Furies is unleashed (see the Nether Swarm profile on page 351 of the **BLACK CRUSADE CORE RULEBOOK**).

THE ZIGGURAT

The Painted Ziggurat is a massive, multi-tiered stone fortress some 20 kilometres away from the Weeping Halls. A former home of generations of pirate kings (and even one or two of the Shadow Margraves), it weathered the bombardment from the Eldar attack better than many structures. However, errant lance strikes destroyed the only entrance, melting it to fused rock and making access to the fortress seemingly impossible. Thus, the secrets of the Painted Ziggurat remain undisturbed by treasure-seekers. Unbeknownst to all but a select few of the inhabitants

of the Weeping Halls, there is another way into the Ziggurat. A winding set of passages through the Candentia Vaults lead into the heart of the colossus.

Eventually, the path of Seiy's agents leads into the Painted Ziggurat. Rubis located the route into the Ziggurat through "persuasion" of a would-be treasure seeker before she attacked the *Deluge*. The Ziggurat served as a base of operations for the agents, and the Crescent Platform at the top of the Ziggurat provided a landing pad other than the plains outside of the Weeping Halls, allowing them to infiltrate the planet unnoticed.

Seiy's agents arrived at Sacgrave via one of the slave-transporters travelling to the Hollows. However, they could not persuade the ship's captain to remain in orbit, and now have no way off-world. Seiy arranged for another ship to retrieve her agents, but for now they must wait until the ship arrives.

As the Heretics follow the path of Seiy's agents, they may not realise at first that they've entered the Painted Ziggurat. However, soon the underground passages lead into the Ziggurat's main chambers. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

You pass through yet another stone archway and find yourself in a room vastly different than the dank passages you travelled through. This chamber is vast and dry, large enough for a Titan to walk through without scraping the ceiling. Along the walls are faded murals and tapestries, their contents concealed by a thick layer of dust. Drifts of dust cover the floor as well, except for a single path leading through the room from your archway to large double-doors on the far side. Someone has passed through here recently and on multiple occasions.

Just as in the vaults, the majority of the Ziggurat is huge, abandoned hallways and passages. However, there are several locations the Heretics may pass through that warrant some note. Seiy's agents await them on the Crescent Platform at the top.

THE GENETIS LAB

Legends abound of the heretical gene-manipulation that the last Duke of Sacgrave and his dynasty carried out. This lab is just one of many such places where they performed these procedures and created beasts for their menageries. The hybrid specimens floating in tanks and the splicing diagrams on the walls would make an Orthodox member of the Adeptus Mechanicus weep. Fortunately none are present.

On the surface, the lab is noteworthy as a hall of horrors. However, if anyone spends time searching through the datacrypts and reading labels, they can make a **Challenging (+0) Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus) Test**. If the Heretic succeeds, he realises that given enough time the contents of this lab might be used to finish what the last Duke started—producing a perfect clone of the Duke himself, including his memories. Such a task could yield only scientific gratification, but there is a chance it could lead to much more. If anyone knows where the *Kasserkratch*—loaded with the wealth of the pirate kings—might have gone, it would be the Duke.

The Alchimera

In their time, the kings of Sacgrave created a great many horrors in the Genetis Labs. However, all but one has either



died or slunk away to other parts of the fractured towers. The Alchimera were built as sentries for the nobles' living area. These amalgams of human and machine, of flesh and metal, remain enslaved to vestigial programming, and continue to patrol the abandoned Ziggurat. Half a dozen are active, and the Heretics may encounter them singly or in small groups anywhere in this area. When they face the first one, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

You find yourself face to face with a creature that is part mechanical gargoyle and part feral human. Its grey skin is covered in corroded metal plates and cracked stone. It opens its sharp metal maw and emits an infuriated shriek at your intrusion. The sound is the like a rabid animal's screech played through a tinny vox.

VELVET AUDIENCE ROOM

The jewelled furniture and tapestries have rotted to dust. However, the chamber's most prominent ornamentation was carved into the walls. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Terrible stone faces look down on the room. You recognise just enough of them to guess that every one of the statues is a god from some culture or another. There is a snarling ork, and a giant eye. A slender, laughing humanoid, a great coiled dragon, a shaggy wolf... the parade of deities marches on across the walls. It is marred in places by the scars of the planet's bombardment.

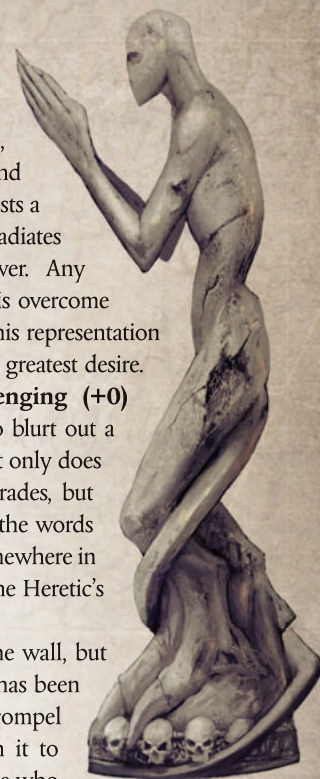
Of the ninety-nine original icons, thirteen have shattered or melted beyond all recognition. Eighty-five of the remaining statues are cut from blood-red marble. One is pearlescent white.

The Questing Idol

The smallest idol stands on the far side of the room, facing the door. Like the others it is part of the tower wall, but this one is shimmering ivory and only a foot tall. Its vague shape suggests a human with double-jointed legs. It radiates a gentle, comforting aura of power. Any character who gets within 5 metres is overcome with certainty that the god behind this representation can hear him, and wants to grant his greatest desire. The character must pass a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** or be compelled to blurt out a plea for the thing he wants most. Not only does this show weakness before his comrades, but a moment later everyone who hears the words knows in the depths of their soul: somewhere in the abyss of the Screaming Vortex, the Heretic's desires have been heard.

The idol can be removed from the wall, but it is the only one that can. Once it has been removed from the room, it does not compel anyone who comes in contact with it to blurt out his desires. However, anyone who already did so has a desire to keep the idol near him.

The resolution of this is beyond the scope of this adventure. However, it can provide an ominous starting point for a future plot of the GM's design.



THE CRESCENT PLATFORM

The pirate empire built this semicircular landing platform in an eye of relative calm within Sacgrave's raging storms. It is a safe place for a ship to land, is completely hidden from the simple augur arrays installed in the Weeping Halls, and it is where Seiy's agents are meeting their transport.

Fortunately for the Heretics it hasn't arrived yet (possibly due to the Onyx Scar's intervention). However, Seiy's agents may have had time to fortify their position, depending on how well the Heretics kept up with them. In determining how much of a lead Seiy's agents have had, the GM should include the following considerations:

- How quickly did the Heretics pick up the trail?
- Did the Heretics spend an excessive time in any of the Cadentia Vault locations?
- Did they do anything else that obviously increased or decreased the speed of their pursuit?

Once the GM has decided how long Seiy's agents have had to prepare, he translates that into what sort of advantages they have created for themselves on the platform. Examples include:

- Using durable debris to create fighting positions.
- Setting an ambush or traps.
- Salvaging heavy stubbers from the towers' old defences and creating makeshift mounted gun emplacements.

At this point, it is up to the Heretics to decide how they

want to approach their rival's position, before the inevitable battle begins. During the combat, Seiy's agents fight a cautious delaying game, firing from cover and not closing to melee combat unless they are completely outmatched at ranged fighting. They are waiting for the shuttle to come pick them up, and the shuttle arrives at the platform (hovering at the edge) after 1d5+5 Rounds of combat. At that point, the agents make a break for the shuttle. If they made a deal with Beylix, however, the shuttle breaks through the clouds in flames and crashes into the side of the Ziggurat, a victim of a Ravager attack craft. Then the agents fight to the death.

LAST HERETIC STANDING

If the Heretics are victorious, they can claim the Tyrant's Cord from their fallen rivals. They must also decide what to do with Seiy's agents (since all of the rivals have enough Infamy to escape death, it is possible any of them could have survived if the GM desires). Killing them is an easy and final solution, but with the right persuasion they could become allies or Minions.

If the Heretics lost the battle on the Crescent Platform, the survivors wake up some time later on the platform and face the consequences of a failed Compact.

THE TURBULENT FUTURE

The Heretics' most immediate concern is probably leaving Sacgrave. If the transport Seiy's agents were going to use is still en route, the player characters might have a chance to commandeer it. Otherwise, resourceful individuals like the Heretics should have little trouble finding a way to leave.

Looking at the larger picture, the Heretics now have the Tyrant's Cord. The next logical step might be to go to Pyurultide and rally the Pox Tribes. However, are the Heretics ready to enter the Inner Ring and potentially anger the Plague God? Do they even know what to do with such a warhost if they raised one?

They have also made an enemy of Seiy the Bereft, although they may not even know it. The Onyx Scar Kabal may or may not have found their relic, and the Heretics may start imagining what they could get in exchange if they found it first.

NPC APPENDIX

The following are the NPCs in the adventure. Any of the NPCs here are considered to have the necessary Weapon Training Talents to use the weapons they are equipped with, without those Talents being listed.

BEYLIX IRESHOR

This exiled Dark Eldar noble wanders the Weeping Halls.

Beylix Ireshor (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
50	45	40	40	60	40	40	50	33	20

Movement: 9/18/27/56
Armour: Arms, Body, Legs, Arms 3
Infamy Points: 2

Wounds: 15
Total TB: 5

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag) +10, Interrogation +10 (WP), Intimidate (S), Linguistics (Eldar, Low Gothic) (Int), Parry (WS) +10, Scrutiny (Per), Sleight of Hand (Ag), Stealth (Ag), Survival (Int).

Talents: Catfall, Cold Hearted, Combat Master, Hard Target, Leap Up, Lightning Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Pity the Weak, Sprint, Swift Attack, Step Aside.

Traits: Unnatural Agility (+3).

Armour: Xenos Mesh (Body, Legs, Arms 3).

Weapons: Agonizer (1d10+8 E; Pen 5; Felling (8), Power Field), Splinter Pistol (30m; S/5/10; 1d10 R; Pen 2; Clip 40; Reload 2 Full; Reliable, Toxic).

Gear: None.

LIEGE VYCRAFT

This cunning "Shadow Liege" rules the Weeping Halls.

Vycraft (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
45	40	35	40	38	45	48	43	47	30

Movement: 3/6/9/18
Armour: Arms, Body, Legs 3
Infamy Points: 3

Skills: Awareness (Per), Charm (Fel), Command (Fel) +10, Commerce (Int) +10, Common Lore (Imperial Navy, Imperium, Screaming Vortex) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S), Inquiry (Fel), Linguistics (High Gothic, Low Gothic, Void Cant), Navigation (Stellar) (Int) +10, Operate (Voidships) (Int), Parry (WS)+10, Psyniscience (Per), Tech-Use (Int).

Talents: Air of Authority, Iron Jaw, Foresight, Light Sleeper, Quick Draw, Lightning Attack, Peer (Criminals), Resistance (Fear), Strong Minded, Swift Attack.

Traits and Gifts: Unnatural Toughness (+1).

Armour: Light Flak Cloak (Arms, Body, Legs, 3).

Weapons: Plasma Pistol (Pistol; 40m; S/2/-; 1d10+7 E; Pen 8; Clip 10; Reload 3 Full), Power Sword (Melee; 1d10+9 E; Pen 5; Balanced, Power Field).

Gear: Glass Talisman.

Gifts of the Gods (Chaos Organ, Eye of Chaos): Vycraft's gifts have given him an unnatural resilience (listed in Traits), and the Psyniscience Skill.

Wounds: 15
Total TB: 5

SEIYR'S AGENT: CYRION TAAL

Arrogant and haughty, Cyron is tolerated by his companions due to his potent psychic powers.

Cyrion Taal (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
42	35	35	32	36	34	35	50	36	21

Movement: 3/6/9/18
Wounds: 14

Armour: 3 All

Infamy Points: 2

Skills: Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Screaming Vortex, Tech) (Int), Deception (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Psykers) (Int), Linguistics (Low Gothic), Psyniscience (Per) +10.

Talents: Child of the Warp (Haunting Breeze), Jaded, Psy Rating (4), Weapon Training (Primary, SP), Warp Lock

Traits: Psyker

Armour: Flak Cloak (Arms, Body, Legs 3).

Weapons: Revolver (Pistol; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip: 2 Rld 2 Full, Reliable), Mono-edged razor-sword (Melee; 1d10+5 R; Pen 2; Balanced, Razor Sharp).

Psychic Powers: Foul Cage, Telekinetic Shield, Warptime, Winds of Chaos (Taal is an unaligned Psyker with a Corruption of 35 for this power)

Gear: Psy-focus, dataslate.

Gifts of the Gods (Eye of Chaos): Taal's eye constantly glows with an ethereal green light, as he sees the currents of the warp. He gains +10 to Psyniscience (included in the Skills Section).

SEIYR'S AGENT: KRAYTH

Krayth is quiet and reserved, a silent berserker.

Krayth (Elite)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
47	45	50 ⁽⁹⁾	40 ⁽⁸⁾	40	36	39	40	29	20	

Movement: 2/4/8/16

Armour: 8 All, 10 Chest

Infamy Points: 2

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Common Lore (War) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Astartes, The Horus Heresy and the Long War) (Int), Linguistics (Int), Navigate (Surface), Operate (Surface) (Int), Parry (WS) +10, Security (Int), Survival (Int) +10.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Blind Fighting, Bulging Biceps, Legion Weapon Training, Hatred (Adeptus Astartes), Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Jaded, Nerves of Steel, Quick Draw, Resistance (Cold, Heat, Poisons), Sidearms, Sure Strike, Two Weapon Wielder, Unarmed Warrior.

Traits: Amphibious, Space Marine Implants, Unnatural Strength (+4), Unnatural Toughness (+4).

Armour: Legionnaire Power Armour (All 8, Chest 10)

Weapons: Legion Power Sword (Melee; 1d10+15 R; Pen 6; Balanced, Power Field), Legion Bolt Pistol (Pistol; 100m; S/2/-; 1d10+9 X; Pen

Total TB: 3

4; Clip: 8 Rld Full, Reliable, Tearing), Legion Combat Knife (Melee; 1d10+9; Pen 0), 4 Legion Frag Grenades (Thrown; 27m; S/-/-; 2d10+2 X; Pen 0; Blast [4])

Gifts of the Gods (None): Thus far, Krayth has not received any gifts of the Ruinous Powers.

SEIYR'S AGENT: LOVEN VALSTOR

Valstor is a Chaos Space Marine sorcerer who enjoys ripping his opponents' thoughts from their heads.

Valstor (Elite)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
41	42	37 ⁽⁷⁾	41 ⁽⁸⁾	38	40	43	45	20	24	

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Armour: 6 All

Infamy Points: 2

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Common Lore (War) (Int), Dodge (Ag) +10, Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Astartes, The Horus Heresy and the Long War, Psykers) (Int), Linguistics (Int), Navigate (Surface), Operate (Surface) (Int), Parry (WS), Psyniscience (Per), Scholastic Lore (Occult) (Int), Scrutiny (Per).

Talents: Ambidextrous, Bulging Biceps, Legion Weapon Training, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Mediation, Nerves of Steel, Psy Rating (3), Quick Draw, Resistance (Cold, Heat, Poisons), True Grit, Unarmed Warrior.

Traits: Amphibious, Psyker, Space Marine Implants, Unnatural Strength (+4), Unnatural Toughness (+4).

Armour: Legionnaire Power Armour.

Weapons: Force Staff (Melee; 1d10+7 I; Pen 0; Balanced, Force), Legion Bolter (100m; S/3/-; 1d10+9 X; Pen 4; Clip: 24 Rld Full, Reliable, Tearing).

Psychic Powers: Doombolt, Mind Probe.

Gear: Psy Focus, trinkets.

Gifts of the Gods (Steel-Hearted): Valstor is unnaturally fearless, imbued by a warp-born bravery. He counts all sources of Fear as being one less than normal (and if Fear 1 he is unaffected). As a devotee of Tzeentch, he ignores Fear from psychic sources completely.

SEIYR'S AGENT: RUBIS

The leader of Seiyr's agents on Sacgrave, Rubis is a fallen Tech-Priest of no mean skill.

Rubis (Elite)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
35	37	31	50	28	49	35	39	32	29	

Movement: 2/4/8/16

Armour: 6 All

Infamy Points: 2

Wounds: 18

Total TB: 5

Skills: Awareness (Per), Logic (Int), Common Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus, Koronus Expanse, Screaming Vortex, Tech) (Int), Forbidden Lore (Archeotech, Adeptus Mechanicus, Xenos) (Int), Linguistics (Low Gothic) (Int), Parry (WS), Scholastic Lore (Chymistry) (Int), Security (Int), Tech Use (Int) +10, Trade (Armourer, Cryptographer).

Talents: Die Hard, Enemy (Adeptus Mechanicus), Foresight, Luminen Shock, Mechadendrite Training (Utility), Swift Attack, Technical Knock, Total Recall, Weapon-Tech.

Traits: Dark Sight, Machine (4), Mechanicus Implants.

Armour: Concealed Armour Plating (2 All).

Weapons: Enslaved Plasma Gun (Basic; 90m; S/2/-; 1d10+8 E; Pen 10; Clip: 20 Rld 5 Full, Maximal), Luminen Capacitors (Melee; 1d10+4 E; Pen 2; Shocking).

Gear: Auspex, combi-tool, dataslate, Mechanicus Assimilation (3), Mechanicus Implants, Luminen Capacitors, multikey, unholy unguents, several treasure hunting maps.

Gifts of the Gods (Mehanoid): Rubis's body has merged obscenely with her cybernetics. She gains +1 to her Machine Trait (included in her profile), and as a devotee to Tzeentch, gains +10 to Awareness Tests.

LEVINCENDER

The Levincenders are mercenaries within the Weeping Halls. They can be used individually or as a Horde as the GM wishes.

Levincender (Troop)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
35	35	35	42	33	24	30	40	28	-	-

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 14 or **Magnitude:** 25
Armour: 6 All **Total TB:** 4

Skills: Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Screaming Vortex), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int).

Talents: Die Hard, Exotic Weapon Training (Lightning Caster), Resistance (Fear), Weapon Training (Chain, Las, Primary, Shock).

Armour: Leather Vest (Body 1).

Weapons: Chain Shortsword (Melee; 1d10 +4 R; Pen 2; Tearing), Lightning Caster (Basic; 60m; S/-/-; Special; Pen 7; Clip: N/A)†.

Gear: Lho sticks.

†A Lightning Caster can only be used in the vicinity of an active thunderstorm. It can be used to harness ambient electrical energy in the air and redirect it in a bolt doing 1d10+5 E Damage. If used on the same Round that lightning strikes within 250m of the wielder, he can redirect a more powerful bolt to do 2d10+10 E Damage. The rules for lightning strikes are covered in the locations the Heretics are likely to confront the Levincenders. However, if the GM wishes to use them elsewhere during a lightning storm, he can simply assume there is a 10% chance that lightning strikes within range at the beginning of a given Round.

Gifts of the Gods: A Levincender mercenary may have one of three possible mutations. If using a Horde, the GM has two choices. He may either select one mutation to apply to the entire Horde, or he may apply all three mutations to the entire Horde, under the assumption that there are individuals with each mutation amongst the throng. The latter option makes for a more dangerous foe, and should only be selected if there are several Chaos Space Marines in the Heretics' warband.

- **Brute:** The mercenary is a muscle-bound monstrosity, gaining +10 S and +10 T.

- **Bulging Eyes:** The mercenary has giant frog-eyes, gaining Dark Sight and +5 BS.

- **Festering:** Everything about the mercenary is infused with decay and rot. Its melee attacks (including attacks with melee weapons) gain the Toxic (0) Trait.

Electric Bravado: Levincender Hordes only test to break once they have sustained 75% casualties.

ALCHIMERA

Terrifying experiments left over from the days of the Shadow-Margraves, Alchimeras are horrible monsters with a taste for mayhem and flesh.

Alchimera (Elite)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
50	11	45	56	30	08	40	40	06	-	-

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 20

Armour: 3 All

Total TB: 5

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Parry (WS).

Talents: Ambidextrous, Autosanguine, Berserk Charge, Blade Dancer, Combat Master, Furious Assault, Mimic, Prosanguine, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee), Unnatural Vigour.

Traits: Dark Sight, Deadly Natural Weapons, Machine (+1), Natural Armour (+2), Unnatural Strength (+3).

Armour: Basalt-studded skin (All 3).

Weapons: Metal claws and teeth (Melee; 1d10+7; Pen 3; Balanced, Razor Sharp, counts as two weapons).

Gear: None.

HERETICAL CAMPAIGNS

"Make war upon the Imperium of Man? What is it you think the Legions have been doing for the last ten thousand years? War does not end with a single victory or a single planet. It is an eternal creature that outlives men and their tiny triumphs."

—Arzyn the Silencebringer, warrior of the World Eaters

By the destructive nature of their environment and their own blackened souls, most Heretics' stories—however epic and dreadful—are brief. Running a **BLACK CRUSADE** campaign for an extended period of time requires special considerations, and also opens up additional opportunities not available in a more short-lived tale.

Note, this section is intended for GMs to read, and although there's nothing secret within these pages, it is written for a GM's perspective.

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

One of the first things a GM should decide is whether he wants to run a continuing campaign, or shorter stories that run the length of a few Compacts. A long campaign requires him to do additional work and planning. If a group's players aren't interested or suited to such a game, the entire group could end up feeling frustrated. Some basic questions to consider before putting the effort into a long-running **BLACK CRUSADE** include:

Does the gaming group have a high turnover rate?

One of the main reasons to run an extended campaign is to be able to tell a story over a longer period of time. If a group's player complement isn't relatively stable, the GM might be the only one who ends up seeing that story unfold, while players and characters come and go.

Does the group like to play the same game for long periods of time? Running an extended campaign obviously means the GM and players will be playing **BLACK CRUSADE** a lot. Does the group get bored relatively quickly with the same game and switch through other systems or settings? If so, a group might be better served by keeping the scope of the campaigns short, so that they don't have months or years between each chapter of the GM's campaign.

What story scope is the group interested in? Does the group prefer to run games that take a long time to build up to their climax? Do they have lots of stories in mind for the **BLACK CRUSADE** that wouldn't work together in the same campaign? If a group falls into the latter category, they might prefer not to run extended campaigns so that they can play with more different ideas.

STORY CONSIDERATIONS

The chaotic, conflicted nature of the Screaming Vortex (as well as Heretics themselves) poses a few challenges that a more structured campaign environment doesn't. The more adventures the GM creates, the more he is likely to find himself in need of a less transient solution to common



story elements. This section introduces possible solutions to typical issues, and also presents sample NPCs to fill some of the roles an ongoing story is likely to need. With all of the setting elements, these offerings are not meant to mandate how the Heretics deal with any of these recurring situations. The intent is to provide the GM with everything he needs to quickly start his campaign, without necessarily having to do all his world-building up front. The GM can add, modify and delete from the list of setting elements as time goes on to best suit his own campaign.

GROUP DYNAMICS

Page 264 of the **BLACK CRUSADE CORE RULEBOOK** presents various suggestions for keeping a **BLACK CRUSADE** game from straying too far from common goals, but over time intra-party conflict is bound to occur. The cooperation implied in a Compact lasts for an adventure, but a gaming group may find itself in need of a stronger reason for a lasting alliance during a long campaign. Most players don't mind suspending disbelief slightly to make the game run; a certain amount of player cooperation is always needed for any roleplaying session to be successful. However, the best campaign framework turns the out-of-game assumption that the player characters should at least nominally work together into an in-game motivation.

Perhaps in the early stages of their rise to power, the Heretics do not mind serving masters other than the Dark Gods themselves. However, as they rise in Infamy, their allegiance to

a unifying power grows less and less appropriate. Many groups may not want to tread that path in the first place. In this case, you may want to establish the characters as a Circle of the Worthy. This praxis has been used by warlords from some worlds in the Screaming Vortex for thousands of years. In whatever pit or stronghold a Heretic occupies, he displays a small number of emblems—usually between four and a dozen. The method of display varies greatly; it might be an embroidered banner or a pedestal of graven likenesses. The common element of the exhibit is that it bears the symbols of men and women that the Heretic considers his equals. Each of those represented in a Heretic's emblems also has their own display that includes the Heretic's symbol, thus forming a Circle of the Worthy.

This praxis' purpose is twofold. First, it is a way of proclaiming respect for those who have aided a Heretic in the past. Secondly, it serves as a warning to potential enemies that to trouble one who possesses it is also to trouble other formidable powers. If a Heretic feels that one of his allies is no longer worthy, he can remove that symbol at any time, although it is considered cowardly to do anything other than return the disgraced emblem as a sign of defiant displeasure. There is a dishonourable stigma associated with betraying someone whose emblem is still in a group's Circle. Doing so may result in Infamy loss and certainly decreases one's chances of being included in any other Circles.

If that is not sufficient to make sure each adventure at least starts out with all the player characters sharing the same Primary Objective, even less subtle methods can also be used. Perhaps the players want to portray very fractious individuals, and they would prefer an outside constraint to keep the game on track while allowing them to play their characters as utterly uncooperative and treacherous. Maybe the GM just doesn't want to have to deal with that particular logistical challenge in planning his campaign. In this case, something akin to a Ritual of Shackled Destiny may be required.

The Ritual of Shackled Destiny

This dark rite goes by hundreds of names with thousands of variants. It addresses a fundamental problem that spans the known galaxy: trust between the treacherous. The ritual invokes the Dark Gods to intervene and bind the fates of the participants together. From this point forward, if misfortune befalls one of the shackled, an echo befalls them all. Whenever one of the ritual participants loses Infamy to avoid dying, all the other participants reduce their own Infamy by half that amount. The GM may also decide this binding influences the Heretics' destinies in less obvious ways.

Although this ritual can readily be performed by a Sorcerer or Psyker character with access to the right scrolls and lore, it is not the sort of agreement most Heretics are eager to enter into. Early in the campaign, the GM can present some opportunity so compelling that even the ritual is a price worth paying to participate in the Compact. Alternatively, an outside entity might force the shackling upon them. This could be a more powerful entity that the Heretics serve or just a fickle daemon amusing itself at the mortals' expense (the Heretics will doubtlessly want to give it proper thanks later).

THE WELL OF OPPORTUNITY

There is no such thing as a trusted source of information in the Screaming Vortex. The Heretics would be quite right in assuming that anyone who tells them about an opportunity for gain must want something for himself. So how does the GM present potential Compacts to the player characters without hours of second-guessing? Doubt may be exactly what the GM wants in some instances, but it can get tiresome if it happens every game. Below are some possibilities.

Opportunities from Within: Encourage the players to engage in their own research. No one can expect to rise to power by always sitting back and waiting for opportunity to come to him. Each Heretic should detail what he does to further his ambitions when not engaged in a Compact. Perhaps he spends every spare hour pouring over lore to discover where powerful artefacts lie, or dedicates a portion of his forces to scouting for planets ripe for conquest. Maybe he has a network of spies and saboteurs in the nearby domains of the Imperium. When the GM wants to present a prospective Compact through such a channel, he can give the player the information at the end of the previous session or between games. This can also be done at the beginning of the session, but discussing it ahead of time gives the player time to prepare how his character will present it to the rest of the group. It also lets the GM be positive the Heretic intends to pursue the opportunity.

Information Brokers: Not every soul living outside the Emperor's light is an aspiring warlord. Some parties have neither the means nor the desire to conquer and pillage. They would rather curry favour and profit from infamous heretics like the player characters (Palmer Grath in *RIVALS FOR GLORY* is one such example). Opportunities for gain can sometimes be acquired from these individuals using the standard rules for acquiring items and services. The Availability Modifier depends on the value of the information.

In Medias Res: Things are not always what they appear. The GM can start a game session in the middle of a routine activity: exacting obedience from thralls, defending one's holdings from pirates, or indulging in the dark pleasures that come with the power the Heretics have already earned. During the course of this event, the Heretics uncover a secret or encounter a foe that leads to forging a Compact.

Forge the Occasional Allegiance: Sometimes the Heretics may have to agree to share the spoils of a Compact with some other entity. This is unlikely to be a comfortable alliance since both sides may be justifiably worried about betrayal, but this is the nature of Chaos.

BASE OF OPERATIONS

Rogue Traders have their ships; Throne Agents have their Inquisitorial Holdings. Most Heretics are also going to want somewhere to keep their possessions, enjoy the benefits of their station, and (in the case of humans) sleep in relative security for a few hours. Have the Heretics pooled their resources to fortify a single location that they all occupy, or are they scattered on different planets throughout the Screaming Vortex?

Establishing where each Heretic resides isn't a strict necessity for an extended campaign, but it is one of the details that can become an irritating omission if not eventually addressed. The Heretics can only come into being at the moment they convene and fade back into oblivion at the end of a Compact so many times before realism suffers. Furthermore, a personal stronghold gives each character a location he can use as an outward expression of the character's personality, and build up as his Infamy increases.

TRANSPORT

Assuming one or more of the Heretics hasn't opted to use a ship as their base of operations, another recurring question the characters will have to answer is how they get from one location to another. Even if the Heretics control warships, they may not want to keep them waiting idle as passenger transport. Then again, perhaps such a luxury is a privilege of rank. Below are several different options for traversing the void. The GM may decide one or more are available to the player characters, or use them the next time the characters make an Infamy Test to acquire passage somewhere.

The Perfect Blade

The *Perfect Blade* is a Chaos cruiser that troubles the sleep of even the reckless voidfarers who brave the Screaming Vortex. The *Perfect Blade* is said to herald its arrival with keening wails that travel through the warp and ring in the ears of its victims before their death screams join the cacophony. It is captained by a Chaos Space Marine from the Iron Warriors named Hesferon. The ship's prow is a wall of serrated gears that can tear through the hulls of opposing vessels like a chainsword through flesh. This hungry mechanism then consumes the remains of the defeated vessels, incorporating the wreckage into itself. Every time the *Perfect Blade* is encountered it is different from the time before. It is said that the warp shrieking is actually the protests of the metal hull as it is forever taxed and distorted by the ship's endless self-fortification.

Pirates

The pirate empire of Sacgrave may have fallen, but the Screaming Vortex still teems with raiding fleets of every size and composition. Some of the most well-known pirate fleets include the Black Regret under the command of the renegade Admiral Kalyan, and the anarchic Current Runners. For the right price or the right favour, these predatory vessels can also be persuaded to take on passengers.

The Thresher

Varied and inexplicable are the things that surface from beneath Furia's seas, but the appearance of this strange and perfectly functional dull grey voidship floating from the depths of the oceans surprised even the planet's floating salvage communities. The vessel is roughly the size of a frigate but its exterior design is unlike any patterns on record. However, the interior controls are unquestionably of Imperial origin and the ship cogitators chatter in High Gothic. The *Thresher* is not well armed, but it is incredibly fast and manoeuvrable, and can be operated by a crew of only a few thousand thralls or slaves. Furthermore it scarcely registers on augur arrays, making it the perfect vessel for infiltration.

Dark Eldar Alliance

Not every trip between planets requires a ship. The webways run thick and tangled through the Screaming Vortex, although the nature of the warp storm makes them an even more dangerous and turbulent place than in other regions. A human couldn't hope to navigate these passages through the warp safely, but they are home to the Dark Eldar. These xenos are fickle and vicious, but they hold the secrets to bypassing a planet's every defence.

ADDITIONAL COMPLICATIONS

If the GM is writing more Compacts, he is going to need a longer selection of Complications to choose from than those provided in the **BLACK CRUSADE CORE RULEBOOK**. Here are some additional possibilities:

Dark Displeasure

The Heretics inadvertently anger a powerful warlord or a thrice-blessed servant of the Ruinous Powers. This individual doesn't consider the Heretics to be worth his time. However, he has made it clear that anyone who delivers him the Heretics' heads would earn his favour. An inconvenient number of enemies seem interested in that offer, and no one else wants anything to do with the player characters lest they incur the same wrath.

A Fit of Conscience

A key unit in the Heretics' forces has been overcome with regret and weakness. Instead of carrying out their orders, they launch a suicidal penance battle. Worse yet, perhaps it is one of the player characters that finds a Compact requires an act that is unpalatable even to his blighted conscience. The latter requires the characters to have well-defined motivations and histories that the GM knows well. The opportunity for this kind of roleplaying challenge is exactly why those details are so important to a strong campaign.

No Quarter Given

The Heretics reach their destination to discover it besieged by foes only interested in indiscriminate slaughter. Possible culprits could include warp entities, Orks, Necrons, or Tyranids. If the Heretics are going to complete their Compact, they will have to avoid becoming victims of the attacking horde and fulfil their Objectives in a vastly different situation than they'd planned. If things go awry, the Heretics might find themselves having to ally with parties they had set out to conquer.

MECHANICAL CONSIDERATIONS

By default, the **BLACK CRUSADE** mechanics represent the transient nature of a Heretic's story, burning twice as bright and half as long. If characters are going to have a longer playable lifespan, a few numerical assumptions change that underlie the game. The optional rules presented here give the GM a greater degree of flexibility without having to change the core rules.

TABLE 1-4: INFAMY SACRIFICES FOR ITEMS

Infamy Test Modifier	Infamy Sacrifice Required
+20 or more	1
+10	2
+0	3
-10	5
-20 to -30	8
-40 to -50	10
more than -50	Impossible

INFAMY AND CORRUPTION

When a Heretic's Infamy or Corruption total reaches 100, the game is over for that character. By design, the basic **BLACK CRUSADE** system does not offer ways to reduce one's Corruption Points (and Infamy loss is only associated with failure). Since Infamy and Corruption gain go hand in hand with playing **BLACK CRUSADE**, this puts a firm—and none too generous—time limit on a character, unless some mechanisms are introduced to postpone the inevitable.

These rules only alleviate that problem if the players make use of them. For an extended campaign, the GM should make sure his players understand the intention to play over a longer time period and that if they don't make use of these optional rules they might be in for a character change before the campaign is over. Note also, these rules are completely optional, and may change the core game experience.

Sacrificing Infamy

Like other Characteristics, there is no mechanical downside to having a high Infamy. Therefore, if a player chooses to lower his Infamy in the name of longevity, he should get something beneficial out of it. Below are some possible ways that Infamy could be spent to purchase advantages that wouldn't normally be available in a shorter campaign. In all cases, the Heretic should still justify how he taxed his reputation and personal power for the gain in question. He might have called in an excessive number of favours, or now finds himself beholden to an unpleasant number of other Heretics because of the number of promises he had to make to get what he desired. Infamy Sacrifices are also necessary to attain and improve upon Superior Minions of Chaos (below).

Reversing Gifts and Afflictions

As discussed in Chapter IX of the **BLACK CRUSADE CORE RULEBOOK**, sometimes the GM might allow a character to rid himself of a truly undesirable mutation by sacrificing something of value to the Dark Gods. To do this, the Heretic still needs to describe whatever ritual, supplication, or sacrifice he is invoking. However, if he reduces his Infamy by 5 to represent the magnitude of resources expended in this endeavour, he does not need to make an Infamy Test to be rid of the unwanted Gift; it is automatically removed from the character.

Acquire Specific Gifts or Rewards

Just as a player may find a particular Gift to be incompatible with his character concept, there may be a particular Gift that he is hoping his character gains. With the GM's permission, a

player can sacrifice Infamy to modify his roll for Gifts of the Gods or Rewards of the Dark Gods. The Infamy is sacrificed after the roll is made, and cannot be done if the Corruption Track threshold is crossed by gaining Corruption via failure. Modifying a roll on the Gift of the Dark Gods table costs an amount of Infamy equal to the number the character wants to add or subtract. This is in addition to the modifier for the character's Infamy Bonus. For example, a character with an Infamy Bonus of 8 can sacrifice 2 Infamy to modify his roll by a total of 10. Any changes to the character's Infamy Bonus due to this sacrifice are calculated after the gift is assigned. Modifying a roll for Rewards of the Dark Gods requires an Infamy sacrifice equal to half the number by which the character wants to modify the roll (rounding up).

Acquire Resources

The composition of a Heretic's holdings is partially by design and partially determined by whatever he sees the opportunity to take. Even if a Heretic is able to pursue specific enemies and locations so he can collect certain assets, such conquests require time. There may be occasions when a character needs to acquire something very specific right away (and Infamy Tests, if applicable, have failed him). If he is truly desperate he may be able to obtain what he seeks, but at a cost. With the GM's permission, a Heretic can permanently decrease his Infamy to be assured of attaining an item. This may be done regardless of what type of location the Heretic is in or if he just failed an Infamy Test to acquire the item. Determine the



total Infamy Test modifier that would be required to attain the item (based on all the usual factors) and then reference **Table 1-4: Infamy Sacrifices for Items** for how much Infamy must be sacrificed. It is not possible to combine Infamy Sacrifice with the rules for Trading.

Reducing Corruption Points

Corruption Points are the double-edged sword in a Heretic's rise to power. On one hand, a stronger amount of warp energy permeating his soul means it is easier for the Dark Powers he serves to subtly alter reality around him in his favour. At the same time, if he accumulates too many Corruption Points, he might suddenly find himself a mindless, mewling spawn. In order to stave off that fate long enough for a campaign to play out, the GM can offer players various opportunities to reduce their Corruption Point total. In all cases, this reduction does not represent a real purification of the Heretic's soul, or that the Dark Gods have any less of a claim to it. The effect is a purging of warp energies from the body in much the same way that toxins might be expelled—only less pleasant.

Except as noted below, reducing one's Corruption Points does not reverse Gifts gained from the Corruption Track. If a character reduces his Corruption Point total, he should note the point he is at on the Corruption Track before the change. Regardless of his Corruption Point numerical score, he remains at this Track Threshold, and does not generate another gift until he gains enough Corruption Points to surpass where he was before and reach the next point along the Track. In other words, while it is possible to lower a character's Corruption Point total with these optional rules, it is not possible to go backwards on the Corruption Track. Heretics use their current Corruption Points when determining what Exceptional Abilities are available through Infamy Points; this means it is possible to reduce the effects of Infamy Points using these rules.

Ritual of Castigation

This process takes many forms, ranging from ceremonies using artefacts stolen from the Imperium's churches to being conjoined with reverse empyrean tubes driven by arcane machinery. However, all of these methods have one thing in common: scouring one's soul is always painful and debilitating. A Heretic who undergoes such a ritual may spend Experience Points to remove Corruption, at the rate of 250 XP per Point of Corruption removed.

Simulacrum Effigy

A warp energy simulacrum is a preventative measure rather than a reactive one. This crystalline repository is psychically attuned to a particular individual, and absorbs a portion of the warp energies he is exposed to. Commissioning such a device counts as an Infamy Test to acquire a Very Rare item. As long as the Heretic is wearing the simulacrum, he can make a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** whenever he is exposed to sources of warp energy that would cause him to gain Corruption Points. If he passes the Test, half of the Corruption Points (round down) are absorbed into the simulacrum instead of being gained by the Heretic. This only works for external sources of corruption such as sorcery or open warp rifts. It does not absorb any Corruption gained from performing blasphemous acts.

THAT'S QUITE A FEW INFAMY POINTS YOU HAVE THERE

One thing GMs may notice is that as they increase in power and Infamy, their players have quite a few Infamy Points to spend, far more than the Fate Points available in other Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay Games. This is intentional! As they grow in power, Heretics are supposed to be fighting incredibly dangerous foes, such as Greater Daemons, Nemesis Dreadknights, troupes of Harlequins, and Necron Lords. The Heretics will never have the raw Characteristics and stats that some of these enemies do. Infamy Points provide the edge, because a Heretic should have a chance to fell a Greater Daemon.

However, if a GM wishes to, he can limit the number of Infamy Points that a Heretic spends in a single encounter (not limiting the overall number of Infamy Points). This forces the Heretics to be a bit cautious in managing their Infamy Point resources. The limit is up to the GM, but the suggested number is half.

The Heretic must keep track of the number of Corruption Points stored in the simulacrum. Should he ever roll 95-100 on a Willpower Test to activate the simulacrum, it shatters. If this happens, all of the stored warp energy immediately floods the bearer, and he increases his Corruption Point total by the entire amount stored in the device. Additionally, creating a warp simulacrum requires imbuing it with a tiny fraction of the owner's soul. With such an item, there is always a risk that one's enemies might get hold of it...

False Repentance

Only the truly terrified and desperate would actually shrink from the dark powers they once embraced. Still, it does happen that a man suddenly sees himself on the very edge of becoming a mindless beast of Chaos and retreats from the path of destiny. Such a cowardly act may stave off the ravages of mutation for a time, but it comes with a great loss of respect. For every point a character reduces his Infamy by, he may remove 2 Corruption Points. However, the Ruinous Powers are never pleased with those who forsake them. Inevitably the Heretic will give in to the draw of power. The next time he rolls to determine a Gift of the Gods, he may not try to gain a Reward instead, and may not modify the result by his Infamy Bonus.

END GAME: THE BLACK CRUSADE

When players reach the last landmark of Infamy, whether it is the threshold to Apotheosis or the threshold to leading a Black Crusade, it should feel like more than adding the last small total to a scalar math equation. The GM should plan for why this event is the final step towards launching a Black Crusade. Perhaps it represents unearthing a super weapon the likes of which the Screaming Vortex has never seen, seizing the holdings of a rival warlord and quadrupling the Heretics' own resources, or a dozen new worlds pledging themselves to the Heretics' cause.

BRINGERS OF RUIN

In the **BLACK CRUSADE CORE RULEBOOK**, Chapter VIII: The Game Master briefly discusses the options when the player characters are finally ready to launch their Black Crusade against the Imperium. This section attempts to provide more detailed guidance if the group decides to play through the Black Crusade itself.

Gathering Resources

The **BLACK CRUSADE CORE RULEBOOK** on page 268 lists the a prerequisite amount of Infamy for one to lead a Black Crusade: 140. However, this is far more than simply a numerical threshold. Firstly, the 140 Infamy should represent what the Heretic had to do to reach that threshold. If the game has been successful, the Heretic must have duelled potent enemies, built a dangerous reputation, be owed favours by powerful individuals and organizations, and even bent voidships, armies, and entire planets to his will. To lead a Black Crusade, he must muster those resources.

Such a task may involve more than a little bookkeeping, as the players work with the GM to tally up what resources they have at their disposal. This stage is less about individual combat and more about negotiations, organizing forces, and sending out minions to do one's bidding. However, that isn't to say this stage cannot be fun. The GM can portray this as the players' hard-earned efforts coming back to them in spades—the entire campaign paying off as armies rally to their banner and the worthies of the Vortex kneel before them in supplication. Let them bask in their glory. After all, the hard part is yet to come!

Define Victory

What is the first domain of the Corpse God that the Heretics are seeking to conquer? The Jericho Reach? The Calixis Sector? Seizing any one sector is a momentous undertaking on its own, but is that enough to spell victory or is more required? The GM and the players should agree on exactly what the game's new objective is. They could decide that their campaign is not over until they have swept through the entire galaxy and conquered Terra itself. That is going to take a long time, but then again, if you want to run a campaign that only ends when the player characters die or rule the universe, you will never be without a new sector to conquer. However, sooner or later you will run out of areas that Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay provides setting material for.

Discuss the New Rules of the Game

Before they launched the Crusade, the Heretics' ultimate goal was to accumulate 100 Infamy. What is it now? If victory is conquering the Calixis Sector, how will they measure progress towards it? Number of planets held? Does it count as defeated once the capital world falls? Maybe the Heretics are now accumulating Victory Points instead of Infamy. There is no one correct answer to this question, but the GM and the players should all have the same understanding of how the game has changed.

The group may also find themselves wanting to employ mechanics from other Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay games to represent the different scale of the Crusade. **ROGUE TRADER** offers rules for space combat; massed battle rules can be found in **MARK OF THE XENOS** for **DEATHWATCH**; a game full of sabotage from within might benefit from the Influence rules in **ASCENSION** for **DARK HERESY**. Borrowing from other games is all purely optional. Ultimately, all the GM needs to do is remember that no matter how big the scope of the story gets, the player characters are still the stars. Keep the lens focused on them.

Focus on the Player Characters

Even without any new mechanics, the entire Crusade can be represented by the concept of Turning Points. A Turning Point is the event that decides the outcome of a larger conflict. This could be the combat to take out the enemy general in the middle of a battlefield, one encounter during the siege of a planet, or an entire Compact that determines whether Chaos will take or lose a sector. In all cases, the Turning Point isolates an event or set of events that the Heretics can affect using the existing rules, and then the rest of the story flows according to how the player characters perform at that Turning Point.

If the story does venture into territory where massively scaled battles are unavoidable, the strategy remains the same: keep the action focused on the characters the players control. If there are 900 Chaos soldiers and a 1000 Imperial Guardsmen, let 900 from each side cancel each other out and assume that everything really hinges on the margin—the remaining 100 Guardsmen in a Horde versus the Heretics (or their Minions).

It can be tempting to summarise sweeping initiatives with Command Tests or other proxy Skill Tests. This may be appropriate for minor skirmishes, but falling back on pure summarisation too often during the main story takes away the very ground's-eye view that differentiates a roleplaying game from a tabletop war game. Of course, if a strategic game to determine the campaign's outcome is what the players want, the Warhammer 40,000 setting certainly offers the opportunity to determine the outcome of a massive series of battles by pitting large armies against each other. However, doing so leaves the domain of the roleplaying game rules.

