



DARK HERESY™

ENEMIES WITHIN™

THE ORDO HERETICUS
OF THE ASKELLON SECTOR

WARHAMMER
40,000
ROLEPLAY



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Edric sat quietly in the dim light, carving out a new stake. He didn't like Snope's World, and that was before the deaths. Its smell of wet ashes was even stronger to him here in this damp, collapsed hovel. The youth dared but a small candle, just enough light to see his knife and the wood. With each cut, Edric focused his hate for one final duty to the Emperor.

Edric had a witch to kill.

They had come to Snope's World on Her orders. No one knew her real name, so they took to creating ones. Davan solemnly called her The Lady, almost in the same tones he used for the many saints in his prayers. Canto laughingly named her She Who Gives Orders. Edric would never have thought an adept of the Machine Cult capable of humour, but Lhal also used the phrase. Though perhaps she meant it literally.

Edric hadn't settled on a name yet, but then she had only plucked him from his avenging solitude of witch hunting a short time ago. He was sure it would come soon, though, in the same way he was always certain of his righteous mission.

All knew better than to use her title, of course, even him. She operated from the shadows, using Acolytes such as themselves. The fewer who knew of her the better—especially here on a world that seemed to thrive on devious acts and veiled conspiracies.

They were far from Hive Saturna and the glittering Platinal Palace, though, in a refurbished Meldorian hab that their targeted sect used in furtive gatherings. The sect lay at the end of a trail that started with a hive implosion and a screeching cry heard by Astropaths across the Asphodel Depths. Whispers and intimations pointed to aged tomes and bloodstained parchments, kept hidden under the group's habtop lair. Items of horrible power, power enough to crush mountains, in the hands of fops eager for new amusements. All was to be ended tonight, as per Her command.

Newly purloined clothing and ivory masks helped them blend in with the similarly garbed members. Canto provided the final flourish with a pilfered turquoise orchid, the secret sign for entry at the tower level. Once in, it was then simple to slide away and begin hunting through the quiet corridors below the merriment.

Their footsteps seemed to echo loudly along the poorly lit passages. Two levels down, Lhal finally paused them at one door.

"Here," she whispered, holding up her auspex. "A much greater power flow is within." She gave the slab of metal a soft push and it creaked open, spilling strong light out into the hallway.

Outlined against the light crouched a masked figure at the end of the corridor. With a sudden lurch, it stood and dashed away.

Davan didn't need to give orders. Canto was already sprinting after the retreating form. Lhal was right behind him, her power blades drawn and glowing. Davan grabbed Edric and pulled him into the chamber. "Fast now. We won't have much time."

Inside, elegant glow-globes hovered above gilded pedestals. Each sphere illuminated a single open book, oddly shaped relic, or unfurled scroll. Cables ran along the pedestals like nesting snakes.

They moved quickly amongst the artefacts, searching for true signs of the Ruinous Powers. The slightest hint would be enough to condemn those above. Even if unaware of what they had unleashed or what powers they had used, these sinners would pay. Witches, all of them, and Edric looked forward to the flames.

Each item revealed some new blasphemy, but no Warp-taint. There was little time, even if their friends took care of the furtive observer. It seemed forever before Edric himself found it.

"Here." His voice trembled as he called, his eyes watering painfully at the symbols in the opened tome before him. "These glyphs, the marks inside them. This is no fake. This is damnation."

Davan didn't hesitate. "Alert the others. We burn this room and then we burn everyone else here."

Edric clicked his micro-bead. "Canto. Lhal. We found it." There was no reply. "It's real. Get clear." He tried to keep the rising panic out of his voice. "Don't come for us—get out now!"

He heard footsteps behind him and whirled, almost firing before he recognised Canto's mask. "Praise the Throne," he said, relieved at the sight. "You didn't respond, and we..."

Davan's voice was low and cold. "That's not him."

A thin, gloved hand came up, lifting away the bone-white ceramic to reveal Canto's grinning face, marred only by blood trickling from around his eyes. "Ah, you see right through me," he said in a musical voice, lips unmoving as he uttered the words. "She has truly trained you well."

Another hand came up, peeling away that face to show another one below, arrogant and lined with crimson rivulets. "She always speaks highly of her pawns whenever we have our little chats," he said, pouting at the remains of Canto's face. "I had so hoped, though, that she would be here personally this time."

Edric broke out of his shock and fired, but the autopistol hits were like rain on a Chimera's hull. A casual slap from one gloved hand pitched the youth into Davan, throwing them both aside.

The tall, perfectly groomed figure advanced on them, delicately licking the blood from his lips. Azure tendrils flared around his shoulders, and similar flames danced around his eyes. Edric knew his enemy now. "Witch!" he shouted as a curse, even as elongated, grasping fingers reached for his skull.

A blast of cold energy tore the fingers away and cast the tall enemy against one of the pedestals, dropping him hard.

Edric looked towards the source of the blast. His comrade, his mentor, his *friend*—whose hands were now wreathed in curls of amethyst flames. Witchfire. Edric almost collapsed. "No..."

"Yes," Davan said, mournful and sad but still forceful. "I was about to leave the Ecclesiarchy and end myself when The Lady found me and gave me a way to atone for my sin." He marched forwards resolutely, thick violet fires growing up his arms. "Run now, Edric. Tell her..."

"Tell her what, little witch?" the now-standing figure taunted. "That you will never finish your penance?" He smiled wide. "Or that you knew she is just like you, also blessed by the Warp?"

The unnatural fires exploded around Davan and his foe, and Edric was hurled through a wall to the marshes below. He could only stagger away as the entire structure erupted in witchfire, purples and blues fighting for dominance as they rose into the night sky. Those final, laughing words echoed in his mind as he faltered in his steps, finally collapsing into the soft, wet ground.

There. The stake was ready, sharp and filled with all the hate he could channel into the blessed Thaurian hardwood. He could almost feel it glow in the faint candlelight.

Three days had passed before he found a coded parchment in one of the backup spots, detailing the time and place for extraction. It said she would be there, in person. He couldn't wait to see her.

He still didn't know her real name. He never would. But now Edric finally knew what to call her.

Heretic.

INTRODUCTION

"Our enemies prowl in the shadows of shining cathedrals. They scuttle in the darkness of dank underhives. They lurk in the corners of gilded palaces. They even dare to stand openly, hiding behind false faces and honeyed words. They are everywhere that men live and breathe—and so we must always be ready to face them with fire and the Emperor's wrath!"

—from the Epistles of Inquisitor Kharkov

Though the rapacious alien and the vile Daemon have ended entire worlds and devoured countless souls, many hold that these are lesser threats to the survival of Mankind when compared to those that come from within the Imperium itself. Such enemies represent the foulest of treacheries: deviant cultists, grotesque mutants, unnatural witches, and others who were once human, but have betrayed Mankind and their Emperor through their actions if not their very existence.

Cults exist throughout the Imperium, and often begin as benign gatherings devoted to religious study, martial training, medicae practices, and other worthy pursuits. All too often, however, they become twisted, and turn to darker pursuits and unholy powers. Quests for ancient knowledge grow maniacal, and necessitate appeals to the God of Fate. Mastery of the sword becomes all, and soon only the Blood God is worthy of respect. Surgical preservations delve too deeply into the nature of flesh, and the appreciative Plague Lord bestows gifts on his new children. Obsessions themselves grow until no excess is unthinkable, and the Dark Prince lasciviously welcomes his eager supplicants. Cults grow and spread in their devotion to the Ruinous Powers, befouling habs, hives, and even whole worlds with their taint, until rebellion and worse erupt from these ghastly beliefs and practices.

Mutants are common within cults, their inner corruption revealed through misshapen forms. Such deviance might once have been considered mere genetic damage, but in these terrible days, all know that the taint of the Ruinous Powers is the cause. Each bestial hide, each tentacled growth, each glowing eye-stalk can only indicate Chaos contorting flesh into new, hideous shapes. Mutants betray Mankind by debasing the form of man itself, and are rightly rejected by human society.

Other, more dangerous mutants hide their deformities inside their skulls and dare touch the Warp with their minds. Psykers are useful to the Imperium, but are also the most dreadful of threats. Those not shackled and properly trained are vulnerable to the predations of ravenous Warp-entities, and can grant these foul hosts unfettered access to material space. Reality itself suffers irreparable harm in these instances, and entire worlds can be plunged into the Realms of Chaos, never to return. Better that witches be caught and burned than be free to damn themselves and others to such fates.

These menaces can be found in every setting and on every planet that humanity inhabits. This is especially true in the Askellon Sector, a region that weeps with the echoes of ancient betrayals. Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus—those entrusted with standing against such enemies—and their servant Acolytes find no end to heretics, mutants, and witches in these ancient worlds. For so long as men and women exist, there will always be enemies within.

ENEMIES WITHIN examines these threats and how they relate to the Askellon Sector, and is divided into three chapters:

CHAPTER I: HERETICUS

The history of the Ordo Hereticus within Askellon is a long one, with tales of psyker eruptions, mutant uprisings, and other heresies across the millennia. This chapter offers greater details of this history and the secretive legends concerning Ordo Hereticus activities throughout Askellian space, including the terrible Vaxi Atrocity that nearly destroyed the sector.

CHAPTER II: FURY AND FIRE

This chapter features many new player options, especially for crafting Acolytes through the use of new home worlds, backgrounds, and roles, as well as the Sister of Battle elite advance. Players also discover new weapons, talents, and psychic powers to support their Acolytes as they struggle against heresy. Acolytes can even launch their own independent Inquests rather than await their master's directives, and seek out Radical assets should they wish to use such possibly heretical forces themselves.

CHAPTER III: ROOTS OF HERESY

The final chapter explores Askellian planets and the heretical cults festering on each, offering players new possible home worlds and Game Masters new Hereticus-themed locations and adventure ideas. GMs can also use the cult and plot generators with the other support materials to craft new adversaries and twists for Acolytes seeking to root out and destroy Askellon's enemies within.





CHAPTER I: HERETICUS

Beset on all sides, humanity fights a battle for its very existence. It is the province of the Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus—the Witch Hunters—to protect Mankind from what they consider its greatest threat: betrayal from within. This is a burden from which these grim wardens cannot flinch. They know that a moment of weakness, of remorse over their own terrible actions, or even the failure to act at all can cost humanity dearly. It is better to incinerate an entire population than to allow a single heretic to live, planting the seeds of Chaos that could grow to damn entire systems. To defy a Witch Hunter's will is to risk incurring his blazing wrath, and very few wish to find out just how fiercely that wrath can burn.

Few welcome the arrival of Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus. They know that the presence of Witch Hunters usually also means purifying flames to cleanse any hint of heresy from the planet. Those who do rejoice can often find themselves on the pyres as well, for no one is fully free of corruption in the eyes of zealous Inquisitors. As zealousness is often a watchword for Ordo Hereticus Inquisitors, it is not uncommon for their departure to leave bonfires of heretics, mutants, and, of course, witches so immense as to be seen from orbiting ships.



Few individuals within the Imperium are more powerful or more essential than the Witch Hunters of the Ordo Hereticus, and though all are equal in title, they are by no means identical. Differences in philosophy and tactics define the emphasis of their approach to the mission of saving humanity from itself. Though all have ultimately only one task, the enormous variety of opinions on both the most pressing threats and the best methods to combat those threats often leads to animosity and disagreement. Because each Inquisitor has ultimate personal authority, the right to employ that authority in any way he or she sees fit, and the power to back up that authority, arguments between members of the Ordo Hereticus can be highly contentious and often violent.

It falls to the Ordo Hereticus to defend against the threats that arise from those around them. Tolerance for their fellow man is not a quality for which most, if any, Witch

Hunters are known, given the nature of their enemy. Decisiveness, action, resolve, authority, certitude, suspicion—these are the hallmarks of Inquisitors. These traits give power to will, and by the will of Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus, all things are possible—perhaps even the preservation of Mankind against impossible odds.

SECRETS OF FIRE

"My flamer can never grow cold so long as a heretic draws breath."

—Inquisitor Po, Ordo Hereticus

None can say for certain what specific incident, if any, prompted the Emperor to charge the first Inquisitors with their never-ending mission to secure Mankind's right to exist among the stars. From that point forth, though, Inquisitors became the left hand of the Emperor, guarding against the plots of xenos, the predations of the creatures of the Warp, and the treachery of those within Mankind itself—all so that no peril could ever threaten to extinguish Mankind's light from the universe.

Nothing more than this can be said in any definitive way. The very act of seeking knowledge is considered by many to be a sign of possible corruption, for what more does a man need to know, other than that he lives to serve the Emperor? Still, there are those who pursue the truth, or at least what they believe to be the truth, delving into the shadowy history of the Inquisition. Legends, myths, and dark fables abound, all offering differing explanations of its origins. All of these tales claim to be the incontrovertible truth, and yet nearly all of them offer different, utterly incompatible stories. Most cannot even agree on the identities of those first Inquisitors, let alone what words were spoken to them or other such details. Further confounding those who seek ancient knowledge is the existence of individuals who work tirelessly from within the ranks of the Inquisition to strike all traces of truth from what records might remain. None but actual Inquisitors could ever be entrusted with such powerful knowledge, and few Inquisitors would even allow others of their rank to know these ancient secrets.

This secrecy is a common guiding principle for many Inquisitors. A trail that does not exist cannot be followed, and often the only evidence that an Inquisitor has operated in a sector is a disturbing void of information. This can take the form of missing records, datavaults, or even entire populations. Burning a book and burning a world both can accomplish the same thing, the latter perhaps differing only in scale. If flames are required to turn the truth to ash, the Inquisitor must strike the match—no matter how all-consuming the blaze.

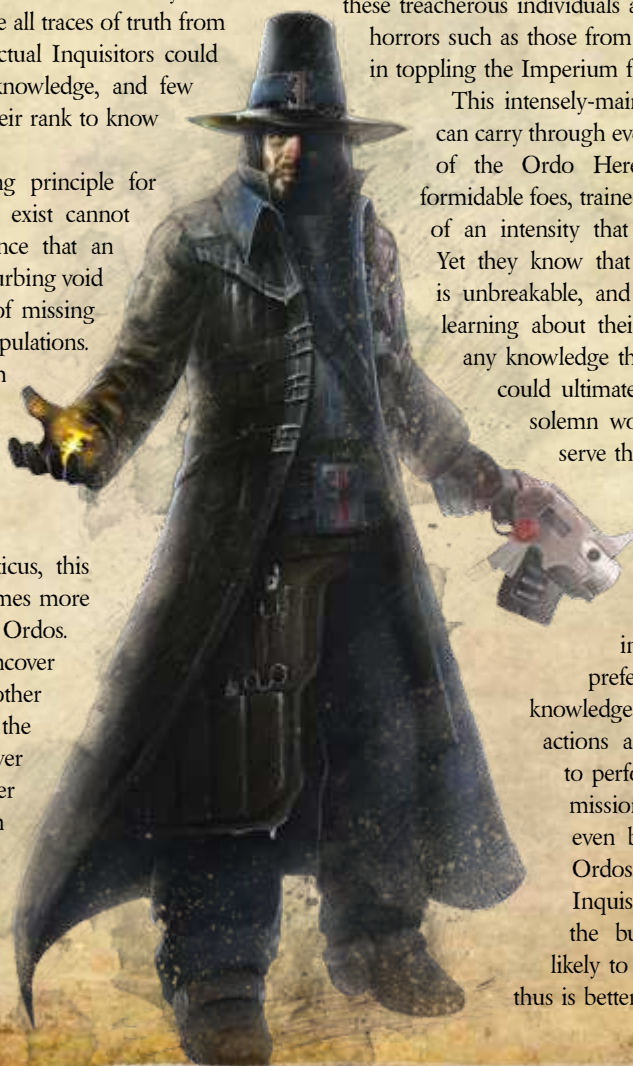
For Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus, this need to remain in the shadows is sometimes more important than it is for those from other Ordos. One of the main ways in which they uncover internal threats is to keep watch on the other organisations of the Imperium, such as the Ecclesiarchy, with the greatest levels of power and influence. There is great risk whenever power is consolidated in the hands of an unquestioned few. Fear of reprisal keeps many would-be traitors from attempting heresy, but secretive watching can reveal even greater plots, and ensure even more heretics reach the pyre.

GIDEON LORR

Inquisitor Lorr has an uncompromising and simple directive towards any who display psychic abilities: death. Across the Segmentum Pacificus, he has overseen the execution of countless psykers, including Sanctioned Astropaths and even Navigators in his quest to eradicate any who even remotely utilise the Warp. Lorr has witnessed first-hand the terrors of daemonic incursion, and would rather see all psykers dead than allow a single Daemon access to real space. Often described as the ultimate Puritan, many suspect his actions are sure to bring retribution from other Inquisitors, as his purge could possibly cripple interstellar travel and communications within the Imperium.

Perhaps nothing in Imperial history illustrates this internal threat as well as the period known as the Age of Apostasy. During this time, the ideological and political struggle between the Ecclesiarchy and the Administratum weakened both to the point where Goge Vandire, a delusional and power-mad High Lord of the Imperium, was able to seize near-absolute control of both organisations. Through a series of covert dealings, political manoeuvrings, and assassinations, he became both High Lord and Ecclesiarch, combining the authority of both in one man—and it was nearly the ruin of the Imperium. Those who dare ponder such things believe that the Ordo Hereticus came into being as a protection against actions and malign influences such as those of Vandire. Mankind must always guard against the rise of these treacherous individuals and their hidden agendas, lest horrors such as those from the Age of Apostasy succeed in toppling the Imperium from within.

This intensely-maintained ignorance of the past can carry through even for Inquisitors and servants of the Ordo Hereticus itself. Inquisitors are formidable foes, trained to resist probing and torture of an intensity that would shatter lesser minds. Yet they know that no will save the Emperor's is unbreakable, and thus these Inquisitors avoid learning about their own history, knowing that any knowledge they may be forced to give up could ultimately be used to undo all their solemn work. The lesser Acolytes who serve these Inquisitors are, of course, much weaker than their masters, and it is incredibly rare for Inquisitors to trust an Acolyte with any meaningful or dangerous information. These Inquisitors prefer instead to keep their servants' knowledge limited to the details of the actions and duties they are expected to perform in service to their Lords' missions. Many Acolytes might not even be aware of the existence of Ordos, let alone the one that their Inquisitor follows. A mind free of the burden of knowledge is less likely to wander and to question, and thus is better able to serve.



TRAITORS TO MANKIND

"Fools! They dare call me heretic, when I have seen true power!"

—Ulrika du Garnet, First OverSeer of the Sisters of Primal Vision

The Inquisition is not a formal, hierarchical organisation. The powers given to Inquisitors by the mandate of the Emperor make it impossible for any regimented structure or system of ranks and classes to function effectively. Inquisitors are thus free to execute their duties as they see fit, leading to the forging of individuals of unequalled autonomy. What they believe must be done is indeed just that, and none can gainsay them. There is no deciding mechanism to say that one approach is correct and another is invalid. Only the results matter against the terrible foes of Mankind.

The foes of the Ordo Hereticus are exclusively members of humanity itself—the same faction which Inquisitors seek to save. Unlike aliens or Daemons that plot the downfall of man more openly, heretics within the ranks of humanity operate in secret, to rot the fruit from within before any can detect the stench. These enemies often seek positions of power and influence within the mind and body of the Imperium, such as the many offices of the Adeptus Terra itself. Particularly bold heretics may even attempt to infiltrate and poison the very soul of the Imperium—the Ecclesiarchy. Foes such as these are pawns of Chaos, whether they know it or not, and traitors to their species.

Worse yet, these traitors can be found everywhere. All men and women have within them the seed of corruption, of false action, of betrayal. Even those who do not mean to stray or sin may do so through laziness, greed, or even simply by living. Mutants and psykers may profess love of the Emperor, but their very existence can lead others to question the path upon which man is set. Even those who burn their own flesh working in the forges on Mars, or hurl themselves into the breach to stem the tide of a xenos invasion, may one day give in to the temptation to ease their own pain. No one is above reproach. No one is innocent. No one can be trusted.

For Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus, trust is scorned as a weakness that causes men to ignore the growing seeds of heresy in those around them. The only thing that can be trusted is that all men can be corrupted, and any man can fall. Traitors are everywhere and can be anyone. No promise or oath guarantees loyalty; the Emperor and all of Mankind paid dearly to learn these truths. These Inquisitors are entrusted with ensuring that the terrible price in blood and souls never needs to be paid again.

It is their mission to root out those who know themselves to be evil, but also those who are so weak that they allow themselves to be tricked into betraying their own kind. These ingrates and fools are the worst of the worst, betrayers who must be dragged screaming from the dank cellars of their own villainy and ignorance, vigorously interrogated, and ultimately purged. Others simply seek greater power for themselves and care not if the cost is the future of Mankind. Regardless of the egotistical delusion or vile pettiness that drives them, all of these men are traitors to their kind who must be excised from the body of the Imperium. The Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus know that wretches such as these are far more dangerous in the long run than any daemonic summoning or marauding Ork fleet.



Some traitors have slipped so slowly from the Emperor's light that they are unaware they tread in darkness. What might begin as a commander's desire to reward each of his platoon's victories with a celebratory feast may alter over time into an orgy of consumption that serves to venerate Slaanesh. The light of a Witch Hunter's torch is sure to show the commander and his platoon the error of their ways. Some heretics are so consumed with their own mad plots that they do not even consider the consequences of their actions, or perhaps are so deluded that they believe they could not possibly be found out. Misguided, mad, or mistaken, it makes no difference to the Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus—all must be eradicated for their treachery.

It is a mission that can never end. A heretic might be a mere human, inconsequential when compared to alien armies or daemonic incursions against reality itself, but where there is one heretic, more soon congregate, like flies to a corpse. Many fear that the presence of mutants of body or mind instils similar corruption within others, and fears often become truths when belief is strong enough. Numbers become power, and power unchecked can overturn hives, topple the rightful rule, and taint entire worlds with the stench of Chaos. Only through the fierce, unrelenting pursuit of even the slightest of heretics can these threats be quelled before entire worlds must be burnt to the crust to prevent their spread.

Those in high offices or other positions of great power within the Imperium can try to deflect inquest through intimidation and threats of imprisonment or worse. Clandestine heretics might attempt to keep their treacherous machinations safely hidden away until it was too late to stop them. Horrid mutants and unholy witches can gather together to plot against the societies that rightly hate them. These and other traitors to Mankind are exposed by the blazing light of discovery that the Witch Hunters shine into their darkened souls, and no power is great enough, nor office high enough, to extinguish this flame.

BURNING MILLIONS TO SAVE BILLIONS

"Rejoice! Your deaths ensure your planet survives."

—Heard during the Night of Tall Flames

No matter the particulars of their chosen methods, it is impossible to argue against the importance and impact of the work of Inquisitors. They have doubtless saved untold numbers of human lives on numerous occasions. The actions of the Witch Hunters, however, are perhaps the most horrific of any Ordo. Most men could not contemplate, let alone execute, what they would deem as necessary. The greatest Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus are often those who have tortured and killed more of their fellow men than others would see over the course of entire lifetimes, and yet in each case the toll was worth exacting. The misery and deaths of so many are nothing when weighed against the numbers that are saved.

This is not to say that Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus necessarily enjoy putting their fellow man to the torch, even if they do derive great satisfaction in executing their role. They know that their actions are necessary. The suffering of one individual today may quicken the compliance of many others, and thus may save billions of humans tomorrow. One man's hellish agony is inconsequential compared to the survival of Mankind, and therefore those who follow the Ordo Hereticus must be prepared to create an inferno that others within the Imperium would find unthinkable. Such is the will necessary to be an Inquisitor.

The hearts of the Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus must be also hardened, so that they might survive the threat of betrayal and heresy of other men. The face they see in the mirror is that of their foe—a constant reminder that while the heretic's visage may be familiar, his eyes are those of a cold, soulless stranger who has tossed aside his birthright as a human. This is one of the many reasons why these Inquisitors are often stern and grim in prosecuting their duties, their determination absolute and allowing for no weakness. There is little reason to hate the alien or the Daemon, for such are anathema to Mankind by their very nature. The heretic, the mutant, and the witch have turned from the Emperor. For such traitors as these, the Ordo Hereticus can only show hatred and fire, the latter perhaps its favoured weapon against its enemies.

Given that the enemies within are, or once were, human, fire serves as an excellent weapon of terror. Immolation is a horrific form of death, unlike the clean lasgun round or power blade cut. To burn the heretic is to impose the Emperor's Wrath upon the foul mutant or screaming witch in a highly visible manner. This can stay fixed in the minds of all who witness it, and perhaps keep many others from straying. Humans instinctively fear fire, where the alien or Daemon might care little about these purifying flames. These cleansing flames also leave nothing behind—no corrupted flesh, no Warp-tainted minds, no unholy texts, nothing but ash. Where the Ordo Xenos might wish to study a slain alien to discover new ways of exterminating its species, there is no need to study the mutant and witch who have found their proper fate.

As many of the Ordo Hereticus work closely with the Ecclesiarchy, which also favours flame-based weapons, it is also common for them to share weaponry and combat tactics—though in many cases, such tactics consist of burning every soul they encounter, lest any heretics escape. Often the mere hint of an imminent fiery pogrom is enough to frighten heretics into rash action or unprepared movement, enough to ensure their careful plans are laid to waste and they meet the fires they dreaded. Inquisitors, even with Acolytes to aid them, cannot be everywhere, but the fear of their righteous flames can be anywhere that threats to Mankind exist.

The threats from the heretic, mutant, and witch must be uncovered and eradicated with the greatest of zeal and efficiency, for they can quickly grow amidst unprotected societies. Witch Hunters cannot allow bureaucracy, politics, ego, or stubbornness to impede their course of action. Though their unrelenting demand for obedience may push others to harbour resentment, they must not be distracted or delayed by the protestations of those bent to their will. Their mandate from the Emperor gives them the right to put the torch to any who resist, leaving behind only the scorched remains of the reticent to remind others of their authority. This must be so, for without the boundless powers of the Ordo Hereticus, traitors could divert attention from themselves by hiding behind their offices and titles. Fear must be one of the greatest weapons in their arsenal, and this fear must strike at the heart of even those whose authority seems unquestionable. Only Witch Hunters have the requisite power to generate this fear and wield it against the enemies within.

A PYRE FOR EVERY HERETIC

"You are my master no longer. I call thee Heretic!"

—Inquisitor Geoffrey Pan, former Acolyte

Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus have as many different viewpoints on the best ways to shield Mankind from seemingly inevitable doom as there are Inquisitors themselves. Though they pursue a common goal, they are far from united in their thoughts on how it might best be achieved. They are divided by methodology and philosophy, with no one approach carrying any more weight or truth than any other. This diversity of views serves the Ordo Hereticus well, for if no two traitors betray Mankind in exactly the same way, then no one tactic is likely to stop them all.

Still, the differences can lead to conflict between Inquisitors—especially those with opposing Radical and Puritan stances. For a sternly Puritan Witch Hunter, even the slightest compromise is unacceptable. To traffic at all with mutants or psykers is to invite damnation upon himself and to betray the very purpose for which he was given power and authority. He would rather a thousand humans die than employ the sorcery of a non-sanctioned witch to save a single one of them. Even the Navigators who guide his ship safely through the Warp are not to be trusted. A fervently Radical Inquisitor of the Ordo Hereticus, however, sees no path that he must leave unexplored. He would gladly recruit a hundred mutants and unleash their corrupted forms upon a den of heretics, if such an action would save a thousand human lives.

There are many different factions of Inquisitors, some of which have more appeal to Radical Witch Hunters, some to Puritans, and some to those who occupy a middle ground. The Recongregators, for instance, believe that the Imperium itself is no longer effective in its current state, and is a detriment to the survival of humanity. Radical Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus who believe strongly in this concept do more than just keep a close watch on the Adeptus Terra—they actively work to turn it to ash so that it might be reborn like a phoenix, pure and with renewed purpose. Other, less stringent Witch Hunters among the Recongregators might act differently. These could prefer to keep the Imperium itself structured roughly the same, but wish to clean out the decayed flesh of old leadership, and reinvigorate it with individuals of their choosing. Recongregator Witch Hunters all agree, though, that the root of the problem lies with the heretics and traitors who have allowed the Imperium itself to become more important than the humans it serves. It is this belief that unifies them all, on some level at least, as members of the faction.

The Ordo Hereticus, with all the differing approaches that its individual Inquisitors employ, is not without its mechanisms for cooperation. In times of great need, an Inquisitor can call for the assembly of a conclave of his fellows in order to defeat a threat to Mankind. In some instances, this may happen when the enemy is so vast that a single Witch Hunter and his Acolytes would be spread too thinly to counter the actions of the foe. In other cases, the danger may begin with human traitors, but expand to incorporate enemies of a nature more effectively countered by the Ordo Malleus or Ordo Xenos. The Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus are proud, strong, and fiercely independent, but few would allow ego to doom their charges, and thus they make use of a conclave in order to better protect Mankind.

Conclaves can also be called to settle differences between Inquisitors, from philosophical disputes to violent affairs of honour to blood debts. There are even times when one Inquisitor has cause to suspect that another has fallen into heresy. Since it is the purview of the Ordo Hereticus to uncover plots and corruption within the hearts of other men, it is most often Witch Hunters who level these accusations of heresy against their fellows. Regardless of the Ordo of the accuser, he can call for the traitor to be excommunicated—a judgement known as Excommunicate Traitoris. This is not an action that is taken lightly, and can usually only be adjudicated by a conclave. The thread that is common to all conclaves is the need for quick, decisive action that allows individual Witch Hunters to return to their grim business of saving Mankind, each in his own way.



TO BE AN ACOLYTE

"Burn the mutants! Kill them all!"

—Hassex the Manyhanded, Mutant Acolyte

As far-reaching and unquestioned as an Inquisitor's powers are and effective as his methods may be, there are limits to what he can accomplish alone. Fortunately, an accomplished Inquisitor is also proficient at securing the aid of exceptional individuals who can help save Mankind from extinction, whether these recruits know this is their task or not. Acolytes are often selected based on some unique talent or personality trait that the Inquisitor feels he can use, such as skills in deception or the mastery of a unique weapon.

A Witch Hunter might look for certain talents in his Acolytes more strongly than Inquisitors from other Ordos, given the nature of his enemies: other humans, and creatures that were once human. Acolytes must at all times be ready to deal with certain aspects of human interaction, such as seeing through deceptive guises and interrogating captives, and including being able to kill without mercy when needed.

Such an Inquisitor might commonly seek those with no qualms whatsoever in dealing with his enemies, from misshapen mutants to reality-altering witches to traitorous cultists, in a terminal manner. Watching over their fellow humans, rooting out the evils that they do, and when necessary eradicating them from the Emperor's Sight is often a horrific task. Cold-hearted killers, perhaps ones even eager to share death as directed, are prime assets. His Acolytes must have full conviction of his cause to slay even the seemingly innocent, trusting in their master's admonishments of unseen heresy or hidden mutation. Worse, they might be complicit or even instrumental in burning hives or worlds, and must have the strength of will to not buckle under the terrible knowledge of their actions.

He can also desire other, non-lethal skills in his Acolytes for interaction with human society, the home of his enemies. The ability to slip undetected into secured manses or downhive hovels is prized. Acolytes with connections both high and low are valuable in ferreting out cults and applying leverage, if needed, to learn their secrets. Others who are skilled at deception and applying personal charm can ingratiate themselves with the fallen. Only the foolish would claim to be able to understand the alien, or fathom the mind of a Daemon, but to think like the heretic while retaining complete devotion to the Inquisitor's path is invaluable.

As his Acolytes are humans, they can also be used to infiltrate the many cults festering wherever they go in human societies. These roles are often fraught with peril, but even if the Acolytes used in this way sometimes perish as a result of their actions, they have served their purpose.



Sometimes Acolytes can even provide useful services without any awareness of their true purpose. A Witch Hunter, knowing how overtly his agents typically act, might dispatch them to a known area of heresy simply to draw attention so that he might move about undetected, or use another warband to surreptitiously penetrate a furtive sect.

Some traits, though, might damn an Acolyte even before he joins a warband, or abruptly cut short his service. The taint of mutation could lead to early, permanent retirement, no matter how many years of faithful actions he had performed before his flesh became twisted. Similarly, an eruption of witch-powers could bring immediate flames, lest his unholy gifts draw the attention of the Ruinous Powers. Even a Radical Inquisitor of the Ordo Hereticus might have no tolerance for Acolytes mutated in this way, and could consider a swift death a merciful ending.

An Inquisitor's location in the spectrum of Radical or Puritan methodology is thus often critical in his choice of Acolytes. A strongly Puritan-leaning Inquisitor would find it nearly impossible to resist killing a mutant on sight, let alone ever consider keeping one as an Acolyte. Any association with such debased humans is unacceptable tolerance for corruption, and the strongest of standards must always be kept when such creatures are the enemy. A Radical Witch Hunter, by comparison, may tolerate or even actively recruit mutants and psykers, as he believes they can be of use to him, even acting as bait to draw out more of their foul kind.

In the end, Acolytes, though valuable, always know they are disposable assets. An Inquisitor might not hesitate to knowingly send one of them into a dank corridor to be eviscerated by ambushing traitors, should it help him gather information needed to ensure the cult is fully destroyed. He might even sacrifice entire warbands against a terrifying Alpha-level psyker, if it buys him enough time to call upon greater forces to burn this witch. Acolytes who can survive these and similar encounters and recognise what it means to truly defend Mankind, though, might one day prove worthy of becoming Inquisitors themselves.

FYODOR KARAMAZOV

Karamazov has travelled across the Imperium atop his Throne of Judgement, a walking mechanical cathedral containing servitors to record sessions as well as carry out the invariable sentence of guilt upon all he judges. While others might act in secret, he instead often leads entire armies to descend upon worlds he finds wavering from the grand destiny the Emperor set forth. For this Inquisitor, there is no defence or mercy in his court; even the innocent are guilty of wasting his valuable time and are set aflame with the many witches and traitors he always discovers.

A SECTOR OF LIES

"I fear we have only begun to uncover the sins of deceit and betrayal buried in this wretched sector. With each sin the so-called Lords of Askellon enact, the Warp draws ever closer and its terrible fate grows ever more likely"

—Intercepted vox transmission, attributed to Lord Dyrulli

The Askellon Sector is a forlorn region steeped in treachery, a taint that countless men and women of the Ordo Hereticus have sought to cleanse throughout the long millennia. Unlike some regions, in particular the nearby troubled sector of Calixis, Askellon has never been host to an institutionalised Inquisitorial presence established by the concerted efforts of determined Inquisitors or their Acolytes. Thus, the sector's myriad sins have never been properly scrutinised, documented, or called to account. Indeed, the last occasion such an organised effort was attempted led to the catastrophic Vaxi Atrocity, a shame that many still bear generations later on behalf of the fallen.

Each Inquisitor to have pursued the calling of the Ordo Hereticus in the Askellon Sector has sought to uncover the true nature of the region, and learn something of its history and the events that have driven its masters ever closer to the abyss. Some claim that Lord Dyrulli, a highly-placed Arch-Savant, came closer than any to uncovering a rotten kernel, but he was discovered, and what knowledge he had amassed was burned on the pyres or scattered to the irradiated winds. Since Dyrulli, others have tried to retrieve but a portion of his works, but little more than singed fragments of once-weighty tomes have been recovered.

THE DYRULLIN APOCRYPHA

"Clearly the scribbblings of a once-great mind, lost to insanity. Unworthy of attention."

—Lannseen Faal XI, Curator Primax, Grand Repository of Juno

How many Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus have laid down their lives to uncover the sins of Askellon is a figure unlikely to be fully tallied, for since the Vaxi Atrocity few operate there openly or in wide coalition. Some, however, have managed to uncover secrets as tantalising as they are horrifying, including a handful of pages from Dyrulli's lost writings—parts of his extensive *Marginalia on the Apocrypha Askellios*. Indeed, it appears that he somehow gained access to volumes of the *Apocrypha* no one believed still existed. While many of these fragments are held to be little more than the fevered ramblings of a mind long surrendered to madness, others hold that they must surely contain at least a portion of the truth. To this day, his collected writings on the subject of the manifold sins of Askellon are known as the *Dyrullin Apocrypha*, forming as they do an addendum to, or lost volume of, the *Apocrypha Askellios*.

Few have access to this mythical tome, for scant copies were printed, and the majority of these are sealed away in heavily guarded vaults. It is said that only a handful remain within Askellon itself, for most were burned along with Dyrulli and his circle. Outside of the sector, one copy was reputed to have been locked beneath the Tricorn Palace, the centre of power of the Calixian Inquisition. Persistent rumours claim that at least one copy was delivered to Terra in the hands of Dyrulli's most beloved surviving disciple, though for what purpose has never been determined.



INQUISITOR TYRUS

One of the most fervent followers of the Monodominant faction, Tyrus' power-armoured form has left untold thousands burning in his wake. The Inquisitor particularly abhors witches of any type. This includes alien psykers, and he readily attacks xenos forces if he suspects they use Warp-powers, or any he suspects of harbouring such deviant beings. Tyrus is fond of ancient trials and ordeals to establish guilt, believing that it is the Emperor that brings final judgement on his captives. He also actively watches over his fellow Inquisitors, and can be as terrifying to those he finds to be heretic as he is to any witch he captures.

THE LOST EPISTLES OF SAINT VALERIUS

"Mine eyes hath looked upon the face of the holy one, and seen naught but decay and duplicity. He who the masses of that region adore so fervently I saw for a traitor, and a foe of all that was once good and wholesome. I name that sainted one thrice. Traitor. Traitor. Traitor. Though they will burn me for it, I shall never recant."

—Extract from the *Dyrullin Apocrypha*
on the 17th Epistle of Saint Valerius

Saint Valerius is a much-venerated figure within the Askellon Sector, his gaunt, stern likeness carved into a thousand stone edifices and rendered in faded stained glass the length and breadth of the region. The saint is regarded as the saviour of Askellon, an intercessory figure said to watch over its people and its masters and to provide protection in time of need. Numerous legends relate a wide array of tales regarding the early life and miracles of Saint Valerius, and while most vary widely in events, dates, and scope, all describe the saint rallying the people of Askellon against some overwhelming outside force. In some versions, the invaders are ravaging xenos from the voids beyond the sector's trailing margins, at other times hideous creatures coalesced from the raw stuff of the Pandaemonium itself. One variation holds that the saint was originally a great general who served in the wars of the opening years of the Age of Imperium, returning to Askellon to find it overrun by those who had renounced their oaths to humanity and sought to enslave the sector's worlds.

Dyrulli's *Marginalia on the Apocrypha Askellios* contains an extensive addendum to these legends, any single sentence of which would have guaranteed his execution had they been exposed. In his commentary, Dyrulli related a dark truth he had purchased at high price indeed from a broker of painful facts in the back sinks of Port Aquila. Saint Valerius, so the pedlar claimed, was a traitor, and his rallying call was heeded not by those who served the Emperor, but by their foes. The Imperium had come to punish the Lords of Askellon for siding against Terra in some calamitous matter he would not name, and Valerius had called upon the people to resist their punishment. Dyrulli himself makes no certain claims of the truth of the broker's words, but claimed the man was to be trusted beyond all others in such matters. If true, the single most venerated figure in the entire sector is a traitor, whose act of defiance was not against invaders or enslavers, but against the righteous servants of the Emperor of Man.

THE UNSEEN LORDS OF ASKELLON

"The Masters of the stars are to us as xenos overlords, stellar vampyres sucking on the blood of a once-pure people, and in doing so tainting that blood with their own crimes. They came here, I am certain, fleeing from some crime too distant and too terrible to relate. I know not the nature of that crime, but I am certain the void itself recoils at their presence, and where the void draws back, the beyond rushes in, and each of us are doomed to share their hell."

—Johas Zadok, *Beyond Perdition*, Chapter XX, Verse VII

The name of Johas Zadok is one familiar to many of those who study the forbidden texts that seem to breed in Askellon. To the Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus, Zadok is a highly contentious figure, not because his words were lies, but because they were almost certainly true, albeit representing a truth of the least palatable kind. Over a career estimated to have lasted half a century and more, Johas Zadok is known to have penned at least three dozen missives recounting a staggering range of theories regarding the masters of the sector and their dark histories. He was a collector of conspiracies and a pedlar of paranoia, from whose auto-quill flowed a nigh continuous stream of the most far-ranging and detailed ideas. Most who have come into contact with Zadok's rambling tomes have dismissed them out of hand as blatant nonsense, while those with a vested interest in the sector have blanched that he might know and reveal so much. Those serving the Ordo Hereticus who have read extracts from the tomes have seen in them tantalising glimpses of a truth they always suspected lay just beyond their reach, and ever sought to learn more.

Dyrulli's opinion on the writings of Johas Zadok seems to be that he represented one of the most dangerous, yet potentially most useful men in the sector. Dyrulli committed extensive resources to finding him, yet whether he ever did remains a matter of great mystery. It appears that Zadok's writings bred some manner of cult, the broad form of which appears to be hagiographic in nature. Some claimed that Zadok himself had nothing to do with the cult that sprung up around him, and that it represented no more than a cadre of self-selected dilettantes addicted to the thrill of forbidden knowledge. Some operating in the sector have recorded encounters with fringe elements of this cult, invariably during investigations into the highest echelons of the sector's ruling elite. These individuals have at times proved willing to assist an Acolyte in his investigations, though only ever on the strictest of terms, the principal being complete anonymity. Invariably, the investigation has been at such a crucial juncture—or else reached such a dead end—that the agent has agreed to the stranger's terms and accepted the aid. Such help often consists of little more than an uttered name or location, just enough to open up the investigation once more. The Cult of Zadok appears to harbour a need to expose some apocalyptic truth regarding the masters of the Askellon Sector, yet is evidently cautious about doing so in too drastic a fashion, preferring to chip away at the mighty edifice one small stone at a time. What might happen to them, their foes, and the Acolytes of an Ordo Hereticus Inquisitor nearby when that structure reaches its inevitable failure point remains to be seen.

THE LOST FAMILIA

"And upon that fair and fulsome land the Scion set his seal, and his kin marched out under the light of a wholesome sun. Only later, when twelve and seven generations had passed, did the strangers come, and the sky was covered with blood and the seas turned solid and the kin of the Scions lost."

—Fragment of the *Apocrypha Askellios* recovered from the funeral pyre of Lord Dyrulli

The Administratum codifies Knight worlds as planets autonomous from the Imperium and host to one or more Knight Houses. These ancient institutions consist of noble bloodlines pre-dating the Imperium by many thousands of years, most having settled their home world in the far distant and all but forgotten Dark Age of Technology. The scions of the Knight worlds are oath-sworn to protect their subjects from the numerous threats that assail them, and they do so mounted in towering suits of Knight Armours, smaller than, but distantly akin to, the mighty god-engines of the Adeptus Titanicus.

The Askellon Sector is known to host but only few dozen Knight Houses, but there are some that say it was once home to many more. Perhaps one of the original colony arks or an offshoot that populated the Founding Worlds of Askellon set down on a planet so hazardous to life that the colonists called upon the Standard Template Construct systems with which they were equipped to aid them, and this led to the creation of the first Knights of that world. If so, this world must have been beyond the current borders of the sector, or else fallen so thoroughly that no trace of it remains today.

Dyrulli, however, is known to have an altogether different theory on this matter. In his *Marginalia on the Apocrypha Askellios*, Dyrulli ponders whether one of the region's Knight worlds might have already been established when the colony arks arrived, representing a still-earlier phase of humanity's expansion into the stars. Perhaps, Dyrulli theorises in his notes, the already-established Knights warred with the colonists, or conversely, perhaps they shunned the settlers, recognising something in them they wished to have no truck with. If this is true, so Dyrulli continues, that original and impossibly ancient Knight world might exist yet, hidden in the darkness along the fringes of the sector.

Dyrulli is thought to have sponsored several missions into the trailing void to locate some evidence of the presence of this lost Knight world. His intentions in doing so were mixed. At least in part, he hoped that if they lived still, the Knights might have been witness to, and maintained records of the founding of the Askellon Sector, and be able to shed light on certain of its darkest secrets. In addition, a Knight world would make a potent ally indeed should Dyrulli's masters in the Ordo Hereticus ever find themselves in dire enough need to call upon them. There are no records if he was successful, or if he was able to call for aid when he fell. Some tales relate that his pleas were heard, but rejected as being unworthy of Knightly attention. Only an extensive and perilous investigation is likely to uncover even a shred of the truth.

THE SENDITE PARATEXT

"And at length the end shall come, and blood shed long ago shall be shed once more. The sin of the Lords shall be washed away in the blood of the seventy-seven worlds, and the others shall feast for all time."

—Transcription on parchment fragment, found amongst the belongings of a slain Dyrullian disciple

Those of the Ecclesiarchy and the Inquisition who make it their mission to study the staggeringly diverse sects and denominations of the Imperial Creed know that of the many variations in doctrine, a predominant belief present in numerous permutations across the entire Imperium is that of the end times. Since the earliest days of the Age of Imperium, those that preached the divinity of the Emperor also preached that all would soon end. Not a century has passed, not a millennium has been marked, without a hundred thousand worlds erupting in apocalyptic fury, as frothing demagogues preach the imminent end unless the people submit themselves to the Emperor's judgement.

This overarching doctrine of the end times is as dominant in the Askellon Sector as it is in a hundred other regions, but it has been noted that there, it has a peculiar characteristic. In many other sectors, Imperial sermons proclaim that the end can be averted if the faithful rise in common cause against the numerous foes of Mankind, for all other ways they are worthless. In Askellon, such teachings take on a different tone, for they are invariably preached—or more often written—in secret, and it is not the common multitudes that are blamed for the coming end, but often the highest-born nobles ruling the sector. For obvious reasons, this creed is rarely openly practised, unless the preacher is anticipating repression and intends to spark a violent uprising. The Lords of Askellon, like those of any other region, do not take kindly to such shows of sedition and discontent.

Though voiced behind closed doors or written in secret tomes, these sermons—collectively known as the Sendite—all accuse the ruling nobility of the Askellon Sector of being the cause of the Warp storms that plague it so, and which, all agree, will one day bring about its end and the death of every soul on all its worlds. The particular crime of which the nobles are accused varies widely, from decadence and faithlessness to an unspeakable blasphemy committed many generations ago.

Lord Dyrulli encountered the whole range of these doctrines during his missions within the sector, but it is known that he came to focus most intently upon those that claimed the nobles were harbouring some secret stain, a taint that remained upon them into the current era. Furthermore, he traced the rise and fall of such sermons and correlated them with increases in Warp storm activity. After years of study, he reached the conclusion that the sermons were correct, and that whatever the true nature of the accusations, the nobles were somehow complicit in the rise and enduring fury of the Pandaemonium across Askellon.

Dyrulli's studies of this matter reached a conclusion that he went to some effort to warn his masters about. Though the secret sermons might be correct, with each came the increased likelihood of a general uprising erupting across the sector. This, he theorised, might cleanse the region of the tainted nobility, but such a concentration in time and space of such bloodshed and anguish would surely echo through the Warp and cause the storms to swallow the sector for all time.

THE PELLUCID WAY

"From the gap between spaces they come, from the shadows between shadows they return. Look for them where the angles meet out of kilter, look for them when the blood trail stops at the wall. Look for them most of all when you hear the sound of chains when nothing moves nearby."

—*The Pellucid Way*, unknown author,
sole known copy, annotated by Lord Dyrulli

According to Dyrulli's *Marginalia*, strangers have been visiting the vast network of tunnels, bunkers, and chambers said to honeycomb the ground beneath the Pellucid Tower, the seat of government of Juno and the entire sector, for generations. When first Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus learned of the possibility of infiltration, several dispatched Acolyte warbands to investigate. One went missing entirely, another stumbled across a wholly-unrelated plot to trigger a military coup, and a third, that in which Dyrulli was serving as a savant, found tracks that appeared to confirm a regular and long-running intrusion by an unknown faction. Subsequent investigations revealed nothing, and it was suspected that whoever the intruders were, they had become aware that their presence was discovered and ceased their activities, for a time at least.

Thirty years later, however, a contact in the employ of Dyrulli's masters received word of an assault against a Munitorium depot deep in the Tower's sub levels and the investigation was reactivated, this time lead by Dyrulli himself. Dyrulli called upon and employed the very finest trackers and manhounds his masters in the Ordo Hereticus could field. Despite numerous near-successes, though, he and his forces simply could not run down the intruders as they penetrated from the tower's outer wards to its inner sanctuary and then simply vanished.

Later on, quite by chance, Lord Dyrulli related the frustrating events to a peer. This fellow personage had recently been involved in the prosecution of a xenophile cult, which had sprung up amongst void clanners working distant asteroid mines at the edges of the Juno system. The subsequent conversations led to a reappraisal of events from a different angle, leading Dyrulli to conclude that the preternaturally stealthy intruders must have been some manner of xenos infiltrator, for no human could accomplish such feats. Later study and contemplation would further narrow Dyrulli's suspicions, until he was of the belief that the intruders were engaged in some clandestine meeting with a very important group or individual within the Pellucid Tower. These events occurred many decades ago, but given that Praefectrix Charlotta Anastasia XX spends almost all of her days withdrawn from the world in the depths of the armoured foundations beneath the Pellucid Tower, his conclusions were grave indeed.

Some who have learned of them now dare whisper that the Praefectrix could be in the sway of some manner of alien outsider, or be in league with the xenos. Perhaps she had been entirely replaced by one, or perhaps her mind, body, and soul were not her own, and she had been transformed into some horrible meat puppet of impossibly alien domination.

Perhaps Dyrulli's masters might have called upon the expertise of their peers of the Ordo Xenos and launched a joint operation to uncover the truth. Dyrulli never lived long enough to determine which, if any, of these possibilities was true.



THE DEATH OF LORD DYRULLI

Many of the extant writings of Lord Dyrulli are now known only in fragmentary extracts, for much of his works were burned, along with him and seven thousand of his order in the ruins of an unnamed and long-abandoned cathedral on Juno. Having uncovered one truth too many, Dyrulli was discovered by the agents of the Lords of Askellon while infiltrating a hidden archive not far from the Pellucid Tower. He was dragged forth in chains and paraded through the streets for all to see, and before dawn all with any contact to him, no matter how tenuous, were likewise interned. The Ordo Hereticus, whose lords Dyrulli served, had prepared against the Arch-Savant being captured. While the exact details remain unknown, it is assumed by some that a hidden hand nearby activated some tiny implanted device, which granted him the Emperor's mercy before he could be tortured, and more importantly, made it impossible for the Lords of Askellon to extract any information from his prodigious mind.

With Dyrulli dead and his followers executed by the vengeful Askellian Lords, but two deeds remained to be done. The first was to recover what works they could, and it is from the scorched pages scattered about the funeral pyres that these accounts are drawn. Secondly, blood would have blood. For each of the seven thousand and one agents and contacts, as well as innocent bystanders burned in the many and massive pyres, one of their own number would die—but not before a horrible, lingering madness. Every day for almost twenty years, a scion of the Askellon nobility or a beloved retainer, counsellor, or bodyguard was struck down by such a stark, frothing madness that a quick, merciful death delivered by his master was the only possible end. This punishment met the accord of every faction, Puritan or Radical, with an interest in the Askellon Sector, so well-regarded was Lord Dyrulli.

Woebetide any who incur the wrath of a unified Inquisition...

HERESIES OF ASKELLON

"Askellon may indeed be doomed, but when it slips into the pits of damnation, be it this very night or a thousand years hence, that doom must not be allowed to engulf the greater domains of the Imperium. You know how such death throes form gateways through which the legions of the abyss march forth. This we shall not allow. We must act now against the lords of this sector, and burn them all!"

—Ascribed to Lord Hark at the Conclave of Gnshal Oblitia

The annals of the Imperium are a fragmented, incomplete mass of bloodshed, lies, superstition, and contradiction, and as such, few worlds know much for certain about their own histories even a few centuries before. The same is true for systems, sub-sectors, and sectors, with the picture growing ever less clear the further afield one looks. Amongst the various worlds of the Askellon Sector, however, the situation is far, far worse. On many of the Imperium's worlds, information is lost due to war or simple institutional incompetence on a staggering scale. In Askellon, the situation seems entirely deliberate. For reasons that no Inquisitor has ever been able to satisfactorily explain, the official histories of the sector, as maintained by the ruling bodies of its own world governments, are not only incomplete, but are riddled with what can only be deliberate falsehood.

Exactly why the Askellian ruling classes wish to enshroud so much of their sector's history in shadow remains a mystery, and so it falls to others to attempt to piece together something of the truth. The Adeptus Administratum mission on Juno and the capitals of each sub-sector have at various times attempted to create a more complete picture, but with their task made all but impossible by the ebb and flow of the Pandaemonium, this is in truth an endeavour doomed to failure.

Throughout much of its known history, such as it is, Inquisitors have not operated openly in Askellon. At times, this is simply because they have not deemed the cursed place worthy of their presence, but at other times it must have been because their interests were best served by remaining in the shadows. Occasionally, it was simply not safe to do so, even for one with the power of an Inquisitor. As puissant as even a single Inquisitor undoubtedly is, when his foes converge even he can be threatened despite the power he can wield. In such case, an Inquisitor must either withdraw to muster his own forces in preparation for a counter strike, or else hide his activities so he may strike from a quarter his foe least expects. Often it is his Acolytes, some of whom perhaps operate without even knowing their master's true name or the actual motives for their orders, who are directed to undertake attacks or aggressive investigations when it is best to keep an Inquisitor's presence undetected.

Thus, the archives make reference to periods when powerful Inquisitors, their names known far and wide, operated openly in Askellon, and far greater periods where none appeared to do so at all. Scattered tales of those prosecuting their mission within the bounds of the Askellon, prior to the death of Arch-Savant Lord Dyrulli, are still found by those with the will and the means to uncover them. Only a few, carefully guarded records dare reveal even hints as to the event that was pivotal in this shift and that nearly saw Askellon torn asunder: the Vaxi Atrocity.

THE VAXI ATROCITY

Though it looms large in the ebb and flow of cause and effect that has shaped—and continues to shape—the Askellon Sector, very few are aware of the truth of the Vaxi Atrocity, either within or without the region. Despite its portentous title, the Atrocity was committed not by any lord, or servant of a lord, of Askellon, but by the members of the Ordo Hereticus.

The Vaxi Atrocity had as its roots at an attempt by a number of Inquisitors, aligned to the veteran Witch Hunter Lord Spiron Hark, to investigate, and if needs be, purge, the Askellian nobility to get at the hidden secrets of the sector. Many had studied the remains of Dyrulli's researches, and even used his name and death as a rallying cry. Lord Hark was a notorious bombast and a Puritan through and through, and as such had garnered more than his fair share of rivals and enemies within the ranks of the Inquisition over the decades of his service. These opposed his plans, apparently simply to frustrate Hark's rise in power and influence rather than because they objected to the course of action itself.

Lord Hark called a conclave at Gnshal Oblitia, a world on the very edge of the sector. Towering in his black and gold power armour and crimson cloak, and reciting baleful stanzas from his Book of Ashes, he demanded action. A bitter exchange erupted in the hallowed vaults of the Oblitia Cathedra, soon followed by recriminations and accusations so severe they could not be withdrawn without substantial loss of face. Centuries of accumulated ill-will, anger, and virulent mistrust amongst the Inquisitors operating in Askellon seemed to quickly boil over to impossible levels. Hark finally gathered his household and his allied peers to leave the conclave for the inner Askellian worlds. Gesturing emphatically with his signature two-handed power sword, he declared to the assembled Inquisitors that he would have the truth, one way or the other, and with or without the blessings of those opposed to his direction.

Inquisitor Hark's opponents, despite appearances, were not opposed to him merely because he was a Puritan and they were considered the opposite, however. Rather, it was because two decades before, they had instigated their own infiltration of the sector for their own ends, and feared Hark's interference would ruin their work. Exactly what that work amounted to or was aimed towards appears to be a secret these Radicals took to their graves, for ever is it said that history is written by the victorious. In this matter, Hark and his allies were the seeming victors, but only after a war and a calamity so pernicious it was dubbed the "Vaxi Atrocity" by those allowed to know of its true existence.

Upon the disbandment of the assembly at Gnshal Oblitia, both factions set out for the sector's core, sweeping up what allies they could along the way and utilising their powers as Inquisitors to requisition what assets they encountered. Squadrons of battleships indentured from the Imperial Navy clashed in the void, for the will and power of the Inquisitors overrode all other agencies and commanders. As the rival groups penetrated deeper into the Rubicon Sub-Sector, they called upon ever-greater forces, and entire regiments of the Imperial Guard mustered at their order from a swathe of worlds along a route many parsecs in length. By the time they crashed headlong into Rubicon, all pretence at due process was shed.

The warring forces made planetfall on a number of systems across the sub-sector, unleashing the full potency of the armies they had requisitioned upon not just one another, but any others caught in the middle. Entire worlds were burning before the Lords of Askellon had any notion what was occurring. Sector-wide defence protocols were set in motion, but while the defenders had experience fighting uprisings, prosecuting mutant culls, and even stalling xenos invasions, none had ever faced an enemy as powerful as this in many centuries.

Within weeks, all but a handful of inhabited systems in Rubicon were consumed in war, and those Astra Militarum regiments raised from Askellon's main worlds were in disarray. The Terminus Prime system defence fleet was reduced to a cloud of burning hulks, its squadrons paid for by the great Askellian merchant houses and entirely unsuited to the total war that descended without warning.

At length, the Sector Praefect, at that time Lord Vhinjet Romonav VII, declared war upon the unknown invaders. Using the full extent of his own powers, he mustered as many regiments as could be raised on the world of Vaxi along the rimward border of Rubicon, determined to bring them to battle and stall the invasion of his realm.

Lord Romonav's declaration was a strident statement, which began as a warning, but soon meandered into what amounted to an admission of heresy. Entire generations of savants have debated whether Romonav intended to broadcast the message he did, or if he was overcome by hubris, misunderstood, caught in the grips of insanity, or even possessed by some daemonic entity. Regardless of the truth, by the end of the message, which was transmitted using every Astropathic choir on Juno and spread across Askellian space, the Praefect had, with deliberate intent or otherwise, announced his sector's secession from the Imperium of Man.

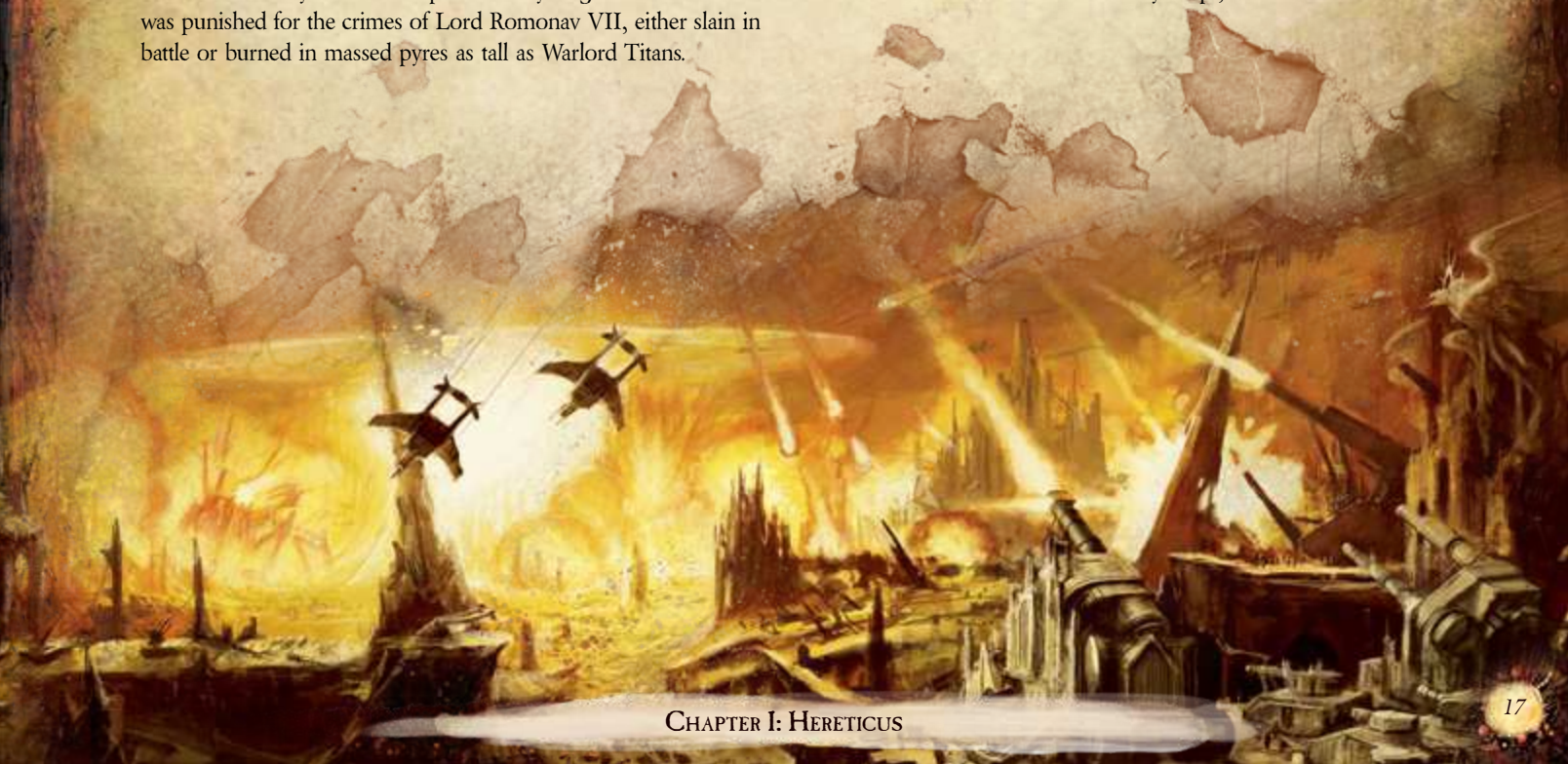
Confronted with treachery on such a massive scale and mindful of those shreds of the sector's history they had access to, the opposing factions ceased their internecine battle. Immediately, they fell upon Vaxi and the millions of Askellian troops mustered there with power and potency surely not seen since the Macharian Crusade. The combined forces massacred the defenders in a crusade so bloody none were spared. Every single warrior on Vaxi was punished for the crimes of Lord Romonav VII, either slain in battle or burned in massed pyres as tall as Warlord Titans.

As the fires settled over Vaxi, Inquisitor Lord Hark called for a parley. Within the hour, a dozen of the most powerful and influential Inquisitors in the segmentum were facing one another across a plain of ash and scattered bone, the horizon alight in all directions with flames. The words that passed between them were either unrecorded, or else deliberately struck from any record, but their essence can be determined easily enough. The events leading up to the Vaxi Atrocity must not be repeated again, they agreed. Whatever gains were to be made from Inquisitors operating in the sector in their current manner could not possibly be worth visiting such destruction upon it that the bulk of an entire sub-sector lay in ruins, and Askellon stripped of its ability to defend itself should invasion come from an unexpected quarter.

So far as Lord Romonav's treachery went, however, that could not be forgotten or forgiven. Shortly after his ill-judged declaration of secession, Romonav was found dead upon his throne at the annual state opening of court at the Pellucid Tower. Five thousand petitioners looked upon his face and blanched at the expression they saw on what remained of his features, before hurrying silently away lest such an awful fate be visited upon them too.

There remain many who secretly believe that the events as related represent but the tip of an unfathomably-deep iceberg, and that some or all of the main figures involved were being horribly manipulated. Some whisper that Hark was but a puppet for some other secretive personages operating in the sector, others that Romonav's part was entirely staged, or did not originate from him at all. Even Dyrulli's name was brought into the affair, either to sully it further or show his works were truthful.

To what ends the Atrocity served these agencies is still speculated, for none dare speak openly given the power that was wielded. While an uneasy peace keeps the various factions from outright war, if one were to become too powerful in relation to the others, open war might again erupt between them. Those at the fringes of the numerous factions and philosophies in which the Inquisition is steeped appear ever ready to challenge this status quo, and none can predict when all-out wars might come again. Few, however, doubt that they must, and worry who might be behind these new conflicts when they erupt, and for what benefit.



HERESIES ANEW

As the Age of Imperium grinds inexorably onwards and the Pandaemonium closes in around Askellon, the icons for which the Inquisition are so well-known elsewhere are all but unseen. None can say for certain when an Inquisitor last operated openly and in full view, for none have made themselves known to the sector rulers since the dark days following the Vaxi Atrocity. That is not to say that the worlds of the sector are barred to such individuals of course, for nowhere in or beyond the Imperium is outside of their sphere of influence. Indeed, individual Inquisitors still go about their business in the open, but they rarely do so in full view of the sector's higher authorities. This is not for fear of those authorities, for Inquisitors fear none save the Emperor and perhaps their peers. Rather, only an outcast intent upon sowing mischief and discord would do so, for fear of invoking the wrath of his own who have found the more secretive approach the most effective one amidst the treachery and betrayals that permeate Askellian space.

None can say for certain how many Inquisitors now operate within Askellon; while it may be several hundred, it is far more likely to be but a handful; perhaps at times there might be only a lone Inquisitor in this forsaken sector. The lower-ranked Acolytes in the service of an Inquisitor are quite another matter, however, and it is likely that many more Acolytes of all stripes pursue the shadowy business of their unseen masters on almost every inhabited world in the sector. Despite the effects of the Vaxi Atrocity, the Inquisition, and in particular the Ordo Hereticus, has never fully turned its gaze from the Askellon Sector, for to do so would be a gross dereliction of its duty. Though the burning of Dyrulli and the events of the Atrocity make the task more onerous, there are still those amongst the Lords of the Inquisition that look upon Askellon from distant Terra or some far-off fortress and know that some deep-rooted sin lurks within the very foundations of its worlds. Some hold that it courses through the rarefied noble blood of its lordly houses. Others claim that it calls out across the ages, perhaps even drawing the Pandaemonium to itself, to what end none can imagine.

Whatever the truth may be, Askellon breeds heresies at an alarming rate. It also consumes the lives of those tasked with uncovering such heresies, and at an equally rapid pace. The conspiracies are legion and far too numerous to elucidate even in the briefest form. Nonetheless, what follows could be considered a typical body of sins the Acolytes of the Ordo Hereticus might be aware of and actively investigating at any given time.

THE 4TH ORBITAL OF DESOLEUM

The hive world of Desoleum is served by four major and countless minor orbital structures, primarily concerned with the transportation of goods and people to and from the surface. One serves mainly incoming transports, and a second outgoing ones. The third is a defence installation, as many of its guns trained on the surface below as on the open space above. Of the current status of the fourth, no one can be entirely certain.

For untold centuries, Desoleum Skydock 4/4 served as a trading hub utilised by the numerous merchant concerns operating across the sector and beyond, in particular those that would sooner deal with trade brokers than directly with the Consortium. It offered the numerous services such wealthy clientèle highly valued, from null-chambers in which the most secret and delicate negotiations

could be conducted without fear of intrusion, to stasis vaults in which any treasure imaginable could be deposited for a day, a year, or a century. The Skydock was known as something of a destination, and in the way such places invariably are, it was served by a teeming horde of criminal concerns eager to provide for every possible luxury or vice the wealthy visitors could demand. Generations of Chartist Captains, merchant princes, and Rogue Traders utilised Skydock 4/4, until one day, it simply closed its void locks, purged its seals and silenced its beacons. To all who witnessed it, it appeared for all the world as if it had suffered a catastrophic reactor failure, a disaster for sure, but not hardly a unique one, and certainly a disaster from which it could recover.

Within hours of Skydock 4/4 falling silent, a fleet of rescue vessels was closing in. Many rushed in the hope of recovering survivors, with more no doubt eagerly relishing the prospect of looting the numerous vaults of treasure sure to be housed within. At first, however, none could breach the Skydock's armoured hull, for the airlocks appeared sealed from within. Later, when heavy recovery vessels were able to force a breach, it was discovered that the Skydock had been purged and sealed deliberately, and not a single living soul remained within. Where the bodies disappeared to has remained a mystery.

For several years, Skydock 4/4 remained empty and unclaimed, for the most common explanation of the disaster was a rogue machine spirit that had turned on its masters with fatal effect. Several senior Tech-Priest Magi visited the world, and while none dared set foot upon Skydock 4/4, all agreed that this was the most likely explanation. All counselled that the best course of action was to allow the huge station's orbit to degrade until it simply burned up in the atmosphere, an end that, without power or oversight, would surely overtake it within a few short decades.

That was fifty years ago, and Skydock 4/4 remains on exactly the same orbit it ever has. Since that time, though, the place has become active once more, albeit in an entirely unofficial capacity, and there are numerous and largely unwholesome rumours as to how, why, and who is in command. Some note that the dating of the Skydock's fall was the exact date the trading house of Rosa received its charter to operate in Askellian space, and that in one fell swoop, many of the that house's unknowing rivals lost a fortune in assets deposited in the Skydock's supposedly secure stasis vaults. None can say either how many, if any at all, of those treasures were purged along with Skydock's passengers and crew, the suggestion being that those vaults might remain intact at the heart of the orbital. Countless other rumours surround Skydock 4/4, and so often has the name of House Rosa been spoken that the members of the Ordo Hereticus have taken note. Ordinarily, the concerns of merchant houses are far below those of the Inquisition, but this case is not so easy to dismiss. If indeed the original disaster was caused by a rogue machine intelligence as some whisper, then this in itself is sufficient to draw the Ordo Hereticus's suspicions.

Recently, investigations have revealed that House Rosa appears to have made legal claim to the charter under which Skydock 4/4 operated. This claim has been lodged with the Consortium of Desoleum, and as such is all but impenetrable to those unfamiliar with Desoleum's mercantile idioms. Several attempts to insert Acolytes into positions from where they might be able to learn something of the truth have been made. As yet, though, none have proven successful, and many have failed to return at all.

THE ADORII CULTS OF JUNO

For several decades, many Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus with an interest in the Askellon Sector, and in particular its ancient sector capital, Juno, have been aware of an emerging cult calling itself the “Adorii.” At first this cult, one of many that infest the ruin-strewn wastes of Juno, was determined to be of a type referred to by many Ordo Hereticus savants as “psy-phile” or “psytheistic,” a classification that covers a broad range of cults whose members appear to venerate, adore, or outright worship psykers. Such cults are far from rare in the Imperium, and not all are counted as outcasts or heretics. Some worship only the single and greatest psyker ever to have lived—the Emperor himself—and so fall within the impossibly broad church that is the Imperial Creed. Others are dangerous recidivists who seek out rogue psykers or harbour as-yet undiscovered, latent psykers, and spirit them away before the authorities can claim them for the great cults that feed the Black Ships of the Adeptus Astra Telepathica. The Adorii cults of Juno were logged as yet one more blasphemous gathering amidst a multitude of such, and left for the Vigil to deal with, or the Adeptus Arbites if it could not.

Recently, however, a number of disturbing reports have come to light, drawing some in the service of the Ordo Hereticus to the conclusion that the Adorii represent a more severe threat than was previously thought. Cult magi have been observed making offerings at the lip of the so-called Bleak Pits—the vast sink holes in which those nascent psykers rounded up on Juno have been cast until such time as the Adeptus Astra Telepathica come to ferry them away to Terra. With the Black Ships long overdue, the Bleak Pits are filled beyond capacity, and an area many kilometres about them is known to be plagued by a wide range of bizarre psychic phenomena.

Effects range from weirdling lights in the night skies above the pits to ethereal voices singing on the rad-tainted winds. While most sane men stay well clear unless their duties dictate otherwise, the Adorii cults of Juno are drawn to them, and seek to bring them about in ever more impressive fashion.

The magi of the Adorii appear to have learned that the most extreme psychic effects can be brought about by making living offerings to the thousands of wretches in the pits below. They have formulated a highly-involved ritual seemingly designed to bring the psykers to a fever pitch, before throwing the unfortunate victim down to his death. If the victim is himself a nascent psyker, the phenomena are still more intense, the gathered Adorii overcome by what witnesses describe as religious ecstasy.

While this act would be considered a dire crime, it would nonetheless remain the purview of local institutions, were it not for a greater effect of which the magi conducting the adoration rituals may or may not be entirely unaware. Each time the Adorii

sacrifice a psyker to trigger the effects, they weaken the already-tortured barrier between reality and the beyond, and the tendrils of the Pandaemonium quest ever closer to the sector. Several members of the Ordo Hereticus regard it as a priority that the Adorii cults be halted before they trigger something far worse, a disaster that only their compatriots in the Ordo Malleus may stand a chance of averting—and then only by the intervention of the Grey Knights Chapter of the Adeptus Astartes.



THE HUBRIS OF LORD SARAWAK OF AVENTINE

For several years, the Imperial Commander of the Tributary World of Aventine has been slowly withdrawing himself and his world from the chains of fealty and interdependence that bind the Askellon Sector and the wider Imperium together. Lord Sarawak of Aventine does this not for his own aggrandisement, but for what he believes to be the highest of principles. He perceives the rot that has eaten the foundations of the sector's noble lines, and their determination to do nothing in the face of the ever-rising Pandaemonium. What Sarawak does not realise is that in his efforts to avert the doom of his beloved and powerful world, he perhaps has all but sealed it.

Having neglected the psyker culls which are one of only two primary duties the Imperium imposes upon those deputised as Imperial Commanders, the rates of psyker birth on Aventine have risen exponentially. The most obvious outward sign of this is the vast holding bastion in which culled psykers rounded up for the Black Ships were once imprisoned. This ancient prison now stands empty, and none dare enter it for fear of the taint within.

Lord Sarawak imagines that the Imperium is so blind as to have not noted his virtual secession, and while the sector government on Juno might be so, there are others in the region whose gaze is far more vigilant. The network of agents that serve various Ordo Hereticus Inquisitors has indeed noted Lord Sarawak's crimes, and while the Imperial Commander has yet to commit the ultimate sin of renouncing the rule of distant Terra, he is already damned as far as many are concerned.

The errant Lord Sarawak has not yet been called to account for his deeds, however, perhaps greatly due to the nature of the Inquisition itself. While those of the Emperor's subjects who are aware of the existence of the Inquisition might regard it as a vast, homogeneous, and unified whole, the exact opposite is in fact the case. The Inquisition has existed as long as it has, and faced every threat to Mankind imaginable because it is not centralised and it has no actual structure an attacker could topple. Each and every member of the Inquisition is part of an impossibly intricate web of power and influence, and nothing is beyond his use as a weapon. This is the case with Aventine, for while there are many Inquisitors who would see Lord Sarawak burn, there are others who speak, unknown to him, in his defence. To date, the matter has yet to be settled and so the executioner's axe is stayed, if but for a time.

There are several reasons why Sarawak has not yet been dealt with in the manner that normally meets those that commit the crimes he has. In part, it is because there are those in the ranks of the Ordo Hereticus who adhere to certain Radical notions, wherein the Imperium must be allowed to undergo periodic convulsions in order to keep the entire body healthy. There are even those that believe in tearing down the entire structure of the Imperium's government and starting afresh with a new web of power.

Though both of these extreme views have been aired in the debate over Aventine, the strongest opinion amongst the most vociferous and, for now, numerically superior faction, is that Lord Sarawak is correct to withdraw from the sector. There are those within the Ordo Hereticus with an interest in the Askellon Sector that see the sense in withdrawing, and would not see an effective leader such as Sarawak executed.

There remains, however, the issue of the psyker cull, which must be addressed if Aventine is not to fall prey to a major daemonic incursion. To address this, a number of missions have already been launched to purge Aventine of the most powerful of nascent psykers without alerting Lord Sarawak or the Aventine Yeomanry. To date, these Ordo Hereticus-launched missions have proven successful, and a number of potentially devastating rogue psykers have been executed before they could rise to become true powers. With each mission, however, have come back reports of an ever-worsening situation. Psychic phenomena grow ever more intense, and on some nights it is said the graceful bridges that connect the thousands of island-mesas of Aventine are lined with shrieking phantoms, and that the seas turn red with ethereal blood. With each report, the voices of those that would bring Lord Sarawak to justice become louder and harder to ignore. At length, the situation is bound to become too dire, and a decision as to the ultimate fate of Lord Sarawak of Aventine must be made to avert some far larger disaster.

THE LOST ORDER

Records describing the coming of the Great Crusade to the region that eventually became the Askellon Sector are scant, as they are for almost all parts of the galaxy when discussing that far distant age. In the case of Askellon, however, there appear to be far more gaps than in other regional histories, a state consistent with most matters pertaining to the sector and its dark past. One particular area of concern among those of the Ordo Hereticus relates to the presence of the forerunners of the Adeptus Mechanicus. While the sector contains a number of sovereign Mechanicum domains, including the mighty forge world of Cerix Magnus, it once contained another which some legends state was far greater than those of current times. This lost forge world remains unnamed in the shrouded histories of Askellon, but those references that do appear to allude to it suggest it was a powerful realm indeed,

ruled by a particular sect of the Mechanicum that specialised in that darkest of arts—the machine intelligence.



Even at the dawn of the Imperium, it is known that such intelligences were utterly forbidden, yet certain sects within the Machine Cult still delved into these proscribed areas. Fell rumours from those ancient times hold that several of these sects travelled in the mighty colonisation fleets that settled Askellian space, eager for fresh locations to continue their researches away from dogmatic opposition. Fragmentary records that have survived millennia of suppression do indicate there were several conflicts between the newly arrived Adeptus Mechanicus of the Imperium and several native Askellian sects during the time of Compliance.

Those who dare study such mythical eras from Askellon's past believe that not all of these heretical cults were properly extinguished, though the tales of artificial minds grown from vat-grown tissue now exist more as nightmare than fact. Worse, some relate that the templates for such forbidden intelligences may have had their origins in excavated data vaults from civilisations that were long dead when humanity first settled this region of space.

What happened to the hosts of these machines as the Age of Imperium dawned cannot be known; most likely the secrets of their creation were lost, or else they were outlawed completely. Nothing has been discovered of them in Askellian space, though numerous rumours and accusations continue to circulate amongst those with knowledge of the myriad sects, doctrines, and heresies of the Adeptus Mechanicus.

Often linked to this notion of lost orders of artificial intelligence is a still more shrouded claim that one of these unnamed forge worlds was so mighty in arms and in resources that it had raised its own Titan Legion. The tales had its forbidden god-machines marching to battle accompanied by serried ranks of battle mechanisms—no mere unthinking constructs such as servitors or standard mechanical automata, but heretically self-aware.

Once more, there survives no physical evidence that such an order existed at all from those ancient days, yet legends of such evidence surfacing appear once every generation or so. These dark fables invariably reach the ears of the Ordo Hereticus; even partly accurate they are of the greatest import, for none dare contemplate the horrors that thinking machines might unleash upon Mankind.

The latest rumour to emerge appears to be the most significant yet, for it contains a new element none have encountered before. These claim that a renegade faction within the Inquisition, a faction with links to a number of known, outcast Radical Inquisitors, has uncovered details of the lost forge world and its attendant Legio. They state that during the great rebellion at the time of the birth of the Imperium, the forge world was crushed by the ancestors of Cerix Magnus in a bitter and violent internecine war that raged for several centuries.

When it was finally concluded, the unnamed forge world was so utterly defeated that not even a cloud of planetary debris remained to mark its passing. What may remain, however, are the fruits of that forge world's expertise: countless thousands of deactivated war engines now sealed away in a vast stasis chamber hundreds of kilometres beneath the surface of Cerix Magnus itself. Furthermore, the tale goes on, the lost Legio somehow escaped the death of its forge and exists yet. Somewhere in the darkness, its human and machine descendants remain ever-vigilant for the opportunity to avenge themselves on their ancient foe and reclaim the treasures taken at the moment of their home world's fall.

PURITANS AND RADICALS

While a great many of the conspiracies and blasphemies that have plagued the Askellon Sector over the millennia have been the fruit of whatever rotten taint casts its pall over the entire region, others are in fact the result of the ongoing wars that split the Inquisition itself. To an outsider, it might appear that settling matters of doctrinal schism with violence, often on a grand scale, is foolhardy in the extreme, it has in fact ensured the ongoing survival of the Inquisition and, potentially, of the Imperium itself. But while the process might serve the interests of the Inquisition, it is to the extreme detriment of those caught in the crossfire.

While the fact is largely unknown within the sector, even to those occupying the highest echelons of its power structures, many wars between diametrically-opposed factions of Inquisitors have been fought in the Askellon Sector, quite apart from the full-blown invasion and massacre that was the Vaxi Atrocity. In fact, some abominations that many blame on the ruthlessness or disinterest of the Lords of Askellon are actually collateral damage inflicted by warring Inquisitors or their numerous Acolytes.

Those of the Ordo Hereticus who concern themselves with the status and fate of the Askellon Sector are riven by factional schism. It appears that those of a Radical bent outnumber their rivals in Askellon, possibly because Puritans regard the entire region as lost beyond hope of redemption. Of those Puritans and their allies that do operate in Askellon, most adhere to the Monodominant philosophy, one of the most extreme and uncompromising in outlook. Monodominants tend to be strident bombasts, or vengeful slayers of entire worlds. They invariably hold that any they regard as guilty of even the slightest sin should be purged ruthlessly, sometimes consigning entire cities or worlds to the pyre for the sin of a few. In such a region as Askellon, Monodominant Ordo Hereticus Inquisitors see heresy wherever they look, and have no compunction about delivering their judgement.

However, there are those within and who serve the Ordo Hereticus who are unwilling to see their Monodominant peers purge the entire sector in such a way. Rather, there are those in the Radical camp who hold that if the region must meet its doom, it should do so in a manner that serves Mankind as a whole. Any other fate, they argue, is a crime against all the Emperor sacrificed so much to achieve, for the stars and the human-held worlds that orbit them should not be abandoned without gain.

In particular, the Istvastian faction and a number of its derivatives appear well-represented in the ranks of the Ordo Hereticus operating in the Askellon Sector. Istvastians hold that only through continuous and drastic strife can Mankind remain strong, and from this philosophy a number of sub-divisions have evolved amongst Askellian Ordo Hereticus Inquisitors. In most cases, these philosophies are represented in only small groups, sometimes in no more than a single Inquisitor and his immediate network of Acolytes. In other instances, certain philosophies and disciplines have become established and have even begun to spread their unseen roots further afield.



JAUEG DAG

In his earlier years, this headstrong Thorian Inquisitor conducted secretive investigations into the remains of Imperial saints on the ancient world of Gallilenus III. His operatives infiltrated catacombs to probe the revered corpses, questing to learn what allowed their bodies and souls to achieve such divine achievements. The Sisters of Battle who guarded the crypts discovered the desecrations, and rather than reveal himself, Dag and his Acolytes attacked and killed many in his escape. Realising his horrible actions, he has since served in the Ordo Hereticus to atone, though whispers still exist of the ghastly tomb-robbers within those sacred crypts.



THE ARGURII

Augurmancy is an esoteric Askellian discipline derived from types of logic-based prognostications, outlawed by the adherents of the Machine God many centuries ago. In its primordial forms, its disciples fed endless records of calamities across the sector and beyond into huge cogitators, in order to predict future events that might threaten the Mechanicum. With each new war or devastation, its adherents believed their new predictions grew more accurate.

The wax and wane of the Pandaemonium and its terrible destructions became a prominent source of data, and adherents became obsessed with its study. The Great Warp Storm's dancing, fractal patterns soon dominated the disciples. Collected data ceased to be strictly factual and deviated into dark, near unintelligible rants of binaric code that few could decipher without cerebral failure.

Some practitioners began claiming they could soon foretell the eventual collapses of the Askellon and the Imperium. Such wild statements led to the eradication of the discipline in a massive purge, overseen by the puritanical Tech-Priests of Selvanus Binary under the orders of Quorum Primus. While it was indeed eradicated from the Mechanicum, others took up the forbidden discipline.

It was Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus who kept it alive, though redirected to Mankind's fate rather than just that of the Mechanicum. Using feral witches, secret missives from Rogue Traders and Navigators, voidseers on remote stations, auspex-taps, and other illicit means to follow the Pandaemonium's terrible ballet, they continue to gather data and reap predictions. Many began as Isstvanians, seeking ways to know of future calamities so they can act to strengthen the potency of these events. Some were drawn to Askellon because they sense its impending doom, holding that such an event must surely represent a cataclysm powerful enough to truly strengthen Mankind enough to overcome its many threats.

The most fervent of these Argurii believe that the final predicted cataclysm is the death of the Emperor and the rebirth of Mankind into an ascended psychic being. Some even seem to be examining the Pandaemonium and its effects on psykers as a means to hasten this event. This marks them out as Radicals to Ordo Hereticus Inquisitors of a Puritan outlook, many of whom reject all psychic phenomena and do not even accept that the Emperor is, or was, possessed of them. What form such a transformation might take remains unknown, however, and there are many in the ranks of the Ordo Hereticus, both Puritan and Radical, who hold that such a belief is beyond the pale, even for an Inquisitor.

THE REMONSTRANCE

Other philosophies permeate Askellon, perhaps lesser known but still filled with powerful adherents. One such is the Remonstrance, a small group of veteran Inquisitors who hold that all Imperial institutions, including the Inquisition itself, should be torn down, so that the entire structure by which humanity rules itself can be rebuilt. Thought to have originated shortly after the Vaxi Atrocity in the midst of much acrimony and accusation as to the true causes of that terrible event, they quickly became consumed with finding the hidden roots behind Askellon's troubled past.

Throughout many years of delving into the darkest secrets of the sector, individual Remonstrancers have reached the conclusion that the original settlers of the region were fleeing some great injustice when they came to Askellon, unwilling to accept whatever regime held dominion at that shrouded time. All that has transpired in the galaxy, from the Age of Strife to the Great Crusade, through the Horus Heresy and into the Age of Imperium, these Inquisitors believe is the inevitable result of the evil of the regime those original colonists were fleeing. The Remonstrance wishes not just to tear down the Imperium, but to return it to an earlier, purer form, a template they believe is hidden in the very blood of the Lords of Askellon, passed down to them over countless generations.

To date, there are far too few Remonstrancers to effect such an end, but this has only served them to plot ever more drastic acts in order to bring about their desired objective. Most such schemes have been stymied by rival Inquisitors, but with damnation and anarchy closing on the region, this state is unlikely to last forever.





CHAPTER II: FURY AND FIRE

The enemies that lurk within forever menace the Imperium, and more importantly Mankind itself. They can be found everywhere, from shining cathedrals to dank underhive caverns. Wherever there are men, there are those who have turned away from the Emperor's Grace and turned heretic, or whose flesh has twisted into the inhuman mutant, or who have allowed their unprotected minds to become linked to the Realms of Chaos. Knowing or unknowing in their fall, they are a foul rot upon humanity that must be burnt away. Against such heresy, the Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus and those who serve them as Acolytes stand ready with purifying flames and unflinching will, knowing that their struggle can never end.

Players can find new options for creating their Acolytes in this chapter, as well as potent new weapons for their Acolytes to wield against their enemies and new talents to represent growing proficiencies in combat and investigatory efforts. Those wishing to have their Acolytes call upon the Warp for aid, or better identify the actions of the witch, can choose minor psychic powers. Players can also work with their Game Master to develop independent Inquests, allowing their characters to conduct self-directed investigations and further direct the fate of their Acolytes. Game Masters and players wishing to develop Inquisitors and warbands in Radical directions might also be tempted with the powerful assets in this chapter, even though less flexible minds might label those assets as heretical and as dangerous as the threats they would combat.

COMBATTING HERETICS

"We can forgive those who fail. We can only burn those who fall."

—Cardinal Karmine of Vouxis Prime, speaking before his Faithful

Acolytes serving an Ordo Hereticus Inquisitor often face the worst of horrors—other humans. The deviant behaviour or rapacious carnage of the alien, or the unholy powers of the soul-devouring Daemon, is terrible; the depths to which humans can descend, though, are endless in magnitude and form. Investigating the horrors of men tries the spirit, for witnessing the foul acts that only humans are capable of performing means knowing anyone, no matter his origins, can become heretic, witch, or mutant. To withstand the threats facing the Ordo Hereticus, Acolytes must steel themselves with contempt and hatred in both body and mind against the greatest of foes—their fellow men.

In this section, players gain new options for their Acolytes for fighting such threats. Their service could begin on a bountiful agri-world, technologically-frozen feudal world, or harsh frontier world. New Acolytes might come from the devout Adepta Sororitas or might have lived as wretched mutants, perhaps with their minds focussed on the role of Fanatic or Penitent. Players also can use the Sister of Battle elite advance, and can call upon new reinforcement characters in their endless struggle against the enemies within.

NEW HOME WORLD: AGRI-WORLD

Harvesters on the most fertile of the Imperium's worlds; without their bounty, humanity would collapse into starving barbarism.

"Harvest of megacre aleph-stroke-237 is now complete at 41.5 gigatonnes. Survivors are directed to assemble for relocation and harvest of megacre aleph-stroke-238."

–Laud hailer announcement during
the Tertiary Season of Verdale III

Those who toil on agri-worlds provide the Imperium's countless billions of subjects one of their essential resources: food. The Adeptus Administratum classifies planets to this task often based on the desirable climates, native livestock, or other natural factors. On other agri-worlds, artificial aspects dominate, such as sheltered hydroponic lakes, floating fields suspended in hollowed-out planetoids, or algae vats buried deep within irradiated mountains. In all cases, their populations are devoted to a single cause: feeding the Imperium. Even the slightest crop failure or livestock plague can doom other worlds to horrific starvation or collapse an Imperial warfront, thus making their often-overlooked efforts vital for humanity's survival.

LIFE ON AN AGRI-WORLD

Though agri-worlds are each devoted to growing and gathering foodstuffs for a ravenous Imperium, each is unique in the ways it goes about this, as well as the actual items it produces and exports. Many rely on staples though, as these are relatively simple to grow, store, manipulate, and process into a variety of forms for human consumption across the galaxy. Some concentrate on rarer items and delicacies that can only be produced on that planet, foods bound for the tables of the connected and powerful. In time, most become renowned for certain exports, as Kalto is for padonus rice or Cel is for its mhoxen. Few agri-worlders, however, share in these bounties from their cultivated fields or packed corrals, and often subsist on discarded grains or meats unsuitable for processing.

AGRI-WORLD RULES

A character from an agri-world applies the following benefits during character creation:

CHARACTERISTIC MODIFIERS

+ Fellowship, + Strength, – Agility

FATE THRESHOLD

2 (Emperor's Blessing 7+)

HOME WORLD BONUS

Strength from the Land: An agri-world character starts with the Brutal Charge (2) trait.

HOME WORLD APTITUDE

Strength

WOUNDS

An agri-world character starts with 8+1d5 wounds.

RECOMMENDED BACKGROUNDS

Adeptus Mechanicus, Adeptus Ministorum,
Imperial Guard, Mutant

RANDOM SELECTION

If using Table 2-1: Random Home World from page 31 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, an agri-world can be generated on a roll of 86–100 with an even result.

Agrarian workforces can be anchored to working a single field, often developing such devotion to their produce that new religious sects can spring up like the plants themselves. Others might continually travel the surface, following local growing seasons to descend like attacking armies on fields ripe for harvest, and scouring the landscape to remove every morsel of grain, stalk, or other edible life. More voracious than any swarm, they leave behind nothing but barren soil before marching off to eradicate the next territory. On some planets, especially where there is a strong Adeptus Mechanicus presence, labourers with bionic scythe-limbs might work alongside monotask harvest servitors while combat servitors patrol the fields and use their heavy stubbers to discourage marauding creatures.

Produce fields vary in size and shape, including precisely-designed acreages based on ancient decrees, patterns to venerate revered saints, or wild forms based on the seasonal whims of their rulers. Some fields are not on the land at all, such as plankton farms that reap the oceans or underground fungi caverns. Other agri-worlds instead specialise in livestock creatures, from the ubiquitous grox to unique native beasts that cannot thrive anywhere else. Like the flora these need not be terrestrial, and could include gargantuan sea-beasts larger than starships, or sky-blackening clouds of protein-rich insects. In some cases these planets might import base fodder, or cultivate hydroponic algae and vat-grown flesh, just to feed these fauna until the beasts are harvested.

AGRI-WORLD CHARACTERS

Working on any agri-world, no matter its produce, is harsh and remorseless. There are always fields to till, crops to tend, harvests to conduct, or beasts to oversee. Even in artificial pastures, algae vats must be seeded and skimmed of their precious yields in continual cycles. This subservience to natural processes breeds strong individuals who readily apply their muscles to any problem. It is somewhat rare for them to leave their home world, but those who do can find many new uses across the Imperium.

Agri-worlds often supply the bulk of their Imperial Tithes in edible produce rather than manpower, given their relatively low populations and the importance of their exports. Still, the Imperial Guard is known to draw in agri-world natives, especially in times of invasion for nearby planets. Some agri-worlders might develop an affinity for machinery, after much experience working with auto-scythes or harvest crawlers, and could be noticed for recruitment into the Cult Mechanicus. The Ecclesiarchy calls to others, from their years spent intoning prayers for successful harvests. The endless tabulations of harvest output, seed usage, or other essential organisational recording can indicate a talent perfectly suited to the Adeptus Administratum and a vital posting anywhere across the Imperium.

The curse of mutation is also present, though less often confronted and eradicated. Agri-worlds, with lower population densities, allow the afflicted to more easily hide deformities or elude watchful eyes. Such characters would welcome escape offworld, where they can repay their rescuers with inhuman muscle or arcane abilities.

SAMPLE AGRI-WORLD: NOVABELLA

A relatively unsophisticated planet under the firm control of the Ecclesiarchy, Novabellans mate a fierce adoration to the Imperial Creed with their agrarian and seagoing duties. No work is done without careful prayer and offerings to the Harvest-Father, their term for the Emperor. Fields are laid out in the shapes of religious icons, seeds are planted according to blessed revelations, and crops are reaped in time with ancient hymns. Despite periodic blights and other terrible calamities, their devotion has always been rewarded with wondrously abundant yields of grains and fish, which are processed into ration bars devoured (and dreaded) by many Guardsmen across Askellian space.



NEW HOME WORLD: FEUDAL WORLD

Perpetually frozen in a state of technological grace where muscle dominates and machinery is limited; these societies reflect and affirm the correct Imperial roles of master and servant.

"Ours is the perfect life. All know their place, and all know their duty to their lords, vassals, and of course to the Emperor. All are surely comforted that this will be the same, both the next day and the next century."

–Federica VI, Lady Beneficia of Castillo

Feudal worlders live on planets defined by two pronounced aspects, the first and most dominant being a technological level suspended far below many other Imperial societies. On many of these worlds, gunpowder-based devices represent the extent of advancement. Ranks of crude blackpowder firearms and legions of mounted warriors on the charge might make for the ultimate weapons on their battlefields. The other defining aspect of feudal worlds is how their natives live, all part of networks of obligations and allegiances throughout a tribe or other societal grouping. These ties remain throughout generations, all members born, raised, and dying within their fixed stations. Like their technology, feudal worlders exist in a stagnated state. In many ways their society is similar to the Imperium itself, a welcome familiarity after the shock many natives of such worlds face as they become aware of the wider society of Mankind.

LIFE ON A FEUDAL WORLD

Feudal worlds are commonly thought to be backward, and compared to much of the Imperium, this is true. Their technology is certainly primitive, with beasts and human muscle providing the power to till fields, raise protective battlements, and transport goods and people. Their technology can also dictate how they fight; with gunpowder as the pinnacle of weaponry, personal combat might dominate as warriors seek glory against honourable foes.

FEUDAL WORLD RULES

A character from a feudal world applies the following benefits during character creation:

CHARACTERISTIC MODIFIERS

+ Perception, + Weapon Skill, – Intelligence

FATE THRESHOLD

3 (Emperor's Blessing 6+)

HOME WORLD BONUS

At Home in Armour: A feudal world character ignores the maximum Agility value imposed by any armour he is wearing.

HOME WORLD APTITUDE

Weapon Skill

WOUNDS

A feudal world character starts with 9+1d5 wounds.

RECOMMENDED BACKGROUNDS

Adepta Sororitas, Adeptus Administratum,
Adeptus Ministorum, Imperial Guard

RANDOM SELECTION

If using Table 2–1: Random Home World from page 31 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, a feudal world can be generated on a roll of 16–33 with an odd result.

Despite these limitations, feudal worlders are capable of great feats of engineering, such as complex aqueducts or gigantic statuary. They might also develop alchemical potions, healing herbologies, biological poisons, or techniques in animal training that could surpass those of many other societies.

All within a feudal world owe allegiance to those above them, from lowly peasants to elite warriors to the local ruler, who bows before the world's assigned planetary governor. This allegiance can take the form of providing food, armed support, material supplies, or other aid on demand. In turn, each ruler has obligations to those below him, such as protection from external threats, lands to work for personal use, and other benefits. This reliance on societal bonds of obedience and loyalty between members can provide structured governance across the years, lending stability to an otherwise harsh and demanding life. This helps populations balance themselves in turn; unlike many planets within the Imperium, feudal worlds are generally self-sufficient, with populations low enough that they can support themselves through agriculture and animal husbandry. Like other aspects of feudal world life, the methods used might appear primitive, but are often effective and well-suited for the natives and their planet.

Feudal worlders live a life of security. All know their role in society, and would rarely think of questioning this order. That it does not change from one generation to the next, from one century to the next, is of little notice or importance. Such is life on a feudal world, as it is across the Imperium itself.

FEUDAL WORLD CHARACTERS

Feudal worlders can range from peasants expert at raising crops, to artisans and masons responsible for providing shelter, to martial defenders of the realms, and more. Following their hereditary paths, few stray from what their forefathers have done for generations before them, or would even think of that possibility. One thing they all have in common, though, is an ingrained trust in the obligations and allegiances that tie together all levels of their culture. Such strong cultural backgrounds make them ideal for adoption into service to the Imperium, which operates along similar structures on a galactic scale.

Most feudal worlds owe minor agricultural or mineral tithes, with raw manpower their most important Imperial offering. Feudal worlds often experience culture shock when the Imperium contacts them; once this is overcome and the threats humanity faces are translated into forms the natives can understand, they can become strong sources for Imperial Guard recruitment. Mounted feudal warriors, used in combat on steeds ranging from near-Terran equines, reptilian lizards, or huge, flightless avians, provide for some of the most famous shock troops in the Imperium. Feudal worlders often venerate personal combat and honour, and some of their planets might become recruiting grounds or even fortress-monasteries for Chapters of the Adeptus Astartes.

War is not the only area feudal worlders might excel at, for without advanced technologies, their reliance on memorisation and mental organisation can make for strong fittings within the Adeptus Administratum. Many turn their devotion to the newly-revealed Imperial Creed, displaying veneration sufficient to join the Ecclesiarchy or even possibly the Adepta Sororitas. Despite unauthorised pogroms and burnings, witches are still captured as per Imperial dictate. Those brought to the Black Ships, though, might go on to serve their Emperor directly, or provide aid against the very forces that spawned their unholy and unwelcome powers.

SAMPLE FEUDAL WORLD: ADDEROTH

Adderoth is one of the coldest inhabited Askellian worlds. Its natives live behind massive castles carved from anchored icebergs, with royal sigils inscribed into the frozen walls to ward off both predatory creatures and rival empires. Peasants work shore-fiefs to grow kelpweed and harvest shoals of bloodsnails, while honoured knights do battle against gigantic aquatic reptiles to prove their mettle and defend their peoples. Those warriors chosen to leave the ice for the sky—new regiments of the Adderoth Drakemen raised for the Imperial Guard—carry the fangs of their last kill as sets of ornate daggers.



NEW HOME WORLD: FRONTIER WORLD

Existing on the edges of the Imperium with little governance or law; far from the blessings of civilised society, there is little of the Emperor's Light to illuminate these shadowy planets.

"I'm sure this fancy windup chrono does indeed mean you're wealthy—somewhere else. On this world, you'll be needing to use that pretty laspistol of yours instead if you're wanting to impress anyone."

—Tildi Galloph, trading post dealer

Frontier worlds occupy the desperate, lawless fringes of the Imperium. Inhabitants quickly learn self-reliance by necessity, knowing that they cannot expect outside aid against marauding humans or ravenous aliens. As always, where there is little Imperial attention, heresy and mutation festers unchecked. Frontier worlds swarm with the violent dregs of humanity, with pirates, bandits, outlaws, and worse ruling many areas. These planets easily become breeding grounds for rogue psykers, misguided heresies, and vile cults, and can threaten Mankind across the wider Imperium should their contagion spread.

LIFE ON A FRONTIER WORLD

Whereas life on any Imperial world is harsh and unrelenting, except perhaps for those of high birth who endure more subtle or insidious burdens, frontier worlders often stand apart. Frequently, there is no Adeptus Arbites presence on their planets, and planetary governors might only rule from orbit or from another system altogether. As such, frontier denizens must face many threats on their own, from xenos raiders to natural hazards to hostile native species or tectonic instability. These worlds are often newly-discovered, distant from regular traffic or trade routes, and settled with incomplete or poor analysis of the planet's dangers. Many were found by accident, uncovered from ancient Warp charts, or mentioned in the margins of a Rogue Trader's logs. Frontier worlds might instead be locations previously inhabited; many reveal signs of earlier civilisations, ranging from ancient human societies to long-dead alien empires. These remnants of the past might even be the reason for some settlements, or drive explorations to uncover relics from ancient times.

FRONTIER WORLD RULES

A character from a frontier world applies the following benefits during character creation:

CHARACTERISTIC MODIFIERS

+ Ballistic Skill, + Perception, –Fellowship

FATE THRESHOLD

3 (Emperor's Blessing 7+)

HOME WORLD BONUS

Rely on None but Yourself: A frontier world character gains a +20 bonus to Tech-Use tests when applying personal weapon modifications, and a +10 bonus when repairing damaged items.

HOME WORLD APTITUDE

Ballistic Skill

WOUNDS

A frontier world character starts with 7+1d5 wounds.

RECOMMENDED BACKGROUNDS

Adeptus Arbites, Adeptus Astra Telepathica,
Mutant, Outcast

RANDOM SELECTION

If using Table 2-1: Random Home World from page 31 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, a frontier world can be generated on a roll of 34–44 with an even result.

While other citizens of the Imperium might have domestic resources or imports to support themselves, frontier worlders are forced to scrape and scrounge for survival. Many are dependent on, or at least familiar with, Imperial technology, and thus their societies become a mix of refurbished devices and native constructions. This can lead to near-barbaric existences, with tribes of chainaxe wielding renegades attacking settlements for precious promethium or lasgun sentry arrays guarding isolated homesteads from predatory creatures. Still, frontier worlds always seem to attract new settlers.

Many come to the borders of the Imperium seeking escape from local religious authorities. Some might wish to worship the Emperor through means thought heretical or deviant; on a frontier world, they might be able to establish their own sect, and in time perhaps make it the world's version of the Imperial Creed. Those whose worship of dark entities would rightfully earn them burning pyres and tortuous deaths also seek their version of religious freedom. Escaping to a world where there are fewer prying eyes or torch-wielding mobs, these cults might conduct their foul rites openly or even establish control over a settlement. Many also might seek out frontier worlds for the lucrative possibilities they offer. There might not be any signs of obvious riches, but there could be xenos relics, useful native species, or even wonders from the Dark Age of Technology all waiting to be uncovered.

Not all frontier worlders have chosen their homes willingly, in search of a better life. Hive populations can be tithed to populate a newly-established world, and entire hab blocks might be stripped bare to begin new lives away from comforting crowds and metal cities. Penal legions could also be used to establish footholds on empty planets, all understanding that their new lives might be grim but still better than certain death on the battlefield.

Existing on the far edges of Imperial Law and often outside the commandments of the Imperial Creed, frontier worlders can develop a heretically relaxed attitude towards aliens. Locals wielding xenos weaponry, living in habitats crafted for non-human entities, are common. Some frontier outposts even openly trade with travelling xenos, thus spreading the taint of the alien. This acceptance of the impure can also extend to mutated humans or unholy witches. For frontier worlders, survival requires terrible alliances, with lives saved at the cost of souls. To live on the fringes is to exist in shadows, and in these shadows heresy breeds.

FRONTIER WORLD CHARACTERS

Living on a frontier world is often an exercise in daily survival: an existence not as extreme as that on a death world, but still fraught with peril. Those who do survive learn to rely on themselves, but can still go on to act as part of a wider society in the Imperium. Given the scarcity of any clearly worthwhile resources, even raw manpower, most of these planets are tithed at a relatively low grade. Raising new Imperial Guard regiments might only happen once a generation. For many, the only regular contact with the Imperium might be visitations from the Adeptus Astra Telepathica and its League of Black Ships. Where proper Imperial oversight or societal watchfulness is lax, uncultured psykers can exist or breed with impunity for years before discovery, giving them time to increase in power and danger. This also is true for those twisted in body as well as mind, with physical mutants both subtle and gross untamed, especially in wilderness areas.

Combating these deviations, missionaries of the Ecclesiarchy often flock to these worlds to bring the faith and fire of the Emperor to those who have strayed. Many become martyrs to their holy causes, and their offspring may perhaps be called to the Schola Progenium and become excellent Arbitrators on other worlds across the Imperium. Others natives, though, retain their sense of self-reliance and refrain from becoming part of any organisation, living for themselves according to their own code as countless other frontier worlders do each day.

SAMPLE FRONTIER WORLD: MARNINE

Isolated along a rough Warp-route at Thule's far rimward edges, Marnine has few resources or other appealing features. It had attracted only desultory settlement efforts, but offworld traffic has increased recently from a group obsessed with the deep caves that puncture the surface. Despite Eldar raids, the rumours of spectacular discoveries underground have attracted growing attention. It is only a matter of time before an official Adeptus Administratum presence is established and Imperial Law enforced, but until then there are few limits to what might be achieved here.



NEW BACKGROUND: ADEPTA SORORITAS

Guided by faith to execute the will of the Ecclesiarchy; armed with righteous strength and shielded from harm, they perform their holy duties in the name of the Emperor.

"We remember you, Alicia Dominica. You who received the word of our Father and cast down the apostate. You who returned us to our true path of vigilance and devotion. We remember you and honour you with our words, actions, bodies, and souls."

—from *A Prayer of Remembrance*

Legends say that in the final moments of the Reign of Blood, Alicia Dominica, leader of the warrior Daughters of the Emperor, stood before the Golden Throne with a select few trusted of her order. There they received the Light of the Emperor, filling them with terrible purpose to defy the tyrant who had taken control of the Ecclesiarchy and instigated the worst civil war since the Horus Heresy. When they emerged from that most holy chamber, they carried His righteous fire within them. Dominica descended upon the treacherous High Lord Vandire and ended his terrible Reign along with his life.

In the Reformation that followed, the Decree Passive was enacted to forbid the Adeptus Ministorum from controlling any men under arms, and thus prevent the Ecclesiarchy from threatening the Adeptus Administratum's rule over the Imperium. The all-female Daughters were deemed exempt, though, and became the Orders Militant of the Adepta Sororitas—a powerful presence to ensure the will of the Ecclesiarchy was enacted faithfully. The fierce devotion of the Sisters to their Emperor has ended many a threat from within the Imperium since those dark days. No heretic can stand against their zeal in enacting the judgement of the Ecclesiarchy, but the Sisters have also grown into a number of Non-Militant Orders devoted to the healing arts, communications, and diplomacy. In all ways, though, they are supremely loyal to the Emperor, utterly incorruptible and ready to purge all heresies with hymns and fire.

ROLE WITHIN THE IMPERIUM

As the primary military arm of the Adeptus Ministorum, the Adepta Sororitas is expected to fight the Ecclesiarchy's Wars of Faith and to defend its holdings from alien or daemonic attack. Additionally, its Orders are charged with maintaining the rule of the church by keeping Imperial citizens on the Emperor's path. Those citizens outside the Adeptus Ministorum who have dealings with any Sister know that she is an extension of her Order, of the larger Adepta Sororitas, and of the Ecclesiarchy as a whole. This gives even a lone Sister the ability to achieve much, for her authority to act in the Emperor's holy interest is almost never questioned, lest recalcitrance be perceived as heresy. Because no obstacle must be allowed to impede this holy mission, even those citizens within the Ecclesiarchy itself defer to the requests of a Sister. If she requires access to an otherwise off-limits holy tome, or if she demands answers from a Cardinal, she will not be denied.

ADEPTA SORORITAS RULES

A character with the Adepta Sororitas background applies the following benefits:

STARTING SKILLS

Athletics, Charm *or* Intimidate, Common Lore (Adepta Sororitas), Linguistics (High Gothic), Medicae *or* Parry

STARTING TALENTS

Weapon Training (Flame *or* Las, Chain)

STARTING EQUIPMENT

Hand flamer *or* laspistol, chainblade, armoured bodyglove, chrono, dataslate, stablight, micro-bead

BACKGROUND BONUS

Incorruptible Devotion: Whenever an Adepta Sororitas character would gain 1 or more Corruption Points, she gains that many Insanity Points minus 1 (to a minimum of 0) instead.

BACKGROUND APTITUDE

Offence *or* Social

RECOMMENDED ROLES

Chirurgion, Fanatic, Sage, Warrior

The Sisters of the Adepta Sororitas have an intrinsic protective instinct and a willingness to sacrifice themselves for a purpose and for the love of their Emperor. Such inspiring devotion for others comes through instruction and indoctrination. These fiercely loyal women are Daughters of the Emperor in more than just title, for no child has ever so loved her own father as the Sisters love the Emperor. In His name they seek the enemies of their Father and annihilate them with unmatched zeal. It matters not to them if their foe is a sect of overt Chaos-worshipping humans discovered on a backwater world, or a seemingly loyal Imperial Guard regiment standing watch at the heart of Imperial space. Heretical action demands deadly retribution, and the Sisters of Battle mete it out regardless of the nature of the foe.

This is not to say that all members of the Adepta Sororitas are soldiers, as its various organisations are divided into Militant and Non-Militant Orders. The Sisters of the Orders Militant serve as soldiers, guardians of sacred sites, and righteous enforcers of the Emperor's Will wherever they are needed. The Sisters of the Non-Militant Orders fill the ranks of the linguists and scholars (Orders Dialogous), negotiators (Orders Famulous), physicians (Orders Hospitalier), and other non-combat personnel. Though not as visible to the foes of the Imperium, the Sisters of these Orders are just as vital for uncovering and rooting out traitors. Their knowledge is used to reveal the blasphemous meanings of mysterious texts, to discover the beginnings of heresy in a suspect's family history, and to keep prisoners alive long enough for Confessors to see their grim efforts bear fruit.

ADEPTA SORORITAS CHARACTERS

The unquestioned access and deference to the power of the Adepta Sororitas grants Sisters of all Orders, be they actual power-armoured battle maidens or not, the ability to accomplish much that others cannot. Battle Sisters of the Orders Militant are renowned for their purity and martial prowess. This secures the Sisters' positions at the sides of governors, politicians, and other dignitaries, where they offer matchless protection while keeping watch over their charges, without fear of being drawn into any political machinations. A Sister of the Orders Militant may serve on many planets and fight thousands of battles in her lifetime, all in the name of her Order and her Emperor.

A Sister of the Non-Militant Orders may be just as well-travelled as her warrior kin, but her roles are very different. With access to otherwise sealed historical records, a Sister can uncover plots that have been centuries in the making. Negotiating on behalf of a planetary governor, she can steer arrangements to the benefit of her Order, or even prevent those deemed unwise. A Sister's keen mind makes her a welcome addition to the staff of a wealthy merchant, where she can maximise profits while also tracking resource movements in search of illicit dealings. War and disease bring pain and misery to all parts of the galaxy, and many Sisters take it upon themselves to aid those who have suffered, especially those who have fallen in service to the Emperor.

There are also Sisters who save lives by acting as translators across the stars or even on single planets, where human tongues have twisted base Gothic into myriad forms, and a single misspoken phrase could ignite a bloodbath. The ways in which a Sister of the Non-Militant Orders can use her skills and devotion in order to serve her vital mission are limited only by her persistence and will, and for her these traits are never in short supply. The diverse range of skills and roles represented in the Adepta Sororitas and the devotion all within have to the Emperor's Will can even lead to a Sister working with like-minded Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus as they purge the Imperium of the enemy within.

SAMPLE ADEPTA SORORITAS BACKGROUND: THE ORDER OF THE WATCHFUL EYE, ORDO FAMULOUS OF JUNO

As the capital of Askellon, Juno is home to more wealth, aristocracy, dignitaries, and potentially damaging treachery than any other planet in the sector. Each day the sun sets on a thousand new alliances between families, traders, and rival powers. The Ordo Famulous maintains a sizeable monastery here to track the unending dealings and shifting tides of influence, and its monastery is a highly-sought destination for young Sisters wishing to prove themselves in even the most difficult of bureaucratic circumstances. Those who carve out a strong reputation might be recruited to execute the Emperor's Will in even greater service.

NEW BACKGROUND: MUTANT

Hatred, violence, and pain—these are the daily bread for those cursed with the vile taint of mutation. Devotion, strength, and subservience—these are their means for survival.

“From this moment on, you are under my protection, but also my watchful eye. Serve me unflinchingly and live. Hesitate to act when commanded and suffer boundless, painful wrath.”

—Inquisitor Aubschmidt, binding a mutant Acolyte into service

For all but the most privileged of Imperial citizens, there is little hope for anything but lives of misery and death. The difficulties presented by the insurmountable constraints of station and birthplace, and the punishing cruelties of disease, xenos raiders, and endless war are enough to sap the will of most men, but there are wretches who have been pushed deeper into the well of hopelessness. Afflicted by abhorrent deformities of the flesh, mutants are denied even the comparative paradise of drudgery as forge workers or faceless soldiers. Marked by inhuman deformity, they are shunned by those around them at best, branded as living vessels of corruption and destroyed at worst.

ROLE WITHIN THE IMPERIUM

Mutants are almost invariably seen as affronts to the Emperor's vision for Mankind, though their origins can be from many sources. The Ruinous Powers often twist and bend the forms of mortal to “bless” them with unnatural flesh. Some mutants are twisted in body and mind through exposure to Warp-stained items or even from reading forbidden texts. Others might be the product of poisoned environs or random accidents of birth instead. In the 41st Millennium, though, any rational explanations fall to the insanities that permeate these dark ages, and a loyal citizen is unwilling or unable to draw a distinction between these factors. The Imperium believes that mutation cannot be anything but a manifestation that an individual's soul is also proportionately tainted—and in most cases, this is correct. Fear and distrust are the norm in most human worlds, and mutants are rarely given a chance to make an accounting of themselves. Because of this, the role of most mutants in the Imperium is that of a scapegoat for ill-fortune or an object for violent and cathartic release at the hands of others.

Many mutants succumb to their suffering; some turn to dread endeavours, even seeking the favour of dark powers for revenge against their tormentors. There are, however, mutants whose existence is beneficial to Mankind. Some serve the Emperor out of a sense of duty that remains true in their hearts despite the maladies that twist their forms. Others accept servitude as a less painful alternative to the miseries of their daily lives. Still others are forced, or at least shepherded, along a path to serve. The most notable, and among the most accepted, of these are Sanctioned Psykers and Navigators—mutants prized for their abilities to combat Chaos on its own ground or to guide ships through the Warp, respectively.

Most are not as fortunate though. They have no mental gifts to offer, and must provide physical labour in exchange for their forestalled termination. Perhaps their bodies have swelled with muscles expanding to degrees impossible to achieve for even the most physically fit of untainted men and making them ideal beasts of burden. Others may be immune to pain, making them perfect troops to form the beachhead of an assault.

MUTANT RULES

A character with the Mutant background applies the following benefits:

STARTING SKILLS

Acrobatics or Athletics, Awareness, Deceive or Intimidate, Forbidden Lore (Mutants), Survival

STARTING TALENTS

Weapon Training (Low-Tech, Solid Projectile)

STARTING TRAITS

One of the following: Amphibious, Dark-sight, Natural Weapons, Sonar Sense, Sturdy, Toxic (1), Unnatural Agility (1), Unnatural Strength (1), or Unnatural Toughness (1)

STARTING CORRUPTION AND MUTATION

A Mutant character begins play with 10 Corruption points. Instead of rolling as normal for malignancy or mutation, roll 5d10 on Table 8-16: Mutations (see page 292 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook) to determine a starting mutation for the character.

STARTING EQUIPMENT

Shotgun (or stub revolver and great weapon), grapnel and line, heavy leathers, combat vest, 2 doses of stim

BACKGROUND BONUS

Twisted Flesh: A Mutant character can always choose to fail any test associated with resisting malignancy or mutation. Whenever he would gain a malignancy, he may roll on Table 8-16: Mutations to gain a mutation instead.

BACKGROUND APTITUDE

Fieldcraft or Offence

RECOMMENDED ROLES

Assassin, Desperado, Penitent, Warrior

MUTANT CHARACTERS

When an Imperial citizen finds himself in the presence of a mutant, often the wretch lives only for as long as it takes to draw a weapon and squeeze the trigger. There are some, though, who occasionally find uses for the tainted. Desperation, unique circumstances, or simply a more Radical approach can stay the hand of an Inquisitor and grant a mutant a chance to earn a few more moments of life.

A mutant's deformities usually offer it something unique—something that affords it a chance to survive where humans might not. He might have skin hard enough to deflect small arms fire, bizarre sensory organs, additional limbs, or even leathery wings that allow him flight. The variety of mutation is endless, and for a mutant who is willing to turn his perceived weaknesses into advantages, life can take an unexpected turn. It is even possible, paradoxically, that he might be of use to an Inquisitor.

An Inquisitor can hold up his mutant Acolyte as a symbol of his power over corruption in a variety of situations where a pure human would not suffice. He can use a mutant to infiltrate Chaos cults and debased sects where others would be easily detected, or pose as a captured prisoner to allow a warband a favourable reputation among local Enforcers. Regardless of the specific duties assigned to the mutant, he is a valuable asset for any Inquisitor willing to look beyond the stigma associated with such a deviant and turn his purpose toward the benefit of the Emperor and the survival of Mankind.

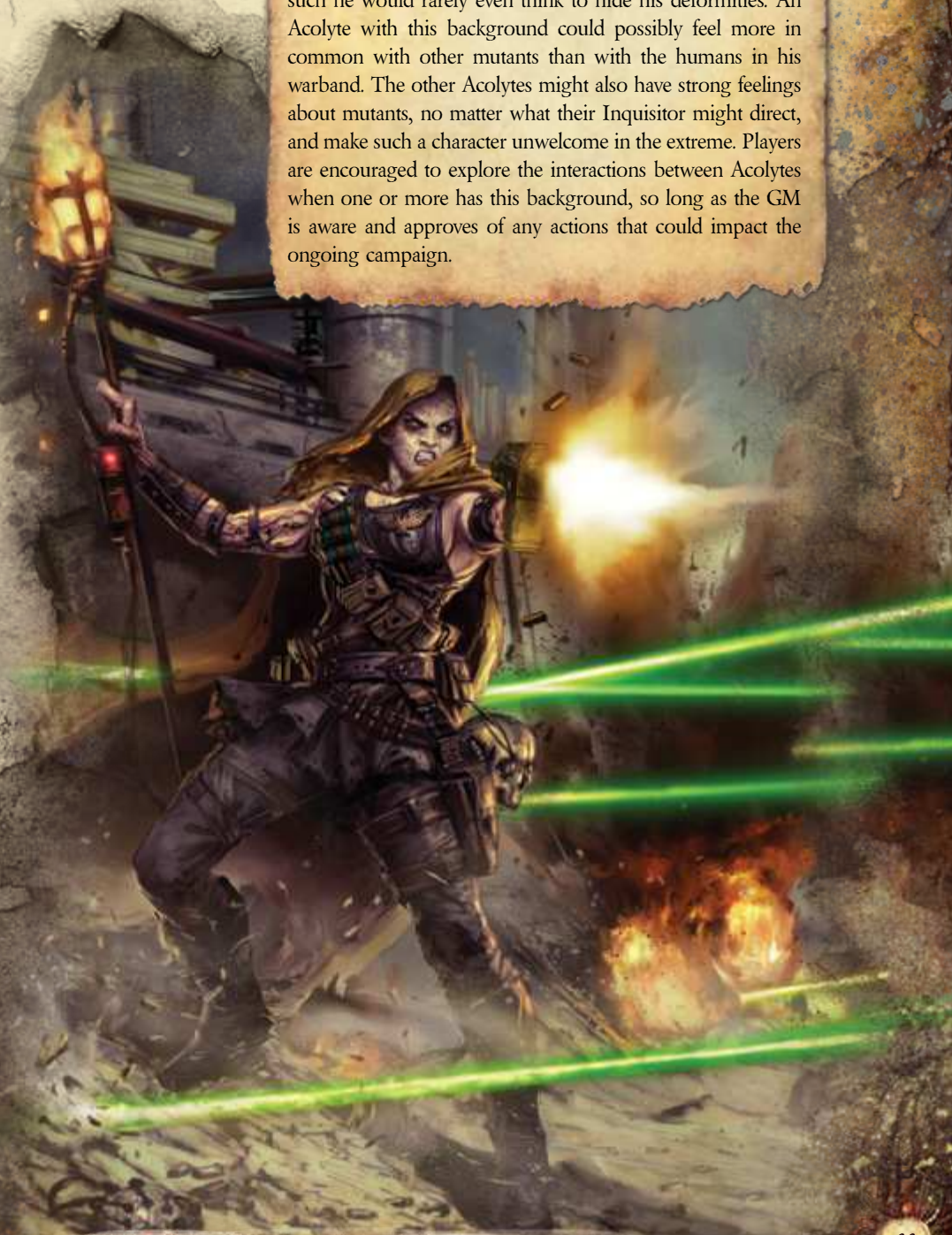
SAMPLE MUTANT BACKGROUND: THE JARVIN SPAWN

Deep beneath the processing plants on Desoleum's Hive Jarvis, a series of huge chambers processes the foul Iokian bile-fly paste into rations that feed millions. The conditions are inhuman, even compared to the similar facilities within the planet's other hives, and so only the inhuman labour here. Some of the mutants come from the increasingly arid tunnels beneath the hive. Others may have once been men, but years of exposure to the decaying larvae and the native rocks lining the insect breeding pens have twisted them into misshapen forms. All know they can have no other fate but to work and die, but there are tales of a small few who aided a group of offworlders and were never seen again—still destined to die, but now in a much more important duty.

MUTANT ACOLYTES IN DARK HERESY

A player wishing to use the Mutant background should discuss this with the GM to ensure such a character fits into the outlook and disposition of the warband's Inquisitor. A Puritan Inquisitor, for example, might never allow such a thing, while a Radical might not give it a second thought. A Mutant Acolyte might also not fit into campaign plots, and the GM could need to revise planned adventures.

As opposed to an Acolyte who gains malignancies and mutations in the course of adventures, a PC with the Mutant background begins play with physical afflictions—many of which could be so overt as to make disguise impossible. He might have had them at birth or from a young age, and as such he would rarely even think to hide his deformities. An Acolyte with this background could possibly feel more in common with other mutants than with the humans in his warband. The other Acolytes might also have strong feelings about mutants, no matter what their Inquisitor might direct, and make such a character unwelcome in the extreme. Players are encouraged to explore the interactions between Acolytes when one or more has this background, so long as the GM is aware and approves of any actions that could impact the ongoing campaign.



NEW ROLE: FANATIC

Single-minded in the pursuit of their vital goals or the destruction of their hated enemies; there are no limits to what extremes they will go as a result of their obsessive beliefs.

"Why do you stay your hand? Where one mutant exists, I know there must be others!"

—Last words before the Burning of Hive Jaspo

The Imperium thrives on belief. Belief drives the Adeptus Ministorum in its efforts to unite Mankind in worship of the Emperor. For most citizens, belief might be as simple as the forlorn idea that tomorrow might be a better day, or that they can expect a tomorrow at all. For a Fanatic, though, belief is all. It consumes his life, and the depth of his conviction creates the purity of utter certainty in his actions and utter obsessiveness towards his goals. He might easily hate anyone not agreeing with him as much as he hates the target of his beliefs, and burn friend as well as foe in his quest. Death holds no fear, and any setbacks only make him redouble his efforts. Convinced in the righteousness of his beliefs, no matter what they are, he strides fearlessly against his foes as an unstoppable force, and woe unto anyone or anything that dares bar his way.

THE ROLE OF THE FANATIC

A Fanatic can be found anywhere across the Imperium, from a lowly underhive scum who obsesses over the precise geometry of his fungus patch to a planetary governor determined to eradicate all mutation, no matter how many of his subjects he has to burn to do so. A Fanatic might direct himself towards a single activity, such as continually carving Aquilas onto any surface he finds to spread the word of the Emperor, or arranging his chainsword strikes in battle to form his hive gang's mark in bleeding flesh. There is nothing that a Fanatic cannot become obsessed over, though those chosen to become Acolytes often have devoted themselves to directions an Inquisitor might find advantageous. A Fanatic who passionately hates psykers, aliens, or heretics is useful, but many a Fanatic has other useful traits, and his zealotry might not be obvious to his Inquisitor or fellow Acolytes at first. His comrades understand only when they notice that he insists on hand-making each of his autogun rounds because he does not trust castings he has not witnessed personally, or calmly refuses disguises and insists his enemies must always know the face of their killer.

While every Fanatic is nigh-absolute in his conviction, for some the exact target of that conviction could shift. This can come about due to a change in location, where he might encounter an unfamiliar heretical cult or foul xenos race and thus make this his new focus. Alternatively, he might strive to abolish plasma weaponry after suffering vent-burns in combat or upon learning that such weapons devastated a beloved settlement. A Fanatic might be aware of his dogmatic nature, and through sheer force of will redirect his monomaniacal dedication towards a new purpose or foe. So long as he has a proper focus, this type of Fanatic can develop and become even more useful for the warband.

FANATIC SPECIAL RULES

A Fanatic character gains the following benefits:

ROLE APTITUDES

Leadership, Offence, Toughness, Weapon Skill, Willpower

ROLE TALENT

Deny the Witch or Jaded

ROLE BONUS

Death to All Who Oppose Me! In addition to the normal uses of Fate points (see page 293 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook), a Fanatic character may spend a Fate point to count as having the Hatred talent against his current foe for the duration of the encounter. Should he choose to leave combat against a Hated foe in that encounter, however, he gains 1 Insanity point.

The mere absence of his obsession does not lessen his zeal, however. For a Fanatic, this could only indicate the righteousness of his cause and make him strengthen his efforts. Finding a hab empty of expected xenos relics, for example, might only be the first step. He might be convinced that only through even more stringent interrogations can they be found. This might lead to purging an entire hive level by level, no matter how impossible this task, in order to find the relics he is convinced must exist.

Within a warband, a Fanatic can be a powerful asset. Where others might falter when set against overwhelming cultists or terrifying Daemons, he cannot be stayed and can inspire others with his convictions. When Acolytes face hopelessly complex data retrievals or insidiously attractive temptations, a Fanatic rebukes doubt and exhorts his compatriots to do the same. He always scoffs at any signs of laxity, and considers anything less than absolute conviction to be weakness—and no Fanatic can abide weakness. This can lead to rabid pursuits in mistaken directions or futile attacks, however. In some cases, the other members of the warband might have to rein in or redirect a Fanatic when his actions are not furthering the aims of their Inquisitor. This can be a difficult task, for a Fanatic often opposes these efforts with increased certainty that his beliefs are correct, and redoubles his actions despite any evidence others might see.

FANATIC CHARACTERS

Given the horrors of the 41st Millennium, the behaviour of the Fanatic is a common one amongst many settings and organisations. On death worlds, for example, only those with ardent and ceaseless hostility for the local flora and fauna survive to live another day, and on shrine worlds a Fanatic can find pilgrims and other passionate worshippers to share his zealotry. Indeed, a Fanatic within the Adeptus Ministorum can often find welcome company in his extreme beliefs amongst the fiery orators and torch-wielding preachers that roam many worlds in search of sinners to burn. This is especially so for the Adepta Sororitas, where few can match the fierce hatred that their Sisters of Battle show towards any they deem heretic, or the adoration they hold for the Emperor.

Even though most would assume zealotry and obsession evidence of emotional responses, Fanatics can develop themselves as Tech-Priests of the Adeptus Mechanicus. The endless avenues of research and study allow for acutely focussed thought and activity, from the search for STC fragments to unravelling the secrets of the Tyranid Hivemind. There is no area in which an Adeptus Mechanicus Fanatic cannot immerse his entire being, perhaps augmented through engrammic branding or other electro-cranial reinforcements. Filled with certainty in the Omnissiah, a Fanatic might spend his life buried deep within datavaults that extend to the Dark Age of Technology or far beyond the fringes of Imperial space in search of archaeotech relics, in all cases confident beyond calculation that his pursuit is worthy and cessation is unthinkable.

It is also not uncommon for a Fanatic to truly find himself as a member of the Adeptus Arbites. All Arbitrators, from the lower ranks who patrol scum-filled habways to the stern Judges who oversee entire worlds, are expected to have extreme dedication to the Emperor's Laws. Regardless of the circumstances or even degree of the offence, a Fanatic would endlessly pursue the guilty no matter the collateral damage or injury to others. Punishing the guilty is all that matters, and anything less is to weaken the laws that bind the Imperium together.

SAMPLE FANATIC: SISTER PYRESS

Ellessa Rone was a simple vendor of her intricate, hand-crafted trinkets in Hive Suzzum's infamous Circumspect Market—until she was swept into the fervour of the Order of Redeeming Flames after it led a procession of captured witches and mutants near her stall. The righteousness of the Order lit something within her, a deep longing for such certainty, and she fashioned her own torch to join their ranks. Now known as Pyress, she soon became one of the Order's most devoted members. Nothing was allowed to stand in the way of her fiery sweeps; she even led pogroms deep into the gigantic crystalline caverns far below the hive's surface. It was in one of these unnatural grottos that she met a strange visitor, who showed her even greater threats to target with her obsessive fury.



FANATIC SAMPLE PATHS

A Fanatic's obsessions are sometimes not limited to his own mind: he must convince others of the correctness of his beliefs as well. Unlike a Hierophant, he is not necessarily a zealot for the Emperor, and focusses his extreme beliefs in almost any direction, from hatred of the xenos to a passion for bladed weapons. A player wishing to build a Fanatic in this way would concentrate on linguistics, rhetoric, and other means to help sway others to his convictions, as well as reinforcing his own mental strengths to ensure nothing can alter his own beliefs.

RECOMMENDED ADVANCES:

Characteristics: Intelligence, Fellowship, Willpower
Skills: Charm, Deceive, Intimidate, Linguistics (High Gothic)
Talents: Bastion of Iron Will, Halo of Command, Resistance (Psychic Powers), Strong Minded

The Fanatic often displays the righteousness of his fervent beliefs through example, and leads through the strength of his conviction. No matter what stands before the warband or causes it to hesitate, he refuses to fall—a tenacious inspiration to the other Acolytes and an unstoppable enemy to his foes. To develop this type of Fanatic, a player would look to enhance his Acolyte's physical characteristics and combat abilities. The character might even devote himself to becoming a living weapon to better demonstrate his zealotry, using his own flesh to smite his hated enemies.

RECOMMENDED ADVANCES:

Characteristics: Strength, Toughness, Willpower
Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Intimidate, Navigate (Surface)
Talents: Combat Master, Crushing Blow, Frenzy, Hammer Blow, Purity of Hatred, Unarmed Specialist

NEW ROLE: PENITENT

Driven by atonement and contrition; having learned their sins through self-discovery or external excruciation, they are eager to suffer and prove their dedication to the Emperor.

"Let the heretic strike and scar me. He can do nothing as terrible as what I truly deserve."

—Tarrantine Erasmus, Askellian ligatured psyker

Most heretics end their deluded lives burnt on righteous pyres, devoured by Daemons, or torn apart by loyal citizens, but for a small portion there are fates perhaps worse. A Penitent must continue living, both knowing his damnable transgressions against his fellow humans and denying himself cleansing death until he redeems his soul. Even this mental suffering is not enough—for many, similar punishment of the flesh is also necessary. He might obsessively lacerate his own skin with a small whip he carries in one hand, or he—humble even in his suffering—might employ such devices as an inner waistcoat of tiny barbed chainmail or gloves lined with burning chems. The Penitent fully believes in his woeful state, and his sins dominate his thoughts. He might share them with others, but most keep such transgressions private. He knows he has erred in the eyes of the Emperor, and that is enough in his fervent desire for utter purity. The Penitent knows of his terrible sins, be they real or imagined, and devotes himself to using pain, denial, and other mortifications of the mind and body in his quest for redemption.

THE ROLE OF THE PENITENT

The Penitent welcomes opportunities to suffer for his sins; as an Acolyte, he can not only find these but also use them for the protection of Mankind and his fellow Acolytes. He not only shrugs off injury, but welcomes it as proof of his devotional penance. His needs are few, and he might survive only on sips of water and stale corpse starch rations as part of denying his flesh any semblance of pleasure. He can also be a steadying force in the warband, humble but forceful, ensuring that the right is not sacrificed for the expedient, or that the warband does not drift into worldly comforts during its investigations. Where others might seek out lavish appointments or fine clothing, the Penitent refrains from anything that diverts the essential suffering necessary to properly focus on these critical endeavours. Even if such items are required for disguise or subterfuge, he always ensures his own penance continues—from simply adding sharp stones into his stylish footwear to stuffing his ornate belt with biting metal shards. His weak flesh and spirit need constant reminders of his sins, and only through these reminders can he hope to find atonement.

Though a Penitent can become absorbed with harming flesh, he can also become a useful medicae from learning how to mend his own flesh after particularly egregious self-inflicted tortures. No Penitent wishes death, as that would be a cowardly abrogation of the debts he owes for his sins; maintaining his own scoured form for continued suffering is absolutely necessary. Of course, he is often more than willing to share this suffering with others the warband meets and convince them to repent as well. If these sinners live, then they might join him on the long path to forgiveness. If not, perhaps they were too far gone for redemption and are better consigned to death.

PENITENT SPECIAL RULES

A Penitent character gains the following benefits:

ROLE APTITUDES

Agility, Fieldcraft, Intelligence, Offence, Toughness

ROLE TALENT

Die Hard or Flagellant

ROLE BONUS

Cleansing Pain: Whenever a Penitent character suffers 1 or more points of damage (after reductions for Toughness bonus and Armour), he gains a +10 bonus to the first test he makes before the end of his next turn.

A Penitent can have a useful role in combat. As someone familiar with pain, his ability to ignore or even appreciate the burn of lasgun blasts or agony of chainsword slashes can ensure he keeps fighting while others might falter. It is not uncommon for him to lead his warband into battle, eager to accept withering castigation while his allies advance behind him.

He also may have hidden abilities or connections, perhaps long forgotten or expressly kept concealed, as they reveal or are otherwise part of his prior life. There are hosts of once-powerful lords, generals, and magnates who now walk humbly throughout Askellon in hair shirts or thorned tunics for their sinful pride that may have lost ships or even worlds. Other Acolytes may have difficulty uncovering the Penitent's secrets, though, as this requires establishing rapport and trust—not an easy task, given that Acolytes can rarely trust anyone, least of all each other.

PENITENT CHARACTERS

A Penitent might travel to a distant frontier world to live out his life in isolation and abject denial, or seek out a primitive feudal world. Another finds solitude in other ways, descending into a hive world to become just one of the endless, faceless billions within a steel mountain. The Penitent might instead become a wandering pilgrim, travelling across Askellon to retrace the weeping steps of the saints or legendary Explorator fleets that uncovered long-lost relics of the Omnissiah. With each step he wills himself to feel the pain of all those who travelled before him, often augmenting this through the application of scourging whips or neural barbs.

The Adeptus Ministorum holds penance as an important part of faith, and Penitents can be found throughout the ranks of the Ecclesiarchy. Some are used to hunt down other sinners, knowing that only through purifying flames can the unrighteous find the Emperor's blessing, and praying for the day they are allowed to also burn. Tech-Priests of the Adeptus Mechanicus might find their own version of penance for failures to the Omnissiah, such as stripping technology from their bodies. Relying only on weak flesh until they are worthy again of holy bionics, they know there is no greater form of suffering possible.

Penance can be performed in battle, where penal legionnaires fight as part of the Astra Militarum as payment for their crimes. Some struggle against this fate, while a Penitent welcomes this opportunity to redeem himself. Most sinners die horribly and too soon for the expurgation of their sins, but any death against the foes of the Emperor is a better death than most deserve. Some even survive long enough to be freed for other service. Penitents know they still have sins to resolve, even if their explosive collars are deactivated, and may still wear one of the heavy devices around their necks as a reminder that penance can never truly end.

Many a Penitent seeks his own personal acts of redemption. He might have been a criminal or heretic who was never caught, and realised his sins in a flash of light, as if the Emperor turned His Gaze upon his face. He might have witnessed the horrors of his actions, such as seeing a Daemon possessing a sacrifice or watching a hab burn due to shoddy work. He may have been the proud officer who saw all of his loyal men and women perish in the futile attack he ordered, or a cowardly Enforcer who fled and allowed bloodthirsty cultists to overrun his comrades. He might be a hidden mutant, knowing his very flesh is a sin no matter the actual degree of his genetic corruption. In these cases, the Penitent could undertake his own solitary path of suffering to gain no one's forgiveness but the Emperor's. He might abandon his life to become an Outcast or remain in his current vocation, with no one but himself to determine what, if anything, constitutes absolution.

SAMPLE PENITENT: IRSTEN KALLOW

Kallow speaks little of his past, though the faded and bloodstained robe he wears is common on Terminus Prime, and he sometimes lets slip extensive knowledge of Warp routes and Rogue Trader dynasties. His past, he says, is of little importance compared to the sins for which he must atone. As one of the Benailed Mutilants, a sect that stretches across the Rubicon Sub-Sector, he drives tiny ritual nails into his flesh anew every day; the number and serration of the nails he uses indicate that his sins were many and grave indeed. His devotion to redemption is sincere, but few believe he will live long enough to finally withdraw his last nail for good.



PENITENT SAMPLE PATHS

Only through cleansing pain can the Penitent find even the hope of atonement. For this character, though, it is not enough that he suffers—he must display his penance to others, that they see the consequences of sin. His ritualistic scourging and other acts of contrition are done publicly and even as part of combat. A player seeking to develop a Penitent in this manner could invest in physical and martial development to better inflict suffering on himself and his foes, as well as fashion enthralling spectacles to show his enthusiasm for his penance.

RECOMMENDED ADVANCES:

Characteristics: Agility, Toughness, Weapon Skill
Skills: Athletics, Medicae, Survival, Trade (Performancer)
Talents: Combat Master, Die Hard, Flagellant, Iron Jaw, Jaded, Leap Up, Swift Attack, True Grit

Many a soulless pariah often spends his life convinced he deserves the abhorrence others show towards him. Certain he has sinned greatly against the Emperor, he knows that only through self-sacrifice can he find redemption. He willingly stands against psykers—those attached to the unnatural realms he is forever denied—and weeps at the terrifying abscess where his soul should reside. The Untouchable elite advance would be the first step in creating such a Penitent, along with talents designed to disrupt psykers and their unholy acts.

RECOMMENDED ADVANCES:

Characteristics: Perception, Toughness, Willpower
Skills: Awareness, Forbidden Lore (The Warp), Scrutiny
Talents: Flagellant, Jaded, Psychic Null, Warp Anathema, Warp Bane, Warp Disruption
Elite Advance: Untouchable

NEW ELITE ADVANCE: SISTER OF BATTLE

The Sisters of Battle represent some of the deadliest and most fanatical warriors humanity can muster, and any members of the Adepta Sororitas who reach this lofty rank are fighters of renown amongst their order. Clad in power armour and adamantine faith, they smite the foes of the Ecclesiarchy, driven on by their unwavering zeal. While few can stand in the path of these holy warriors, the effect their actions have on the populace is as great as their strength of arms. The might of the Sisters of Battle lies not only in their martial prowess, but also in the sacred dread they evoke in all who bear witness to their crusades.

Though few Inquisitors have direct ties to the Adepta Sororitas, those who work closely with the Ecclesiarchy sometimes call upon a Battle Sister to join their warband of Acolytes, bringing down the wrath of the Emperor upon the enemies of humanity. To some, her blessed fits of divinely-inspired passion might be terrifying, but none can deny the efficacy of this mighty warrior in the battle for humanity's very soul.

SISTER OF BATTLE TALENTS

The following talents are available only to a Sister of Battle character, and are purchased with experience in the same manner as regular talents are purchased.

BLESSED MARTYRDOM

Battle Sisters fight with the firm conviction that their souls are secure, protected eternally by the Emperor. Emboldened by this knowledge, they can stride forward without fear, trusting that no fleshly wounds can lay their spirits low. Many wondrous miracles have been recorded at times when faithful champions of the Adepta Sororitas have been struck down, only to rise again or perform an even greater miracle in their death throes. Those who witness these blood-stained miracles are invariably filled with holy awe.

Tier: 2

Prerequisites: Ceaseless Crusader, Shielding Faith

Aptitudes: Leadership, Willpower

Effect: Whenever this character burns Fate threshold to survive a mortal blow, each other friendly character who witnesses her miraculous survival regains 1 spent Fate point. When this character dies in battle, each other friendly character who witnesses her glorious demise regains all spent Fate points.

CEASELESS CRUSADER

When faced with the enemies of the Imperium, the Sisters of Battle have been known to display inhuman endurance, pursuing their enemies tirelessly. Those who witness their miraculous stamina on the battlefield are often filled with zeal of their own to rejoin the battle in spite of fatigue and injuries.

Tier: 1

Prerequisite: Willpower 45

Aptitudes: Leadership, Willpower

Effect: As a free action, this character may spend a Fate point to ignore the effects of Fatigue until the end of the encounter. When she does so, each other friendly character within 30 metres removes 1 level of Fatigue.

SISTER OF BATTLE SPECIAL RULES

The Sister of Battle elite advance has the following rules:

EXPERIENCE COST

750 xp

PREREQUISITES

- **Influence:** 50
- **Willpower:** 40
- **Adepta Sororitas Background:** Only members of the Adepta Sororitas can undertake the harsh training to become Sisters of Battle.

INSTANT CHANGES

Gain the Peer (Adepta Sororitas) and Weapon Training (Bolt) talents, the Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis) skill, and the Willpower aptitude.

EQUIPMENT

Gain Adepta Sororitas power armour, and Godwyn-De'az bolt pistol *or* flamer.

UNLOCKED ADVANCES

A Sister of Battle character gains access to a special set of talents. These talents are available only to a Sister of Battle character, and are purchased with experience in the same manner as regular talents are purchased.

CLEANSE WITH FIRE

It is the charge of the Adepta Sororitas to scourge the wicked, and some take to this task with a terrifying efficacy, charring their heretical enemies with deadly flame weapons and scattering the ash underfoot.

Tier: 2

Prerequisite: Ballistic Skill 40

Aptitudes: Willpower, Offence

Effect: When attacking with a weapon with the Flame quality, this character can re-roll any results lower than her Willpower bonus on damage rolls.

DIVINE VENGEANCE

Members of the Adepta Sororitas are filled with the light of the Emperor, inspired by His presence, and on the battlefield they shine brightly indeed. To the Sisters of Battle, wars of faith are religious expressions as significant and irreplaceable as prayer. To slay the Emperor's foes is an act of worship, and for their piety, Battle Sisters are rewarded with the Emperor's grace.

Tier: 2

Prerequisites: Cleanse with Fire, Ballistic Skill 45

Aptitudes: Ballistic Skill, Offence

Effect: The first time in each combat that this character inflicts Righteous Fury upon an enemy, she regains 1 spent Fate point.

EMPEROR'S GUIDANCE

The Battle Sister beseeches the Emperor to guide her strikes, finding the gap in even the strongest of armour. With a mighty blow, she lashes out to smite her enemy.

Tier: 2

Prerequisites: Insanity 25, Furious Zeal

Aptitudes: Willpower, Offence

Effect: As a Free Action, this character may spend a Fate point to increase the penetration of her weapon by her Insanity bonus until the end of her next turn.

FURIOUS ZEAL

The Sister of Battle wields her faith as she would a blade, slashing through all impediments to deliver the Emperor's Justice. Her sword-arm is strong, and she fights with no regard for her own life and with no fear of defeat.

Tier: 1

Prerequisites: Insanity 10, Hatred (Any One)

Aptitudes: Weapon Skill, Offence

Effect: This character adds her Insanity bonus to damage she inflicts with melee attacks against targets included in one or more of her Hatred talents.

SPIRIT OF THE MARTYR

The Battle Sister asks for the protection of the Emperor, that she might shrug off hideous strikes long enough to bring down justice on His foes. Even this brief prayer can grant seemingly miraculous resistance, as bullets ricochet off of her armour and mortal blows fall just short.

Tier: 2

Prerequisites: Insanity 20, Furious Zeal

Aptitudes: Willpower, Defence

Effect: As a free action, this character may spend a Fate point to gain additional Armour points on all locations equal to her Insanity bonus until the end of her next turn.

SHIELDING FAITH

The warriors of the Adepta Sororitas are well-known for being warded against the power of the witch, for their faith in the Emperor blasts through sorcery just as their holy bolters pierce flesh and bone. Sisters of Battle have been known to walk through gouts of sorcerous flame and come out untouched by the unholy fire, and to brush aside even the most beguiling illusions of the foul denizens of the Warp.

Tier: 1

Prerequisite: Deny the Witch

Aptitudes: Willpower, Defence

Effect: When using the Deny the Witch talent to make an Evasion reaction against a psychic power, this character may spend a Fate point to automatically pass the test with a number of degrees of success equal to her Willpower bonus. If she does so, the psyker must make a Fear test against a Fear rating of 1.

ZEALOT'S PASSION

As they are filled with mercy for the Emperor's chosen, the Sisters of Battle hold in equal measure hatred for His foes. The wrathful oratory of a member of the Adepta Sororitas is something to behold, and few can stand before her fury.

Tier: 3

Aptitudes: Fellowship, Offence

Prerequisites: Fellowship 35, Spirit of the Martyr

Effect: As a Free Action, this character may spend a Fate point and choose a foe. Until the end of the encounter, she and each of her allies within ten times her Willpower bonus in metres count as possessing the Hatred talent against that kind of enemy.



NEW REINFORCEMENT CHARACTERS

The following reinforcement characters represent the horrific fates that can await any who speak against—or worse, dare to oppose—the will of the Ecclesiarchy. When unleashed against heretics, they are creatures of terrible fury who cannot rest until the Emperor forgives them in death.

ARCO-FLAGELLANT

Influence Minimum: 35

Influence Cost: 6

Peer (Adeptus Ministorum) talent lowers Influence Cost by 1d5

Woe unto the poor unfortunate sentenced to arco-flagellation, one of the more gruesome of the many punishments the Ecclesiarchy inflicts on those deemed heretical or merely intrusive. His body is subjected to excruciating surgeries and augmentations, while his mind is broken and reconstructed into a more pliable state. Vicious whips or other deadly weapons are permanently melded with his arms, and chem-injectors now line his grotesquely muscled shape. Only the pacifier helm welded into his skull keeps him—just barely—under control and able to follow simple commands, through a combination of hymns and harmonies laced with hypno-coded tranquillisms.

Each arco-flagellant has two unique trigger words. The first deactivates his pacifier helm and causes his injectors to unleash massive doses of stimm, painblockers, muscle enhancers, and other combat drugs, transforming him into a lethal blur of lashing metal and brutal ferocity. While active, few can withstand his fearsome rage and utter disregard for his own survival. The second trigger re-activates his helm, overpowering his mind with soothing sonics as his injectors flood his body with neutralising chems. Docile once more, he can only mindlessly await his next opportunity to repent and kill.

Weapons: The arco-flagellant is armed with either a pair of implanted chainaxes or implanted electro-flails.

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10

Talents: Ambidextrous, Combat Master, Devastating Assault, Iron Jaw, Lightning Attack, Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Shock), Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Master (Melee), Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee), Unnatural Strength (3), Unnatural Agility (3), Unnatural Toughness (3)

Traits: Dark-sight, Fear (1), Machine (2), Mindlock

Gear: Internal micro-bead (to receive/relay instructions only), machine augmentation and plating, numerous chem injectors

Triggered Rage: While the arco-flagellant is under the control of his pacifier helm, he cannot attack or use any combat abilities—essentially, he is totally passive. Once his primary trigger word has been registered, he immediately is transformed into a killing machine and uses his full array of abilities against his foes. He is returned to his passive state by the second trigger word. Trigger words should be pre-determined before play, though might be tied to only one Acolyte's vocal inflections if desired, and can be delivered by speech, electronic vox signal, or psychic message.

Programmed to Kill: While in his active state, an arco-flagellant must always attack the nearest enemy in melee combat if possible. If he is not engaged with the nearest enemy, he must move towards that enemy and engage it if possible.

Cannot be Stopped: While active, an arco-flagellant is immune to Fear, Pinning, Stunning, the effects of Fatigue, and the effects of Critical damage (except those that result in the destruction of limbs or death). When an arco-flagellant returns to passive mode, if he is suffering any Critical damage, he suffers 1d10 additional Energy damage (ignoring Armour and Toughness bonus) as his chem-ravaged form reacts to his accumulated wounds.

Chem Overload: At the end of every round of combat in which the arco-flagellant was in his active state, he must roll 1d10. On a roll of 9, he suffers 2d10 Energy damage (ignoring Armour and Toughness bonus).

ARCO-FLAGELLANT					30
H ² 01-10 8		WS 53		BS 04	S 7 40
AR ² 11-20 8	AL ² 21-30 8	T 6 38	Ag 7 45	Int 10	
B ³ 31-70 9		Per 41	WP 20	Fel 02	
LR ² 71-85 8	LL ² 86-00 8	If —			
HALF 7	FULL 14	CHARGE 21	RUN 42	THREAT 18	
Implanted Chainaxes			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+11 ^{++SB} (R)			
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 13 KG	AVL SC	
SPECIAL: TEARING					
Implanted Electro-Flails			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+9 ^{++SB} (R)			
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 4.5 KG	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: FLEXIBLE, SHOCKING					





Though its form can vary, a Penitent Engine is commonly a huge bipedal mechanism with outsized metal arms bearing vicious weapons, binding the condemned with heavy chains and invasive wiring. It fills the pilot's mind with painful stimuli to reinforce his feelings of guilt, enrage him to destroy his enemies, and make him weep for his many sins. In battle he becomes a ferocious terror, using his arm-mounted dual weapons to tear enemies apart with huge chainaxe blades or roasting them with the purifying fires of heavy flammers. To be allowed to become affixed to one of these ancient, venerated relics is to know the merciful possibility of eventual forgiveness from the Emperor and the Ecclesiarchy, either through his own death or through his enemy's.

PENITENT ENGINE

29

H ⁶
01-10 **12**

AR ⁶
11-20 **12**

B ⁶
31-70 **12**

LR ⁶
71-85 **12**

AL ⁶
21-30 **12**

LL ⁶
86-00 **12**

WS	BS	S ⁸
40	40	55
T ⁶	Ag	Int
40	41	20
Per	WP	Fcl
20	40	04
I/I		
—		

HALF 6

FULL 12

CHARGE 18

RUN 36

THREAT 23

Heavy Flamers CLASS *HEAVY*

RNG 30M

RoF S/—

DMG 1d10+5 (E)

PEN 4

CLIP 10

RLD 2 FULL

WT 45 KG

AVL RA

SPECIAL: FLAME, SPRAY

Penitent's Chainaxes CLASS *MELEE*

RNG —

RoF —

DMG 2d10+8^{SB} (R)

PEN 4

CLIP —

RLD —

WT 15 KG

AVL VR

SPECIAL: TEARING, UNWIELDY

PENITENT ENGINE

Influence Minimum: 45

Influence Cost: 5

Peer (Adeptus Ministorum) talent lowers Influence Cost by 2

To be forever bonded into the massive framework of a Penitent Engine is both a horrid curse and blessed opportunity. Only the most egregious of wretches would be given such a sentence when mere exile, imprisonment, arco-flagellation, or death would not suffice. The condemned is often a priest who failed his congregation, a missionary who abandoned his converts, or another who committed heinous acts against the Adeptus Ministorum. It might even be a Sister of the Adepta Sororitas who disgraced her Order or seeks out penance for her own internal failings. Once implanted into the torturous machinery and linked with spinal clamps, chem injectors, and neural lashes, the properly grateful sinner can begin atonement and retribution for his crimes.

Skills: Awareness (Per)

Talents: Ambidextrous, Die Hard, Frenzy, Iron Jaw, Weapon Training (Chain, Flame, Heavy), Thunder Charge, Two-Weapon Master (Melee, Ranged), Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged)

Traits: Auto-stabilised, Dark-sight, Machine (6), Size (6), Unnatural Strength (3), Unnatural Toughness (2)

Gear: Internal micro-bead, numerous parchments delineating his many sins and prayers for forgiveness, two extra fuel tanks for each heavy flamer

The Penitent's Rage: A Penitent Engine can activate the Frenzy talent as a Half Action.

Fury of the Tormented: A Penitent Engine can spend a Half Action to gain the Hatred talent against a single foe until the end of the encounter.

WEAPONS OF HATE

"Knowingly or not, you have consorted with those that embrace the Ruinous Powers. For that very reason you shall burn!"

—Lord Inquisitor Ashish Khalid at the Pyre of Tennir IV

Ternal is the battle for humanity's soul, and all those that adhere to the conventions of the Ordo Hereticus know that there is no tool too obscure or costly to aid in such a struggle. From seemingly archaic firearms to sanctified weapons of fallen saints, these devices do far more than simply smite the heretic—they act as clear warning to any who would turn from the Emperor's Light.

This section covers devices either used by, or heavily associated with, the Ordo Hereticus and its methods, as well as numerous items common to specific worlds of the Askellon Sector. It also includes Profane Objects: unique Askellian relics and objects of uncertain origin and frightening consequence.

RANGED WEAPONS

The ranged weapons of witch hunters are as eclectic and eccentric as the individuals that walk the path of the Ordo Hereticus. They feature a powerful mix of low-tech and advanced weaponry, using blessed ammunitions and purifying flames.

ARQUEBUS

A weapon that exemplifies the brute force approach of most black powder weapons, the arquebus is the most common firearm found on Askellian feudal worlds. It can knock a man in full plate off his feet with a single shot, but the recoil, smoke, and reload time make the weapon impractical in the heat of melee fighting.

If a character with a Strength bonus of 3 or less uses this weapon, it counts as a Heavy weapon instead of Basic weapon. When fired, an arquebus also creates a cloud with the Smoke (1) quality centred on the firer that lasts for 1d5-1 rounds.

CONDEMNOR COMBI-BOLTGUN

Extremely hard to acquire within the Askellon Sector, the Condemnor Boltgun is a highly-specialised combi-weapon found almost exclusively in the hands of Ordo Hereticus Inquisitors and their Acolytes. It combines a boltgun with a single-shot crossbow armature that can be loaded with a variety of bolts, and between the two deadly ammunitions, surely no heretic can survive.

"DELIVERANCE" LIGHT CROSSBOW

Manufactured in small quantities across a number of Askellian feudal worlds, the Deliverance is a peculiar weapon that sacrifices the punch of regular crossbows for a faster reload time. Usable in one hand or even as a wrist-mount, the Deliverance is a quiet and easily-concealed weapon.

If given a forearm weapon mounting, the Deliverance's range is not reduced. Tests to find a concealed Deliverance suffer a -20 penalty, and it counts as having a built-in silencer (see page 164 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook).

"DRAKE'S CLAW" LAUNCHER

This primitive rocket fires a thin-shelled warhead, and is named for the Rogue Trader who scoffed at its outlandish appearance. The direct damage is minimal, but as Drake discovered, the payload breaks into viciously lethal splinters that are horrific to remove.

This rocket is a single use item and cannot be reloaded.

FLINTLOCK PISTOL

Exceptionally basic in both construction and operation, flintlocks are surprisingly common throughout the Imperium due the level of prestige attached to them. Finely-crafted flintlocks pass through Askellian generations as heirlooms, and some fetch enormous prices among high nobles and Rogue Traders alike.

This pistol counts as a truncheon when used in melee combat.

GODWYN-DE'AZ BOLT WEAPONS

The expertly crafted Godwyn-De'az line of bolters are more than just weapons of war. They are handcrafted artefacts—their components sanctified and blessed at every step of construction—and icons of devotion. Untold billions of heretics have fallen before the howl of these holy weapons, and they remain fearful symbols of the Adepta Sororitas across the Imperium.

Such weapons are normally only available to Acolytes with the Adepta Sororitas background—those without it must provide a rationale to their GM when attempting to acquire these items.

"LONGFLAME" LAUNCHER

The Longflame is a primitive rocket launcher capable of sending a single warhead a significant distance, but without a great deal of accuracy. The heavy warhead explodes with considerable force, and leaves a lasting inferno to disrupt enemy movement.

This rocket is a single use item and cannot be reloaded.

MAGNUS-PATTERN "CERBERUS" HEAVY FLAMER

The Magnus-Pattern Heavy Flamer—known for its triple-barrelled design—appears in many Askellian militaries as well as witch hunting warbands. Its weight includes the backpack fuel supply.

MAGNUS-PATTERN "GORGON" CHEMICAL FLAMER

Favoured by the followers of more fanatical Ordo Hereticus Inquisitors, the Gorgon utilises corrosive chemicals that leave any survivors with debilitating injuries and lingering sickness.

Its specialised design prevents the use of other types of Flame weapon ammunition.

MAGNUS-PATTERN "HYDRA" FLAMER ARRAY

The Magnus-Pattern Flamer Array is not a single weapon, but in fact several flamers strapped to each forearm with tubes leading to a high-pressure fuel canister. Usually worn under heavy robes, the Hydra allows its user to wave his arms back and forth spewing an unrelenting torrent of fire. The effect is nothing short of terrifying, and the Hydra has a prized reputation for breaking up crowds of cultists, seditionists, and other would-be heretics.

When a character fires a Hydra Flamer Array, he gains the Fear (1) trait until the end of the encounter. The Hydra's Spray quality affects a 90° cone, rather than the usual 30° arc for weapons with this quality. Its weight includes the backpack fuel supply.

Table 2-1: Ranged Weapons

NAME	CLASS	RANGE	RoF	DAM	PEN	CLIP	RLD	SPECIAL	WT.	AVAILABILITY
Bolt Weapons										
Godwyn-De'az Bolt Pistol	Pistol	40m	S/2/—	1d10+5 X	4	10	Full	Reliable, Tearing	3kg	Extremely Rare
Godwyn-De'az Bolter	Basic	90m	S/2/—	1d10+5 X	4	30	Full	Reliable, Tearing	6kg	Very Rare
Godwyn-De'az Heavy Bolter	Heavy	140m	—/—/6	1d10+8 X	5	80	Full	Reliable, Tearing	35kg	Extremely Rare
Godwyn-De'az Storm Bolter	Basic	80m	S/2/4	1d10+5 X	4	60	Full	Reliable, Storm, Tearing	8kg	Near Unique
Flame Weapons										
Cerberus Heavy Flamer	Heavy	30m	S/2/—	1d10+5 E	3	8	2 Full	Flame, Reliable, Spray	40kg	Very Rare
Gorgon Chemical Flamer	Basic	20m	S/—/—	1d10+4 E	2	6	2 Full	Corrosive, Felling (1), Flame, Spray, Toxic (2)	8kg	Very Rare
Hydra Flamer Array	Basic	8m	S/—/—	1d10+4 E	2	10	2 Full	Flame, Proven (3), Spray	10kg	Very Rare
Low-Tech Weapons										
Arquebus	Basic	45m	S/—/—	2d10 I	2	1	2 Full	Concussive (1), Inaccurate, Unreliable	8kg	Common
Castigator Heavy Crossbow†	Heavy	70m	S/—/—	1d10+6 I	1	14	2 Full	Concussive (2), Reliable	12kg	Scarce
Deliverance Light Crossbow†	Pistol	15m	S/—/—	1d10 R	0	1	Half	Primitive (7)	1kg	Rare
Drake's Claw	Heavy	200m	S/—/—	1d10+2 X	2	1	—	Blast (3), Crippling (1), Inaccurate, Primitive (7), Tearing	6kg	Rare
Flintlock Pistol	Pistol	15m	S/—/—	1d10+2 I	0	1	2 Full	Inaccurate, Primitive (8), Unreliable	3kg	Common
Longflame	Heavy	200m	S/—/—	1d10 R	0	1	—	Blast (4), Flame, Inaccurate, Primitive (8)	6kg	Rare
Musket	Basic	30m	S/—/—	1d10+3 I	0	1	2 Full	Inaccurate, Primitive (8), Unreliable	7kg	Common
Snapper Repeating Rifle	Basic	50m	S/2/—	1d10+3 I	0	8	2 Full	Inaccurate, Overheats, Primitive (8), Unreliable	45kg	Very Rare
Plasma Weapons										
Sentinel Plasma Rifle	Basic	120m	S/5/10	1d10+5 E	3	40	Full	Reliable	20kg	Extremely Rare
Exotic Weapons										
Purgatus Crossbow†	Basic	50m	S/—/—	1d10+5 I	0	5	2 Full	Reliable	16kg	Rare
Condemnor†	Basic	100m	S/—/—	1d10+4 R	2	1	2 Full	Accurate, Reliable	8kg	Rare

†The damage, penetration, and special qualities of these weapons are dependent upon the ammunition used.

MUSKET

An improvement on the arquebus, the musket suffers fewer drawbacks with recoil and reload, making it an ideal weapon for ranks of feudal soldiers.

A musket counts as a staff when used in melee combat.

“PURGATUS” CROSSBOW

A mix of a crossbow and a shotgun, the Purgatus is an ancient pattern unique to the Ordo Hereticus. Designed to launch handcrafted wooden stakes inlaid with purified silver runes that disrupt psykers and Daemons alike, the Purgatus is a precision weapon and symbol of Inquisitorial supremacy.

The Purgatus can use any type of shotgun and crossbow ammunition, as well as its own Purgatus Stakes (see page 47).

SELVANUS-PATTERN

“CASTIGATOR” HEAVY CROSSBOW

Something of an oddity for a forge world with a reputation for advanced technology, this ostentatious device fires bolts almost a full metre in length and can put a man on the ground with even a glancing hit.

Whenever a Castigator inflicts damage (after reductions for Armour and Toughness bonus) on a target that has the Size trait with a value of 5 or lower, that target is knocked Prone.

SELVANUS-PATTERN “SENTINEL” PLASMA RIFLE

A Cerix Magnus design perfected by the dogmatic scrutiny of Selvanus Binary, the Sentinel pulse rifle eliminates the usual drawbacks of plasma weaponry by changing the nature of the energy discharge, through smaller pulses rather than large bolts. This pattern also includes a higher rate of fire and a better targeting system. Designed in tandem with the Praetor Armour of the Ebon Guard, Askellian collectors go to great lengths to acquire one.

“SNAPPER” REPEATING RIFLE

Found only on a few Askellian worlds, the Snapper Repeating Rifle represents the pinnacle of black powder engineering. Functionally similar to a musket, the Snapper features a rotating cylinder that holds eight individual shots to lessen the need for reloading.

If a Snapper’s wielder uses it as an improvised melee weapon and scores two or more degrees of failure on the Weapon Skill test, its mechanisms snap and it is damaged.

GRENADES

Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus, the Sisters of the Adepta Sororitas, and those who follow them wage war with some of the most unusual weapons in the Imperium. Sanctified blasts, clouds of anti-psyker dust, and even the collected blood from weeping statues all serve to eradicate mutant and heretic alike.

PSYCHOTROKE GRENADE

Psychotroke grenades release a pungent, sweet-smelling psycho-reactive nerve agent considerably more potent than typical hallucinogen grenades. The special nature of the gas means that even environmentally-sealed armour offers no protection.

Respirators and sealed armour grant no bonuses against these grenades. For every degree of failure on a Toughness test to resist the grenade’s effects, add +1 to the roll (to a maximum of 10) on Table 5–3: Hallucinogen Effects from page 146 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook.

PSYK-OUT GRENADES

These grenades disperse a cloud of psi-refractive particles thought to have been created as a by-product of the processes that sustain the Astronomican, and disrupt a psyker’s connection to the Warp.

Any psyker caught within the grenade’s blast radius, or who enters the cloud created by its Smoke quality before it dissipates (1d5 rounds), must take a Very Hard (–30) Willpower test or have his psy rating temporarily reduced by 1 for every degree of failure. If a psyker fails the test by two or more degrees of failure, he must also immediately roll on Table 6–2: Psychic Phenomena (see page 196 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook). Every six hours, a psyker automatically recovers 1 point of psy rating lost this way. Additionally, any attempt to manifest a psychic power from within the cloud automatically fails.

RAD GRENADE

Difficult to find or manufacture, rad grenades contain radioactive particles that blink out of existence within a second of release. Despite their short-term effects, the damage caused is often enough to leave the toughest of foes gasping as radiation saps their vitality.

When a character is struck by an attack from this weapon (whether or not he suffers damage), he must immediately make a Hard (–20) Toughness test or suffer 2d10 Toughness damage.

Table 2–2: Grenades and Explosives

NAME	CLASS	RANGE	RoF	DAM	PEN	CLIP	SPECIAL	WT.	AVL.
Grenades/Missiles									
Psychotroke Grenade	Thrown	SBx3	S/–/–	–	–	1	Blast (3), Hallucinogenic (4)	1kg	Rare
Psyk-Out Grenade	Thrown	SBx3	S/–/–	1d10 X	0	1	Blast (3), Smoke (3)	1kg	Extremely Rare
Rad Grenade	Thrown	SBx3	S/–/–	1d10 E	0	1	Blast (2)	1kg	Very Rare
Sporc Bomb	Thrown	SBx3	S/–/–	–	–	1	Blast (5)	2kg	Very Rare
Tears of the Emperor	Thrown	SBx3	S/–/–	1d10 X	0	1	Blast (2), Sanctified	–	Near Unique
Whitefire Grenade	Thrown	SBx3	S/–/–	1d10+4 X	3	1	Blast (3), Corrosive, Flame, Smoke (5), Toxic (2)	1kg	Extremely Rare

SPORE BOMB

A terror weapon available only in Askellon's most illicit of black markets, the spore bomb is a small stasis chamber that contains a large dose of fresh Temperance mind-mould spores. A spore outbreak can last for months, making this heretical device a terrible danger in densely packed habs and a great concern to numerous Askellian Inquisitors.

Any character within the blast radius of a spore bomb suffers the effects described under mind-mould (see page 403 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**).

TEARS OF THE EMPEROR

Seen as a miraculous weapon and the Will of the Emperor made manifest, Tears of the Emperor contain a blood-like substance said to weep from statues and relics across Askellon. Carefully collected in ornate crystal bottles, they are a potent weapon against the forces of Chaos.

When a psyker is struck by an attack from this weapon, he must immediately roll on Table 6-3: Perils of the Warp (see page 197 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**). When a creature with the Daemonic trait is struck by this weapon, it gains the Warp Instability trait until the end of the encounter. If it already has this trait, it suffers a -20 penalty to the tests it makes for this trait until the end of the encounter.

WHITEFIRE GRENADE

Whitefire is a terrifying substance that burns exposed flesh more quickly than promethium. It also creates a caustic smoke that both obscures vision and poisons the air. Used throughout the Askellon Sector for both crowd control and to quickly eliminate massed hordes of foul mutants, this grenade has built up a reputation as a weapon of divine retribution.

Whenever a character begins his turn in the cloud of smoke created by the Smoke quality of the grenade, he suffers a single automatic hit that inflicts 1d10 Impact damage with the Corrosive and Toxic (2) qualities and must test for suffocation (see page 243 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**).

MELEE WEAPONS

The close-quarters weapons favoured by the Ordo Hereticus within Askellon share many similarities with their ranged counterparts. Most of these feature seemingly primitive but powerful designs, with both the capacity to torture and kill, and include the cleansing wrath of fire. These items require one hand to use, unless specified otherwise.

AXE OF RETRIBUTION

As much a work of art as it is a weapon, each Axe of Retribution takes its design from the relics of Askellian saints, and features glittering polished metal and beautiful, sharpened jewels. Blessed daily with the rarest of sacred unguents, this mighty weapon cleaves sin from soul as it rends flesh from bone. This is a two-handed melee weapon.

BRAZIER OF HOLY FIRE

A versatile weapon in the hands of a skilled user, the Brazier of Holy Fire works as a devastating melee weapon, an inspirational icon, and, in times of need, a deadly flamethrower to incinerate heretics and witches.

Any character who can draw line of sight to an ally wielding an active Brazier of Holy Fire gains a +10 bonus to his Willpower tests. Additionally, it can be used as a heavy flamer with a clip size of 1. Once fired, it loses the Flame quality in melee until it is reloaded, a process that takes roughly 20 minutes and involves several special hymns.

ELECTRO-FLAIL

An electro-flail uses groups of long, electrically-charged wire lashes, each attached to a short staff or handle. While lacking the reach of a whip, it can hit with greater impact. A popular weapon when lethal force is not desired, an electro-flail has brought down many heretics and witches for further interrogation before their eventual fate is decreed.

FLAIL OF CHASTISEMENT

Barbed with small hooks, the Flail of Chastisement slices at its victim's flesh as he struggles to escape its constricting lash.

A target who escapes from this weapon's Snare quality is no longer affected by its Crippling quality.



Table 2–3: Melee Weapons

NAME	CLASS	RANGE	DAM	PEN	SPECIAL	WT.	AVAILABILITY
Flame Weapons							
Brazier of Holy Fire	Melee	—	1d10+5 E	3	Flame, Unbalanced	6kg	Very Rare
Fire Gauntlets	Melee	—	1d10 I	2	Flame, Unbalanced	1kg	Very Rare
Low-Tech Weapons							
Axe of Retribution [†]	Melee	—	2d10 R	6	Felling (2), Sanctified	8kg	Near Unique
Flail of Chastisement	Melee	—	1d10+8 R	2	Crippling (2), Flexible, Primitive (8), Snare (2)	3kg	Rare
Man-Catcher [†]	Melee	2m	1d10 I	0	Snare (4), Unwieldy	8kg	Scarce
Praesidium Protectiva ^{††}	Melee	—	1d10 I	0	Defensive	14kg	Very Rare
Power Weapons							
Power Stake	Melee	—	1d10+7 E	5	Power Field, Sanctified, Unbalanced	1kg	Very Rare
Shock Weapons							
Electro-Flail	Melee	—	1d10+2 R	0	Flexible, Shocking	4.5kg	Rare

[†] Weapon is Two-Handed.

^{††} Provides 4 AP to the Body and Arm wielding the shield, which stacks with existing armour.

MAGNUS-PATTERN FIRE GAUNTLETS

More commonly known as Judgement's Grasp or the Hands of the Emperor, Magnus-Pattern Fire Gauntlets are a peculiar matching set of metallic gloves linked to small forearm-mounted promethium chambers. By extending his fingers, a priest can safely coat his hands in a nimbus of fire, awing gathered crowds and frightening mutants.

As a Free Action, the user can ignite the gauntlets, granting a +20 bonus to Intimidate tests. They always come in pairs, and the reservoir lasts until the end of the encounter (or 2d10 minutes outside of structured time).

MAN-CATCHER

The man-catcher features a spring-loaded claw atop a long pole that snaps shut on the user's activation. Rarely used to kill, its purpose is to restrain and immobilise rioters and other heretics.

This is a two-handed weapon, and the user must spend a Half Action each round in order to maintain a hold of his victim. The Best craftsmanship version is fitted with electrical wiring and gains the Shocking quality.

POWER STAKE

Cast from a single rod of blessed iron and featuring a compact power field generator, a power stake is most effective when plunged into the heart of a heretic psyker. Covered in etchings and runes that protect against the machinations of the Warp, it uses the victim's own psychic potency against himself.

A power stake inflicts an additional 1d10 Energy damage for every point of psy rating the target possesses. Additionally, possessing a power stake grants a +10 bonus to all Interaction tests made with those aligned with the Ordo Hereticus.

PRAESIDIUM PROTECTIVA

Said to contain fragments of the Emperor's armour, this highly ornate shield is unique to the Adepta Sororitas. It can turn aside even the greatest of blows and has saved the lives of many Sisters.

The Praesidium Protectiva adds +4 AP to the body and the arm holding the device, and also acts as a force field with a protection rating of 35. It is only available to Acolytes with the Adepta Sororitas background—those without it must provide a rationale to their GM when attempting to acquire this item.



SPECIAL AMMUNITION

Many who fight the heretic favour unusual rounds for their weapons, both to better defeat their foes and to create a unique impression on any who might be witnessing their actions.

“EMPEROR’S LIGHT” THERMAL BOLTS

Although rare on feudal worlds, armoured vehicles are common throughout the Imperium. This ammunition attempts to solve the ineffectiveness of low-tech weapons against armour by fitting small melta charges and magnetic clamps to the front of crossbow bolts. The results are dangerous anti-tank rounds, but ones that suffer from inaccuracy due to weight.

Effect: A weapon using thermal bolts loses the Primitive and Accurate qualities (if it has them), but gains +1d10 Energy damage, penetration 6, and the Melta and Inaccurate qualities. These bolts weigh twice as much as regular crossbow bolts.

Used With: Crossbows.

Table 2–4: Special Ammunition

NAME	AVAILABILITY
“Emperor’s Light” Thermal Bolts	Rare
“Emperor’s Wrath” Shard Bolts	Scarce
“Heretic’s Match” Incendiary Rounds	Scarce
Purgatus Stakes	Extremely Rare
Purity Bolts	Very Rare
Sanctified Ammunition	Rare
Silver Stakes	Very Rare
Theta-Pattern Concussion Bolts	Very Rare
Theta-Pattern Shock Bolts	Very Rare

“EMPEROR’S WRATH” SHARD BOLTS

A cruel device intended to cause maximum lingering damage, a shard bolt is made of a brittle metal that breaks apart after penetration. These shards twist further into the victim’s flesh and are excruciating to remove.

Effect: A weapon using shard bolt ammunition gains the Crippling (2) quality.

Used With: Crossbows.

“HERETIC’S MATCH” INCENDIARY ROUNDS

These ungainly shells and arrowheads are filled with promethium or other highly incendiary materials, and ignite with immolating fire on impact. Few heretics can withstand this fury of the righteous made manifest.

Effect: A weapon using this ammunition gains the Flame and Unreliable qualities, and loses the Blast quality (if it had it).

Used With: Bows, Crossbows, Shotguns.

PURGATUS STAKES

Designed specifically for the Purgatus Crossbow, each handcrafted stake features runes and wards that affect the Immaterium on a fundamental level.

Effect: A weapon using Purgatus stakes gains the Sanctified quality. Further, whenever a target with either the Psyker or Daemon trait is struck by a Purgatus stake-bolt, it must make a Challenging (+0) Willpower test. If it fails, it must immediately roll on **Table 6–2: Psychic Phenomena** (see page 197 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook).

Used With: Purgatus Crossbow only.

PURITY BOLTS

Peculiar and ornate crossbow bolts rumoured to originate outside the Askellon Sector, these arcane devices contain a small haywire generator that activates on impact.

Effect: A weapon using purity bolts gains the Haywire (2) quality.

Used With: Crossbows.



SANCTIFIED AMMUNITION

This specialised ammunition covers a broad spectrum of types, often handmade. Examples include shells laced with psycho-conductive filaments, promethium purified through blessings and infusions of sacred oils, and arrowheads covered in microscopic etchings of warding and devotion.

Effect: A weapon using this type of fuel or ammunition gains the Sanctified quality.

Used With: Bows, Crossbows, Flame, Solid Projectile weapons.

SILVER STAKES

Not nearly as potent as Purgatus stakes, these bolts still make a mockery of those who gain strength from the Warp.

Effect: A weapon using silver stakes gains the Sanctified quality and inflicts an additional 1d10 damage against targets with the Daemonic or Psyker trait.

Used With: Crossbows.

THETA-PATTERN CONCUSSION BOLTS

Rediscovered by the eccentric and outspoken Tech-Priest Magos Dahnnic Rhom, these bolts contain a proximity sensor that explodes a fraction of a second before impact. This detonation creates a micro-singularity that sends a concussive wave of unrelenting force in all directions.

Effect: A weapon using this ammunition gains the Blast (5) and Concussive (5) qualities. Additionally, anyone within the blast radius must pass a Hard (–20) Strength test or be thrown 1d5 metres away from the centre of the blast and knocked Prone.

Used With: Crossbows.

THETA-PATTERN SHOCK BOLTS

Another attempt by the Tech-Adepts of Core Theta to marry more advanced technology with the primitive nature of crossbows, these bolts embed several micro-electrical capacitors within a tungsten tip, creating a non-lethal charge designed to incapacitate anything up to a grox in size.

Effect: A weapon using shock bolts gains the Shocking quality. In addition, if the target fails its Toughness test from the Shocking effect by three or more degrees, it becomes Unconscious instead of Stunned for a number of rounds equal to his degrees of failure..

Used With: Crossbows.

Table 2–5: Protective Gear

NAME	LOCATIONS			PROTECTION		
	COVERED	AP	MAX AG	RATING	WEIGHT	AVAILABILITY
Adepta Sororitas Power Armour	All	7	50	—	35 kg	Extremely Rare
Field Wall Generator	—	—	—	65	18 kg	Very Rare
Mouldsuit	All	—	40	—	10 kg	Rare
Practor Armour	All	6	50	—	16 kg	Extremely Rare
Rosarius	—	—	—	50	0.6 kg	Extremely Rare

PROTECTIVE GEAR

Although many say that faith is the ultimate shield, armoured suits and protective fields also yield excellent results when blocking the tentacles of horrid mutants and rusted blades of debased heretics.

ADEPTA SORORITAS POWER ARMOUR

Covered in devotional script, purity seals, and symbols of worship, the armour worn by the Sisters of Battle is as much a holy icon as it is a protective casing. More nimble than the massive suits of the Adeptus Astartes, it still retains many technological enhancements that give its wearer an edge in battle.

Adepta Sororitas power armour grants the Unnatural Strength (1) trait, and the wearer always counts as braced. The armour does not increase the wearer's Size trait, and is only available to Acolytes with the Adepta Sororitas background.

MAGUS-PATTERN FIELD WALL GENERATOR

A renowned item from the forge world of Cerix Magnus, this device creates a force field with a wide protective scope. It has saved the lives of Acolyte warbands and beleaguered teams of Adeptus Arbites on many worlds across Askellon.

The wall consists of two or more generators. Activating or deactivating a generator requires a Full Action, which also activates all other linked generators. A linear force field then forms between each generator, 1.5 metres high and up to 8 metres in length. The barrier acts as cover, so only parts of the body protected by the field wall gain force field protection. If a wall section overloads, then only that portion between the two generators shuts down, and any other linked sections remain unaffected.

MOULDSUIT

An adaptation of the standard Askellian environmental suit, the so-called mouldsuits of Temperance contain a triple-redundant filtration system designed to protect the wearer from the deadly mind-mould. Absolutely vital in dealing with spore infestations, the mouldsuit's robust design makes it useful in many other situations, and the few that leave the planet fetch a good price.

A character wearing a mouldsuit is completely immune to the effects of mind-mould (and thus spore bombs), unless he has the Psyker trait, in which case the spores affect him normally. The filtration system grants a +40 bonus to any Toughness test made to resist the effects of harmful gasses, as well as a +10 bonus to tests for resisting extreme temperatures and being set on fire. Each contains a separate rebreather unit that lasts for 5 hours before requiring replacement. It is not designed for battle, and offers no combat protection though it can be worn over armour. If the wearer takes more than 5 points of damage in a single round, the suit becomes damaged and ceases to provide filtering benefits until repaired.



PRAETOR ARMOUR

One of Selvanus Binary's seminal creations, Praetor Armour protects its Ebon Sentinels from harm as they guard the vitally important forge world. Capable of fluid and articulated movement, the armour is resilient enough to withstand most small arms fire and close-ranged combat. Occasionally, suits appear on the open market, where they fetch extravagant prices before the Adeptus Mechanicus moves quickly to reclaim them.

Praetor Armour contains an integral respirator, comm-link, photo-visior, targeter, and recoil suppression sleeves, as well as a magnetic harness on the back capable of holding a single basic weapon. Any Acolyte without the Adeptus Mechanicus background gains the Enemy (Adeptus Mechanicus) talent while openly wearing or displaying Praetor Armour.

ROSARIUS

Equal parts force field, devotional icon, and badge of office, the rosarius is a conversion field commonly used by the Ecclesiarchy and its allies.

Allies who can draw a line of sight to a character with a rosarius gain a +10 bonus to Fear and Pinning tests; this is lost if the wearer dies or suffers any Critical damage. It is only available to Acolytes with the Adeptus Ministorum or Adepta Sororitas backgrounds, or who have taken the Inquisitor elite advance. Acolytes without these backgrounds must provide a rationale to their GM when attempting to Acquire this item.

ARMOUR UPGRADES

Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus often adorn their armour with all manner of protections, including sanctified symbols designed to inspire the worthy and frighten the wicked. These upgrades operate in the same way as Weapon Modifications (see page 162 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook), including a maximum of four upgrades per armour.

ADAMANTINE CHAINGUARD

Some devoted Imperial servants wrap their armour in heavy links, the added weight acting as a reminder of the burdens Mankind must shoulder on the path to righteousness. The chains also act as a secondary defensive measure, breaking weapons that strike them. **Effect:** When an enemy uses a melee weapon to strike a character wearing this armour, if the 1s digit of his attack roll is a 1, the weapon is destroyed unless it has the Power Field or Warp Weapon quality, or is otherwise immune to being destroyed (such as being granted by the Natural Weapons trait). This upgrade imposes a -5 penalty on the upgraded armour's Maximum Agility rating due to its bulk.

Used With: Any armour.

AUTO-SENSES

Consisting of a complicated array of sensors and scanners networked into the user's helmet, Auto-Senses both aid in tracking targets and detecting ambushing foes.

Effect: As long as the user wears the upgraded helmet, the wearer gains a +5 bonus to his Ballistic Skill and a +10 bonus to all Awareness tests based on Sight and Hearing.

Used With: Power armour.

BRAZIER OF SAINT ROBERTO

A common item among Ecclesiarchy priests, Sisters of Battle, and devoted Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus, braziers serve little practical purpose, but act as beacons of inspiration for the faithful. Most Askellian braziers include the iconography of Saint Roberto—a martyred priest said to have faced down an army of mutants with nothing but a knife and his faith—and feature either his holy seal or a representation of his blade.

Effect: A brazier must be affixed to a backpack, helmet, or similarly worn item. Setting it aflame requires a Half Action and it can burn for 2 hours. Whilst alight, it acts as a glow-globe and grants a +30 bonus to all Charm and Command tests, a +10 bonus to Intimidate tests, and a -40 penalty to all Stealth tests. If the wearer is ever knocked Prone while it is lit, he must pass an Ordinary (+10) Agility test to avoid setting himself on fire.

Used With: Any armour, helmet, or backpack.

CERAMITE PLATING

Ceramite protects against heat-based attacks, granting the wearer greater levels of protection against those who would turn fire against him.

Effect: Armour upgraded with ceramite plating provides an additional 3 Armour points of protection against attacks with the Flame or Melta qualities and other heat-based attacks.

Used With: Carapace and power armour.

DEVOTIONAL ICONOGRAPHY

Devotional iconography takes many forms, including sanctified scrolls, purity seals, large metal halos, and even entire suits of armour covered in barely visible micro-etching.

Effect: The wearer gains a +10 bonus to Command tests when dealing with those faithful to the Imperium, but suffers a -10 penalty to Fellowship tests when dealing with those not loyal to the Emperor.

Used With: Any armour.

HEXAGRAMMATIC WARDS

This upgrade uses powerful wards and a latticework of null-circuitry to protect not just the wearer's body, but also his soul.

Effect: The wearer gains a +20 bonus to tests made to resist any psychic attack or manipulation directed at him. The upgraded armour's Armour points are doubled against hits inflicted by psychic attacks. The Warp Weapon quality does not ignore the AP provided by this armour.

Used With: Carapace and power armour.

Table 2-6: Armour Upgrades

NAME	WEIGHT	AVAILABILITY
Adamantine Chainguard	+4 kg	Very Rare
Auto-Senses	+2 kg	Very Rare
Brazier of Saint Roberto	+10 kg	Common
Ceramite Plating	+2 kg	Rare
Devotional Iconography	+1 kg	Common
Hexagrammatic Wards	—	Extremely Rare

NEW VEHICLES

Across the Askellon Sector, numerous vehicles help Mankind thrive in every hostile environment, and each one is yet another tool that all Inquisitorial Acolytes must use if they are to fulfil their masters' byzantine wishes.

ADEPTA SORORITAS IMMOLATOR

A vehicle unique to the Sisters of Battle, Immolators serve as both tanks and transports. The adaptable turret design allows for multiple weapon patterns, and Immolators bolster the ranks of the Adepta Sororitas, bringing mobile firepower right where the Sisters need it most.

IMMOLATOR		TRACKED
FRONT: 28	SIDE: 26	REAR: 18
CRUISING SPEED: 70 KPH		TACTICAL SPEED: 15 M
MANOEUVRABILITY: +0	SIZE: MASSIVE	AVL: NU
CARRYING CAPACITY: 6	INTEGRITY: 30	THREAT: 30
CREW: DRIVER, GUNNER (TURRET)		
VEHICLE TRAITS: ENCLOSED, REINFORCED ARMOUR, RUGGED, TRACKED		

WEAPONS

One turret-mounted weapon chosen from the following:

Twin Heavy Flamer		CLASS HEAVY
RNG 30M	RoF S/-/-	DMG 1d10 + 5 (E)
PEN 4	CLIP 20	RLD 2 FULL
Wt 90 Kg	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: FLAME, SPRAY, TWIN-LINKED		
Twin Heavy Bolter		CLASS HEAVY
RNG 150M	RoF -/-/6	DMG 1d10 + 8 (X)
PEN 5	CLIP 120	RLD 2 FULL
Wt 80 Kg	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: TEARING, TWIN-LINKED		
Twin Multi-Melta		CLASS HEAVY
RNG 60M	RoF S/-/-	DMG 2d10 + 16 (E)
PEN 12	CLIP 24	RLD 2 FULL
Wt 80 Kg	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: BLAST (I), MELTA, TWIN-LINKED		

The Immolator may take one pintle-mounted storm bolter:

Storm Bolter		CLASS BASIC
RNG 90M	RoF S/2/4	DMG 1d10 + 5 (X)
PEN 4	CLIP 60	RLD FULL
Wt 9 Kg	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: STORM, TEARING		

Holy Upgrades: If the GM permits, the Immolator may have the Blessed Hull and/or Laud Hailer upgrades (see the Adepta Sororitas Rhino entry for details).



ADEPTA SORORITAS RHINO

The most common transport available to the Adepta Sororitas, the famously-robust Rhino allows for rapid redeployment as well as quick strikes into enemy lines. Sisters of Battle adorn the Rhino with holy symbols, and often display the Sigil Sororitas proudly upon its flanks.

ADEPTA SORORITAS RHINO		TRACKED
FRONT: 25	SIDE: 22	REAR: 16
CRUISING SPEED: 70 KPH		TACTICAL SPEED: 15 M
MANOEUVRABILITY: +0	SIZE: MASSIVE	AVL: ER
CARRYING CAPACITY: 10	INTEGRITY: 30	THREAT: 20
CREW: DRIVER		
VEHICLE TRAITS: ENCLOSED, REINFORCED ARMOUR, RUGGED, TRACKED		

WEAPONS

One pintle-mounted storm bolter:

Storm Bolter		CLASS BASIC
RNG 90M	RoF S/2/4	DMG 1d10 + 5 (X)
PEN 4	CLIP 60	RLD FULL
Wt 9 Kg	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: STORM, TEARING		

Holy Upgrades: If the GM permits (and if the vehicle belongs to the Sisters of Battle), the Rhino may have the Blessed Hull and/or Laud Hailer upgrades. Each has an Availability of Rare.

Blessed Hull: Washed with consecrated oils and filled with sacred incense during construction, the vehicle's hull stands as a bulwark against the powers of the Warp. The vehicle counts its armour as 5 Armour points greater against hits inflicted by psychic attacks. Attacks with the Warp Weapon quality only ignore half of its Armour points (instead of all of them as normal).

Laud Hailer: Emitting a stream of devotional prayers sung in powerful tones, the vehicle bolsters the spirits of the faithful. Each friendly character within 30 metres of the vehicle can re-roll failed Willpower-based tests.

REPRESSOR ARMoured TRANSPORT

A rare vehicle seen mostly in the hands of Arbitrators and Battle Sisters, the Repressor acts mainly as a troop transport. Based upon the venerable Rhino chassis, it has a raised hull aligned with fire ports that allow occupants to fight from within the vehicle's hull. For police actions, riot control, and city fighting, there are few better options than the Repressor.

REPRESSOR		TRACKED
FRONT: 28	SIDE: 26	REAR: 18
CRUISING SPEED: 55 KPH		TACTICAL SPEED: 12 M
MANOEUVRABILITY: -10	SIZE: MASSIVE	AVL: VR
CARRYING CAPACITY: 10	INTEGRITY: 32	THREAT: 25
CREW: DRIVER, GUNNER (TURRET)		
VEHICLE TRAITS: ENCLOSED, REINFORCED ARMOUR, RUGGED, TRACKED		

WEAPONS

One turret-mounted storm bolter. If the Repressor belongs to the Adeptus Arbites, it may instead take a water cannon with integrated riot launcher for that mounting. The riot launcher has a fire selector, and comes loaded with 1 clip each of choke, smoke, and stun grenades.

Storm Bolter		CLASS BASIC
RNG 90M	RoF S/2/4	DMG 1d10 + 5 (X)
PEN 4	CLIP 60	RLD FULL
WT 9 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: STORM, TEARING		
Water Cannon		CLASS HEAVY
RNG 50M	RoF S/-/-	DMG 2d10 (I)
PEN 0	CLIP 20	RLD 2 FULL
WT 60 KG	AVL SC	
SPECIAL: CONCUSSIVE (3), PRIMITIVE (5), RELIABLE, SPRAY		
Riot Grenade Launcher		CLASS HEAVY
RNG 100M	RoF S/3/-	DMG †
PEN †	CLIP 30	RLD 2 FULL
WT 36 KG	AVL SC	
SPECIAL: † VARIES WITH GRENADE TYPE SELECTED		

The Repressor may take a pintle-mounted storm bolter. If the Repressor belongs to the Adepta Sororitas, it may alternatively take a heavy flamer in that mounting.

Storm Bolter		CLASS BASIC
RNG 90M	RoF S/2/4	DMG 1d10 + 5 (X)
PEN 4	CLIP 60	RLD FULL
WT 9 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: STORM, TEARING		
Heavy Flamer		CLASS HEAVY
RNG 30M	RoF S/-/-	DMG 1d10 + 5 (E)
PEN 4	CLIP 10	RLD 2 FULL
WT 45 KG	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: FLAME, SPRAY		

Cupola Turret: The Repressor's unusual turret sits within the superstructure of the vehicle's hull, limiting its field of fire. The turret may only fire 90° to the front and left of the vehicle, and is unable to fire to the right or to the rear.

Dozer Blade: The Repressor treats heavy rubble and other detritus as open ground as long as it moves no faster than its Tactical Speed each turn. Additionally, a Dozer Blade allows the vehicle to push objects equal to its own Size (and smaller) out of the way, but this slows the vehicle to a maximum of its own Tactical Speed.

Fighting Platform: The Repressor has three fire points on each side of the vehicle, each allowing one passenger to fire his own personal weaponry through the slot. The vehicle's top hatch allows one passenger to fire from the vehicle.

Holy Upgrades: If the GM permits (and if the vehicle belongs to the Sisters of Battle), the Repressor may have the Blessed Hull and/or Laud Hailer upgrades (see the Sororitas Rhino entry on page 50 for details).

VAN CLEEF'S WADER

Already in wide use when Temperance's second-wave colonists arrived, Van Cleef's Wader started as a simple grox-drawn cart before becoming fully mechanised. Adapted for the frontier world's unpredictable weather, the Wader converts to a watercraft in minutes, keeping its occupants safe from flash flooding.

VAN CLEEF'S WADER		WHEELED
FRONT: 8	SIDE: 8	REAR: 8
CRUISING SPEED: 30 KPH		TACTICAL SPEED: 6 M
MANOEUVRABILITY: -10	SIZE: MASSIVE	AVL: AV
CARRYING CAPACITY: 6	INTEGRITY: 15	THREAT: 4
CREW: DRIVER		
VEHICLE TRAITS: AMPHIBIOUS, ENCLOSED, RUGGED, WHEELED		

WEAPONS

Two pintle-mounted spore flammers (one on either side):

Spore Flamer		CLASS HEAVY
RNG 30M	RoF S/-/-	DMG 1d10 + 4 (E)
PEN 2	CLIP 18	RLD 2 FULL
WT 8 KG	AVL SC	
SPECIAL: FLAME, SPRAY		

Temperance Burner: The Wader is designed to operate in the midst of fire, often driving directly into burning mind-mould infestations to ensure the foul spores are fully destroyed. As such, it is highly flame-resistant, and Agility tests to extinguish it if it catches fire (see page 263 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook) gain a +30 bonus.



PROFANE OBJECTS

Chaos is as insidious as it is deadly, capable of enthralling even the greatest of minds and the strongest of wills. Many cultists—and also Witch Hunters of the Ordo Hereticus—begin their paths to damnation thanks to a corrupted icon or unholy relic. Even when these items hold no actual power, legends and stories can fester over the years, lending the objects an aura of terrible mystery that few can resist. In some cases, obsessive beliefs and obscene rituals can even imbue items with actual, terrible powers that can consume souls or devastate planets.

This section describes only a few of the many Profane Objects that litter Askellon. Each is unique, and Acolytes do not acquire them via the usual methods of Availability and Requisition. Instead, they must locate, contain, or wrest them from the hands of heretics, cultists, and demagogues, often as the major plot for a campaign or Inquest (see page 62). Their rules include additional narrative effects and suggestions for other ways they can be used, and Game Masters are encouraged to alter them as desired. Profane Objects are more legend than fact, and the rules that follow represent only one possible facet of their unnatural natures. GMs are also encouraged to create their own Profane Objects; there are innumerable other items of unholy power—such as the Speculum Apocalyptica, Marquan's Crystal Gloves, or the

Masque of Many Colours—ready to become the basis for new investigations.

ANIMUS SKULL

Servo-skulls are a common sight across the Imperium, unnoticed and unremarked, except when a citizen offers a brief respectful moment to the honoured servant whose mortal remains host the installed mechanisms. Within the Askellon Sector, though, there are tales of a servo-skull that became possessed during a turbulent Warp translation, one that now hosts a daemonic entity. Though the Askellian Mechanicum insists there is

no possibility of its existence, hereteks and techno-cults across the sector have never stopped striving to locate and harness its baleful spirit. That the entity within might only be toying with its supposed masters is rarely suspected.

QUESTING FOR THE PROFANE

Few realise the faithful servo-skull floating nearby might be this terrible mechanism. Those seeking it out might capture every device they find, examining each with psychic powers or other eldritch probes, but never entirely certain whether it is truly mundane or cleverly hiding its true nature. Some Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus routinely destroy any servo-skulls they encounter, just in case. No Tech-Priest would countenance such activities, but still some forges quietly restrict servo-skull access into their prohibited datavaults.

USING THE OBJECT

Any servo-skull might actually be the Animus Skull, as it is possible it can possess other skulls when its current shell is destroyed. Its “owner” gains a +30 bonus on Tech-Use tests, which is added at

the GM's discretion, especially when success might have terrible or perverse consequences. The Animus Skull counts as having a Willpower of 60, and can be ordered to grant this bonus on command via an Opposed Hard (–20) Willpower test. If the owner fails this test, he gains 1 Corruption point and suffers 1 point of Intelligence damage per degree of failure on the test. The skull delights in other actions that cause death and destruction, such as corrupting other machine spirits to its bidding, or abruptly deactivating life-support or engines in vehicles.

BONES OF CARDINAL CASSILLE

Many within the Ecclesiarchy fear these are the desecrated remains of a holy relic from the shrine world of Ossuar. After his death while banishing a foul Daemon in the 36th Millennium, Cardinal Cassille's crypt became a major pilgrimage destination, but his tomb collapsed several centuries ago and was found empty. Many cults have made terrible claims of the unholy rituals they have performed using the bones, enough to launch several Adepta Sororitas purgation missions—but none have met with success.

QUESTING FOR THE PROFANE

Both thralls of the Dark Gods and servants of the Emperor alike have made possession of these items an obsessive goal lasting lifetimes and beyond. The charred bones seem to call to each other, and many have claimed that even the smallest shard pulls softly towards its fellow remains. Some are so tarnished and bloodstained as to be unrecognisable, except to adepts of dark tomes or psychic senses. The Askellian Ecclesiarchy still desperately seeks them out with the hope that through prayer and sacrifice they can be cleansed for reburial.

USING THE OBJECT

Having been used in numerous rituals over many decades, the once-holy bones are now infused with the blasphemous energies of a thousand thousand cultists. If a bone suitable for combat is used to attack, it counts as a power axe; the user does not need a Weapon Training talent to wield it without penalty and adds twice his Corruption bonus to the damage inflicted. The owner gains the Enemy (Adeptus Ministorum) (5) talent, and members of that organisation (or others at the GM's discretion) gain the Hatred and Frenzy talents when fighting him. Smaller bones could also be used to aid in dark rites, daemonic summonings or bindings, or even act as protection against holy weapons and psychic attacks.

CANDLES OF ENDING

Most accounts relate that these eight ivory-coloured candles can only be lit after the wicks are dipped in the fresh blood of the owner. They are never diminished with use, though; no wax melts, and wicks remain untouched. The flames on each dance as if in harsh winds, but burn so strongly that the air screams as if in agony. While lit, they are believed to weaken the barriers to the Immaterium and allow Warp energies to drip into real space. Some claim the candles are the rendered remains of saintly orders lost when the Pandaemonium claimed their planet, and the screams are their souls being slowly devoured. Others preach that the candles are actually bound Daemons, and represent an unholy pact made when Askellon was first settled. Most insist, though, that should the candles finally burn away, the sector would fall to the Pandaemonium forever.

QUESTING FOR THE PROFANE

Many cults seek the candles for unholy rites, such as binding Daemonhosts or attracting the Pandaemonium, based on the legendary connections to the Warp the candles are said to grant. Radical Inquisitors often pursue them for the same reasons, desiring the power they can offer against the Dark Gods. Across Askellian history, however, there are many dark tales of those seeking the candles. In most of them, owners are driven mad as they exhaust fortunes and armies to acquire the others, or the brief moments when all eight were assembled occur shortly before terrible clashes over possession tore planets apart.

USING THE OBJECT

Lighting the candles does not require fresh blood, though the user is encouraged to perform similar obscene rites when setting each aflame. A user who does this gains 1d10 Corruption points, and an additional 1d10 points if he did not have Corruption prior to the candles' use. When all eight are lit, they grant a +30 bonus to any activities within 9 metres that draw upon the Warp for power, and creatures in that range with the Warp Instability trait lose this trait while they remain in the affected area. The candles can have other effects as well, such as increasing the chances for Psychic Phenomena, causing the results from psychic powers to vary wildly, or even causing Sanctified items to grow listless and ineffective as the unholy light from the candles burns reality itself.

CARMINE AQUILA

A relic of only recent notice, this thick metal sigil of the Imperium was discovered when the Pandaemonium receded from the planet Kul late in the 38th Millennium. When a naval officer recovered it as a memento, he thought at first that it was merely part of the uncounted detritus from before the world was quarantined. With each voyage through the Warp, however, the Aquila became increasingly encrusted with a dark red film that was utterly irremovable. Before he could take any further action, the tale goes, his ship was assumed lost as it never reached its destination. Since then, stories of the tarnished sigil appearing after Warp translations within vessels across Askellian space, from humble system-hoppers to mighty battleships, have become common. For it to appear within a ship is the foulest of luck, and none survive for long afterwards, as the Pandaemonium seeks out its unholy vengeance.

QUESTING FOR THE PROFANE

Few but the utterly insane would dare seek out this cursed item, meaning countless heretics scour ships whenever travelling for any sign of the crimson sigil. Most hope it can somehow be used as a weapon against the hated Imperium, even if it means their own deaths. Others, especially within the Ecclesiarchy, hope to find and cleanse it of Warp-taint, or appease whatever dark forces empower it and make it once more an icon of the Emperor.

USING THE OBJECT

If this cursed item is within 3 metres of an event calling for Psychic Phenomena, the event instead automatically triggers a roll on Table 6-3: Perils of the Warp (see page 197 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook); whoever is nearest to the object counts as the triggering psyker, if needed. Each character who witnesses the event gains a number of Corruption points equal to his Fate threshold. The item seems to bring ill-favour to those following

the Imperial Creed, perhaps depressing the number of Fate points available for those loyal to the Emperor, or twisting Fate point usage into results that inflict horrific outcomes. Each translation into the Warp should be a horrific event if the Aquila is aboard, with flickering Gellar fields and cracking hull plates.

CHALICE OF TEARS

This ornate metallic cup is said to be covered with elaborate filigree and complex designs of an almost hypnotic nature. Its legends within Askellon are very fresh, as if it was newly crafted or entered the sector from elsewhere. It has rapidly become the focal relic of many cults within the Stygies Cluster. Many scholars of the malefic hold that it originally contained the tears of redeemed heretics, who wept with rediscovered love for the Emperor before being properly executed. Now, though, more fear the veracity of tales that it is always filled with tears that did not come from any human or natural creature at all. Spilling the shimmering, pungent liquid within has been linked to many accounts of breaches of reality into the Immaterium and daemonic possessions.

QUESTING FOR THE PROFANE

Many heretics are certain the chalice contains unique waters that grant immortality or immediate ascension to blessed daemonhood, and have made elaborate rituals in preparation for its discovery. Other schools believe it has the tears of a banished power of the Warp, and can summon this monster to bound servitude. These and more reasons make the chalice highly sought-after, an activity that has consumed the lives of hundreds—if not thousands—of researchers.

USING THE OBJECT

He who dares to drink from the chalice must spend a Half Action to make a Very Hard (-30) Willpower test, followed by a Challenging (+0) Corruption test. He removes an amount of damage equal to the sum of the degrees of success from these tests or can remove 1 point of Critical damage, but also gains 1 Corruption point for each point of any type of damage removed. Otherwise, he is overcome by the unnatural liquids and gains 1 Corruption point for each degree of failure summed from the two tests; on three or more degrees of failure, he also triggers a roll on Table 6-2: Psychic Phenomena (see page 196 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook) and adds ten times the degrees of failure to the result. In the hands of those without Corruption, the chalice might burn the skin or tempt the pure with visions in the shining waters; its waters could also be used as part of daemonic summoning rituals or desecrating a holy shrine.

EYE OF CHAOS

While many Askellian cultists wear the profane symbol of Chaos somewhere on their debased form, often as a weeping brand or on a blood-encrusted necklace, dark tales speak of one potent icon of the Dark Gods in particular. Its eight-sided arrangement of spiked metal is similar to other obscene marks of Chaos, but at its centre is a fleshy, closed eye. With the proper sacrifices and profane rites, the eye opens (it is claimed) to reveal a tiny spark of the Warp itself. Rogue witches, cult magi, and even Sanctioned Psykers eagerly seek out this dark icon for the power it could provide, though it might be at the cost of their souls.

QUESTING FOR THE PROFANE

Also known as Tzeentch's Pupil or the Warpsoul, this item is a dark legend amongst those who draw upon the Sea of Souls for good or ill, from minor hive-witches to mighty Chaos Space Marine Sorcerers. To wield such force is the ultimate temptation for many psykers, luring even Inquisitors to either possess or destroy the tainted item, and therefore potentially towards their doom.

USING THE OBJECT

The correct rituals required to open the eye require a Very Hard (–30) Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) test. For every degree of success, the user gains 2 Corruption points; for every degree of failure, he gains 2 Insanity points. Once opened, raw Warp energies rush through the icon and through its wielder for 1d10 rounds; any psychic power he manifests during that time counts as being used at twice the effective psy rating. A power strengthened this way always generates Psychic Phenomena, with a bonus to the roll equal to twice the effective psy rating the psyker chose. Even unopened, the icon is a powerful item, and can easily sway those who follow the Dark Gods to the side of its user or ignite a cult into violent uprisings.

FOUNDATION STONE OF HOUSE DANE

Legends tell that some powers rejected Compliance when the Imperium discovered Askellon. Scattered half-truths and mad whispers speak of the brutal response to one house, and how Imperial forces reduced House Dane's bloodline and holdings to smouldering cinders. Few records remain other than the *Lay of Askellios* and other approved histories, but none mention this event. Many dead Askellian worlds, though, still show the massive scars of battles from that legendary time; no indications as to which parties were involved in the fighting have yet been found.

Nevertheless, numerous sects have emerged claiming loyalty or even ancestry to House Dane, all swearing to rid Askellon of the hated Imperium. Over time, they became obsessed with stories of the last remaining piece of House Dane, the foundation stone of its continent-sized palace. Some hold it is a huge edifice, others a mere stone fragment, but all seek it out and have even built rites around its return. They uniformly believe that it can reveal the truth of Askellon's origins and the terrible betrayals that nearly destroyed the emergent sector those ten millennia ago. Mere rumours of its location have set off clashes between Imperial forces and the sects, or even between rival sects. After long worship, it is possible that even the most mundane of objects could devastate worlds through the sheer belief that imbues or even shapes its form.

QUESTING FOR THE PROFANE

The story of the stone is a lightning rod for rebellious and heretical activity, making its discovery a high priority among both the faithful and the faithless. Each year, more and more sects spring up as the search intensifies. Worse, the groups looking for the stone often intermingle with Chaos cults that seek the stone as the final piece to their arcane rituals. The following represent only a fraction of the sects, cults, and recidivist groups seeking out the stone.

Danist Scions: A deluded group that truly thinks itself the ancestors of House Dane, this group claims to have found the stone on at least four separate occasions.

The Shining Way: This group claims the Foundation Stone belongs to the Emperor, and has attacked even Ecclesiarchy forces in an attempt to keep supposed locations a secret.

The Star of Dane: A number of Inquisitors have joined the hunt for this Slaanesh cult, which hides its activities under the façade of charitable organisations spread across a number of agri-worlds.

The Emergent Hand: Believed to be a Nurgle-dedicated cult, this group operates from the swamps of Orinoca. Its adherents claim that one of the numerous massive lagoons was the actual site of House Dane's palace, and search their depths for its remains.

Sons of Temperance: A more recent Danic cult, whose fanatical members believe the Foundation Stone central to a mass ritual of reconciliation with the Imperium. Some within the Ordo Hereticus suspect there are links to Khorne worship in these activities.

USING THE OBJECT

Reports of the Foundation Stone vary its size from as large as a Baneblade to as small as a coin held in a stasis chamber. Whatever the truth, and assuming the stone even exists, Acolytes would most likely use the stone (or false rumours of the stone's location) as a way of luring heretical cults and separatist movements out of hiding. By the same token, cultists that believe they are either fighting for, or in defence of, the stone gain the Fearless talent and the Hatred talent for anyone—including rival cultists—attempting to take the stone (or what they think is the stone) away from them. Psykers could perhaps use the stone to gain visions from Askellon's founding, though attempts to comprehend the titanic struggles of those eras could inflict Insanity points or worse.

HAMMER OF SAINT LUCILLIUS

Despite no records of a Saint Lucillius in Askellian history, his hammer appears several times throughout the sector's records, often in the hands of cult leaders or firebrand military commanders. In each instance, reports speak of an incredible power that has destroyed armies and brought enemy warlords to their knees.

Some reports also indicate a wailing noise emanating from the hammer, a sound that grew louder with each strike and sent adversaries into a frenzy. Others relate accounts of a barely-perceptible halo of energy surrounding the user that became brighter as nearby comrades sank to their knees in agony. Many have the user falling dead into a desiccated husk after the battle is won, or collapsing into weeping insanity. In no cases was the object recovered, thus leading most adepts to think of it as an allegory for the fickle nature of victory than an actual artefact. Many cult leaders and Inquisitors, though, are certain it actually exists, and seek it out for a host of uses—some to eradicate the sector, some to save it.

QUESTING FOR THE PROFANE

Khorne cults seem the most interested in the hammer as a potent weapon, as do other sects eager for its legendary prowess in combat. The Askellian Ecclesiarchy also seeks it out, as many believe it could indeed be a holy relic of a forgotten saint. A variety of Inquisitors, especially those with Istvanian leanings, have their warbands continually searching for the hammer for their own inscrutable reasons.

USING THE OBJECT

The Hammer of Saint Lucillius is an exceptionally dangerous tool that draws strength from nearby allies and fills enemies with uncontrollable anger. Any character using the Hammer gains the Frenzy talent and a +5 bonus to Weapon Skill tests for each other friendly character within 8 metres, but each of those allies suffers a -5 penalty to Weapon Skill tests. The Hammer itself counts as a Best craftsmanship power fist with the Concussive (3) and Tearing qualities. At the end of combat, each other friendly character within 8 metres suffers one level of Fatigue and the user suffers +1d5 Corruption points for each adversary he killed using the Hammer. The Hammer's corrupting nature might reduce the Disposition of allies towards its owner, or the user could insist he must always wield the Hammer in favour of any other weapon, as it instils him with a sense of invincibility.

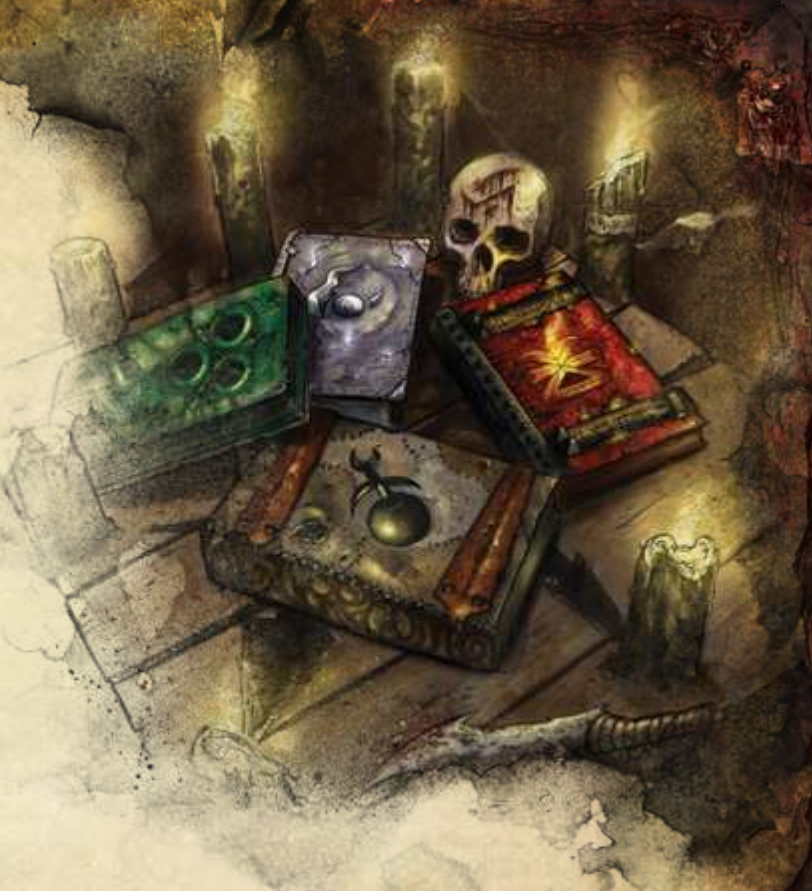
LIBRIS MALEFICARUM

Unlike many other Profane Objects, there is no uncertainty whether these obscene tomes exist—the only question is how many copies pollute Askellon. Originally thought to have been written as a treatise for combating the Ruinous Powers, the *Libris Maleficarum* consists of four books, each one dedicated to a specific Chaos God. The earliest mentions of its existence are several millennia ago, linked to the pompous Ordo Hereticus Inquisitor Fenlimid Belenos, who claimed authorship. Copies began scattering throughout the sector to like-minded Inquisitors and witch hunters. When Belenos' secret Xanthite adherence came to light after his mysterious death, however, the *Libris'* validity became a subject of heated debate.

Most denounced the books as trickery and subterfuge, and claimed the work actually concealed daemoniac rituals as well as other forbidden secrets. Such condemnations drew the attention of countless heretical cultists, all seeking out intact copies to further their unholy aspirations. Fresh versions surface every few decades to only further stain the soul of Askellon, each one more tainted than the last as new authors refine or twist Belenos' original words into even more terrible forms.

QUESTING FOR THE PROFANE

Untold Askellian cults constantly seek a copy of the *Libris Maleficarum*; it is likely that many already possess a copy and are ready to put it to use. Whispers tell that copies exist in circulation between a number of Askellian nobles, and that an original might reside on Juno. Over the centuries, several Inquisitors have dedicated their lives to hunting down every copy of the books, handing their mission down to their successors in a seemingly endless—but essential—task. Most seek to destroy the tomes, but a few Xanthites continue Inquisitor Belenos' work, making them as much a threat as any Chaos cult.



USING THE OBJECT

Unlike other Profane Objects, multiple copies of the *Libris Maleficarum* exist. Very few retain the original's text, and most exist as copies corrupted by cult leaders. Reading the *Libris* requires three ranks in either the Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) or Forbidden Lore (The Warp) skill. Acolytes can use the *Libris Maleficarum* when investigating various aspects of Chaos, represented by further bonuses to later Forbidden Lore tests, or tests to resist the influence of the daemoniac or the profane (the GM has the final say on the exact nature of the bonuses). A character gains 1d5 Corruption points for each hour spent studying the horrid books. The GM can use the Craftsmanship ratings to represent different versions of the *Libris Maleficarum*.

Poor: The books are scarcely legible scrawls, written by someone with no real understanding of the original text. The Acolytes never gain Corruption points for reading these books; researching them should take at least twice as long and offer very limited benefits.

Common: This specimen is a typical modern example of the *Libris Maleficarum* and likely a copy of a copy, with a number of annotations and additions made by this version's twisted author.

Good: This is one of the scant few copies that retain most of Inquisitor Belenos' original text. Acolytes need only Linguistics (High Gothic) in order to study this set of books.

Best: This version of the *Libris Maleficarum* clearly bears the marks of the daemoniac. The leathery covers are patchworks of human and inhuman skin, and the rusty text is jagged and uncomfortable to view. Simply being near it sends strange whispers into the Acolytes' heads, and they see shapes in their peripheral vision that vanish when looked at directly. An Acolyte also gains 1 Insanity point for each Corruption point he gains as a result of reading this version of the foul text.



MADANI'S MUSIC BOX

This apocryphal item originates, according to most legends, from the private workshops of amateur metalsmith Baron Michellius Madani of Vouxis Prime. Roughly the size of a fat dataslate, its baroque exterior hides an impossible number of gears and levers that whirr frantically when the brass crank is operated. Tales claim that it only plays a single piece of music—“*Nuella's Lament to the Fallen of Juno*”—although no records remain of who Nuella was, or who the “Fallen of Juno” were.

The sad tales relate that those hearing the song were enraptured, ignoring everything else and swaying oddly to the ringing tune. Some scholars believe reports of mass disturbances linked to the item; these describe a cacophony

of discordant noise emerging from a main harmony that grows louder to eventually drown out the original tune. When the tune ceased, listeners fell to the ground as their skin erupted with lesions and unusual scars. Driven mad without it, these wretched sufferers would thrash uncontrollably, pleading to hear the music once again. Dark tales speak of entire hab-blocks or cities going into riotous frenzies, tearing apart everything and everyone around them in their frantic desire to recapture the song. Mere recordings, it is said, would not suffice, and only broadcast a dry recitation that enraptures no one—a worrisome note that many Inquisitors believe can only indicate the device has psychic effects or Warp-based components.

QUESTING FOR THE PROFANE

Some believe the music box to be a form of terror weapon, but many feel this fails to explain the euphoric and addictive nature that has made it the target of many Slaanesh cults. Those seeking it out often search for news of unusual illness outbreaks, or habs—or even hives—going silent as their populations fall to the irresistible melodies. Some fear that if it were allowed to play long enough, it could enrapture an entire planet. This could make it useful for quashing a revolt in extreme situations, or create a terrible sacrifice to the Dark Gods.

USING THE OBJECT

As long as the user keeps playing the music box, everyone except the operator cannot leave the area or even turn away from the box's user without first passing an Arduous (–40) Willpower test. Additionally, those that fail the test suffer an Addiction (see page 173 of the *DARK HERESY* Core Rulebook) to the music box, where the afflicted character gains 1d5 Insanity points each day he goes without hearing the music. GMs might want to inflict further Insanity depending on the size of the enraptured crowds, or even have a user gain Corruption points as each note takes something away from his soul.

VOCRAM'S EFFIGIES

The first records of the master sculptor Vocram appear only a few decades after the Askellian Wars of Compliance. It is said he created busts of Juno's six most powerful leaders, gifting the perfect works of hand-quarried Desoleum quartz to each personage in a grand ceremony. Despite the artificer's renown, which spread to other sectors as he departed to travel the nascent Imperium, all the busts were soon quietly hidden away from public viewing after their presentation. After each noble's death, as the legend goes, others discovered that the effigies held more than suspected. Many expected to see the busts displayed at the nobles' grand funerals, but the now-masterless servants refused to go near the items. Some claimed they could hear their former masters screaming whenever they approached, and another asserted that simply looking at the sculpture caused her to see visions of endless flames before she blacked out. These claims went mostly ignored, but soon others experienced the similar strange occurrences, and news spread across Juno of the “cursed” effigies.

When Inquisitors arrived, the busts had already vanished, whisked away by forces unknown—but in the long years since, many claim to have seen them. Some believe that Vocram created the busts to expose dark secrets, whereas others claim the busts are capable of corrupting even the most pious with nothing more than a glance. Some Inquisitors posit that the busts themselves hold no real power, but that it was some sorcerous enchantment on Vocram's chisel that imbued each with a darker purpose. No matter the truth, the busts clearly exhibit abilities many consider sorcerous or even daemonic, and every few decades a small conclave of Inquisitors declares its intent to find and destroy all six before the effigies' corruption spreads. None have met with success.

QUESTING FOR THE PROFANE

Many within Askellon see the six Effigies as some form of prize, and over the centuries several unscrupulous nobles have attempted to gather all six in a kind of macabre collection. Even those who understand the danger seek the busts, as each holds an unexplainable allure. Naturally, the Effigies draw the attentions of various cults, but more disturbing reports suggest that an underground network of Radical Inquisitors seek the Effigies in the hope that they might help in harnessing the power of the Warp or learning more of Askellon's hidden origin. As such, Acolytes seeking Vocram's Effigies might find themselves fighting against Acolytes of another Inquisitor more than they battle any cult or heretical faction.

USING THE OBJECT

A character who owns one of the Effigies may use it to cleanse the taint from his soul, but at the price of his sanity. After staring with total concentration at the disturbing marble for at least an hour, he can remove any number of Corruption points. For each point removed, however, he suffers the same amount of Willpower damage, and gains twice that number of Insanity points. After each use he must roll on **Table 8–15: Malignancies**; should he gain a Malignancy he already possesses, he then gains an additional 1d10 Insanity points instead. The GM can also impose an Addiction to the statue; its ownership could become a source of jealous friction within the warband, or it could inflict horrific facial deformities if used to remove too much Corruption.

THE ART OF HATRED

"The witch and heretic often conceal their sins beneath a veneer of false faith, disappearing into the masses of pious citizens. To drive them out into the open and deliver their due judgement, you must be merciless and indefatigable."

—Inquisitor Koracia Gremm

The Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus and the Acolytes who serve them must develop specialised abilities in order to root out and punish the heretics, mutants, and psykers who threaten the Askellon Sector.

The following new talents are available to all Acolytes who meet the prerequisites. Acolytes can select these new talents in exactly the same fashion as those in the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook, by paying the xp cost determined by the talent's tier and the character's number of matching aptitudes.

TALENT DESCRIPTIONS

The following presents each new talent, including its effects, prerequisites, and aptitudes.

AEGIS OF CONTEMPT

Tier: 3

Prerequisites: Shared Destiny, Shield of Contempt, Hatred (any)

Aptitudes: Defence, Leadership

The Inquisitor wards his mind and soul to withstand the influence of the Archenemy of Mankind. Just as his Acolytes help him to guard Mankind against such damnation, so does he guard them, strengthening their resolve with benedictions of hatred and cleansing prayers.

Whenever this character or an ally within 10 metres gains Corruption, reduce the amount gained by 1 to a minimum of 0. In addition, an ally within 10 metres can spend a Fate point to gain 0 Corruption instead. These effects do not stack when there are multiple characters with this talent within range.

DIVINE PROTECTION

Tier: 3

Prerequisites: Ballistic Skill 45, Willpower 35

Aptitudes: Finesse

Those who hunt the witch and mutant often prefer to use cleansing fire to purify their unclean enemies. As if to further demonstrate the cleansing power of flame, some such blessed warriors even use flamers and similar weapons when their allies are in the line of fire, yet miraculously leave them unaffected. If a supposed ally does succumb to the flames, surely that is only evidence of concealed heresy.

When the Acolyte attacks using a weapon with the Spray quality, it only strikes enemies within the area of effect; the attack does not harm allies.

FLAGELLANT

Tier: 1

Prerequisites: Willpower 30

Aptitudes: Offence, Toughness

The Acolyte knows that pain is cleansing, and regularly mortifies his own flesh to atone for his sins. As a Full Action, the character can inflict some suitable punishment on his own body, suffering 1d5–2 levels of Fatigue (to a minimum of 1). He then gains a +10 bonus on Willpower tests to resist Fear, Pinning, psychic powers, or suffering Corruption, for one hour or until the end of the current encounter. If the Acolyte also possesses the Frenzy talent, he can enter a Frenzied state as a Free Action while under the effects of this talent.

INTO THE JAWS OF HELL

Tier: 3

Prerequisites: Adamantium Faith, Halo of Command, Will of the Inquisitor

Aptitudes: Leadership, Willpower

The Inquisitor's strength of conviction and faith in the Emperor—or perhaps the fear of his retribution—inspire those at his side to fight on, even in the face of overwhelming odds and the terrors of the galaxy.

Servants and allies within 10 metres can subtract the Inquisitor's Fellowship bonus from their degrees of failure on a failed Fear or Pinning test, so long as the Inquisitor passes the test. If this reduces the degrees of failure to 0 or less, a character counts as having passed the test with 1 degree of success. The effects of this talent apply to Acolytes in the Inquisitor's warband and to other servants of the Imperium fighting under the Inquisitor's orders, as well as others at the GM's discretion.

INDOMITABLE CONVICTION

Tier: 3

Prerequisites: Shared Destiny, Strength through Conviction, Resistance (Fear), Jaded

Aptitudes: Leadership, Willpower

An Inquisitor must often share a part of his burden of knowledge and understanding with those who serve alongside him. Although some Acolytes might succumb to madness and despair, those who undergo such mental trials with their sanity intact come out stronger for it. An Inquisitor can also benefit from such an experience, drawing strength from his comrades and renewing his faith in his duty to Mankind.

Whenever this character or an ally within 10 metres gains Insanity, reduce the amount gained by 1. In addition, an ally within 10 metres can spend a Fate point to gain 0 Insanity instead. These effects do not stack when there are multiple characters with this talent within range.





MOUNTED WARRIOR

Tier: 1

Prerequisites: Rank 2 (Trained) in any Operate skill *or* Rank 2 (Trained) in Survival skill, Ballistic Skill 30 *or* Weapon Skill 30

Specialisations: Melee, Ranged

Aptitudes: Weapon Skill *or* Ballistic Skill, Offence

Hard-won experience fighting from the saddle or seat of a vehicle has trained the Acolyte to adjust for the motion of mounted combat, moving with the vehicle instead of fighting against it.

When a character purchases this talent, he selects the specialisation that matches the characteristic prerequisite and aptitude used in purchase. He then reduces any penalty for making corresponding attacks (Melee *or* Ranged) from a moving vehicle or mount by 10 for each time the talent has been purchased in that specialisation. This applies to both ordinary attack actions and vehicle combat actions, such as Hit and Run.

PENITENT PSYKER

Tier: 2

Prerequisites: Psy rating, Strong Minded, Willpower 40

Aptitudes: Psyker, Defence

Psykers are hated and shunned throughout the Imperium, and even those psykers who serve the Emperor often struggle with their curse. Whether a rogue psyker taken under an Inquisitor's wing or a sanctioned psyker whose faith condemns his abilities, such an individual might develop the ability to act as a kind of psychic lightning rod, sacrificing his own flesh in order to protect his allies from the Warp-spawned powers of the witch and wyrd.

When the psyker or an ally within 10 metres becomes the target of a psychic power, the psyker may voluntarily suffer any number of levels of Fatigue. Each level of Fatigue suffered grants the target a +10 bonus on any Opposed test to resist the power or Evasion test to avoid its effects. If the target's test to resist or avoid the power results in a roll of doubles, the psyker generates Psychic Phenomena, just as if he had used the Focus Power action.

PURITY OF HATRED

Tier: 2

Prerequisites: Hatred (Any)

Specialisations: Any group for which the character possesses the Hatred talent

Aptitudes: Offence, Willpower

The Acolyte has honed his hatred to a razor's edge, pure and unsullied by mercy or doubt. When facing the object of his hatred, whether it be the witch, mutant, heretic, or traitor, the Acolyte is an instrument of the Emperor's Will, despatching His judgement upon the enemies of humanity as if guided by His very hand.

When selecting this talent, the character chooses one specific group for which he possesses the Hatred talent. Against opponents of this group, the Acolyte's attacks gain the Vengeful (9) quality. If the Acolyte's weapon or attacks already possess this quality, decrease the value by one (to a minimum of 1).

TAINTED PSYKER

Tier: 2

Prerequisites: Psy rating, Rank 2 (Trained) in Psyniscience skill, 10 Corruption points

Aptitudes: Knowledge, Psyker

Though all psykers draw their power from the Warp, the Scholastica Psykana teaches that the Warp is something to fear. Some psykers ignore these warnings, whether wyrds who escaped the Black Ships, scholars of malefic lore, or even sanctioned psykers fallen from grace. Such tainted psykers embrace the true potential the Warp offers, and even heed its denizens' whispered promises of greater power.

When making a Focus Power test, the character may gain a number of Corruption points up to his psy rating. For each point he gains in this way, he gains a +10 bonus to the Focus Power test but adds +5 to rolls on Table 6-2: **Psychic Phenomena** (see page 196 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**).

WITCH FINDER

Tier: 2

Prerequisites: Rank 2 (Trained) in the Forbidden Lore (Psykers) skill, Willpower 45

Aptitudes: Knowledge, Perception

In order to root out the witch, wyrd, and sorcerer, an Inquisitor or Acolyte must be able to detect and follow the sign and spoor of the psyker. Although some are themselves psykers, or employ the services of such, others train their own senses and mind to detect even the subtlest traces of psychic activity.

The character counts as possessing the Psyniscience skill at Rank 1 (Known), even though he is not a psyker. Note that he cannot spend experience to gain additional ranks in the skill.

MINOR PSYCHIC POWERS

"I was just a boy when I first heard the voices. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that they listened back. And what they could do."

—Kulvin Strein, rogue psyker

The sanctioned psykers of the Adeptus Astra Telepathica undergo rigorous testing and training before they ever receive the opportunity to put their powers to use for the good of the Imperium. An integral part of this training involves learning to structure their innate power in approved applications set down millennia ago, known as disciplines—an appropriate name, for these predetermined uses, rather than dangerous experimentation and openness, reinforce the discipline necessary to avoid the predations of the Warp.

Some psykers exhibit powers outside of the disciplines, often without consciously intending to. Such minor powers are most often the purview of the witch and wyrd, those who have not received the training of the Scholastica Psykana. These rogue psykers often exhibit such powers early in life, and many are not even aware of doing so. Some sanctioned psykers learn to forget such abilities during their training, or have the capability forcefully burned from their minds. However, even some sanctioned psykers begin to display such abilities after a time, perhaps as a response to the unexpected and versatile needs of service to an Inquisitor.

GAINING MINOR PSYCHIC POWERS

As with other psychic powers, a character must purchase a minor psychic power before he can use it. Any character with a psy rating of 1 or higher can purchase minor psychic powers by spending the amount of experience points listed in the power's entry, so long as he meets all prerequisites. Note that, unlike the psychic powers in the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook, minor psychic powers do not belong to any psychic discipline, and so are not organized into a discipline tree or trees.



MINOR PSYCHIC POWER DESCRIPTIONS

The following minor psychic powers are available to any character with a psy rating, although they are most frequently the province of rogue psykers who lack the training and skill necessary to manifest the disciplines of the Adeptus Astra Telepathica.

AURA OF FEAR

Summoning his eldritch powers, the psyker projects a fearful aura. All those who witness him see their own deepest fears projected onto the psyker, not with their eyes, but in their minds.

Value: 200 xp

Prerequisite: Fellowship 35, 5+ Insanity points

Action: Full Action

Focus Power: Hard (–20) Willpower test

Range: Self

Sustained: Half Action

Subtype: Concentration

Effect: The psyker gains the Fear (1) trait as long as he sustains this power.

Psychic Phenomena: Instead of rolling for Psychic Phenomena should the situation call for it, the psyker instead must take a Fear (4) test and also suffer Warp Shock as per page 289 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook if he fails.

DEJA VU

The psyker reaches into his target's mind and momentarily scrambles synapses and memories, causing the target to relive his last few moments.

Value: 200 xp

Prerequisite: Willpower 35

Action: Half Action

Focus Power: Opposed Difficult (–10) Willpower test

Range: 5 metres x psy rating

Sustained: No

Subtype: Concentration

Effect: The psyker selects a single target, who opposes the test with an Ordinary (+10) Willpower test. If the psyker succeeds, the target must repeat his last exploit, such as firing a gun at a target who is no longer there or diving for cover from a grenade that has already detonated. This repeated deed counts as the target's Action for the round. If the action would be obviously harmful to the target (but not to an ally), the target automatically wins the Opposed test (scoring 1 more degree of success than the psyker).

FORETELLING

Focussing his preternatural senses onto another person or object, the psyker receives a brief glimpse of the future.

Value: 100 xp

Prerequisite: Perception 35

Action: Full Action

Focus Power: Difficult (–10) Psyniscience test

Range: 5 metres x psy rating

Sustained: No

Subtype: Concentration

Effect: The psyker chooses a single character or item within range and receives a brief and unclear image of the future, giving him a rough idea of one thing that will happen to the target within a number of minutes up to the psyker's PR. The GM decides what information the psyker receives, with additional degrees of success on the Focus Power test yielding more important information. For example, the psyker might learn that the character will be the target of an attack or will himself become violent, or that a cogitator will be accessed by an unknown individual. The psyker cannot select himself as the target of this power.

IGNITE

The psyker draws upon his anger, whether knowingly or not, and channels the Warp to produce a physical manifestation of his burning rage.

Value: 100 xp

Prerequisite: Willpower 30

Action: Half Action

Focus Power: Challenging (+0) Willpower test

Range: 5 metres x psy rating

Sustained: Half Action

Subtype: Attack, Concentration

Effect: The psyker creates a small flame, approximately a centimetre across, at a point within range and line of sight. The flame is not large or hot enough to inflict damage, but can illuminate roughly a 5 metre radius. It can also ignite combustible materials at the GM's discretion, with the chance of igniting an object increasing the longer the psyker sustains the power. If the target of this power is a character, he must pass a Challenging (+0) Agility test each round the psyker sustains the power after the first, or catch fire. The target gains a +30 bonus to this test on any round during which he performs an action with the Movement subtype.

ILL OMEN

Drawing on Mankind's natural, and often quite justified, superstitious fears, the psyker bleeds just a miniscule drop of the Warp's influence into the world. The result, while perhaps logically explainable, nonetheless instils a deep unease in those who witness it—an unmistakable sense of worse things to come. The exact nature of the omen could take any number of forms, including a raven crying three times, a small plant wilting, a disturbingly familiar patina of rust, animals spooking with no apparent cause, or anything else that might unnerve the target.

Value: 200 xp

Prerequisite: Rank 1 (Known) in the Psyniscience skill

Action: Full Action

Focus Power: Difficult (-10) Willpower test

Range: 10 metres x psy rating

Sustained: No

Subtype: Concentration

Effect: The psyker chooses a single target within range and line of sight, who opposes this power with a Challenging (+0) Logic test. If the power is used during structured time and the target fails to resist, he suffers a -10 penalty to all tests for PR rounds. If used during narrative time, the psyker instead chooses a time within the next PR hours for the target to experience the omen. The GM determines the effects on the target's behaviour, but a likely result is that the target rethinks his current course of action or direction he is travelling. The GM should use the psyker's degrees of success and PR, as well as his suggestion for the form of the omen, in determining the outcome.

IMPEL

Developing psykers often instinctively exhibit rudimentary versions of the abilities shown in the disciplines of the Scholastica Psykana. Whereas an accomplished telekine can manipulate objects with more deftness than he could with his actual hands, an untrained psyker might simply lash out, shoving objects with blunt, yet effective, mental force.

Value: 100 xp

Prerequisite: Willpower 30

Action: Half Action

Focus Power: Ordinary (+10) Willpower test

Range: 5 metres x psy rating

Sustained: No

Subtype: Attack, Concentration

Effect: The psyker chooses a target, which can be an object or character, and pushes it directly away from him a number of metres equal to his psy rating. To determine the maximum weight the psyker can push, consult the table on page 248 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, substituting the psyker's PR and WPB for SB and TB. If the target is a character, he opposes the power with a Challenging (+0) Strength test. If the target fails with two or more degrees of failure, he is also knocked Prone. If the psyker wins by 3 or more degrees of success, the target suffers 1d5+PR damage and 1 level of Fatigue.

LUCK

Many undiscovered psykers are known for their luck or good fortune. Such psykers might not even be aware of their own true nature, but subconsciously manipulate events through a variety of psychic effects, from telepathic hints to telekinetic nudges. Of course, if others knew the true reason for their ability to seemingly defy the odds, they would not consider these psykers fortunate, but damned—as might a psyker himself.

Value: 100 xp

Prerequisite: Perception 30

Action: Half Action

Focus Power: Challenging (+0) Awareness test

Range: Self

Sustained: No

Subtype: Concentration

Effect: If the Focus Power test is successful, the psyker gains a bonus of 5 plus his psy rating on the next test he attempts this round. If the psyker fails the Focus Power test by 2 or more degrees of failure, his misguided attempt to call on the Warp backfires, and the resultant psychic ripples inflict a penalty equal to twice his psy rating on his next test this round.



SUGGESTION

Although a far cry from the mind-influencing techniques of a trained telepath, many wyrds and nascent psykers possess a preternatural ability to convince others of small falsehoods. As with many of the powers such psykers evince, this is a useful survival mechanism, allowing the psyker to evade detection.

Value: 200 xp

Prerequisite: Rank 1 (Known) in the Deceive skill

Action: Full Action

Focus Power: Difficult (–10) Opposed Willpower test

Range: 1 metres x psy rating

Sustained: No

Subtype: Concentration

Effect: The psyker convinces the target of a small, but potentially important lie. The target opposes this with a Challenging (+0) Willpower test, which the GM should modify based on the credibility and scope of the lie. In the case of clearly impossible lies, the target succeeds automatically (scoring 1 more degree of success than the psyker). For instance, a human psyker might suggest that a guard has already checked his identification, but would have no possibility of convincing that same guard that the psyker is a Space Marine.

SUMMON VERMIN

Reaching out with his mind, the psyker calls out to nearby minor creatures, who unknowingly heed his summons.

Value: 100 xp

Prerequisite: Fellowship 30

Action: Full Action

Focus Power: Challenging (+0) Willpower test

Range: 1 kilometre x psy rating

Sustained: No

Subtype: Concentration

Effect: A number of small animals—such as rats, snakes, and similar small creatures—up to the psyker's PR within range come to the psyker's current location as quickly as possible. The time until the creatures appear depends on their speed and proximity, and they are likely to arrive over the course of several rounds or minutes. Once the creatures arrive, they behave normally and are not compelled to obey the psyker.

WEAPON JINX

The psyker reaches out with his power, fouling the mechanisms of nearby weapons.

Value: 200 xp

Prerequisite: Intelligence 35

Action: Half Action

Focus Power: Difficult (–10) Willpower test

Range: 5 metres x psy rating

Sustained: No

Subtype: Concentration

Effect: The psyker chooses a number of ranged weapons within range up to the psyker's psy rating, with each Best craftsmanship weapon counting as two weapons for the purposes of this power. Affected weapons count as Poor craftsmanship until repaired. If the psyker's degrees of success on the Focus Power test exceed the psy rating of the power, then the affected weapons also jam immediately. Should the psyker fail the test with 2 or more degrees of failure, his own ranged weapons jam immediately.

WORD OF BEASTS

Many untrained psykers, both in the wilds of feral worlds and the depths of hive cities, develop an instinctive ability to communicate with beasts and lower creatures. Whether this ability represents true telepathy or something else is impossible to say.

Value: 100 xp

Prerequisite: Fellowship 35

Action: Half Action

Focus Power: Difficult (–10) Opposed Willpower test

Range: 10 metres

Sustained: No

Subtype: Concentration

Effect: The psyker opens a limited telepathic link with an animal, which resists the power with a Challenging (+0) Willpower test. If the psyker succeeds, he chooses one of the following effects:

Impression Reading: The psyker receives a mental impression of the animal's recent experiences. These are not thoughts in the sense of a sentient being, but merely vague impressions and unclear images. The GM determines the level of detail and form of the information received based on the intelligence and senses of the animal, as well as the PR of the psyker. The amount of information is based on the psyker's degrees of success on the Focus Power test.

Empathic Link: The psyker establishes a bond with the animal that persists after the telepathic link ends. The animal follows the psyker and obeys his commands to the best of its ability, exactly as if he had tamed and trained it with the Wrangling special use of the Survival skill (see page 116 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook)



INQUESTS

"We thought he perished during our last encounter, but the ritual markings undoubtedly show the involvement of that damnable heretic Zethor. I don't know how he escaped the purge on Temperance, but with the Emperor's guidance, this time we will make sure of his fate."

—Witch-Seeker Arbella Syne

Acolytes often pursue investigations with little foreknowledge of what awaits at their conclusion. This could be because the Acolytes' Inquisitor apprises them of some clue that a heresy is afoot on short notice, or because they simply stumble upon suspicious signs or indicators of some heresy in progress. However, the trusted Acolytes of an Inquisitor, whether serving alongside their master or independently, might also be tasked with locating and eliminating a specific heretic or group over a longer period of time. Some warbands might undertake such similar quests of their own devising, rather than waiting for orders from their master. As with all aspects of a warband's mode of operation, this depends on the methods and preferences of the Inquisitor in question, and the nature of the Acolytes.

Regardless of the circumstances under which it comes about, when a warband pursues a particular heretic or organisation, this can form the basis of an Inquest. Inquests are targeted investigations in which the Acolytes have some idea of their ultimate quarry's identity or goal (though likely not both) and must piece together the clues necessary to find or stop their foe. Inquests can also be used to research and possibly acquire Profane Objects (see page 52) as well as actual living beings. This differs from investigations in which the Acolytes have only a crime scene or other indicator of heresy to follow up on, without any idea as to the nature of the unseen foe or its goals.

In an Inquest, the Acolytes, and therefore the players, are directly involved in determining the goals of their investigation. This makes Inquests particularly appropriate for groups in which one or more PCs are Inquisitors, or groups whose Inquisitor trusts them to prioritise their own investigations. A GM can also use the following rules to structure investigations of a less focussed nature for his own benefit. In such cases, however, the players are less directly involved in the various elements of the process.

Of all the Ordos of the Inquisition, Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus and their Acolytes are most likely to pursue such focussed investigations. Although threats from without and beyond can sometimes be found concealed amidst the worlds of the Imperium, heretics both individual and in covens hide amongst the countless citizens of the Imperium all too often; they are known as the enemy within for this very reason. Even once aware of such heretics, Acolytes pursuing a concentrated Inquest need to root them out and bring judgement upon them.

ELEMENTS OF AN INQUEST

Inquests are divided into three major steps: preparation, prosecution, and resolution. Each of these steps contains a variable number of elements, depending on the nature of the specific Inquest and its scope. During the preparation phase, the warband selects the target for the Inquest, whether it be an individual heretic, an organisation, or even a more nebulous heresy, and

lays the groundwork necessary to begin its investigation. In the prosecution phase, which is usually the longest phase, the Acolytes gather clues, pursue leads, and face one or more Confrontations—pivotal moments that advance the Inquest significantly, as long as the Acolytes survive whatever danger they confront. Finally, the resolution occurs when the warband achieves its goal and brings righteous judgement to the target—or fails to do so.

Unlike other investigations and adventures, the players are directly involved in setting up and preparing for an Inquest, working together with the GM to choose an appropriate target and goal. This helps to ensure the players are invested in the Inquest and its outcome, and provides a great opportunity to pursue NPCs who have made a significant and memorable impression in previous adventures. It also allows everyone to collaborate in creating a new adventure plot and direction for the Acolytes' story. However, the exact level of player involvement in the development and running of an Inquest is not set, and should depend on the preferences of the group and the needs of the ongoing narrative. The following rules include suggestions on different ways to include players throughout the process.

OBJECTIVE

Although most Inquests share a single goal—to bring justice to the target heretics—the Acolytes must determine just what this means in the case at hand. At the most basic level, choosing an objective might simply mean deciding whether the Acolytes are attempting to capture the heretic alive for interrogation or excruciation, or if the enemy is dangerous enough that they seek to purge it completely and expeditiously. Because an objective is determined at the outset of the Inquest, it might be necessary for the warband to revise its goals as it uncovers further information about the target.

The objective helps to determine the Inquest's scope, as it can add additional challenge or entirely new avenues of investigation. For instance, if the warband is pursuing a known heretek, its objective might simply be to kill him. However, the objective might instead be to capture the heretek and to discover the identities and locations of any apprentices he might have trained, as well as find and consecrate or destroy any devices tainted by his unholy work. Obviously, the latter is a much more involved process, requiring a greater scope. In some cases, such additional goals might be so large as that the GM might require an additional Inquest.

SCOPE

Although all Inquests are unique, they are broadly divided into three scopes, named for both the gravity of the Inquest and the nature of its target: Hereticus Minoris, Hereticus Majoris, and Hereticus Extremis. The scope of an Inquest reflects both the length and scale of the necessary investigation, and the threat level and resources of the target, for these qualities are closely linked. In addition to giving the players an idea of the time and effort the Inquest requires, the scope determines the total number of Investigation points necessary to successfully conclude the Inquest. A higher number of Investigation points means a greater number of clues for the Acolytes to discover, more challenging clues and leads to discern, or both. Correspondingly, an Inquest of greater scope requires the Acolytes to face a greater number of Confrontations before reaching their ultimate goal. Of course, Inquests of larger scope also yield greater rewards for successful Acolytes.



As any Inquisitor knows all too well, a heresy is never completely dealt with. Even once a cult's members are heaped on the pyre, questions remain, and the smallest clue could lead to additional heretics and blasphemies. Often investigating one threat can reveal two others festering in the darkness. Inquests are no different, and the resolution of one Inquest might launch a new investigation into related threats. In this way, Inquests can be strung together to create a larger story.

HERETICUS MINORIS

Even the smallest Inquests represent heresies worthy of the focussed attentions of an Inquisitor and his Acolytes. Inquests of Minoris scope are relatively straightforward (as such matters go), and the Inquisitor and Acolytes might even know the approximate whereabouts of the target.

An Inquest Minoris requires 600 Investigation points to complete and includes 1 to 3 Confrontations.

HERETICUS MAJORIS

An Inquest Majoris requires dedicated investigation for the warband to uncover its target and stop whatever plots the heretics have brewing. Although the Acolytes know the nature or identity of their quarry, they must discover many clues in order to find their target or follow his trail. The enemy individual or group possesses considerable resources with which to hinder the Acolytes' mission.

An Inquest Majoris requires 900 Investigation points to complete, and includes from 2 to 5 Confrontations.

HERETICUS EXTREMIS

An Inquest of Extremis scope presents a truly grave threat to Mankind, one that requires many months, even years, to pursue and uncover. The warband might have an incomplete picture of its foe's nature, perhaps only knowing one of many aliases of an arch-heretic, or the identities of only some of the members of a sector-spanning malefic cabal. Rooting out the heretics or tracking them from world to world requires concerted efforts, while the foe opposes the Acolytes with anything from fanatical servants to elite mercenaries or xenos allies.

An Inquest Extremis requires 1,200 Investigation points to complete and includes at least 4 Confrontations.

PREPARING THE INQUEST

The preparation phase is necessary before an Inquest can begin, and in some ways is what differentiates an Inquest from other investigations. This is because the Acolytes, and by extension the players, are also involved in preparing for an Inquest. This step includes everything the Acolytes must do before beginning the Inquest in earnest. During the preparation step, the Acolytes must select a heresy to target, gather any requirements for the Inquest, and decide on a lead investigator. Additional preparations might be necessary depending on the nature of the heresy, or might simply increase the warband's chances for success.

SELECTING A HERESY

Targeting a particular heresy is what defines an Inquest. Although in some cases this might be a more nebulous idea, the warband should select a particular heretic or heretical group if possible, even if the identity of the target is unknown, such as "those responsible for the Stollex Massacres." Nearly any foe could serve as the target for an Inquest, from a powerful rogue psyker, to a secret society spread across multiple sub-sectors, or even a fallen Inquisitor.

Often, the target of an Inquest is an individual or group the warband has encountered before, whether confronted directly or uncovered in a seemingly-unrelated plot. He could even be a Nemesis the PCs have opposed in earlier adventures, as described in the **DARK HERESY GAME MASTER'S KIT**. In this way, an Inquest follows from another investigation. The warband might even have earlier considered the target an ally, only later discovering his true intentions. Even if the Acolytes do not know the identity of the target, an Inquest begins when the Acolytes deliberately choose to seek out a threat they uncovered in a prior investigation.

SCOPE

Selecting a target heresy is key to determining the Inquest's scope, as more powerful heretics or larger cults naturally correspond to a greater scope. Depending on how much the Acolytes know of their target, the GM might determine the scope, or the players might propose one. If the Acolytes are misinformed as to the resources and threat posed by the heretic(s), the GM might inform the players of the true scope and trust them to distinguish between their knowledge and the in-character beliefs of the Acolytes, or he might secretly assign additional objectives and Investigation point goals, only revealing them once the Acolytes discover the truth.

REQUIREMENTS

Requirements include any resources necessary needed to begin the Inquest, including allies, gear, skills, or other resources. They are based on the warband's knowledge at the time of selecting a heresy to pursue, and so the need for additional resources might become apparent as the Inquest progresses. Gathering the requirements for an Inquest might simply require a few Requisition tests, or might form the basis of an adventure in its own right, taking one or more game sessions. However, gathering requirements should not overshadow the Inquest itself, and so the length and difficulty should correspond to the scope of the Inquest.

Usually, requirements do not include information about the heresy, as this is included in the clues and evidence the warband must gather during the course of the Inquest. For instance, knowing the true identity of a mysterious arch-heretic is clearly helpful in stopping him, but finding it would be one of the main goals of the Inquest, not a requirement during preparation.

APPROACH

In order to properly gauge the requirements, Acolytes must decide on an approach to their Inquest. The specificity of detail at this point depends in part on their current knowledge of the target, but at the very least the Acolytes should decide whether to operate openly or covertly, and whether to don false identities. These decisions carry great importance in determining the necessary requirements. If operating openly, the Acolytes might need to acquire additional weapons, armed backup, and combat vehicles, and notify the local authorities of their investigation. If operating clandestinely, they might prepare disguises, research the local authorities so they know how to avoid detection, and take actions to increase the warband's Subtlety prior to beginning the Inquest.

LEAD INVESTIGATOR

Although not strictly necessary, Acolytes may find it useful to nominate a lead investigator. This need not be the warband's actual leader, if indeed it has one, but a PC whose background or expertise suits him well to the Inquest at hand. For instance, if the warband's target is a heretek outcast from the Adeptus Mechanicus, it might work best to select an Acolyte from a forge world or with the Adeptus Mechanicus background to act as lead investigator. If the group's Inquisitor is a PC, he might take this role by default or might appoint an Acolyte to do so. After all, he selected his Acolytes for a reason, and the lead investigator in no way usurps his authority. Similarly, although an Acolyte with the Seeker role might seem an obvious choice, this is not always the best option.

The lead investigator's role is not to order the other Acolytes about or make decisions for them, but to provide special insight as to how to proceed, and to cast the tie-breaking vote in case the group is deadlocked on a course of action. In addition, all Acolytes gain an extra degree of success on Investigation tests for which the lead investigator's background or home world is relevant, and an additional 25 Investigation points from relevant clues. Continuing with the example above, the lead investigator's Adeptus Mechanicus background would grant an extra degree of success to any Acolyte attempting an Inquiry test in order to gather information from Tech-Priests. If the Acolytes further discover that the heretek they are seeking originally hails from Selvanus Binary, this informational clue would grant an extra 25 Investigation points.

PROSECUTING THE INQUEST

Prosecution is the longest phase of an Inquest. To prosecute an Inquest, the Acolytes must discover clues and follow leads in order to collect the evidence they need to find their quarry. Once they hold enough evidence, the Acolytes reach a Revelation, a pivotal breakthrough in the Investigation where the meaning of the gathered clues becomes clear. A Revelation brings the warband significantly closer to the target, prompting a Confrontation.

Depending on the scope of the Inquest, the first Confrontation might bring the Acolytes face-to-face with the heretic they seek, or with a lesser heretic in service or affiliation to the true target. In the former case, the Inquest's resolution follows; in the latter, overcoming the Confrontation yields new clues, and the process resumes. Likewise, the scope of the Inquest determines the number and value of the clues they must uncover in order to proceed.

The prosecution phase usually involves less player input up front, although this depends on how much information the Acolytes possess about the target. If they are already aware of organisations, facilities, allies, and operations connected to the targeted heretic(s), the Acolytes could set their own goals and even plan Confrontations during this stage. They might also already possess relevant clues from previous investigations, even if they did not realise their significance until now. This is particularly likely when targeting the mastermind behind a previous plot or heresy. Generally, however, such strategizing is only possible once the Inquest is well underway and the Acolytes have reached one or more Revelations.

BEGINNING THE INQUEST

In some cases, it is quite obvious where best to begin an Inquest, while in others it might not be so clear-cut. In an Inquest, the Acolytes have at least some idea of the identity or nature of their target, and this should provide guidance on where to begin. If the Acolytes have encountered the target previously, or at least seen the target's handiwork, they might very likely know of accomplices, previous victims, crime scenes, or even recent whereabouts.

If the Acolytes have some evidence from a previous investigation, re-examining it in light of new information might yield additional leads. Instead, the Acolytes might begin an Inquest after discovering too late that the heretic has struck again. In either case, the warband already has its first clue.

CLUES

The true heart of an Inquest is the act of discovering the clues and leads necessary for the Acolytes to locate their target. The Acolytes discover clues much as they do in any other investigation, a natural process utilising their skills and the players' ingenuity. The key difference is that in an Inquest, each clue has a value in Investigation points, which contribute to a running total that the GM tracks, providing both the GM and players with a clear and tangible concept of the clue's importance, as well as the overall progress in the Inquest. The Acolytes must obtain the necessary total number of Investigation points to successfully complete the Inquest and achieve their goal. In addition, certain Investigation point thresholds trigger Revelations, advancing the Acolytes toward their goal and leading to important Confrontations.

Table 2–7: Clue Values

CLUE SIGNIFICANCE	INVESTIGATION POINTS	EXAMPLES
Minor	50	An eyewitness description of the heretic, a spent bolt casing, an ornate sacrificial dagger
Major	100	A discrepancy between a chartist vessel's manifest and its actual cargo, psychic hoarfrost on a hab wall, a tunic stained with fresh alien ichor
Vital	200	A tome of malefic rituals with a specific page torn out, the excruciated testimony of one of the heretic's high-ranking lieutenants, a journal logging Faceless Trade dealings

The GM assigns an Investigation point value to each clue based on its significance, as shown in **Table 2–7: Clue Values**. When devising clues, the GM should generate a total value of Investigation points greater than what the PCs actually need to reach the next Revelation. This way, the Inquest does not come to a halt because the Acolytes miss a single clue, and the warband has multiple options for resolving the investigation. A good guideline for the GM is to provide at least 50 percent more Investigation points than required, and twice the number of clues. All clues do not necessarily need to be equivalent in value, and usually should not be. This allows the Acolytes to reach the next breakthrough by, for instance, finding one vital clue and one major clue, two major clues and two minor clues, or any other available combination. Obtaining more clues, and therefore Investigation points, than necessary can provide the Acolytes with an advantage later in the Inquest, as described under **Revelations** on page 66.

PLAYER-GENERATED CLUES

In addition to establishing clues in advance, the Game Master should be ready to create additional clues or adapt or relocate existing clues based on the Acolytes' decisions. Although the prosecution stage is less reliant on up-front warband decisions, Inquests are much more player-driven than some other kinds of **DARK HERESY** mysteries, and so the plot should keep moving regardless of what approach the Acolytes take.

One advantage of the preparation phase is to provide the GM with a solid idea of how the Acolytes plan to pursue the Inquest, allowing him to design appropriate clues and leads. However, if the Acolytes go in unexpected directions or decide to change their approach as the Inquest develops, the GM should improvise and adapt, allowing the PCs to guide the progress of the Inquest, while still throwing surprises their way.

LEADS

As in any investigation, each clue in an Inquest yields at least one useful lead, and possibly more. The utility of a clue depends on the Acolytes' success in discerning its implications. Even false clues that the Acolytes' enemies plant to cover their trail could actually progress the investigation, if the Acolytes are clever and skilled enough to realise these represent a deception and determine the true reasons behind it.

When examining a clue in order to discern leads, the GM often calls for skill tests to determine whether the Acolytes realise the meaning of a clue, even when the players do not. During an Inquest, the GM should also call for a relevant skill test even if the players reach the correct conclusion on their own. Just as Acolytes often have knowledge players do not, the players might also reach conclusions based on their own knowledge of the **WARHAMMER 40,000** setting, or simply their understanding of the structure of mystery fiction. This is important because the time it takes to discover a lead, the extent of the Acolytes' insight, and other factors all contribute to the ongoing investigation.

For each degree of success on the relevant skill test, the Acolytes gain +10 Investigation points, representing the speed with which they discover the lead, additional insights, and other factors. However, for each degree of failure on the test, the GM subtracts 10 Investigation points from the warband's accumulated total, as the Acolytes take time to conduct additional research or even chase false leads, allowing the trail to cool.



REVELATIONS

Although individual clues are important, they rarely are sufficient on their own to advance the investigation in a meaningful way. By assembling many clues, however, the Acolytes can reveal important facets of the case, gaining the necessary insight to progress to the next phase of their Inquest. These breakthroughs are known as Revelations, and occur when the warband reaches the requisite total of Investigation points. The default requirement for a Revelation is 300 Investigation points. However, GMs should tailor this number to fit the nature of the breakthrough and Inquest, and not every breakthrough needs to require the same number. For instance, Acolytes could have their first breakthrough at 200 Investigation points, the next one at 500, and another at 600.

Once the Acolytes reach the required number of Investigation points for a Revelation, they should gain some valuable information about the Inquest that advances the story in a meaningful way. Revelations can be thought of as those moments when the last piece of a puzzle fits into place—each clue is a separate piece, and the large image the last piece reveals is the breakthrough. Often, a breakthrough is an important correlational clue (see page 282 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook) that the Acolytes discover once they compare the other assembled clues.

If the Acolytes obtain the required number of Investigation points, but fail important skill tests, ignore valuable leads, or otherwise fail to properly utilise the available evidence, they should nonetheless advance in the Inquest. The exact form this takes depends on the clues they have and the nature of the case and ongoing narrative, and the GM has multiple options in such cases. The GM can modify the plot as needed, so that whatever lead the Acolytes choose brings them to the next Confrontation, regardless of his original plan. This might include reassigning guilt, moving NPCs or clues to a different location, or other unplanned actions (see the **All Part of the Plan** sidebar on page 67). If the GM does not want to change the details in this way, he could instead have an important clue, NPC, or even the next Confrontation come to the Acolytes by sheer chance, or based on previous events. The important thing is that the Inquest moves on to a new “act” once the Acolytes reach an Investigation point threshold.

Sometimes, the values of individual clues might be such that obtaining a clue results in the Acolytes having a higher number of Investigation points than needed for the next Revelation. In this case, the excess points carry over into the next phase of the Inquest, providing the Acolytes with a head start and reducing the number of additional clues necessary. However, the warband must discover at least one clue before reaching the next Revelation, even if they already have the requisite Investigation points. To represent the impact of the warband’s effective investigations, the GM and players should work together to show how these earlier clues shed greater light on those discovered in the next stage of the Inquest.



CONFRONTATIONS

Confrontations are those dramatic, pivotal moments in which all the Acolytes’ investigation pays off, from facing down a dangerous sorcerer in direct combat to supervising as squads of Adeptus Arbites raid the manse of a heretical noble family. Confrontations occur as a direct result of Revelations. Although a final Confrontation usually leads directly to the resolution of the Inquest, the Acolytes could encounter several Confrontations prior to that, depending on the scope of the Inquest.

Confrontations do not include all notable encounters, combat or otherwise. They are only those that come about as a direct result of a Revelation, and serve to advance the Inquest in a significant way, or to conclude it. Defeating some Desoleum hive gangers in order to interrogate one is probably not a Confrontation. If the information the prisoner yields leads to a Revelation that allows the Acolytes to locate the hidden workshop of the heretek they are pursuing, entering the heretek’s lair is certain to lead to a Confrontation—whether with the heretek himself or his blasphemous servants and creations.

All Confrontations do not necessarily involve combat, although the final, climactic encounter usually should. A Confrontation could come when the Acolytes find the heretic’s abandoned base of operations, with important evidence about his plans and capabilities. A Confrontation might instead occur when the Acolytes question a key witness who can shed light on the heretic’s current whereabouts. Some Confrontations could go either way, such as when the Acolytes catch up to an important servant or accomplice of the true target. Here, the GM could use a Disposition test to determine if the NPC flees, attacks, or even surrenders with the hope of bargaining with the additional information he possesses. A Confrontation could even consist of an old ally unexpectedly arriving with the missing piece of the puzzle. Whatever form it takes, the important thing is that a Confrontation serves to advance the Inquest in a meaningful way and to provide a satisfying resolution to a particular thread of the investigation, or to the overall Inquest.

COMPLICATIONS

No investigation ever goes off without a hitch, and Inquests are no exception. Complications are those unexpected and unpredictable occurrences that threaten to bring an investigation to a halt, or to delay and distract the Acolytes long enough for their target to slip through their grasp. At the outset of an Inquest, the GM should determine a complication for the Acolytes to encounter at an appropriate point in the Inquest. The GM can select any of the complications or roll on **Table 2-8: Complications** (see page 68), or come up with one of his own devising appropriate to the Inquest.

When selecting or rolling for a complication, the GM does so in secret. Although players are more involved in the development and unfolding of an Inquest than in other investigations, there are still some things the Acolytes cannot anticipate, and that is exactly what a complication represents. The GM should determine when and how to introduce the complication based on the plot, the nature of the Inquest, and the specific complication. Some complications might have subtle effects throughout an Inquest, while others happen suddenly. In many cases, an effective time to reveal a complication is right around the final Revelation, just before the final Confrontation. A sudden complication threatening to halt the Inquest just before its success adds tension and drama. In the case of a complication with far-reaching impact during the Inquest, the sudden revelation might also explain previous events.

Many complications include mechanical effects such as a loss of Investigation points or Subtlety. The GM should feel free to modify these effects, based on the particulars of the narrative and the Acolytes' response to the complication. Fast thinking and efforts to mitigate damage might reduce or negate the penalty, but ignoring the problem, inappropriate reactions, or simple bad luck might exacerbate it.

GMs can also, of course, introduce complications based on Acolyte actions just as he would in any investigation. Significant degrees of failure or simple poor preparation could introduce false leads or red herrings to bedevil the players. These complications could be unique to the situation, specific to a particular Nemesis or a heretical cult.

GM GUIDANCE: ALL PART OF THE PLAN

Many GMs find it effective to “steal” ideas from their players during the course of a mystery adventure, having the PCs’ (and players’) theories and hunches prove correct, even if the GM did not originally plan things that way. Not only does this provide satisfaction for players, it keeps the game moving when the PCs pursue an unexpected lead, and make things easier for the GM. In some cases, the GM might simply feel that the players’ ideas are more interesting than his original plan. However, the GM generally does not reveal this to the players, instead presenting events as if he had them planned that way all along (at least until after the session or Inquest).

Drawing from the players’ ideas is particularly appropriate for Inquests, where the players are already more actively engaged in the design and development of the plot than they are otherwise. Depending on the preferences of the group, the GM could even make this clear to the players. One way to do this is to allow the players to work together to determine the nature of the breakthrough lead once the warband acquires enough Investigation points, rather than presenting them with one of the GM’s devising. Of course, the GM should be involved in this decision as well, to ensure that the lead is appropriate for his campaign and plot. This approach is not for all groups, however. For some players, such transparency might diminish the suspension of disbelief needed for their immersion in the game, while some GMs might simply prefer to maintain the aura of mystique that surrounds their position.



Table 2–8: Complications

d10 ROLL	COMPLICATION
1	Jurisdictional Dispute: The Acolytes' actions interfere with another group's ongoing investigation, or vice versa. This could be the local Enforcers, the Adeptus Arbites, or even another Inquisitor or his Acolytes. Even if the Acolytes do not invoke their authority to resolve the issue, the other party's investigation risks revealing their identities. The players nominate one Acolyte to make an Influence test. Each degree of success on the test reduces the warband's Subtlety by 1, while each degree of failure reduces their current Investigation point total by 10.
2	Civil Unrest: A hab riot, attack by a rival tribe, Enforcer crackdown, witch burning, or other sudden event flares up, throwing the community into disarray. Witnesses and others are unable or unwilling to talk about anything else, while the chaos threatens to destroy important clues. The warband loses 1d10 x 10 Investigation points.
3	Bad Intel: Some key piece of information on which the Acolytes based the Inquest is actually false. Perhaps the target is not actually responsible for the heresy that prompted the Inquest, has been dead for years, or possesses vast resources of which the Acolytes were unaware. The GM chooses or randomly determines one clue already found by the Acolytes, and reduces their current Investigation point total by its value plus 1d10.
4	Unexpected Enemies: Unanticipated enemies attack the Acolytes. These might be previously unknown allies of the targeted heretics, old foes reappearing at an inopportune time, or unaffiliated enemies who perceive the Acolytes as a threat. The GM may use a Subtlety test to determine whether the attackers know the Acolytes' identities or it is an attack of opportunity. The warband loses 1d10 Subtlety.
5	Betrayal: An ally or associate assisting the Acolytes in the investigation betrays them, possibly by leading them directly into a trap set by the target of the Inquest. It might be that the traitor was truly an enemy all along, was lured to the heretic's cause through promises or coercion, or seeks vengeance on the Acolytes for an unrelated reason. The Acolytes lose 50 Investigation points and reduce their Fatigue thresholds by 1 during the next two encounters.
6	Undercover Operatives: The targets of the Inquest, or individuals serving the target, are actually undercover agents serving the Adeptus Arbites, Enforcers, Ecclesiarchy, or even another Inquisitor. If the Acolytes obtain 100 more Investigation points than needed prior to the relevant Confrontation, they learn of this fact in time. If not, each Acolyte reduces his Influence award for successful completion of the Inquest by 1.
7	Mistaken Identities: Perhaps due to their assumed identities or disguises, or perhaps out of simple ignorance, a group mistakes the Acolytes for someone else, leading to severe problems and even violence. Possibilities include Enforcers, Adeptus Arbites, a bounty hunter mistaking the Acolytes for wanted criminals, or an unrelated heretical group mistaking the Acolytes for members of the organisation they are currently investigating. When he reveals this complication, the GM makes a Subtlety test for the warband. The Acolytes lose 10 Investigation points for every degree of success on this test, or suffer a penalty to all Influence tests for the remainder of the Inquest equal to –5 per degree of failure.
8	Local Colour: The Acolytes run afoul of some unusual custom, belief system, or group unique to their current locale, whether that be a single village, a deck of a voidship, or an entire planet. The Acolytes might find themselves facing criminal charges, shunned by the community, or even pursued by an angry mob. The warband loses 1d5 Subtlety and 1d5x10 Investigation points.
9	Catspaws: The Inquest's target is, in fact, only a pawn of the true heretic. This hidden power behind the heresy might be another known arch-heretic, a cult or group, a Nemesis of the Acolytes, or even a Radical Inquisitor. The Investigation points required to complete the Inquest increases by 200, and the Acolytes must face one additional Confrontation.
10	Calamity: Roll twice on this table and use both results.

RESOLVING THE INQUEST

The resolution of an Inquest happens once the Acolytes reach the total required number of Investigation points, prompting one last Revelation that leads to the final Confrontation. These follow the normal model, but, of course, should carry greater drama and excitement. If the Emperor is with them and they found the necessary clues to prepare for the final conflict, the Acolytes might defeat the heretics and complete their mission. However, the target of an Inquest is by nature a dangerous foe, and through burning Fate threshold, a cunning contingency plan, or through some other means, the heretic might escape retribution. Depending on how this happens, the Acolytes might wrongly believe the heretic to be dead, or they might immediately begin their pursuit—and possibly a new Inquest. In either case, the heretic's plans are almost certainly foiled, and he is likely to plot revenge on the Acolytes, possibly creating a new Nemesis for the warband. Such a Nemesis is, in turn, an ideal target for future Inquests.

Even if the target is truly dealt with, the aftermath of an Inquest is certain to provide many avenues for follow-up adventures or additional Inquests. This might include evidence of other heretical plots put in motion by the target, allies and accomplices, or questions of how the heretic obtained resources and knowledge, or why he turned away from the Emperor in the first place. Even if the Acolytes do not take the initiative to follow up such leads, surviving henchmen or servants of the heretic might plot revenge on the Acolytes, or seek to continue their master's work.

INQUEST REWARDS

For completing an Inquest, Acolytes earn experience points following the normal method. In addition, they earn Influence based on the scope of the Inquest and the success of their prosecution. Table 2-9: Inquest Rewards below shows the standard Influence reward for successfully completing an Inquest of each scope and meeting the warband's goals. In addition, the Acolytes earn 1 Influence for every full 300 Investigation points they obtained in excess of the number required to complete the Inquest, to a maximum of 3 extra Influence.

If the Acolytes obtained the requisite number of Investigation points, but failed to successfully complete the goals of the Inquest for any reason, they receive half the normal Influence reward, rounded down. However, if the Acolytes failed to obtain the necessary Investigation points, they lose 1 Influence for every 300 Investigation points, or part thereof, that they fell short.

As always, the GM should consider bestowing Peer and Enemy talents to reflect the PCs' actions during the Inquest. If the warband's Inquisitor is an NPC, the GM adjusts his Influence based on the outcome of the Inquest exactly as if he were a PC.

Table 2-9: Inquest Rewards

SCOPE	INFLUENCE
Minoris	3
Majoris	5
Extremis	7

EXAMPLE INQUESTS

The following two Inquests can serve as examples for players and GMs when designing their own. In addition, a warband can select either of these Inquests to pursue, with the GM and players working together to tailor them to the group.

FORBIDDEN FLOWERS— INQUEST MINORIS

The League of Purple Flowers cult has sunk its roots deep in Hive Desoleum. This malefic group wears many guises throughout the hive, operating under a number of false fronts, from Apex boutiques offering exotic flora, to secret societies, to violent and depraved Underhive gangs. Although the true extent and goals of the group are unknown, its members seek to cast off the shackles of Desoleum's oath system and indulge their passions, regardless of duty. Members delight in the wearing of abnormally bright colours, and identify each other by the use of purple fabrics and jewellery. In keeping with the cult's loathing of the oath system, membership crosses divides of class and station, and a single coven might include a noble and his lowliest servants. In some cases, those of low station possess a higher authority in the cult, with lords and ladies and manufactorum labourers both receiving a perverse thrill from this upheaval of the social order.

The cult and its outward façades place a high value on nature, and botany in particular, something which few hive denizens ever experience. The Purple Flowers expose prospective members to the sensual enjoyment of sunlight, fresh air, and the feel of grass and flowers. From this seemingly-innocent beginning, members are introduced to ever more outlandish and blasphemous pleasures, drawing them further into the embraces of the Dark Prince.

PREPARATION

The activities of a particular member of the cult have drawn the Acolytes' attention. Lord Karheit Vorf was revealed years ago as a magister of the League of Purple Flowers and a worshipper of the Prince of Excess. However, Vorf disappeared before facing justice for his crimes, taking with him a sizeable part of his family's vast resources. Recently, a more refined and potent version of the chem that Vorf first developed has reappeared amongst the decadent youthful scions of the Apex and merchants of the Pinion. This narcotic produces vivid hallucinations in the user, while simultaneously heightening sensations—both real and illusory. The chem goes by many names in the habways, but the most common is phoria. For its users, reality becomes more and more a pale reflection of their chemical experience, and they go to any lengths to obtain more, inevitably finding themselves members of the League of Purple Flowers.

OBJECTIVE

Find Karheit Vorf and stop the production and distribution of the heretical chem phoria.

REQUIREMENTS

The delicate nature of this Inquest lends itself naturally to a covert investigation, as overt action is likely to drive both dealers and users of phoria into hiding. In addition to knowledge of life under Desoleum's oath system, plentiful doses of de-tox are useful.

LEAD INVESTIGATOR

Based on the nature of this heresy, Acolytes with the highborn home world or Outcast background make ideal lead investigators.

PROSECUTION

There are many ways Acolytes might go about conducting this Inquest, each of which could turn up different clues. Likely clues include samples of phoria and imitation drugs, chemical analysis of the drug, the words of users and dealers, or even an Acolyte willingly subjecting himself to the drug in order to gain information from the vivid hallucinations.

FIRST REVELATION— 300 INVESTIGATION POINTS

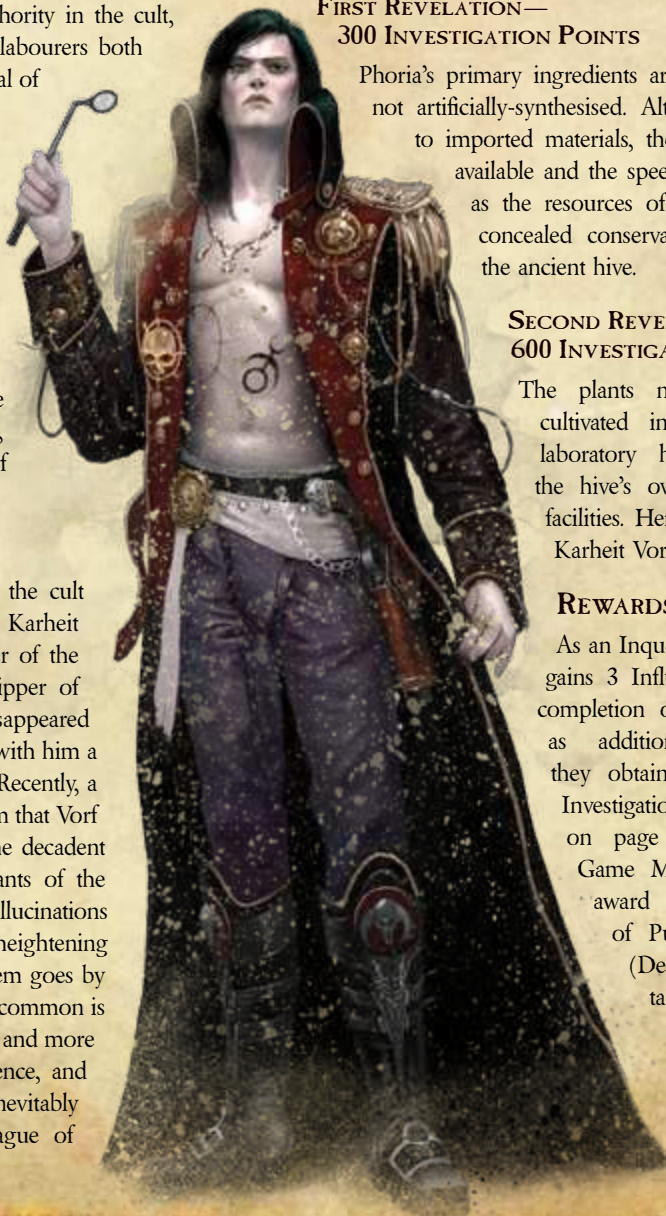
Phoria's primary ingredients are all naturally-occurring, not artificially-synthesised. Although this could point to imported materials, the quantities of the drug available and the speed of production, as well as the resources of the heretic, point to a concealed conservatory somewhere within the ancient hive.

SECOND REVELATION— 600 INVESTIGATION POINTS

The plants needed for phoria are cultivated in a covert hydroponic laboratory hidden within one of the hive's overworked water cycling facilities. Here, the Acolytes confront Karheit Vorf and his minions.

REWARDS

As an Inquest Minoris, each Acolyte gains 3 Influence for the successful completion of this Inquest, as well as additional Influence should they obtain more than 600 total Investigation points, as described on page 69. In addition, the Game Master might choose to award the Enemy (League of Purple Flowers) or Peer (Desoleum Sanctionaries) talent, depending on the Acolytes' actions.



ECHOES OF KAPPELLAX — INQUEST EXTREMIS

Since Arch-Magos Argo Kappellax first developed the theory that the Warp storms tormenting the Askellon Sector were all part of a single whole, others have looked to his research for further insight. Some take his disturbing discoveries about the connection and behaviour of the Warp storms to unspeakable conclusions. The Childes of Kappellax are one such a group, a heretical cult that holds the Pandaemonium as the very object of its devotion.

Beyond their blasphemous worship, the Childes of Kappellax claim to possess a complete understanding of the Kappellax Correlation, indeed of the Pandaemonium itself. Of course, the idea that anyone, let alone a heretical cult, could possess such comprehension is decried as impossible by both the magi of Cerix Magnus and the houses of the Navis Nobilite. Nonetheless, the Childes have repeatedly demonstrated the ability to predict the currents and squalls of the Pandaemonium with startling accuracy. For this reason, Inquisitors must take seriously the cult's stated intention of nourishing the Pandaemonium and guiding it to cleanse all of Askellon.

The identities of the cult's leadership remain a mystery. The expertise the Childes have shown in the past at predicting Warp storm activity points to the possibility of aether-savants of the Adeptus Mechanicus, or even a fallen Navigator. Some whisper that Kappellax himself, though officially dead for centuries, is the true leader of the cult. For their part, the Childes claim only to obey the will of the Pandaemonium itself.

PREPARATION

Recently, the Gherros System in the Cyclopea Sub-Sector was enveloped by a storm of the Pandaemonium, completely cutting off Astropathic communication and Warp travel. Prior to this, as communication became increasingly difficult, sporadic and distorted Astropathic messages from Gherros Prime indicated the unexpected arrival of several voidships and a hostile landing. The final message said only "the Childes have come."

This incident has reinforced the threat of the Childes of Kappellax, and spurred the warband into action.

OBJECTIVE

The warband must uncover the identities of the cult's leaders and the source of their knowledge of the Pandaemonium, and then halt the cult's actions before they attain their goal, whatever it might be. Alternatively, Inquisitors of a Radical inclination and their Acolytes might seek to infiltrate or subdue the cult in order to learn the secrets of its knowledge.

REQUIREMENTS

Warp navigation charts and copies of Arch-Magos Kappellax's research and treatises are essential to understanding the foundations of the cult and its intentions. In addition, if none of the Acolytes possess Forbidden Lore (The Warp) or Navigate (Warp), they would do well to enlist the aid of someone learned in such matters.

LEAD INVESTIGATOR

The Childes of Kappellax base their beliefs on the arcane research of a Tech-Priest Arch-Magos, so Acolytes with the forge world home world (particularly if they are from Cerix Magnus) or Adeptus Mechanicus background are good choices for lead investigator. Because of the insights they can offer into the nature of the Warp and Warp storms, characters from the Adeptus Astra Telepathica or even experienced voidborn are also appropriate.

PROSECUTION

As an Inquest Extremis, the completion of this investigation requires a lengthy and arduous effort, with the collection of many clues. In unravelling the threads of this mystery, the Acolytes must travel to several worlds. Of course, a Revelation is the ideal time for Acolytes to learn information necessitating a Warp voyage.

Potential clues include: the apocryphal writings of Argo Kappellax, annotated Warp charts, interviews with Navigators or Tech-Priests, the identities of low-ranking cult members, the presence or absence of mutations or other signs of Chaos worship on cultists, and patterns and correlations between the cult's activities over the years, and the waxing and waning of the Pandaemonium.

FIRST REVELATION—200 INVESTIGATION POINTS

No one predicted the Warp storms surrounding the Gherros System, save for the Childes of Kappellax—and a single Navigator of House Osiris who has dedicated his life to the study of Kappellax's work.

SECOND REVELATION—400 INVESTIGATION POINTS

The ships that carried the Childes of Kappellax to the Gherros System originated from the asteroids of Port Aquila, where the cult might have a presence.

THIRD REVELATION—600 INVESTIGATION POINTS

The Childes of Kappellax have a presence scattered amongst the asteroids of Port Aquila, and their reach extends throughout the sector, on voidships as well as on the planets predicted to lie in the path of the Warp storms.

FOURTH REVELATION—900 INVESTIGATION POINTS

The Childes of Kappellax are headquartered on Cerix Magnus, and the Acolytes must travel to the sovereign domain of the Askellian Mechanicum to purge the cult. Travelling to a forge world is no simple matter, however—especially when the world's Tech-Priest magi are suspects.

FIFTH REVELATION—1,200 INVESTIGATION POINTS

The Acolytes learn the true identity of the powers behind the cult, and must destroy these arch-heretics—or make use of their blasphemous knowledge.

REWARDS

As an Inquest Extremis, successful completion earns each Acolyte 7 Influence, plus any additional Influence for exceeding the required Investigation point total. Possible talent awards based on the Acolytes' actions and how they handle sensitive matters include Peer (Navis Nobilite), Peer or Enemy (Cerix Magnus Mechanicum), and Enemy (Pandaemonium Cults).

THE RADICAL PATH

"Who are you to question my methods? The threats I face are beyond your reckoning, and merely attempting to fathom the full consequences of my failure would shatter your sanity—nay, your very soul."

—Inquisitor Harrin

For an Inquisitor, the ends justify nearly any means. Yet, some means might draw censure from fellow Inquisitors and peers of the Imperium, should these methods become known. At one end of the spectrum are those Inquisitors who would burn uncounted innocents at the stake to ensure a single witch does not escape, and would decry any use of xenos or Warp-based items. At the opposite are those who utilise the tools of the enemy, or even call upon the services of the impure, in order to stop a greater threat.

RADICAL APPROACHES

To root out and eradicate a true threat to the Imperium, some Inquisitors and Acolytes enlist the assistance of those who are often labelled heretic. In some cases, this might be an overly-simplistic judgement, at least in the eyes of certain Inquisitors, who can look past a hive mutant's hideous visage and appreciate his loyalty to the Imperium or see the value in a psyker's terrible powers. In others, the individual might truly be deserving of the label, but nonetheless be necessary to the Inquisitor in order to stop a truly dire threat to humanity.

Such radical services can aid in an investigation in many ways. These individuals might possess unique talents and abilities that are not found among the sanctioned and approved servants of the Imperium. Additionally, such individuals might offer invaluable insights into an investigation, allowing the Acolytes to find their quarry or unravel the true heretics' plan. After all, it takes a heretic to think like a heretic, and an Acolyte who attempts to understand such thoughts himself risks falling into an abyss from which there is no return.

RADICAL METHODOLOGIES

Radicals often call on the services of individuals and groups whom the institutions of the Adeptus Ministorum and Adeptus Terra label as heretics and enemies of the Imperium. Utilising such retainers and services can earn an Inquisitor or Acolyte the label of Radical, should peers of a more Puritan mindset learn of it.

These services are obtained using a Requisition test, just like other services. However, whereas obtaining medical treatment, food, and transportation often occurs "off camera," the use of radical services should never be a simple matter of rolling dice. Requisitioning radical services offers a great roleplaying opportunity, and by its nature is an important development in the story, whether for the entire warband or for an individual Acolyte doing so without the knowledge of his fellows. Hiring a radical service often involves more than merely the exchange of local currency or the leveraging of one's reputation, and such services are difficult to locate. The descriptions of some radical services include suggestions on the costs or requirements, and GMs are encouraged to come up with suitable costs, some of which could form the basis for small adventures in their own right.

Table 2-10: Radical Tools

TYPE	AVAILABILITY
Bounty Hunter	Average
Dark Oracle	Very Rare
Death Cult	Rare
Heretek	Rare
Hive Gang	Scarce (hive worlds only)
Malefic Scholar	Rare
Mutant Mercenary	Average
Recidivist	Common
Rogue Psyker	Very Rare

Table 2-10: Radical Tools above lists a selection of services and Availability ratings. As always, the GM should modify the Availability of a service to suit the location, the current situation, and the particular resource called upon. Some malefic scholars are better hidden than others, and recruiting a band of mutant warriors is more easily done in the mining pits of Pellenne than amidst the mechathedrals of Cerix Magnus. If the character has an appropriate Peer talent (see **Radical Peers** on page 76), its bonus applies to the Requisition test. Conversely, the penalty for a relevant Enemy talent applies—an Acolyte with a reputation for burning witches is going to have difficulty hiring a rogue psyker.

In addition, the GM should modify the Requisition test based on the difficulty and scope of the task for which the services are desired. Hiring a bounty hunter to bring in an apostate underhive prophet dead or alive might grant a +10 bonus to the test, while kidnapping an Apex noble from a heavily-guarded manse might apply a penalty of -20 or more. This is true even in the case of informational resources. Not only does a scholar of forbidden lore expect greater compensation for rarer knowledge requiring additional research, but dangers to the mind and spirit are every bit as real as those to the body.

A SELECTION OF RADICAL OFFERINGS

The following entries describe just some of the services those of a radical inclination can find in the Askellon Sector. These entries are very broad, and GMs and players are encouraged to further detail the specific services the Acolytes call upon in play. Each entry describes the most likely way the service might be employed, but GMs and players should not feel constrained by these. Of course, convincing a resource to provide additional services might require a more difficult Requisition test—or good roleplaying.

Hiring a service does not always result in the successful completion of a task, which should depend on a number of factors and the needs of the story. Acolytes must not simply hire others to complete their work for them, but rather acquire some assistance in reaching a goal. Each service listing provides one way to implement it in the game, but the results are ultimately at the GM's discretion.

BOUNTY HUNTER

Not unlike Inquisitors themselves, bounty hunters run a broad range of methods, tactics, and morals. Whereas a Puritan might hire a legally sanctioned bounty hunter such as a Desoleum Bondhound, Inquisitors and Acolytes of a Radical stance are not so constrained in their choices. Unlicensed bounty hunters are, in many ways, no different from the criminals, heretics, and mutants they hunt, and so are able to go to foul places and speak with the worst scum of Askellon.

A bounty hunter can track down and capture or kill a target of the Acolytes' choosing—whether a fugitive or not. To determine whether the bounty hunter succeeds, the degrees of success on the Requisition test must exceed the first digit of the target's threat level or its Influence bonus (whichever is higher).

DARK ORACLE

Dark oracles take a number of forms, from feral world shamans, to seers who speak with Daemons, to ancient cogitators of impossible processing power long forbidden by the Machine Cult. Whatever form it takes, a dark oracle is able to predict or foresee the future to some extent. The information an oracle provides is often vague and open to interpretation, but the GM should use the degrees of success on the Requisition test as a guide to how specific and helpful the answers are. If the Acolytes have multiple questions, they receive one answer per degree of success on the Requisition test. At the GM's discretion, a failed Requisition test might yield misleading or false information.

During an Inquest (see page 62), each degree of success on the Requisition test to consult a dark oracle grants the warband +25 Investigation points.

DEATH CULT

Death cults are found throughout the Askellon Sector and beyond, encompassing an impossible number of groups with widely divergent beliefs and practices. Some are devout servants of the Emperor, finding their purpose as living weapons to strike against the Emperor's foes, offering each victim as a sacrifice in His name. Others operate in secret, adhering to a blasphemous variation of the Imperial Creed or killing in the name of the Blood God. Regardless of their beliefs, death cultists are known as peerless assassins and killers, individuals for whom the act of taking life is the highest religious act. For many death cults, the slaying of a worthy target—a definition of which depends on the particular cult—is payment enough. Some might expect some additional incentive, such as keeping all or part of the victim's body or a few drops of blood from the individual requesting the cult's services.



A death cult can assassinate a target of the Acolytes' choosing. If the roll for the Requisition test results in a double, however, the cult's bloodlust results in numerous additional casualties, either in the physical vicinity of the target or related to it in some other way. At the GM's discretion, 4 or more degrees of failure on the Requisition test may result in other problems, such as the cult selecting the Acolytes as its next sacrifice.

HERETEK

Hereteks are those who violate the edicts of the Cult Mechanicus, delving into ancient data-tombs and engaging in the dangerous act of innovation and experimentation. Many were once Tech-Priests, having been cast out of the Martian Priesthood for their crimes, or voluntarily exiling themselves to conduct their research unhindered. Some hereteks hire their services for hard currency, while others expect rare tech or forbidden data in exchange.

Acolytes likely have some specific reason for seeking out their services, such as identifying an archaeotech relic or installing a prohibited cybernetic. Alternatively, hereteks can increase the craftsmanship of one weapon, cybernetic, or other item by one level. This does not represent higher craftsmanship in the traditional sense, but rather some esoteric and damning modification that increases performance, although perhaps with unexpected consequences.

The GM should work with the PCs to come up with additional or alternative effects, such as adding a special weapon quality that might reveal drawbacks at a later time.

HIVE GANG

Most hives spawn countless gangs with drastically different appearances, fighting styles, and motivations. Regardless of their origins, membership, and style, all hive gangs offer at least one service—violence. Most hive gangs see the value in coin, but some only offer their services if the Acolytes suitably impress them or provide some additional motivation, such as the territory they stand to gain from a rival, or the reputation the gang could earn from the planned exploit.

A hive gang can perform some appropriate act of violence, such as attacking a rival gang, raiding an Enforcer precinct to free a prisoner, instigating a riot, or providing additional combatants to fight alongside the PCs. Alternatively, a gang might provide safe passage through its territory or a lawless area. Hive gangs include plentiful members and weapons, and pose a dangerous force when mobilised. The hive gang's success is determined by the Acolytes' Requisition test, which the GM should modify based on the difficulty of the task, including the strength of any groups opposing the gang. Attacking the stronghold of a rival gang of similar strength might impose a -10 to the test, while attacking even a minor Adeptus Arbites fortress-precinct would require a Hellish (-60) test.

MALEFIC SCHOLAR

From Warp-maddened hermits to nobles with the luxury to engage in such pursuits, malefic scholars are sages, academics, and other experts learned in the forbidden. Some malefic scholars might specialise in a certain topic, while others are almost impossibly well-versed in a variety of subjects, each sufficient to ensure damnation. Acolytes might call on a malefic scholar to identify a profane artefact, explain the origins and beliefs of a heretical cult, or provide the true history of a quarantined and forgotten world.

A malefic scholar can provide information or research on an appropriate topic. If necessary, treat the scholar as possessing 4 ranks in the relevant Forbidden Lore skill. The malefic scholar has access to resources such as dismal texts and proscribed tomes, which he might allow the Acolytes to utilise to gain a +30 bonus for a single related Forbidden Lore test.

MUTANT MERCENARY

Although sellblades and hired lasguns are plentiful in Askellon, mutant mercenaries offer certain advantages over more legitimate options. On most worlds, being a mutant is a sentence to a miserable life of oppressed servitude at best, and an agonising death at worst. Consequently, mutant soldiers have little or nothing to lose, and are willing to undertake suicide missions that even the most hardened penal legionnaires would fear. Additionally, the mutations that afflict these warriors often provide benefits in combat, from unnatural resilience and strength, to regenerating flesh, to the ability to blind their enemies with toxic breath.

A mutant mercenary can fight alongside the Acolytes, or attack a foe on their behalf. Some mutant mercenaries fight together as units, or as entire organisations on some worlds, providing additional firepower and fighting ability. The GM should apply an appropriate modifier to the Requisition test if the Acolytes wish to hire a group of mercenaries, such as -10 for a squad of ten or so, or -40 for a company of a hundred mutant warriors.

RECIDIVIST

Acolytes who do not feel constrained by the Lex Imperialis or the laws of a particular world might have reason to employ all manner of criminals and ne'er-do-wells, collectively known as recidivists. This resource includes a wide variety of individuals, including narco-dealers, thugs, oilers, hired killers, skulkers, and Insurrati crime lords. The services provided by such individuals range from providing illicit substances to information, assassination, or all the resources of an organised crime network. Individual recidivists often require only hard payment for their services, while those who represent larger organisations are more likely to also expect a favour in the future.

Recidivists offer a wide array of services. They can provide an illegal item, arrange for a person to disappear, and monitor the movements of an individual. Recidivists can often gather information not only on the activities of rival criminals, but on true heretics, and so make for excellent informants. For examples of recidivists and their capabilities, the GM should reference pages 386–388 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook.

ROGUE PSYKER

In the eyes of many Witch Hunters, rogue psykers represent the greatest threat to Mankind. Yet, other Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus and their Acolytes employ them in the pursuit of their duties. This seeming contradiction often comes down to individual cases. Although many rogue psykers oppose the Imperium, lack control over their abilities, or even court the attentions of Daemons, others have the resolve and faith necessary to serve as Acolytes or even Inquisitors. Somewhere in-between are those rogue psykers who exist on the fringes. They might assist an Inquisitor or his Acolytes out of fear, duty, or the hope of forgiveness for their sins, or simply to make the coin they need to survive.

A rogue psyker can manifest a psychic power at the Acolytes' behest. The GM determines what powers are available to a particular psyker, using the degrees of success on the Requisition test as a guide to the usefulness of the psyker's powers to the Acolytes' purposes. For the other abilities of the psyker, consult Table 2–11: Rogue Psyker Abilities.

Table 2–11: Rogue Psyker Abilities

REQUISITION TEST DO5	ABILITIES
1–2	Psy Rating 2, WP 35, Per 35, Psyniscience Rank 1 (Known)
3–4	Psy Rating 3, WP 45, Per 45, Psyniscience Rank 2 (Trained)
5+	Psy Rating 4, WP 55, Per 55, Psyniscience Rank 3 (Experienced)

THY MASTER'S BIDDING

The factional leanings of a warband's Inquisitor can greatly influence the Acolytes' use of these services. Acolytes who know their master to be a staunch Puritan might shun any tools of the Radical, or they might seek to hide such actions from their Inquisitor. In other cases, Acolytes might find their master prompting them to utilise such tools and resources, or even arranging for them in advance, giving the Acolytes no choice in the matter. Such cases provide great opportunities for roleplaying, as Acolytes of a Puritan disposition must struggle to reconcile their beliefs, their duty, and their loyalty to their Inquisitor. Often, Acolytes are unaware of their master's leanings, in which case they might dwell on the side of caution, assuming him to be a Puritan.

GMs are encouraged to, at the least, provide some hints as to the Inquisitor's stance. Not only does this give the Acolytes some guidance when debating the use of radical actions, but it gives players a better idea of the Inquisitor, bringing this important NPC to life and reinforcing his impact on the game. Of course, some Inquisitors might intentionally hide their true leanings from their Acolytes or even mislead them as to their beliefs, until the time is right.



RADICAL PEERS

Inquisitors and Acolytes who resort to Radical methods often cultivate contacts and allies amongst the very groups they target. Although those of a Puritan stance might condemn this as heresy, pragmatic Inquisitors and their servants recognise that courting and even supporting such lesser evils is necessary to find and stop the true threats to Mankind, for such groups can provide invaluable information, access, and services.

In addition to the groups listed on page 126 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook, with the Game Master's permission, players may select the following groups when purchasing the Peer talent. Of course, GMs might also award the Enemy talent for these groups, particularly for Player Characters of staunch and openly Puritan beliefs.

- **Apostates:** Adherents of forbidden variants of the Imperial Creed, outcasts from and enemies of the Adeptus Ministorum.
- **Bounty Hunters:** Those who live on the line between law and crime, hunting both criminals and the innocent so long as the pay is right.
- **Hereteks:** Fallen Tech-Priests and other experts in forbidden technologies, from xenos-graft weaponry to the heresy of the animus silica.
- **Hive Gangs:** The violent and numerous gangs that control the abandoned and lawless underhive.
- **Mutants:** Individuals cursed with mutation, outcasts from Imperial society and often the targets of extermination.
- **Rogue Psykers:** Those psykers who have escaped the Black Ships of the Adeptus Astra Telepathica, honing their powers independently or under the tutelage of others of their kind—or darker entities.
- **Smugglers:** Voidfaring outlaws who move illegal, forbidden, and heretical goods, and sometimes individuals, between the worlds of the Askellon Sector.



BROAD AND SPECIFIC PEERS

Many of the powers of Askellon eligible for the Peer and Enemy talents listed here and on page 126 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook are quite broad, almost simplistically so. Gaining the trust of a mutant enclave on Pellenne would not necessarily help one calm a hostile mutant raider in the wastelands of Desoleum. Even the branches of the great Adeptus Terra represent impossibly vast organisations, with countless bureaus, departamentos, and subdivisions, and communication across worlds is slow and often non-existent. To some extent, Peer talents represent not the character's reputation amongst a group, but his knowledge of how to approach and deal with such a group. Conversely, Enemy talents can represent a profound inability to speak with the members of particular groups, or even unintentionally broadcasting one's dislike through mannerisms and dress.

The broad groups listed represent only some of the possibilities for Peers. When selecting or awarding Peer and Enemy talents, GMs and players are encouraged to not only create new groups when none of the existing ones are appropriate, but also to use more specific groups. This better represents an Acolyte's true web of contacts and allies, and reinforces his history. For instance, rather than taking Peer (Heretical Cults) to represent an Acolyte infiltrating the Order of the Verdant Mind, he could purchase Peer (Order of the Verdant Mind). Although selecting a more specific group might seem limited and therefore a less appealing option, it can actually be the opposite. By virtue of taking the Peer (or gaining the Enemy) talent, the specific group is more likely to play a part in future adventures, either because the Acolyte specifically seeks out the group (or vice versa) or because the player and GM are reminded of the connection whenever they look at the Acolyte's character sheet.

When an Acolyte possesses both a broad and specific Peer talent that apply to a situation, such as Peer (Inquisition) and Peer (Ordo Hereticus), the character should gain the bonuses from both talents, exactly as if he had multiple ranks in an applicable Peer talent. At the GM's discretion, this might also apply when dealing with an NPC or group for which multiple talents could conceivably apply, such as a Heretic Cult made up of Mutants or Rogue Psykers.

To provide further incentive for players to select specific Peer talents, the GM can institute the following optional rule: when dealing with a specific, named Peer group within a larger group, an Acolyte gains additional degrees of success equal to his ranks in the specific Peer talent. For instance, Peer (Heretical Cults) would not provide this bonus, but Peer (Callers of Sorrow) would.



CULTS

In one of the more extreme examples of radical peers, Acolytes or Inquisitors might actually foster the growth of cults the Adeptus Ministorum would deem heretical. An Inquisitor or Acolytes might become involved with a cult in many ways, and for many reasons. Some might join an existing cult (likely under assumed identities) in order to work their way into a leadership position, or subtly manipulate it from within. One Inquisitor might lay the foundation for a cult, recruiting initial members before disappearing for years and allowing the cult to grow or wither on its own, while another might carefully foster its growth, either through direct involvement or from the shadows.

In any case, a cult provides many uses for an Inquisitor or Acolyte, although the specifics often depend greatly on the nature of the cult in question. A death cult can provide a ready source of deadly assassins and bodyguards. One dedicated to the Dark Gods might draw other Chaos cults out of hiding, either intending to form an alliance or to destroy their competition, allowing the Inquisitor to strike at this previously hidden enemy. A secret society dedicated to forbidden knowledge might discover information useful to the Inquisitor. Cults of many kinds can provide a source of fanatical, disposable, and deniable warriors to fight as proxies in the Inquisitor's secret war.

USING CULTS

An Inquisitor or Acolyte's involvement in a cult can be represented with the Peer talent. In the case of a character who leads or secretly controls a cult, multiple ranks in Peer are appropriate. This gives the character a strong advantage when directing the cult's actions, without providing complete control. After all, such cults are dangerous and often unpredictable, and even the individual responsible for creating one might find it growing beyond his control or turning on him.

When a character attempts to direct a cult's activities, the GM should call for a test, or possibly an Extended test or series of tests, depending on the nature of the action. In the case of an Inquisitor or Acolyte who openly serves within or leads a cult, an Interaction skill is appropriate, such as Command, Charm, or Deceive, depending on the character's position within the cult. For a character attempting to secretly steer a cult from behind the scenes, an Influence test might be more appropriate. In either case, the GM should modify the test accounting for the characters' relevant Peer or other talents, his history with the cult, and how congruent the activity is with the cult's beliefs. If a character fails a test to direct a cult by 4 or more degrees of failure, the GM should consider using a Subtlety test to determine whether the cult learns the character's true identity and motivations. What might happen after that could be the start of a new adventure, quite likely of a different nature than the Acolytes anticipated.



CHAPTER III: ROOTS OF HERESY

Askellon is an ancient sector, one of the many swept up in the initial fervour of the Great Crusade. Few realise, or even suspect, for how many centuries humans and other races lived under its burning stars before the arrival of the Imperium. More worrisome, though, are the dark secrets from those times that still remain undiscovered under mountains of decaying scrolls, or carefully locked deep within warded vaults. Even the coming of the Emperor's Word and the subsequent birth of Askellon as an Imperial Sector did little to diminish this miasma of furtive behaviours and heretical beliefs that permeates its worlds. Many adepts of the forbidden lores darkly whisper that Askellon itself appears tainted, perhaps forever stained by the terrible actions of its denizens from ages past. Many of the sector's inhabitants can only look at the Pandaemonium's growing rage to see the possible truth of this accusation.

Askellon now groans with the impossible weight of a billion billion souls and their sins. Across the sector, there is no counting the number of clandestine sects, hidden groups, and other factions that ferment in darkness against the Emperor's Light. Other cults exist openly, and disguise their true aims behind cloaks of beatific respectability or powerful institutions, often shrouding even their most faithful followers from the horrid truths. The Basilica of Valerius Risen echoes with prayers to the Emperor for protection, but it is the Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus and their Acolytes who must face such menaces with wrathful flame.

In this chapter, players learn more about the worlds of Askellon along with the many heresies and other threats they contain. Gigantic Pellenne of the Grand Processional holds hideous mutant enclaves deep within its endless mining pits. The agri-world of Kalto is the breadbasket of the sector, yet hides bloodthirsty cults underneath its seemingly placid surface. Port Aquila comprises millions of asteroids, and though it is known as a major trading power, there are many illicit smugglers and unholy sects secreted throughout the mostly uncharted rocks. On Temperance's harsh frontier lands, fervent groups seek to purge all deviance from the Emperor, but may themselves be corrupted from within. Not even a dedicated forge world such as Selvanus Binary is free of heresy and the taint of corruption. In these locations and more, Game Masters can find areas for new cults, debased mutants, rogue psykers, and more to develop Hereticus-themed adventures.

GMs also gain tools to generate new heretical cults and vile plots, both to strengthen existing adventures and spark ideas for new ones, or even become the basis for entire campaigns. Acolytes need clues and leads to uncover these foul cultists and other threats, so GM guidance for creating and using such signs of heresies is also included in this chapter. Lastly, Subtlety and how it relates to Ordo Hereticus adventures is covered, allowing GMs to better respond to how their warbands conduct investigations into the many heresies of Askellon.

A SECTOR OF HERESIES

"There can be no mercy while even a single heretic might live."

—Acolyte Jorren Revarl, igniting the first of the Thousand Pyres

Hereticus-themed adventures offer a wide range of threats for GMs to explore. While aliens and Daemons are clearly perils to Mankind's survival, the dangers from within can arise anywhere and at any time. These enemies can lurk in any dark corner of the Imperium, growing their power one convert at a time. In many ways, these threats are worse than the inhuman alien or otherworldly Daemon, for any human that the Acolytes encounter is a possible cultist, witch, or even mutant. They can fester openly in lawless underhives or void stations, or shroud themselves with respectable robes; many an Acolyte has learned to his horror that the foulest of heretics can hide behind even the most loyal of guises. As these enemies exist within human society, the dedicated Acolyte must be aware of how humans live. Knowledge is indeed power when investigating heretics, as new locations can also contain unfamiliar customs, mannerisms, sayings, or even variants of the Imperial Creed that could otherwise be taken for foul rites, or worse conceal actual heretical practices.

For those who follow a Puritan Inquisitor, the only proper fate for the unholy witch, foul cultist, or twisted mutant is that of wrathful flame. There can be no negotiation or discussion with those who threaten Mankind from within, for even the smallest divergence could begin the slow fall away from his stern, correct path. Such an Inquisitor might not allow even a sanctioned psyker as his servant, or anyone showing the taint of the Warp; his Acolytes might be forced to hide even the slightest of mutations or other marks, lest they face the same fires as his enemies.

Those Acolytes acting under the direction of a Radical Inquisitor, whether they know of his leanings or not, could face other dangers. Such an Inquisitor is already willing to use what others would deem unholy powers or foul sects against his enemies. It would be a simple decision to task his servants to embrace dark beliefs or undertake terrible actions to aid in his unending battle. A warband including rogue psykers, deformed mutants, or deviant worshippers might still fight just as devotedly and passionately for Mankind, but could also face immolating fires if discovered, no matter the group's master and cause. Such Acolytes could even find themselves cursed as heretics simply from using artefacts labelled as profane or employing forbidden texts. There might be no worse fate than to be burned as Abomination while true heretics gleefully watch the flames, except to know their twisted paths have indeed led their souls into damnation despite the purity of their intentions.

There are few contained endings in **DARK HERESY** adventures, however. For every threat resolved, many others are uncovered that are possibly even more worrisome. So it is in the unending Shadow War, and particularly true for those involving the Enemy Within. While it might be possible to eradicate invading aliens or banish Daemons back to the Warp, there are few perfect resolutions when dealing with the threats from within. There are always new temptations and degradations to corrupt men and woman. New heresies can emerge from the burning ashes of an exterminated cult, their prevention impossible so long as human weakness exists. This allows GMs endless ways to use the Askellon Sector—for wherever the Acolytes go, heresy is surely to be found.

THE WORLDS OF ASKELLON

Each of the locations in this chapter includes new rules for using it as a home world as part of character creation, as well as a location-unique investigation template for the Game Master. This allows it to be used as both a setting for adventures as well as an integral part of an Acolyte's history.

HOME WORLD RULES

The new home world rules included as part of each location are designed to replace the Home World Bonus used in creating a new Acolyte. This allows a player to pick a specific home world within the Askellon Sector rather than the archetypal setting, such as using Selvanus Binary instead of the standard forge world rules from page 34 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook. This can be particularly useful when the warband is adventuring on that planet, and either a new player joins the group or a player's existing character does not survive and he requires a replacement.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATES

An investigation template is a short adventure outline that features the inhabitants and themes for each of the worlds in this chapter. A Game Master can insert a template into an ongoing campaign to offer a variation on the current investigative focus, or provide an alternate type of adventure as a change of pace for the warband. Each template could also be expanded into a full adventure on its own, or launch a new campaign to more fully immerse the Acolytes into the heresies each world contains.



HRAX

"Honourable spirit, silenced by combat and broken by my hand, may you ascend to the great battlefields of the heavens, and there take many trophies among the Battle Lord's enemies. You have fought well, brother."

—Overheard from a member of the Hrax Bloodknives in the aftermath of battle

Hrax is a desert world which emerged from a receding Pandaemonium front a millennium ago, and whose feudal inhabitants dwell among the mazes of interconnected canyons and cave networks inscribed into its arid surface. These great chasms were carved from streams flowing towards the warm equatorial oceans, and the native flora and fauna are almost completely dependent on these waters for survival. Occasionally, these rivers form pools or small lakes that quickly become verdant oases of life; great herds of sparmadons, families of garnun, and packs of deadly vornae gather about their banks. This sprawling labyrinth of winding ravines, overhanging stone arches, and endless interconnected caverns are as difficult to navigate as the densest of hives, and most Hraxian wildlife relies on some form of echolocation to aid in navigation.

This desolate, windswept rock is covered with massive fortress cities, whose occupants live in complex feudal societies under the command of mighty High Marshals. These warlords rule the great fiefdoms called Bastias, which encompass both their colossal fortresses and any surrounding territory. Bastias also house great warrior hosts originally sworn to defend from Ork attacks, but now more frequently from assaults by rival Bastias.

In exchange for service within his armies and a tithe of any looted equipment, a High Marshal accords these warriors various hereditary rights based on the particular feudal clan to which they belong, as well as individual rewards for accomplishments in battle. As in all things, from dress to bestowed honours, the people of Hrax follow the dictates of the ancient ways—especially the legends surrounding the warriors who fell from the sky.

Bastias are constructed with materials salvaged from the rusted debris of massive Astra Militarum troopships that litter the desert landscape. The most powerful Bastias are formed from the shattered wrecks themselves, whose venerable hulls serve as the basis for fortresses of torn bulkheads and cavernous holds.

Other canyons and ravines have basins littered with the scars of battle and the decaying ruins of ancient Imperial war machines and tanks. Yet who or what the forces of the Imperium faced remains unclear, as no record of such a campaign exists within the sector's voluminous military annals. Some believe it to have been Orks, as greenskin remains pollute the world, while others instead point to the horrific damage inflicted on the numerous burnt out hulls as signs of an enemy of even more extreme potency.

BRED FOR WAR

The warriors of Hrax are a proud and noble people who value courage and honour above all else. Only through combat and glory in battle can individuals advance within Hraxian society, which means the clansmen must fight continuously to maintain their Bastial rights in a never-ending cycle of death and bloodshed.

HOME WORLD: HRAX

Players can adopt Hrax as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Hrax follow the feudal world rules (see page 26), but with the following new Home World Bonus instead of the usual one:

HOME WORLD BONUS

A Keen Blade: The first time a character from Hrax inflicts damage on a target with a bladed melee weapon each encounter, he gains a +10 bonus to Weapon Skill tests to attack that target with that weapon until the end of the encounter.

In addition to power and glory, the inhabitants of Hrax also fight to honour the great warrior king of heaven referred to in clan lore as the Battle Lord. It is said that long ago, the celestial god-king sent his host down from the sky on columns of flame to deliver the people of Hrax from their enemies in a purifying baptism of blood. These legends also foretold that the Battle Lord's armies would one day return to Hrax to convey the worthy to fresh conquests across the heavens.

From the time they are first able to wield a knife, the children of Hrax are instructed in the ways of war, in preparation for this glorious return. The training is brutal in the extreme, with only the most senior clan warriors allowed to instruct the new recruits. Many clans also have reputations for viciousness, cunning, or some other skill or trait on the battlefield, and these too must be ingrained in the new recruits, for without them the clan would lose honour, rights, and prestige among the others.

The feudal clansmen of Hrax wield a variety of weapons in combat, and these weapons vary in condition and function, from jealously-guarded relics to blades that have been repaired countless times over the years. These warriors believe that every weapon has a spirit within that yearns for battle, and that this spirit must be maintained if a weapon is to aid them in combat. For this reason, older, proven weapons are highly valuable to these warriors, both as relics of the Battle Lord's armies and objects of personal value to the fighter and his clan. Many go to great lengths to retrieve weapons that have been damaged in battle, though those which are beyond repair are ceremonially salvaged in order that the spirit within may live on.

The lords of Askellon quickly realised the potential for such skilled fighters, and soon the agents of the Missionarus Galaxia began the diligent and subtle process of indoctrinating the clansmen of Hrax into the Imperial Creed. In a few years, the High Marshals were shown the proper rites of devotion, and those who survived publicly swore new blood oaths to their Battle Lord, who now bore the more worthy title of Emperor. Shortly thereafter, the massive transport ships of the Departamento Munitorum arrived, and before long the first regiments of the Hrax Bloodknives left their world behind to claim glory and honour amidst the innumerable terrors of the Imperium's countless battlefields.

BY BLOOD UNDONE

As Askellon continues to slip further into isolation and anarchy, the warriors of Hrax have had less and less contact with the heralds of the Astra Militarum. Many delegations even routinely insult the proud warriors of Hrax by herding recruits aboard drop ships like cattle, without regard for their rank or ceremonial blood sports and rites of tribute. As a result, relations have deteriorated dramatically in the past century, with many now openly questioning these offworlders' authority and resisting their attempts at impressment with terrible acts of merciless violence.

Several High Marshals have even forsaken their sacred oaths and publicly ordered their warriors to mar their loyalty scars with deep, vicious incisions. To these clansmen, the continued grovelling of the loyalist clans at the feet of their Imperial masters is unbecoming of true warriors, and only by killing the false god's servants can they regain the blessings of the true Battle Lord.

Whispers of the old ways, of terrible rituals and offerings of blood in exchange for unholy power have also begun to re-emerge among many clans, and though the Imperium is quick to quash such activities, many believe these tales hold the key to overthrowing their offworld oppressors. Meanwhile, those clans who persevere in their faith continue to view such sorcerous activities with palpable scorn, and attempts to erase such dishonours by both sides have ended in numerous acts of bloodshed and death.

In addition to the growing unrest that threatens to plunge the planet into open revolt, the number of nascent psykers on Hrax has also risen drastically. Imperial installations have trumpeted numerous decrees forbidding the harbouring of such individuals, but there is little evidence that the natives heed this instruction.

Those fiefdoms still loyal to the Imperium have by and large upheld these declarations, and most youths who display any psychic talents are quickly discovered and presented to the Emperor's servants. Among those who honour the old ways, however, this decree has fallen on deaf ears, as gifted individuals are spirited away into the wilderness only to reappear among the heretic raiders as terrible abominations of Warp-spawned corruption. Many among the clans interpret the return of these blasphemous warriors as a sign of the end times and the impending battle between the Emperor's warriors and those of the gods of the underworld that seek to devour the souls of the slain.



FURIMANCER

Furimancers are relics of the old ways, and their resurgence among the feudal clans is worrisome to many. These sorcerers are devotees of the Hraxian god Charganal, the ruler of the underworld and bringer of the end times in ancient lore. It is said that Charganal draws his strength from the wanton experience of uninhibited combat, and only those who commit themselves to battle without honour or restraint receive his profane blessings.

A Furimancer usually first manifests in the fury of battle. The sensations of combat stimulate his mind, enabling him to tap into his unfettered abilities. These berserkers are founts of unholy destruction, and most quickly perish as the internalised raw Warp energy immolates their forms. Those who do not die, however, learn to channel their blasphemous gifts with devastating effectiveness on the battlefield, where their arrival is greeted with cries of renewed vigour and fury among their heretical brethren.

FURIMANCER (MASTER)					19
H 4 01-10	AL 4 21-30	WS 48	BS 36	S 43	
AR 4 11-20	B 6 31-70	T 44	AG 42	INT 41	
LR 6 71-85	LL 6 86-00	PER 49	WP 57	FEL 44	
			IFL 36		
HALF 4	FULL 8	CHARGE 12	RUN 24	THREAT 30	
PROFANED GREAT AXE					CLASS MELEE
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 2D10+7 ^{SB+PR} (R)			
PEN 5 ^{2+PR}	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 7 KG	AVL NU	
SPECIAL: FORCE, UNBALANCED					

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Command (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (Psyker, Warp) (Int), Intimidate (S) +20, Linguistics (Clan Dialect) (Int) +10, Psyniscience (Per) +20, Survival (Per) +10

Talents: Jaded, Swift Attack

Traits: Psyker (PR 3), Touched by the Fates (2)

Psychic Powers: Smite, Foreboding, Prescience, Assail

Gear: Ceremonial dagger, Warp sigil-inscribed bone armour

Chosen of Charganal: As a Half Action, a Furimancer can suffer 1d5 Energy damage (ignoring Armour and Toughness bonus) to count his psy rating as double for the next Focus Power test he makes before the end of his next turn. After performing this Half Action, he must immediately roll on Table 6-2: Psychic Phenomena (see page 196 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook), adding +10 to the result.

WARRIORS OF THE TRUE FAITH

After centuries of fighting and squabbling amongst themselves, many feudal clans that remain loyal to the Emperor have now joined beneath the might of Warlord Talvrak, High Marshal of The Bastia of the Golden Light and recently-appointed planetary governor of Hrax. The Bastia of the Golden Light is one of the oldest and most revered of the mighty fortress-cities, its name stemming from its many gilded archways and hull panels, as well as the massive Imperial altar that crowns its most prominent battlement. Supposedly, when the sun first falls upon the altar, the light is refracted down the ruined Adeptus Ministorum frigate's many corridors and murals until the surrounding canyon is bathed in radiance. It is rumoured that the warriors of the Bastia cannot be defeated when this light is upon them, and numerous clans have journeyed to its mighty, adamantine gates to beg admittance into the warlord's fiefdom.

However, despite frequent exterminations, the rebellious clans continue to remain a thorn in his side, a fact which is not helped by the aggressive culling of Talvrak's finest warriors for service in the Imperium's armies. The Adeptus Administratum functionaries and Askellian representatives on Hrax also see little need to interfere in the planet's affairs thus far, choosing instead to allow the conflict to continue as they pursue their own selfish gains.

Yet still Talvrak persists in his efforts, even as his allies battle both each other and the heretic raiders for the right to ascend to the Battle Lord's realm. Now, however, his body is growing steadily weaker with age, and his Marshals have begun to squabble and scheme for the honour of command. Meanwhile, the elderly warlord has begun to long once again to bathe in the blood of his enemies and feel his great axe bite into flesh and cleave bone. With every passing year, the call becomes harder and harder to resist, and it is rumoured that he has begun to look to ancient rituals for a way to break the stalemate while ending his own feverish cravings.

AURELIAN JANISSARY

Aurelian Janissaries are among the most zealous of Warlord Talvrak's sworn clansmen, and their courage and skill have won him countless battles in the conflicts that rage throughout the canyons surrounding his venerable stronghold. In return for the right to dwell and worship at the feet of the golden shrine that overlooks the Bastia's highest battlement, the Janissaries forsake all rights of salvage, and pledge their lives and swords to the warlord's service. The Janissaries believe that a being known as the Sky King watches over them in battle, and often adorn their salvaged armour and personal banners with gilded eagle wings as well as other symbols of the Imperial cult. In combat they are nigh unstoppable, as they unleash volley after volley of fire into their enemy's ranks before charging into battle atop their vicious vornae mounts, fearing nothing save death with an unblooded blade.

Vornae are highly intelligent and ferocious predators with powerful legs. They prefer to hunt in packs, using high-pitched whoops to coordinate their efforts as they ambush prey from above. Meanwhile, the course fur that coats their thick, rubbery hides helps regulate their body temperature while camouflaging their movements among the tall hedge thistles and prickly scrub bushes. Only the most skilled riders are able to tame these venomous beasts, and those who manage to do so gain an unparalleled degree of lethal mobility on the battlefield.

AURELIAN JANISSARY (ELITE)										15
H ⁵ 01-10		9		WS		BS		S		
AR ⁵ 11-20		9		AL ⁵ 21-30		41		37		42
B ⁵ 31-70		9		T		AG		INT		
LR ⁵ 71-85		9		LL ⁵ 86-00		40		41		27
				PER		WP		FEL		
				38		38		33		
				IFL		—				
HALF 4		FULL 8		CHARGE 12		RUN 24		THREAT 6		
CROSSBOW										CLASS BASIC
RNG 30M		RoF S/-/-		DMG 1D10 (I)						
PEN 0		CLIP 1		RLD 2 FULL		WT 3 KG		AVL CM		
SPECIAL: PRIMITIVE (7)										
AURELIAN REDBLADE										CLASS MELEE
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1D10+4 ^{SB} (I)						
PEN 1		CLIP —		RLD —		WT 4 KG		AVL AV		
SPECIAL: BALANCED										

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Command (Fel), Linguistics (Clan Dialect) (Int) +10, Parry (WS) +10, Survival (Per)

Talents: Die Hard, Resistance (Fear)

Gear: Banner of rank, Sky King armour over clan leggings, vornae mount, coin pendant, 3 thermal bolts, 18 crossbow bolts

Blessed Armour: After an Aurelian Janissary suffers damage for the first time each encounter, he counts his Armour value on all locations as 2 higher until the start of his next turn.

VORNAE MOUNT (TROOP)										15
H ² 01-10		6		WS		BS		S		
AR ² 11-20		6		AL ² 21-30		35		—		34
B ² 31-70		6		T		AG ⁵		INT		
LR ⁻ 71-85		4		LL ⁻ 86-00		43		42		28
				PER		WP		FEL		
				42		31		02		
				IFL		—				
HALF 14		FULL 28		CHARGE 42		RUN 84		THREAT 7		
VENOMOUS FANGS										CLASS MELEE
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1D10+3 ^{SB} (I)						
PEN 2		CLIP —		RLD —		WT —		AVL —		
SPECIAL: TOXIC (2)										
CLAWS										CLASS MELEE
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1D10+4 ^{I+SB} (R)						
PEN 0		CLIP —		RLD —		WT —		AVL —		
SPECIAL: —										

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag)

Talents: Step Aside, Takedown

Traits: Deadly Natural Weapons, Quadruped, Size (5), Sonar Sense, Unnatural Agility (1)

TOOTH TAKER

Tooth Takers are skilled hunters and warriors whose feats of bravery in combat bring honour to the Lords and clans who sponsor them. Supposedly this title is a relic of ancient times, when mighty warriors who defeated a bestial Ork in single combat preserved the teeth of their foe in the waxy resin of the ferdo shrub and displayed them as warnings of their deadly abilities.

Now this tradition lives on in the exploits of these ruthless killers, though a trophy is only taken if the opponent is bested in single combat. As is also traditional, such trophies must accompany self-inflicted scars or brands to remind the warrior of the battle, assuming the teeth's original owner did not already provide one. As their trophies increase, so too do their honours and accolades.

These warriors are also valuable to the Imperial Guard. Though held in high esteem among their comrades, Tooth Takers are also regarded as reckless and dangerous individuals. Many of their fellow guardsmen often react poorly when they see human bicuspid among their collections of mementos and tusks.

TOOTH TAKER (ELITE)					16
H 4 01-10	WS 45	BS 39	S 42		
AR 4 11-20	T 44	AG 48	INT 35		
AL 4 21-30	PER 41	WP 35	FEL 26		
B 7 31-70					IFL —
LR 4 71-85					
LL 4 86-00					
HALF 4	FULL 8	CHARGE 12	RUN 24	THREAT 7	
MUSKET			CLASS BASIC		
RNG 30M	RoF S/-/-	DMG 1d10+3 (I)			
PEN 0	CLIP 1	RLD 2 FULL	WT 7 KG	AVL CM	
SPECIAL: INACCURATE, PRIMITIVE (8), UNRELIABLE					
HEAVY HUNTING DAGGER			CLASS MELEE		
RNG 5M	RoF —	DMG 1d5+5 ^{1+SB} (R)			
PEN 1	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 2 KG	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: BALANCED, THROWN					

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S), Linguistics (Clan Dialect) (Int) +10, Navigate (Surface) (Int) +10, Parry (WS), Stealth (Ag), Survival (Per) +20
Talents: Combat Master, Devastating Assault, Hard Target, Iron Jaw, Quick Draw, Resistance (Fear)

Gear: Clan leggings, heirloom flak vest, hunting trophies, water skin, 12 musket charges, 6 trophy daggers

Vicious Strike: When a Tooth-Taker makes a melee attack, increase the damage he inflicts and the penetration of his weapon by 1 for each degree of success he scores on the Weapon Skill test when resolving any hits from that attack.

CULT OF THE GREAT EYE

A clear night sky on Hrax is a wondrous beauty, yet the angry stain of Pandaemonium often tarnishes this splendour as it glares down from the heavens like a great unclean eye. Hraxian lore says that this is the gateway to Skreiga, the realm of the dead, and it is here that the Battle Lord's armies fight to keep Charganal and the other foul denizens there from re-emerging into the mortal world.

Now, as discontent with the Imperium continues to spread, there are many among the fallen who seek to revive the old ways of worship in order to free the armies of Skreiga and cast off the yoke of servitude. These so-called Skreiga Clans dedicate themselves to the worship of dread Charganal and the other malevolent beings whose veneration was once prevalent among the feral clans.

Though there are many underworld denizens which a clan may choose as its patron, one of the most powerful is Skarthrall, the keeper of souls. This god is believed to dwell in a hut on the banks of the River of Fate, appearing to his followers as a frail, wizened man draped in a tattered cloak of mouldering furs and shimmering, blue feathers. His small, unassuming hut is filled with the most terrible and wonderful secrets man has ever and could ever have know, and it is here that he weaves the dreams of the mortal realm with silvery threads of influence and seeming chance. It is said that those who harvest souls for Skarthrall may even bargain for a single thread of his forbidden knowledge of their very own, though the cost for such a request is often more than a sane man can bear.

SKREIGA CLAN CULTIST (TROOP)					9
H 4 01-10	WS 39	BS 35	S 41		
AR 6 11-20	T 42	AG 38	INT 25		
AL 6 21-30	PER 39	WP 31	FEL 28		
B 6 31-70					IFL —
LR 4 71-85					
LL 4 86-00					
HALF 3	FULL 6	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 6	
ARQUEBUS			CLASS BASIC		
RNG 45M	RoF S/-/-	DMG 2d10 (I)			
PEN 2	CLIP 1	RLD 2 FULL	WT 8 KG	AVL CM	
SPECIAL: CONCUSSIVE (I), INACCURATE, UNRELIABLE					

Skills: Athletics (S), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S), Linguistics (Clan Dialect) (Int) +10, Navigate (Surface) (Int), Survival (Per)
Talents: Frenzy, Jaded

Gear: Powder and shot bags, heretical charms, salvaged light flak armour, clan leggings

Sadistic Surge: Whenever a Skreiga Clansman inflicts damage with an attack, he gains a +10 bonus to his next attack test.

Looters of the Dead: Some Clansmen arm themselves with looted weaponry from their hated Imperial foes. They have no knowledge of how to reload, though; once it runs out of ammunition or is jammed, it becomes useless except as an improvised weapon.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: THE GATHERING STORM

Overview: The Acolytes must travel to Hrax to investigate the cause of a sudden manifestation of corruption among soldiers within a regiment of the Hrax Bloodknives. This template initially focuses on investigation and diplomacy before eventually culminating in a climactic and terrible battle. Ideally, it can take place after any confrontation that includes an Imperial Guard unit, though any extended contact with members of the Astra Militarum could also provide a segue to this adventure.

ACT I: UNSEEN PERIL

The Acolytes arrive on Hrax after either witnessing or hearing rumours of an appalling manifestation of Warp energy within the Hrax 61st regiment. This catastrophe not only resulted in the loss of over half the soldiers caught within its destructive frenzy, but has also placed the entire regiment under a cloud of suspicion. The individuals responsible for this outbreak originated from the Batloc Clan from the Bastia of the Great Flames, so named for its metal works and fierce grenadiers. Unfortunately, heretical Skreiga devotees have already infiltrated the Batloc clan in order to convert any nascent psykers to their foul worship. These heretics also plan to betray the Bastia to the armies of a rival tainted warband by helping their spies crack this seemingly impregnable fortress.

Upon their arrival, the players must first gain the trust of the Bastia's High Marshal in order that he may grant them title and habitation rights. Next, they must uncover evidence of the feudal clan's corruption and betrayal in order to convince their host of the hidden danger before it is too late; however, the vicious and savage Skreiga warriors are unlikely to yield without a fight.

ACT II: THE CLOUDS DARKEN

Having exposed the treachery of the corrupt members of the Batloc Clan, the Acolytes must now eradicate the source of this foul heresy in order to ensure that Hrax's tithe remains viable. However, they need help in this matter, for word of the traitors' discovery has already reached their enemies, who now make plans to attack the Bastia in force.

The PCs must now make a difficult journey to a nearby loyalist fiefdom to seek aid in the coming battle, though doubtless they should expect to face many dangers before reaching their destination, including native predators, bandits, or even feral Orks.

However, in recognition of their service, the Acolytes may be accompanied by a Clansman Tooth Taker. This trusted aide can help guide them through the winding canyons and subterranean passages, as well as aid them in the ensuing negotiations. Can the Acolytes gain an audience with their would-be allies and convince them to join the fight, or do the loyalists fall beneath the heel of the heretic invaders?

ACT III: COME THE FURY

If the Acolytes are successful in their appeals, they must hurry back to the Bastia of the Great Flames with reinforcements, or else the battle that already rages there will be lost. This fight is not an easy one, however, for a powerful Furimancer commands the besieging Skreiga army, and he has employed a great sorcerous ritual to unleash the denizens of the Warp on the valiant defenders.

The Acolytes must fight their way through the heretic forces to stop the Furimancer from completing his ritual, though they may also face additional complications from Daemons,

sorcerers, and other hazards of war during the course of the battle.

Depending on the Acolytes' preparations, the PCs might receive aid from other loyalist clans in the ensuing battle, and perhaps even offworld help if it is readily available.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS:

- Advance Skreiga units waylay the Acolytes during their long journey to the neighbouring Bastia.
- A cadre of his most trusted, Chaos-tainted warriors surrounds the Furimancer during the battle.
- The trusted Tooth Taker reveals himself as a foul traitor, erupting in mutations as he attacks the Acolytes in their sleep.



KALTO

"They call it the breadbasket. I call it the soft underbelly. If it falls, Askellon starves."

—Decrypted vox-intercept from deep within Vouxis Prime

Located along the Grand Processional, the most stable Warp route in the Askellon Sector, Kalto is a large agri-world whose bountiful production has made it the breadbasket for the untold billions who dwell within the neighbouring sub-sectors. This high productivity is believed to be due in part to Kalto's negligible axial tilt which, when combined with the planet's stable orbit relative to its brilliant orange star, creates a near perpetual growing season ideally suited for agriculture. Kalto is particularly known for its production of padonus rice, a genetically-modified crop developed by the Magi Biologis of Core Theta, as well as large quantities of local emdur grain.

Such advantageous planetary qualities have led many scholars to believe Kalto is actually the result of ancient terraforming during the sector's founding, or of some other nameless techno-sorcery from the Dark Age of Technology. Others interpret the world's relative Warp route stability and remarkably earth-like gravitational pull as evidence of divine providence, while some within the Inquisition and elsewhere view the deadly boneweed, prolific xenos relics, and other unexplained events during Kalto's history as evidence of an as yet unidentified threat.

The most catastrophic of these events happened scant ages ago, when a merchant vessel arrived to discover Kalto's verdant lands and gothic structures inexplicably abandoned, with fields of overgrown crops and livestock wandering loose. Search as they might, the crew found no answers to the mystery, save for a few desiccated corpses locked inside a tarnished security spire, and a grainy vid log of spectral figures. This sudden disappearance of the planet's inhabitants precipitated an intense famine amongst nearby hive worlds. In the following decades, the numerous attempts at appropriation and infighting among political factions made Kalto a byword for bickering and intrigue. The most egregious of these was the founding of Forge Paellus, which occurred when a huge Adeptus Mechanicus cruiser deposited the forge's prefab foundation into the hollowed-out heart of the Loradon mountains.

It is said that cries of consternation over this act rang out in the highest levels of the Pellucid Tower on Juno, and that it came remarkably close to dragging the Rubicon Sub-Sector into war. Eventually, after months of fierce politicking, numerous assassination attempts, and intense negotiations, the competing interests finally renounced their claims on the valuable world. Kalto is now firmly under the control of the Adeptus Administratum. The Adeptus Mechanicus, however, still retains a substantial presence there, much to the resentment of the august Kaltan Ecclesiarchy.

LORDS OF THE HARVEST

Following the cessation of disputes over command of Kalto, the Adeptus Administratum took direct control of the planet's governance, installing one of their own as Praefect to ensure the continued flow of vital crops. Though supposedly only a temporary precaution, this provision has remained in effect for centuries. Whether this oversight is the result of bureaucratic gridlock or devious design remains uncertain.

HOME WORLD: KALTO

Players can adopt Kalto as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Kalto follow the agri-world rules (see page 24), but with the following new Home World Bonus instead of the usual one:

HOME WORLD BONUS

Deny Thyself: A character from Kalto ignores any effects from his first level of Fatigue, and counts his Toughness bonus as two higher for the purposes of determining starvation (see page 267 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook).

Recently, however, the servants of the Kaltan Adeptus Administratum have been more concerned with collating the increasingly disjointed and outdated trade manifests, mercantile parchments, and anticipated tithe projections than exercising any real power on the planet below. Their leader is Adept Torintane, a man who has spent the majority of his two hundred year tenure as Praefect submerged within the potent juvenant salts and bio-invalidator fluids of a personalised data-tank. Despite his advanced age, the Adept's increasingly overwhelmed staff continue to feed him a constant stream of information through a neurolink interface, though the centuries of confused and contradicting reports have gradually taken their toll on the elderly man's sanity.

As a result, the puritanical adept is now convinced that every department of his order is rife with heresy and rebellion, and he has ordered his ruthless Vigilance Servitors to exterminate anyone found guilty of even the most minor infraction. A term of service within the austere walls of his orbiting residence-basilica is a death sentence, and the paper-strewn corridors are said to echo day and night with the sounds of terrified screams and insane laughter.

His primary rival is Planetary Governor Naullis Von Maunx, who also rules the infamous Metothine Gate. However, the Adeptus Administratum's refusal to rescind its claim on the Praefecture makes him beneath the aged Torintane in authority, a status which Von Maunx has attempted to reverse many times during his reign. He is a deceitful, dangerous man whose contempt for the aged Torintane has led him to gradually usurp much of the old man's influence through bribery, intimidation, and deliberate infusions of contradictory data to hasten the erosion of Torintane's sanity.

Torintane, meanwhile, sees Von Maunx as yet another devious malefactor in his ailing domain, and the ancient adept never misses an opportunity to censure his subordinate, or submit his decrees to endless reviews, tedious debate, or in-depth scrutiny. In recent decades, their relationship has become so poisonous as to threaten open hostility, though both sides hesitate to act without assurances of support from their respective allies.

By contrast, the natives of Kalto are a hardworking and simple lot, their lives dedicated in equal measure to their faith in the Emperor and their hereditary duty towards the harvest. Such lessons often come at the end of a lash, and many of the more seasoned workers develop a distinct tolerance for pain and privation before their first season is out.

The Kaltan faithful are also taught to regard rest as a transgression of faith, and that to collapse from exhaustion is preferable to failing their sacred burden. Many do just that, and the fields are said to be littered with the bodies of those who fell during their labours, their corpses constituting a final offering of flesh to the world that sapped their strength.

As this extreme workload takes its toll on their physical bodies, many workers are eventually modified to supplement their failing physiologies, with limbs replaced with specialised harvesting implants, and bodies augmented with water recyclers and thick slabs of vat-grown muscle. Most workers also wear various rudimentary wire cages or other crude implants over their faces that serve as constant reminders of their devotion and sacrifice, while preventing them from partaking of the crops they harvest. Such augmentations are a pivotal moment in the life of Kaltan workers, who often view them as symbols of the devotion and sacrifice necessary to commit themselves fully to their sacred burden. The Kaltan Mechanicum has not been hesitant in recruiting those who proudly display their mechanical improvements into the Cult of the Machine, though many question exactly what these enigmatic keepers of technology hope to achieve by enlisting so many souls to their cause.

COMPLIANCER

Compliancers are the agents of planetary law within the docking hubs of the Metothine Gate, and all are charged with administering both the edicts of the governor and the numerous accords and charters ratified within the great trade halls. However, as the wording of such decrees is uniformly labyrinthine and often deliberately vague, Compliancers must often rely on their own interpretations of these statutes when resolving any disputes. Regrettably for many of their victims, this judgement almost always favours their current employer, and few who encounter these corrupt and brutal officials walk away unscathed.

COMPLIANCER (TROOP) 11

H ³ 01-10 7	WS 38	BS 41	S 38
AR ³ 11-20 7	T 41	AG 35	INT 28
AL ³ 21-30 7	PER 38	WP 30	FEL 34
B ³ 31-70 7	IFL —		
LR ³ 71-85 7	LL ³ 86-00 7		

HALF 3	FULL 6	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 6
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SHOTGUN CLASS BASIC

RNG 30M	RoF S/-/-	DMG 1D10+4 (I)
PEN 0	CLIP 8	RLD 2 FULL
	WT 5 KG	AVL AV

SPECIAL: SCATTER

SHOCK TRUNCHEON CLASS MELEE

RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1D10+3 ^{SB} (I)
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —
	WT 2 KG	AVL AV

SPECIAL: SHOCKING

THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE

Though records of Kalto date back to the earliest days of the sector, little is known of its earlier discovery or initial colonisation. Dark tales from these times describe beings veiled in shadow and malice that once roamed the forests at night, sadistic warriors who cackled excitedly as they dragged the unwary into the spirit world in order to feast on their souls. Known as the Void Watchers, many believe these malevolent beings are the source of the vile boneweed tendrils, which they used to inflict excruciating pain on their victims and provide their fighters with cruel sport.

In addition to the countless signs of ancient human habitation, numerous xenoarcheological surveys have uncovered scattered ruins across the surface of Kalto. Members of the Scholastica Psykana have also occasionally taken an interest in these discoveries, though most of their studies revolve around the psychic resonances and mysterious energy signatures emanating from the ruins themselves.

The most peculiar of these xenos relics are the twisted grey pylons that rise from the ground in regular intervals, like vines of granite interlaced with intricate veins of brilliant silver. They are said to be highly resilient, slowly regrowing any sections that become damaged over the years. Some of the more radical savants who devote their studies to such mysteries even claim that the pylons grow and recede over the course of centuries, their movements linked to some unfathomable external stimuli which remain elusive.

Skills: Athletics (S), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S) (+10), Operate (Void) (Ag), Tech-Use (Int) +10

Talents: Rapid Reload, Takedown

Gear: Flak armoured uniform, manacles, microbead, tome of obligation on a stout chain (can be used as an Improvised Weapon with the Flexible quality), 2 ammo clips

Sucker Punch: When a Compliancer inflicts one or more hits on a Surprised target of Size (5) or less with a Melee attack, the target must make a Hard (-20) Strength test or be knocked Prone.

VIGILANCE SERVITOR

Armed with vicious blades and rumoured to be recruited from Adept Torintane's most diligent vassals, Vigilance Servitors are ruthless killing machines. Highly modified, their cadaverous bodies twitch and judder from the potent chemical stimulants that course through their veins. They are all absolutely relentless in their search for the slightest hint of laxity or inactivity, and many eventually die from the strain of obeying the impossibly severe parameters of their maniacal programming.



VIGILANCE SERVITOR (ELITE) 16

H ⁻³ 01-10 9	WS 47	BS —	S 6 40
AR ⁻³ 11-20 9	T 6 40	AG 41	INT 16
AL ⁻³ 21-30 9	PER 41	WP 20	FEL 05
B ⁻³ 31-70 9	IFL —		
LR ⁻³ 71-85 9			
LL ⁻³ 86-00 9			

HALF 4 FULL 8 CHARGE 12 RUN 24 THREAT 8

IMPLANTED MONO-TALONS CLASS MELEE

RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1D10+9 ^{SB} (R)
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —
		WT 6 KG AVL RA

SPECIAL:

IMPLANTED NEURAL WHIP CLASS MELEE

RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1D10+6 ^{SB} (I)
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —
		WT 3 KG AVL RA

SPECIAL: SHOCKING

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Athletics (S), Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Stealth (Ag)

Talents: Ambidextrous, Dual Weapon Wielder, Sprint, Swift Attack

Traits: Dark-sight, Machine (3), Mind Lock, Unnatural Strength (2), Unnatural Toughness (2)

Gear: Cybernetic physiology, implanted stimm injectors (2 doses), integrated micro-bead

Laxity Begets Heresy: A Vigilance Servitor ignores all effects of Fatigue except for death.

THE METOTHINE GATE

The Metothine Gate is a massive cluster of orbital docks that remains locked in geostationary orbit above Kalto. Within these marbled halls, replete in all their silver and bronze finery, dwells Governor Von Maunx as well as the individual mercantile societies. Amidst these organisations, the majority of trade on Kalto takes place under the constant attention of the Metothine Magnates. Though bound by Imperial decree to provide for the ever-increasing demands of the Askellon Sector, they are shrewd and calculating individuals who, with but a word, can sentence millions to privation and destitution.

Due to the nature of Imperial commerce, as well as the vast fortunes at stake, few accords struck within these opulent cloisters are reached without a heavy cost of blood and suffering. Instances of bribery, assassination, armed confrontations, and other forms of treachery are commonplace. Yet despite such risks, competition for an audience and a Kaltan trading charter is fierce among the many merchant princes and traders who frequent Kalto. The governor's corrupt officials, meanwhile, care little about such blatant disregard for human life, their own efforts focused solely on ensuring the continued function of the profitable docks or the interests of the highest bidder. Von Maunx carefully watches over all deals, if only to confirm he also gains a proper slice of the profits.

THE SEEDS OF BETRAYAL

Perhaps the most perilous of tasks on Kalto is the eradication of boneweed. Though isolated growths are little more than a nuisance, they could threaten the planet's production if left unchecked. To this end, a portion of every Production Hamlet's population is tasked with eradicating all traces of this weed in the surrounding fields prior to harvest. However, despite precautions, casualties among these so-called Reaper Bands are regrettably common occurrences.

For this reason, many overseers view this task as suitable penance for perceived laxity, insufficient harvests, or violating their edicts. Most who succumb to the weed's loathsome presence often end their own lives or die violent, blood-crazed deaths. Those who survive, though, often forsake everything to immerse themselves in the addictive throes of their boneweed-induced fury.

Tendrallid Thralls are feral degenerates who are hopelessly addicted to the euphoric rush of savagery that accompanies boneweed exposure. This ferocity is matched only by their lack of self-preservation and inescapable desire for bloodshed. The more lucid specimens seek instead to distribute their grotesque crop, their minds wholly devoted to spreading the influence of their murderous, new god across Kalto and to other Askellian worlds.

TENDRALLID THRALL (TROOP) 13									
H 2 01-10 4		WS 38		BS 31		S 38			
AR 2 11-20 6		AL 2 21-30 6		T 42		AC 34		INT 24	
B 2 31-70 6				PER 34		WP 33		FEL 29	
LR - 71-85 4		LL - 86-00 4				IFL -			
HALF 3		FULL 6		CHARGE 9		RUN 18		THREAT 5	
HARVEST SICKLE CLASS MELEE									
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1D10+3 ^{SB} (R)					
PEN 1		CLIP —		RLD —		WT 1 KG		AVL CM	
SPECIAL: —									

Skills: Intimidate (S)

Talents: Frenzy

Gear: Tattered clothing and armour, skin satchel of boneweed

Ravaged Mind: A Tendrallid Thrall may activate the Frenzy talent as a Free Action.

BLOODBORNE AUGURAS

Some are so wholly consumed that they allow the boneweed to permanently embed itself in their flesh. This gruesome act grants them even more intense visions of violence and bloodshed, though few have the stamina or will to survive the grisly ordeal. Known as Auguras, they alone are able to master the terrible visions and forge them into a weapon to be wielded against the untainted.

Yet such visions come at a terrible price, for they must constantly slake their thirst for fresh blood in order to feed the burrowing parasitic vines. Other afflicted flock to them, recklessly sacrificing themselves to satisfy the calls for slaughter radiating from the corrupted bodies of these twisted and tortured souls.

BLOODBORNE AUGURAS (MASTER) 20									
H 2 01-10 6		WS 48		BS 31		S 43			
AR 2 11-20 6		AL 2 21-30 6		T 47		AC 38		INT 36	
B 4 31-70 8				PER 42		WP 45		FEL 38	
LR 3 71-85 7		LL 3 86-00 7				IFL 22			
HALF 3		FULL 6		CHARGE 9		RUN 18		THREAT 20	
CHAINAXE CLASS MELEE									
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1D10+8 ^{4+SB} (R)					
PEN 2		CLIP —		RLD —		WT 13 KG		AVL SC	
SPECIAL: TEARING, UNBALANCED									
IMBEDDED BONEWEED WHIP CLASS MELEE									
RNG 3M		RoF —		DMG 1D10+5 ^{1+SB} (R)					
PEN 0		CLIP —		RLD —		WT 2 KG		AVL SC	
SPECIAL: FLEXIBLE, RAZOR SHARP									

Skills: Athletics (S), Command (Fel) +10, Intimidate (S) +10, Parry (WS) +10, Survival (Per) +10

Talents: Ambidextrous, Battle Rage, Die Hard, Frenzy, Two Weapon Wielder

Traits: Fear (1), Natural Armour (2), Touched by the Fates (1)

Gear: Blood-smeared armoured vest and cloth leggings, branding iron, cluster of boneweed-entwined human skulls

Visions of Carnage: Any character who begins his turn within 15 metres of a Bloodborne Auguras must immediately make an Ordinary (+10) Willpower test must or become Frenzied until the end of the encounter (as described in the Frenzy talent on page 127 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook). He must then spend his next turn attacking the nearest target (friend or foe). Characters who are already Frenzied are immune to this effect.

FORGE PAELLUS

Forge Paellus is a massive fortified structure buried beneath the crumbling remains of an abandoned pre-Imperial city, and which now serves as the mechanical heart of Adeptus Mechanicus activity on Kalto. Beyond its colossal gates, the massive Skerab harvesters that trundle across the golden fields are born, and through these same gates the newest initiates of the cult of the Ommissiah disappear. There are also rumours of other, more unsavoury practices and research being carried out inside these towering walls. The increasing laxity of the ruling Magos and his attendants has only served to perpetuate such idle speculation. Many have also observed a decrease in their interactions with outsiders, as well as a disturbing trend of eliminating their external vox implants and biological speech organs through gruesome and crude surgical techniques.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: A BLOODY HARVEST

Overview: The PCs must uncover the source of Chaos-tainted crops before the vitiated foodstuffs threaten the stability of the entire Askellon Sector. This template requires strong interaction skills, with frantic combat serving as thrilling bookends to the adventure. It can easily serve as an interlude between story arcs, or as an opening encounter for a new investigation.

ACT I: OUTBREAK

The Acolytes find themselves in the midst of a massive rebellion on-board a prominent orbital dock. Though the violence initially appears related to an ongoing crisis born of food riots and the resulting brutal crackdowns, the burst of attacks upon the unsuspecting docking bays is far more savage than any of the previous clashes.

What the Acolytes do not know is that tainted shipments of Kaltan emdur grain have somehow made their way into the hands of the rebels and corrupted many of their number, including the ringleaders. Of even greater concern is the fact that the actions of these heretical individuals threaten both the continued prosperity of the valuable orbital docks and the planet below itself.



The warband must wait days before nearby Naval or Adeptus Arbites forces can arrive and quell the uprising. Now the Acolytes must face cramped corridors choked with frightened civilians and Chaos-tainted insurgents if they are to prevent the destruction of the critical docking facilities and the unwanted deaths of thousands caught in the crossfire.

ACT II: BUYER BEWARE

If the Acolytes survive their opponents' attempts to cripple the prosperous port, they eventually uncover fragments of boneweed embedded in the body of one cultist, as well as numerous crates of tainted foodstuffs that shift their attention to the agri-world Kalto. Following up on this clue, they travel to Kalto and arrive within the infamous Metothine Gate.

Here, the Acolytes must now follow the trail of evidence back to the corrupt traders who smuggled the crates off the world, and convince them to reveal the source of the malevolent shipments. Yet the crooked dealings in the Gate are notoriously dangerous affairs, and unless the Acolytes play their hand just right, they encounter heavy resistance.

ACT III: REAP THE SEEDS THAT ARE SOWN

Assuming the Acolytes are able to extract information from the smugglers—either through confession or by recovering physical evidence—they then can locate the Skerab harvester responsible for the tainted crop. It turns out that the venerable machine was hijacked by a Bloodborne Auguras and his thralls, who have since used it to spread their dangerous crop to distant worlds. The cultists are completely devoted to Khorne and the spread of the chitinous vines that savage their flesh, and fight ferociously to protect their baleful harvest.

Depending on how this confrontation plays out, additional investigations into exactly how much of the tainted crop the cultists shipped off world may follow. One of the Acolytes may also come into close proximity to the boneweed during the course of the investigation and subsequently battle his own hidden corruption in future adventures.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS:

- The cultists have enslaved the workers operating the gigantic Skerab harvester instead of corrupting them, thereby forcing the Acolytes to decide if they should save these potentially tainted bystanders.
- The Auguras senses the subtle scars of an Acolyte's previous encounter with Chaos, and seeks merely to corrupt him instead of killing him.
- The influence of Khorne has grown larger than expected, and the Auguras has hidden allies either within the Metothine Gate, a nearby Harvest Commune, or both.

PELLENNE

"Mutant cults? You've discovered that there may be some mutant cults in the mines? There have always been mutant cults in the deep tunnels! The difficulty isn't 'discovering' that they exist—it's 'discovering' ways to cull enough of the filthy scum to keep them from overrunning our homes and butchering us in our beds!"

—Captain Thibalt Psarkin, 2nd Regiment, Pellennian Deep Guard

Pellenne is one of the Grand Worlds of the Askellon Sector. It is crucial to the sector's economy, not only by virtue of its tremendous mineral resources, but also by dint of its vital strategic position. It sits squarely along the Grand Processional, the primary Warp tributary linking the sector's Grand Worlds in relatively stable travel paths. The Processional permits access to the sector capital, Juno, with Warp journeys between the two worlds lasting only scant weeks. In addition, Pellenne sits at the centre of a local web of lesser Warp-routes to a number of Low Worlds within the Stygies Cluster, and acts as a jumping-off point for spinward-bound traffic exiting the wider sector.

Pellenne is a large planet consisting primarily of high-purity unprocessed iron. The iron is not mixed in with rocky ore, or locked below a crust; rather improbably, the entire world appears to be the cooled core of a far larger former planet. It has a thin atmosphere, which at surface level has been heavily polluted and is barely capable of supporting human life. For this reason, human society on Pellenne is almost entirely subterranean.

The planet is riddled with gigantic tunnels, most over a kilometre wide and some much larger. All run for hundreds or even thousands of kilometres in meandering, apparently random courses through the world. Some drop vertically from the surface to unfathomable depths, while others form lazy spirals that slowly meander towards the core over tens of thousands of kilometres. All eventually lead downwards. The tunnels appear to have been cut through the iron during some ancient era, using vast boring machines that have now vanished. There has been much speculation as to the source of these channels; the official explanation is that the tunnels are wonders of the Dark Age of Technology, created by the legendary first Askellian settlers during Mankind's distant times. However, some have pointed to the difficulty of accurately dating the passages; there is also quiet speculation in some quarters that they are far, far older and date back millions of years to some unspecified pre-human culture. The planet's gravity hovers around one Holy Terran standard; despite the planet's vast size, this implies that much of its mass may have been removed by whatever created the vast tunnel network that pervades the world.

The planet's unusually elevated radiation levels, atypically, do not appear to derive from the Pellennian system's own star, but from the planet itself. Radiation levels increase with proximity to the core; at the surface they are raised, but tolerable. In the lowest tunnels they can become quite lethal. The source of the radiation has never been satisfactorily explained, and few are anxious to journey into the lower depths to discover it. Given this, the iron mined on Pellenne should be highly radioactive; however, this is surprisingly not the case. While the iron exhibits high levels of radiation at depth near the core, it somehow loses this quality as it is brought to the surface in a phenomenon not fully understood by the Adepts who have studied it.

HOME WORLD: PELLENNE

Players can adopt Pellenne as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Pellenne follow the standard forge world rules (see page 34 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook), but with the following new Home World Bonus instead of the usual one:

HOME WORLD BONUS

Guard the Pure-blooded: A Pellennian character starts with the Resistance (Radiation) talent and the Trade (Prospector) skill at rank 1 (Known), plus either the Hatred (Mutants) talent or the Dark-sight trait.

Such an environment is inimical to human habitation, and as such the planet's surface outposts and extensive subterranean cities are well-protected with void shields and other protections to ward against the horrific effects of rad-corruption. However, much to the dismay of the planet's long-term inhabitants, mutation rates among the population remain unusually high, even within the richest and best-shielded noble enclaves. Why this should be the case is a growing concern to senior figures within the world's ruling classes. Some have suggested that the mysterious radiation source deep at the planetary core emits energies undetectable by the traditional rad-augurs, energies which have the effect of mutating human genetic material. The preachers of the Adeptus Ministorum cry out that high mutation rates are a sign not of some physical or genetic taint, but of a spiritual malaise brought about by lack of faith in the Emperor. Certain Inquisitors worry that the truth of the matter lies somewhere between these two extremes, and fear that at the heart of the planet lies some object or being which is somehow twisting the planet's human inhabitants into new forms.

Pellenne possesses two small moons. One, Brax, is rich in rare silicates while the other, Leem, is a carbon moon rich in titanium carbide and diamond. Such a combination of geologically distinct bodies in a single system is highly unlikely in planetary formation. The question of how such conveniently exploitable resources came to be in their current location has such worrying implications that few Pellennians are inclined to delve into the matter too deeply, however. Both moons show the same evidence of mining by boring machines of colossal size during some unidentifiable previous period. There is a third, artificial moon, Facility Rho-Kappa 213. This large orbiting smelt yard is operated by the Adeptus Mechanicus under the terms of a centuries-old mutual benefit charter entered into with the current Pellennian ruling dynasty. Beyond these, the space above is remarkably free of orbital bodies and debris.

Pellenne's resources are crucial to the operation of the entire Askellian economy. It annually exports hundreds of teratonnes of pure, high-quality iron for use across the sector, together with large quantities of rarer minerals and ores from its moons. The reliability and consistent supply of iron generated by Pellenne has made it a world of importance; unlike other resource worlds, there is no sign of Pellenne's natural bounty exhausting itself at any time in the future.

ANCIENT HISTORY

Pre-Imperial records relating to Pellenne are scant, but all extant documentation—spanning thousands of years—consistently describes it as a mining world. Pre-Imperial commercial contracts retained by the ruling dynasties indicate that the planet's initial human population was small, a long-vanished caste of peripatetic interstellar mining clans using a high degree of mechanisation. Over millennia, as the skills necessary to maintain their equipment were lost and their fleets of ragtag starships eroded, Pellenne's rulers became more and more reliant upon vast numbers of unskilled labourers shipped to the planet from adjacent inhabited worlds.

Pellenne corrupted these labourers; mutation ran rife among those toiling in the deep tunnels, even among those who took all precautions to ward themselves against the virulent radiation found within. For as long as there have been humans on Pellenne, there have been mutants and outcasts clinging to existence in ramshackle towns outside the shielded tunnel-cities, eking a miserable life from the effluent seeping downward from above them.

The arrival of the Imperium made little difference to the planet's utilisation; indeed, it only hastened the planet's reliance upon offworlders. Locking this imported labour into hereditary contracts of indentured servitude—to do the jobs the resource-rich Pellennian ruling dynasties were not prepared to do themselves—was the next logical step.

LIFE UNDERGROUND

Given the number of indentured workers (who vastly outnumber the natives), the planet's culture retains a rather rough edge, despite its antiquity, and Pellenne still feels like a frontier world. As on most Imperial worlds, the majority of its inhabitants do not experience art, leisure, and the advantages of civilisation. Pellennian society remains highly stratified, with little interaction between social classes. The planet's rulers, a class of interrelated (and often inbred) noble families known as the "Dynants" live in heavily shielded towers on the surface, protected by dozens of regiments of ferocious Enforcer-soldiers—the Deep Guard.

The Dynants are aggressive exploiters of the poor of the Stygies cluster, enticing them to the planet with promises of honest paid work, only to then tie them in to contracts containing unachievable mining targets. Every year, hundreds of thousands of naive workers arrive in Fornix, Pellenne's great subterranean capital city, to discover that they must carry out decades of backbreaking work in highly radioactive mines. There are tales of some managing to eventually leave, but they are more hopeful myth than fact.

The planet exacts a toll on those who work there; mutation rates, especially among those who work closer to the planet's core, are frighteningly high, despite extensive rad-shielding. Any worker exhibiting signs of mutation is dismissed immediately, exiled from the protection of the great tunnel cities, and driven into the vast and ancient mutant Pellennian underclass.

DEEP GUARD ENFORCER

The famed Deep Guard regiments act as both a local defence force and Enforcers on Pellenne, an unusual dual role which speaks volumes regarding the Dynants' paranoia, obsession with control, and the lengths they go to in order to retain it. Effectively a well-equipped militia force consisting solely of native-born Pellennians from the upper, lesser-irradiated levels of the planet, the Deep Guard have a well-deserved reputation for brutality. However, this is tempered by a keen insight into the desperate tactics of mutants from within Imperial society, making the Deep Guard a valuable asset to the wider Imperium: Deep Guard regiments are routinely tithed to the Astra Militarum to take part in the brutal suppression of mutant uprisings across the segmentum and beyond. Their distinctive appearance, with their iron combat armour and stylised drill-bit shaped great helms has made them a familiar sight in areas of civil disturbance across the sector.

DEEP GUARD ENFORCER (ELITE)					12
H ⁵ 01-10 8		WS 39		BS 34	S 32
AR ⁴ 11-20 7	AL ⁴ 21-30 7	T 38	AG 35	INT 28	
B ⁴ 31-70 7		PER 30	WP 29	FEL 27	
LR ⁴ 71-85 7	LL ⁴ 86-00 7	IFL		—	
HALF 3		FULL 6		CHARGE 9	
RUN 18		THREAT 8			
LAS CARBINE			CLASS BASIC		
RNG 75M		RoF S/2/-		DMG 1d10+3 (E)	
PEN 0	CLIP 60	RLD HALF	WT 2.5 KG	AVL CM	
SPECIAL: RELIABLE					
STUDED IRON CLUB			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1d10+4 ^{1+SB} (I)	
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 3 KG	AVL SC	
SPECIAL: PRIMITIVE (7)					

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Forbidden Lore (Mutants) (Int) +10, Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S)

Talents: Enemy (Mutants), Hatred (Mutants), Takedown

Gear: Deep Guard armoured uniform with great helm and integrated micro-bead, powerful arc-candle lantern, 2 ammo clips

Mutant Executioner: Once per round, whenever a Deep Guard Enforcer kills a mutant, immediately he gains a Half Action that he can only use to attack another mutant.



THE TWISTED

No one knows exactly how many mutants there are on Pellenne. Since time immemorial, they have lurked at the edges of human society, feeding upon its refuse and watching its inhabitants with envious eyes. In recent years, as many of the great excavation machines have begun to malfunction, these outcasts have assumed a greater economic importance; each mine's overseer now musters them together every work-cycle in their thousands and herds them into the deepest mines, where they hack away at the bare iron with hand tools in exchange for meagre scraps of food. Those wretches closest to the currently-worked mines and tunnel cities, a group consisting largely of recently-mutated indentured workers desperate for survival, are still utterly dependent upon human society. These desperate exiles occupy hastily-assembled shanties, and jostle for the scraps thrown to them by Pellenne's untainted population.

At a remove from these unfortunates are the descendants of earlier outcasts. These more experienced mutants are less servile and more resentful of their lot. Prone to forming ruthless, exploitative, and secreted bands with their own gang-cant, they are opportunists, entrepreneurs, and innovators, establishing their own constantly-evolving culture. The movers and shakers of mutant society, they operate tattered drinking dens and seedy outposts, many of which are the grandest buildings in the under-towns. These crime lords and ladies, agitators, and thugs are responsible for many ill-fated uprisings against the cruelty of the Dynants over the centuries.

At yet a further remove is a third mutant community. This is by far the most poorly-understood population, consisting of those mutants who, in ancient times, fled deep into the lowest and oldest tunnels. A primeval and preternatural attraction to the depths has always drawn the most mutated. Every year, as if at some secret signal, thousands of mutants wander into the darkness in ones and twos. Many die, their desiccated corpses littering the dark, spiralling tunnels. Yet many seem to find others of their kind, there living a peculiar, almost tribal, existence, feeding upon each other and the strange mould that glimmers wetly in the darkness.

Here, strange societies bloom and fall, far from the eyes of the Imperium, worshipping and sacrificing to hidden gods. Here the spiral mutants breed and plot, waiting patiently for the day when their numbers are so great that they can rise up from the deepest tunnels and drown the light of the human cities in eternal darkness. One day, soon it appears, their time will come despite the futile efforts of those above to eliminate mutants from Pellenne.

SPIRAL PIT MUTANT

The mutants of the deepest pits are an ancient tribal people, subsisting on an unholy diet of cannibalism and a sickening black radiotrophic mould that thrives upon the latent radiation of Pellenne's lower levels. How the spiral pit mutants survive in what should be a lethally-radioactive environment is a matter of some conjecture. Perhaps they have evolved unprecedented levels of natural resistance, or perhaps they have located tunnels with survivable radiation levels; no satisfactory proof supporting either explanation has yet been found.

Some blasphemous theories even hold that the descendants of Askellon's mythological first settlers live among these mutants. These tales relate that though they were once human, they have since devolved to a level where they are no longer recognisable except as horrid creatures to be exterminated as rapidly as possible. What could have driven them to sink so far, both in geography and shape, make up the most twisted parts of these theories.

Although by no means a true-breeding abhuman race, the mutants of the deepest pits tend to share certain traits: glowing eyes, powerful and tumorous horn-like protrusions, and terrifying ferocity when threatened. Although these atavistic mutants have devolved to a lower tech-level, they are by no means animalistic in their behaviour. They have created their own unique languages and cultures, demonstrate complex (if sinister) religious beliefs, and utilise sophisticated techniques when hunting and battling the human inhabitants of the upper tunnel systems.



SPIRAL PIT MUTANT (TROOP)										12
H	4	WS	45	BS	31	S	4	38		
AR	5	T	40	AC	4	INT		38		
B	5	PER	40	WP	35	FEL		28		
LR	5	IFL								
LL	5									
HALF	4	FULL	8	CHARGE	12	RUN	24	THREAT	7	
FEMURSPUR					CLASS BASIC					
RNG	—	RoF	—	DMG	1D10+6 ^{2+SB} (R)					
PEN	0	CLIP	—	RLD	—	WT	3 KG	AVL	SC	
SPECIAL: PRIMITIVE (8), UNBALANCED										
TUMOROUS HORNS					CLASS MELEE					
RNG	—	RoF	—	DMG	1D10+4 ^{SB} (I)					
PEN	0	CLIP	—	RLD	—	WT	2 KG	AVL	SC	
SPECIAL: PRIMITIVE (7)										

Skills: Stealth (Ag) +20, Survival (Per) +20

Talents: Resistance (Radiation)

Traits: Dark-sight, Natural Weapons (Horns), Unnatural Strength (1), Unnatural Agility (1)

Gear: Bone charms, parts of scavenged armour, skin loincloth

The Darkest Pits: A Spiral Pit Mutant cannot get lost when underground, and automatically passes all tests related to navigation below the surface with 1d5 degrees of success.

VEILED MUTANT NOBLE CONSPIRATOR

Not all mutants are shambling monstrosities whose deformities are so obvious that they must run to the darkest tunnels to hide from torch-wielding mobs. There are many who bear the stigmata of genetic impurity in some less obvious, concealable fashion: a second leering face embedded in their chest, a withered extra limb that can be wrapped under voluminous clothing—the variations are infinite.

On Pellenne, it is said that some within the coddled ruling class, the Dynants, secretly bear the mark of the mutant, and conceal their condition for fear of what they would lose if they were forced to join the ranks of those they have oppressed. These conflicted individuals are, by virtue of their condition, easily drawn into conspiracy, whether by blackmail or by desperate need to keep their corruption secret from the agents of the Imperium. Some veiled mutants desperately search for a “cure” for their mutation, while others gather together with other similarly-afflicted individuals and form secret cults for protection, or for fostering revolution against those who would seek to burn them at the stake.

VEILED MUTANT NOBLE (ELITE)					12
H ¹ 01-10 3		WS 28		BS 31	S 43
AR ¹ 11-20 4	AL ¹ 21-30 4	T 31	AC 31	INT 39	
B ³ 31-70 6		PER 39	WP 25	FEL 38	
LR ¹ 71-85 4	LL ¹ 86-00 4	IFL —			
HALF 3	FULL 6	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 8	
HEIRLOOM LASPISTOL			CLASS PISTOL		
RNG 30M	RoF S/2/-	DMG 1d10+3 (E)			
PEN 1	CLIP 20	RLD HALF	WT 1.5 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: RELIABLE					

Skills: Awareness (Per), Charm (Fel), Commerce, (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10

Talents: Peer (Pellennian nobility)

Gear: Fine voluminous clothing concealing a hideous mutation, key to bolthole stashed with embezzled funds and supplies, ultra-fine concealable iron chainmail vest, 2 ammo clips

Concealed Heresy: Each Veiled Mutant has at least one appropriate trait or mutation taken from the entries on Table 8-16: Mutations from page 292 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, so long as it can easily be hidden from prying eyes.



THE CONSANGUINITY

The Consanguinity is a Pellennian sect dedicated to the total eradication of mutants and those who might support them, and worries many with its growing power. Even amid the company of myriad other groups obsessed with destroying mutants wherever they are found, this mildly-tolerated cult stands apart for the volume and extent of its horrific atrocities, extreme fanaticism, and willingness to engage in extreme violence against both mutants and untainted humans alike. In the Consanguinity's eyes, any human who refuses to devote every waking moment to the extermination of mutants deserves nothing less than death, and only vigorous, ongoing war against mutants is acceptable.

Founded on Pellenne three centuries ago, with a manifesto branded into the chest of a charred mutant corpse nailed to the doors of Fornix's High Templum, the cult has in recent years spread its tendrils throughout the Stygies Cluster and beyond. It is highly dogmatic and refuses to allow for any possible usefulness of mutants in any aspect of the Imperium. Brothers of the Consanguinity do not accept any accommodation with mutant communities, and insist upon taking steps to destroy them where local authorities refuse to do so. Indeed, they have been known to assassinate Imperial figures in positions of power who refuse to act against mutant populations per their dictates, often seeking to portray these murders as the work of mutants. In recent years, they have been extremely active, and have come to exercise a frightening degree of control over the mid-level slums of Pellenne. The sect routinely conducts purges wherein those bearing minor birthmarks or disfigurements are burned alive, and summarily executes any citizens believed (accurately or not) to have had dealings with mutants in any capacity. The Dynants who rule Pellenne are increasingly concerned by the support that the Consanguinity appears to enjoy among the working classes. While the Dynants (like all proper Imperial citizens) despise mutants, they despise any threat to their primacy more, and now actively plot against the cult.

The Consanguinity is obsessively secretive; each “Fratr Consanguinitas” (as members of the organisation style themselves) runs his hate-fuelled operations under a highly organised cell structure, while wearing an all-encompassing black robe and identity-concealing hood. The history and membership of the group is virtually unknown, and indeed individual members go to extreme lengths to keep their identities as hidden as possible.

The sect has induced unrest in Pellenne and the surrounding Stygies region by pitting mutants and untainted citizens against each other, to the extent that a number of armed conflicts have been attributed to their work. In recent years, it is rumoured that certain Inquisitors have turned their attention to the group, regarding it as a destabilising influence on important worlds within the Askellon Sector, despite perhaps sharing some sympathy for the group's objectives. There are confused reports of local planetary forces conducting purges of the Consanguinity, and indeed it is muttered in certain quarters that some Frater-run cells have been quietly eliminated by shadowy Inquisitorial operatives, only to reappear in a new, more powerful form at later times. There is, however, little proof of these allegations.



FRATER CONSANGUINITAS

Individual members of a Consanguinity cell are unprepossessing and anonymous, as if expressly selected for their ability to blend into a crowd. When in public, they wear plain, black, unadorned robes with tall hoods that mask their identity and often carry stylised totems displaying a foul mutant hanging from a gallows. All are devoted to committing heinous actions against mutants and those they believe support them in any manner, especially if they provoke greater hatred between humans and mutants.

FRATER CONSANGUINITAS (TROOP)					12
H 3 01-10		WS 35		BS 30	S 35
AR 4 11-20	AL 4 21-30	T 36	AG 32	INT 29	
B 5 31-70		PER 30	WP 39	FEL 35	
LR 4 71-85	LL 4 86-00	IFL —			
HALF 3	FULL 6	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 7	
BATTERED STUB REVOLVER					CLASS PISTOL
RNG 25M	RoF S/-/-	DMG 1D10+3 (I)			
PEN 0	CLIP 6	RLD 2 FULL	WT 1.5 KG	AVL PL	
SPECIAL: UNRELIABLE					
IMPROVISED SATCHEL BOMB (1)					CLASS THROWN
RNG 9M ^{3xSB}	RoF S/-/-	DMG 2D10+2 (X)			
PEN 0	CLIP 1	RLD —	WT 3 KG	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: BLAST (4)					

Skills: Deceive (Fel), Intimidate (S), Security (Int), Stealth (Ag), Tech-Use (Int)

Talents: Enemy (Mutants), Hatred (Mutants)

Gear: Anonymous mining clothing, black hooded robes, map of local mutant shantytown with areas marked in red in strange code, scrap metal body armour

Faceless Peril: When not wearing his distinctive robes, the Frater Consanguinitas has the ability to blend into a crowd, the better to make his escape. He receives a +10 bonus on his Stealth skill when he is in civilian clothing and within a crowd.

MAGISTER CONSANGUINITAS

Despite many attempts, the rulers of Pellenne have never satisfactorily established the identity of the leaders of the Consanguinity sect. Undercover Deep Guard investigations have identified that certain shadowy masked figures issue instructions to individual cell commanders at Consanguinity gatherings, but these individuals have never been captured. These Magisters Consanguinitae seem as skilled in rhetoric and inflaming mobs as they are in subterfuge, treachery, and counter-surveillance. They have been recorded delivering instruction to junior members of the movement in skills as diverse as bomb construction, operating covert cells in hostile territory, countering interrogation techniques, and the deployment of propaganda. The skilled professionalism of these leaders is of some concern to authorities, as they far exceed those typically found among unofficially tolerated groups of this sort. Speculation about the leadership, and why it has insisted on secrecy, has ranged far and wide in senior Imperial circles; the conclusions drawn have led to increased official interest in the cult.

MASTER CONSANGUINITAS (MASTER)					20
H 4 01-10		WS 40		BS 39	S 35
AR 6 11-20	AL 6 21-30	T 40	AG 42	INT 44	
B 7 31-70		PER 43	WP 40	FEL 43	
LR 6 71-85	LL 6 86-00	IFL 40			
HALF 4	FULL 8	CHARGE 12	RUN 24	THREAT 25	
SILENCED HAND CANNON					CLASS PISTOL
RNG 35M	RoF S/-/-	DMG 1D10+4 (I)			
PEN 2	CLIP 5	RLD 2 FULL	WT 4 KG	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: SILENCER					
BLIND GRENADE (2)					CLASS THROWN
RNG 9M ^{3xSB}	RoF S/-/-	DMG 2D10+2 (X)			
PEN 0	CLIP 1	RLD —	WT 0.5 KG	AVL SC	
SPECIAL: SMOKE (2)					

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Charm (Fel) +10, Common Lore (Askellon Sector, Imperium, Underworld) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +20, Forbidden lore (Mutants) (Int) +10, Intimidate (S), Security (Int) +10, Stealth (Ag) +20, Tech-Use (Int) +10

Talents: Constant Vigilance, Hatred (Imperium, Mutants), Keen Intuition, Quick Draw

Traits: Touched by the Fates (1)

Gear: Anonymous and reversible civilian clothing, elaborate hooded and masked black robe, identity papers in multiple names, peculiar and unidentifiable electroos, suicide pill sewn into clothing, 2 ammo clips

Shadowcraft: Magisters Consanguinitae live shadowed lives of hidden conspiracy, ever fomenting conflict between Pellenne and its mutant population. They are paranoid and devious, watchful for infiltration and betrayal. They receive a +10 bonus on any Opposed Awareness skill test.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: THE SPIRALLED DESCENT

Overview: A Magister Consanguinitas is blackmailing a Pellennian noble, Senior Dynant Belkis Straung (who is both a veiled mutant and head of the Pellennian Enforcement Ministry), into sponsoring what is sure to be a disastrous military purge of the Spiral Mutant tribes in the deeper tunnels. The Magister expects this to incite the tribes into outright war against the humans of Pellenne, crippling the planet, and threatening the economic stability of the entire Askellon Sector.

The Acolytes can become involved in the plot in any number of ways. Perhaps they are sent to observe the proposed military expedition on behalf of their Inquisitor, who has reservations about the wisdom of full-scale military action against the tribes. Alternatively, they may be pursuing a renegade who has fled into the deep mines, and become involved in the military expedition to receive support. Perhaps the Acolytes are investigating either the Consanguinity or the Spiral Mutant tribes, or Dynant corruption, and become drawn into the Magister's conspiracy as events overtake them. The adventure involves social interaction with the cream of Pellennian society, combat with mutant tribes and the Consanguinity, and investigation into the widening conspiracy.

ACT I: INTO THE MOUTH OF HELL

The players arrive at Pellenne's starport on the surface of the planet and travel to the Tower of the Grand Dynant, where they observe a crucial vote in the Dynant Council over Dynant Straung's proposal for military action. Straung delivers a fervent speech in support of his motion, and the vote is narrowly approved, though with a far smaller military force than Straung originally sought. The Acolytes observe the proposal being put to the morbidly obese Grand Dynant for his approval, which he readily provides. They arrange to meet with Dynant Straung, and negotiate for involvement in the expedition. He is suspicious of them, and provides them with permission to travel with the military expedition, hoping that he is sending them to their deaths.

The PCs travel by the Grand Funicular, a huge vertical transit system, into the heart of the ancient tunnel city of Fornix. Once arrived, they observe mass demonstrations by the Consanguinity and their supporters against mutants, and observe firsthand the brutal oppression of those who oppose them. The Acolytes are faced with possible moral choices regarding whether to save certain individuals—both human and mutant—from the bloodthirsty mob, given the nature of their mission.

ACT II: INTO THE LABYRINTH

The Acolytes travel to a mustering tunnel for the Deep Guard regiments and meet the commander, General Hubolt. They soon realise that he is incompetent, wildly unprepared, and has been personally sponsored to command this mission by Dynant Straung. They are also introduced to Sund, an anonymous-looking "associate" of Straung's who has been sent to monitor the expedition on his behalf.

The Acolytes accompany the Deep Guard in their Chimera convoy into the deeper tunnels. They travel into one of the Spiral Pits, tunnels several kilometres wide (and thought to be bottomless) that drop vertically towards the centre of the planet, where rumour has it many mutant tribes live.

A narrow road cut into the walls of the vertical tunnel spirals downward, corkscrewing into the depths. The Acolytes ride the Chimeras downward, accompanying the increasingly-worried Deep Guard soldiery as the lights of their vehicles disappear into the still gloom below.

After several days travel downward, Sund goes missing during one of the daily stops to set up camp and rest. The PCs should join (or lead) the efforts to track him down. They observe him meeting with a small scouting party of Spiral Pit mutants, and giving them details of the strength of the convoy. Whether the PCs intervene or not, at this juncture the convoy is ambushed by a vast horde of mutants; Sund escapes in the confusion.

ACT III: STRIVING FOR THE SURFACE

The Acolytes must fight alongside the Deep Guard, whose plan to cull the mutants rapidly disintegrates and turns into a desperate retreat upwards. The Deep Guard are horrifically outnumbered, and despite their superior weaponry, the battle rapidly becomes a massacre. The PCs are among the few able to effect their escape, perhaps by blasting their way past the mutant tribesmen and commandeering a damaged Chimera. They escape to the surface knowing that they have been betrayed by Dynant Straung's emissary, Sund, and harbouring grave doubts regarding Straung's involvement in the defeat.

Upon arrival at the surface, they are ambushed by disguised members of the Consanguinity, who seek to eliminate any survivors of the massacre, so as to make the mutant threat seem all the more terrible. Should the PCs defeat this attack, they likely work to gather more evidence linking Straung to the Consanguinity, and hasten to the Tower of the Grand Dynant to confront him.

They can interrupt him whilst he is giving a speech inciting the assembled Dynants to mount an even larger military expedition. Should they unveil him as a traitor and mutant before the horrified council, he names his deputy, Sund, as the Magister Consanguinitas who was blackmailing him, and as the individual behind the entire conspiracy. The ruling body of Pellenne, finding that they have been duped by an organisation that seeks to incite war between mutants and humans, could be shocked into action or seek to repress the revelation. Sund, though, races to the shuttle bay atop the Tower, seeking to escape Pellenne, and the PCs must attempt to stop him before he can flee their clutches.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Sund escapes the Acolytes and becomes a recurring Nemesis for them (as described in the **DARK HERESY GAME MASTER'S KIT**), possibly even travelling offworld and appearing in the midst of future investigations.
- Sund, and indeed the entire Consanguinity, is revealed to be the tool of an even more powerful adversary; perhaps an Isstvanian Inquisitor seeking to sow dissent within the Imperium or the cat's-paw of sinister Chaos conspirators.
- The Acolytes' actions cause the Pellennians to despise mutants to even more fanatical levels. Support grows to launch an even larger force into the depths, bringing Sund's plan to fruition even though it has been revealed.

PORT AQUILA

"A den of thieves is all it is...thieves dressed like princes."

—Chartist Captain Alron Gizmick

Located in the Diomedea Stella system along the far edge of the Cyclopia Sub-Sector, Port Aquila is one of the major hubs for trade in Askellon and acts as a launching point for goods entering from the coreward and spinward systems. Getting there is not, however, a journey for those without skill or courage. The passages to Port Aquila are treacherous, due less to the lashing tendrils of the Pandaemonium than to the shadow cast from it. For those who make it through, however, opportunity abounds.

Diomedea Stella is a blue supergiant surrounded by a huge asteroid field, the size and scope of which far surpasses any known logical parameters. It forms an almost perfect ribbon, with narrow bands of denser formations in different areas that cannot yet be explained, making this a source of inquiry for the Askellian Mechanicum. Individual asteroids also seem to relocate, causing havoc as the belt seems different every time it is mapped—to this day no one has a complete or accurate map of the field.

The term "port" is a misnomer, as there is no single centralised location in the field. It is home to numerous bases, refuelling posts, and strongholds of all kinds. From the Greater Askellon Trade Combine's huge Atticus Compound to the hidden caverns used by the Pale League and other smugglers, deals happen everywhere. It is also a major anchorage for ships arriving from the neighbouring Ixaniad Sector. For centuries, pirates and traders have also made it their home, but more and more recidivists and heretics have also found a haven in its dark corners. It has always had activity, but its past was far less pleasant or peaceful.

AQUILLAN ORIGINS

Much of the history of the first settlers has been lost. At the high point of expansion in Askellon, Diomedea offered little. There were no planets to colonise and no immediate resources to capitalise on. The field provided a fair amount of shelter, and the bravest of the initial explorers built liveable, self-contained homes out of the rocks. Many began mapping out the field, occasionally finding valuable mineral deposits. Even then, the initial scans showed strange things. The estimated mass and density of the belt far exceeded any other known fields, as if several planets had been destroyed and their remains kept in loose orbit. As people settled in, more odd reports began to filter in. Mineral deposits would change from one scan to the next. Asteroids marked for future mining would be rediscovered months later far from their projected orbital location. The belt became widely occupied, though, as the lure of profit throughout the belt exceeded these frustrations.

HOME WORLD: PORT AQUILA

Players can adopt Port Aquila as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Port Aquila follow the standard voidborn rules (see page 42 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook), but with the following new Home World Bonus instead of the usual one:

HOME WORLD BONUS

Forceful Negotiations: A character from Port Aquila starts at rank 1 (Known) in the Commerce skill, and can use his Strength or Willpower characteristic instead of Intelligence when making Commerce tests.

Where there is profit, there is also greed. Word of opportunity reached the ears of more people, many hoping to start a new life, others hoping to take it from someone else. Raids against the settlers became more commonplace, with many of the families slain or driven back out of the system for good. Piracy and violence became the new norm. A few groups banded together and fortified, finding ruins among some of the larger asteroids and reinforcing existing defences. Trade routes that had started forming from the rest of the sector were attacked and pillaged, and quickly evaporated as the risks were too great. The system stayed like this for centuries, with little hope of change—until the greenskins came.

The fighting between the original settlers and raiders proved fruitless. Little by little, both sides were finding themselves unable to maintain their craft or support their own, yet they knew no other way. That all changed when Waaagh! Oggrim appeared near Diomedea Stella and began hunting for people to fight. Many of the initial contacts were devastating; the Orks were hungry for battle, while both the Aquillans and pirates were exhausted and ill-equipped. Still, all of the humans knew that none of them would survive unless they united against the xenos. Using their knowledge of the field, they began to chip away at the flanks of the Ork fleet, but even then it was not enough. It took the coincidental arrival of the D'Amitri trade fleet to turn the tide.

The D'Amitris were a merchant family on the decline in neighbouring Ixaniad Sector. Seeing contracts and resources drying up, the matriarch, Leah Venria, made a bold move to leave with their remaining ships and fortune and try to rebuild in Askellon. Coincidentally, their entry point was Diomedea Stella, on the outskirts of a major skirmish. Hearing the calls for aid, they responded quickly and decisively, routing the Orks and saving the locals. After hearing what had been happening, the D'Amitri trade fleet offered their services in exchange for the right to conduct commerce in the system when the threat ended.

There are many accounts of the battles for the Diomedea Stella system, most of them highly fictionalised to highlight a specific family's contributions to the defeat of the Orks. The two things that are consistent in all of them, however, are the resolve of all who fought for humanity, and that without the D'Amitri family's aid, they would have fallen. That universally accepted truth enabled the D'Amitris to unify all factions into a single entity that would shape the system and later the sector: the Greater Askellon Trade Combine.

The Combine did not start off successfully. Uniting all of the prospecting families, pirates, smugglers, and merchants was not an easy task, but Venria took to it with an almost religious zeal. She set the Four Principles for the Combine, making sure that individual captains could negotiate contracts, but that they would require approval to confirm routes and the Combine's share. She made sure that all ships were able to defend themselves and capable of transporting cargo. Venria made sure that her captains knew they were partners in the organisation, and she commanded fierce loyalty from those in her employ.

Breaking into the trade dealings of Askellon was another issue altogether. Because the main base for the Combine operated in one of the most remote places in the sector and half of her captains were former criminals, Venria knew she would have to establish the Combine's presence in Desoleum.

Bit by bit, she found contracts with smaller trade houses, building a solid reputation. The proceeds went to expanding the operations; by the time of her death, she had established footholds on all of the Processional Worlds and fortified the main fleet hub in Port Aquila.

As the organisation grew, however, more and more of the profit was being turned over to the Combine, rather than staying in the hands of the captains who made the routes. The D'Amitris, anxious to protect their legacy, sided with the captains and were largely removed from the governance of the Combine. This act sparked a small rebellion among the captains, who began doing work on the side—and endangered the good standing of the Combine by getting caught with illicit goods in their holds. Rather than see the Combine splinter and fail, its leaders re-dedicated the organisation to Venria's original edicts. Captains were entitled to a larger share of the fruits of their labour, and from those profits a portion would be paid to the Combine for support and resupplies.

DIOMEDEA STELLA REBORN

In more recent times, Port Aquila has grown despite its shadowy past. The Warp routes to and from Diomedea Stella—while not easy to navigate—are stable enough for regular traffic, and as a result the population has increased dramatically. The entrepreneurial spirit has found its way back to the system as well, with prospectors and explorers once again seeking fortune amidst the thousands of asteroids. That spirit has also re-awakened some of the darkness that has always been here, seeking new ways to manifest.

Governance of the system is nominally under the Cycloplan Sub-Praefectorate, but in reality, most acknowledge that the only group willing and able to promote law and order is the Greater Askellon Trade Combine. Though the Imperial Navy has the most direct ties to Imperial Law, it does not have a large enough fleet to police the system in the way the Combine can. As a result, the Imperial Navy often acts as an auxiliary to the trade fleets, though officially the relationship is reversed. While minor confrontations are constant between smugglers and prospectors, the Combine and the Navy usually only get involved when their immediate interests are in jeopardy. As a result, frontier justice is often used and accepted among the floating rocks of Diomedea Stella.

Psychic phenomena are also on the rise through the system, as the tendrils of the Pandaemonium have moved closer to the system in recent years. Multiple sites in the system have reported hulls bleeding thick red liquids, gusts of chilling wind blowing through ships' corridors, and ghostly images appearing outside of viewports. Some natives at local watering holes have claimed that they saw faces forming in the nearby asteroids, but most of those stories have been chalked up to cheap imported taffywater or even cheaper local voidsweat. Though usually no larger harm is done, there have been incidents that lack an easy explanation. All have heard reports of those refusing to leave establishments because of what they say they see out among the asteroids. Others tell of settlers and smugglers who have spaced themselves, calmly walking into airlocks without a suit and opening the outer hatch. The tale of the veteran void-master who stranded his crew when he took the shuttle and rammed an asteroid with it still quiets rooms; they say he screamed incoherently through the vox until the impact silenced signal and pilot alike. These incidents are not the norm, however—but they do seem to be growing.

THE GREATER ASKELLON TRADE COMBINE

The Combine is still the trading force that it has been since its origins, but with the D'Amitri family largely out of the command structure, there is less talk of the past and more talk of the future. The head of the Combine is now Zadori Whelk, a former smuggler captain who "saw the error of her ways" after being caught and has renewed efforts to eliminate the criminal contingent in the system. Following her reformation, she undertook a purge of smuggler hideouts located near Combine facilities. Those who would not convert to more honest work were jettisoned into space, their safe houses destroyed. Since her inauguration as Trademaster-General, she has opened up dialogues with the Prospectors' Guild and begun working more closely with the Imperial Navy to balance out the influence of House Surena. These negotiations strengthen her position as a law-abiding businesswoman, while moving towards greater and greater shares of Askellian commerce.

Whelk has also instituted a policy of open enrolment for captains. Those who sign with the Combine come and go as they please, so long as they adhere to its simple but strict Principles. The result has been a constant stream of new talent trying to make their fortunes and an increased stability in the region, as the Combine has refused to hire anyone wanted by the Imperium. With independent trade very much on the wane, it is smart business sense to not run afoul of the law—the enforcement of which the Combine largely handles.



THE FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE GREATER ASKELLON TRADE COMBINE

- *The Combine approves all contracts.*
- *Do not violate Imperial Law.*
- *Fulfil your obligations of the contract.*
- *No work is allowed outside the Combine. Ever.*

The Combine now controls a healthy portion of the trade across Askellon, and is even trying to expand into neighbouring Scarus and Ixaniad; early forays into Calixis, though, showed that the risks were too high, given the current turmoils there. Many of its contracts are long-term exclusives to ensure consistent income, and were brokered under dubious circumstances in most cases. Many of the larger independent traders, in turn, mark these dates, and have begun currying favour with the producers of goods for decades prior to those termination dates to engender a level of trust—and hopefully get the new contract. Very few do change over to an independent, however, amidst rumours of special "negotiators" being sent by the Combine. No one has overtly levelled accusations at the trade juggernaut, but most know the dangers of trying to cross it.

THE IMPERIUM WITHIN THE PORT

In most Imperial systems, there is a centralised location for the functionaries of the Adeptus Terra to set their camp and branch outward. The inherent difficulty in finding a safe singular location to do that in Port Aquila limits the ability of the Imperium to do its work. As a result, the presence of Terra mirrors the reach of the Astronomican to Diomedea Stella: relatively weak and tenuous at

best. Stationed in the *Pride of Askellon*, a *Ramillies*-class station outside the asteroid field on the edge of the system, the small Naval garrison and the other Adeptus representatives sit and let the inhabitants live their lives, largely left alone.

Unbeknownst to most, Port Aquila has a military governor who is, at least on paper, in charge of the system. The current one is Severine Cantrella, once a bold ship commander, but now seldom ever seen outside her offices and living space on the station. Her arrival to the station brought with it a sense of hope and renewed purpose for those who yearned to take Aquila by the reins and tether it to Imperial Law. The previous sixteen governors had lasted a total of only 28 years in service, the longest for 19 months, the shortest for five hours. All sixteen of them had died while in office and on active duty in the system. To a person, unexplained events were the cause of death. From a spontaneous explosion of an asteroid under one governor's landing party to having a malfunctioning thruster launch another governor toward Diomedea Stella, strange things have happened to those who tried to strictly enforce Imperial Law. Severine apparently read the accounts, and made a different plan. She courted the Combine's favour and allowed them to act as the eyes, ears, and hands of the Imperium. The result has been a marked decrease in the amount of violent crime, and Governor Cantrella has been in office for more than eight years. She has had her share of close calls, however, likely a reason for her staying aboard the station. She gives most of her orders through communiqués, and only emerges from her offices to walk among the troops once a year.

Other branches of the Adeptus Terra are not represented equally on the station. The Navy has a patrolling force of a battlecruiser, a light cruiser, and six squadrons of five escorts—nowhere near enough to patrol the system, and too much to just sit at a base. Governor Cantrella has them run training missions and provide support for the Combine when they engage any unruly traders. On board the *Pride of Askellon*, aside from the fifty-man strong Adeptus Arbites precinct, there are very few other branches of the Adeptus Terra. A small Adeptus Mechanicus contingent studies the unusual properties of Diomedea Stella, and chart the ebb and flow of the Pandaemonium across the area. The Astropathic choir consists of ten members who are rotated out yearly, rare for such posts. Residents on the *Pride* have noticed that many of the psykers seem worn and almost sapped of their vitality by the time they leave. Overall, though, the Imperium largely stays away from Port Aquila except for its regular tithes, allowing the Combine to maintain internal justice.

POWERS OF THE PORT

The Imperium and the Combine are not the only factions of note. As in the past, the asteroid field holds many mysteries and secrets that others are all too happy to discover and exploit. Smaller—but still influential—groups have found their ways into Aquillan politics. While these do not have the reach of the Combine, it would be foolish to underestimate their usefulness or their connectedness within the system, for here they hold more sway.

PROSPECTORS GUILD

The stabilisation of Diomedea Stella has allowed the more adventurous pilots and explorers back into the system. The asteroid fields are colossal in scope and extremely dense; between that and the occasional odd moving cluster of planetoids, the fields to this day still remain largely uncharted. The Prospectors Guild entered Port Aquila a few centuries after the Waaagh! was defeated and began a simple existence among the rocks. While the majority of its business is in the extraction of desirable ores and minerals, part of its continued business is in locating asteroids suitable for habitation, industry, or refurbishment into new stations. Each team of prospectors is allowed to handle its own jobs and set its own contracts. There is no centralised location for the Guild that has been located, but that may be by design. What is known is that all teams have a strong knowledge of where their other teams are at all times, so if they cannot perform the job that is asked of them, they know where the people in the Guild are who can.

Many of the smuggling rings in Port Aquila have used the Guild's services at one time or another. The Guild's teams excel at locating, setting up, and masking new sites, and reputedly are paid handsomely for it. The Combine has sought to use them, but thus far no contracts have been drawn up between the two organisations, primarily due to the amount of direct oversight the Combine requires. Once hired, the Guild tends to work without outside connection or input until the job is done. Smugglers such as the Pale League and Darriel's Blackholds actually prefer it that way, for the lack of contact with the location helps retain its secrecy.

The Combine, however, has its bureaucracy to maintain, and any plan for building or expansion requires official representatives to be present at all times. The Prospectors Guild claims it uses "proprietary methods" to complete its contracts, so no one outside the Guild is allowed. The Combine refuses to concede this point, and thus has to rely on non-Guild independents to work for them. If the stories are accurate, the Combine once hired several groups of the independents to track the Guild's diggers, only to have one whole mining team return catatonic. No one else in the Combine's employ has been foolish enough to try.

AQUILLAN MINER

Part prospectors, part tradesmen, part explorers, these individuals understand that their freedom is only won by their own hard work. Unafraid of the dangers of space, they stay afield longer than most, only coming back to a "civilised" establishment for supplies and to sell their finds. Many have tried to find a place within the Prospectors Guild, but have been rejected for one reason or another. Others have come to Port Aquila and stayed independent, and these have been known to sell their ability to locate suitable asteroids to establish bases to a less discerning clientele. The Combine reputedly keeps a cadre of some of the best freelancers in Port Aquila to find suitable nooks and crannies for its meetings. Whether working for the Combine or themselves, Aquillan miners are some of the toughest souls in the system.

AQUILLAN MINER (TROOP)										10
H ⁴ 01-10		3		WS		BS		S		
AR ⁴ 11-20		7		35		32		35		
AL ⁴ 21-30		7		T		AC		INT		
B ⁴ 31-70		7		35		34		39		
LR ⁴ 71-85		7		PER		WP		FEL		
LL ⁴ 86-00		7		43		42		41		
				IFL		—				
HALF 3		FULL 6		CHARGE 9		RUN 18		THREAT 7		
HOT-SHOT LASPISTOL										CLASS PISTOL
RNG 20M		RoF S/2/-		DMG 1D10+4 (E)						
PEN 7		CLIP 40		RLD 2 FULL		WT 1.5 KG		AVL AV		
SPECIAL: —										
MONO SABRE										CLASS MELEE
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1D10+4 ^{1+SB} (R)						
PEN 2		CLIP —		RLD —		WT 3 KG		AVL SC		
SPECIAL: BALANCED										

Skills: Charm (Fel) +10, Commerce (Int) +10, Common Lore (Port Aquila) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag), Inquiry (Fel), Parry (WS), Tech-Use (Int), Trade (Explorator, Prospector) (Int) +10
Talents: Enemy (Smugglers), Quick Draw

Gear: Combi-tool, concealed holster, dataslate, assorted rough gems and oddly shaped stones, micro-bead, personalised void suit
At Home in the Rocks: An Aquillan Miner counts as having 3 ranks in the Survival skill when he is tracking targets in space or on an asteroid.

LIFESTYLES OF THE INSANELY WEALTHY

The merchant princes in Port Aquila, despite their cravings for respectability, often behave exactly like the smugglers and pirates they once were. The traditions of Juno and the oath-cogs of Desoleum allow for little deviation, and thus decorum is preserved in the Processional Worlds. The nouveau riche in Port Aquila, though, wield their wealth like a blunt instrument, believing that it can buy respectability and clear any obstacle. When that fails, however, they often fall back to violence and intimidation. Most easily change their tactics from seemingly measured negotiations to backroom thuggery without missing a beat.

Aquillan traders deal from positions of strength whenever possible, using their wealth to get information, resources, or “collateral” to help swing the best deals they can. Many of these act as functionaries for the Combine, but some still operate independently. Regardless of their affiliations, they act as a brotherhood of sorts if the Port is threatened, and those rare souls who have tempted fate and made those threats are now cold and lifeless somewhere among the rocks.

SMUGGLING RINGS

Smugglers have maintained a niche market here, and are probably some of the most resourceful captains and pilots in the system. Most of them work in the trade of items the Combine refuses to touch, in order to limit contact with what passes for the law. The emergence of Trademaster Whelk makes them a target, though, and that is bad for business. Most of the smuggling rings are local, and handle moving items within the system from one source to another for a reasonable fee. The vast majority of these groups are skilled enough to avoid detection, or are small enough to not warrant investigation or apprehension. Those with the ability to leave the system, however, are careful to kit out their ships with hidden holds and airtight reasons to depart the system, in case the Combine or the Imperial Navy decides to stop and search them. Many of these Warp-capable rings have begun talk of banding together, but as yet have not generated any noticeable cohesion.

The Pale League is a new arrival to the port, though no one can say where it comes from. While it may be a home-grown entity, it is more likely being funded from outside the system. The League operates in the Faceless Trade of forbidden goods, specifically in xenos artefacts and other illicit materials. Its members are seldom caught or spotted, and often leave traps behind for their pursuers to stumble through. This bears the mark of seasoned professionals rather than fresh amateurs, and it is this level of sophistication which has brought much outside attention. Askellon's many other syndicates, especially the Trade Sable centred on Desoleum, do not like competition, and through their agents has begun working with the Combine to help quash these rock-runners. To date, only one member of the League has been captured, and that one chose death rather than divulging information.

Large or small, one thing is clear: the combination of Whelk and the Prospectors' Guild has created a problem for all smugglers. As a result, smaller groups often work together to eliminate Guild resources whenever they are found. Several exploration units have gone missing recently, and a surveying unit was found dead at its last known location, clearly victims of foul play. If rumours are true, the two attempts on Trademaster Whelk's life were also plots of local smugglers, though she has made quite a few other enemies in her time at the post.

SHUTTLE SMUGGLER

With trafficking of illicit substances and trinkets on the rise, the need for discreet transportation is likewise growing. Though the accommodations leave much to be desired, shuttle smugglers can offer discretion and silence if paid enough. As they only work within the system, most of these pilots know the local environs as few others do. Regardless of the cargo, they can move it or know someone else who can. Aside from their ability to move largely unseen across the system, they are also extremely knowledgeable about the major Aquillan players—with whom to work, and whom to avoid. Smugglers work with many types across the system, and for solid compensation and some smooth talking they have been known to share their knowledge. Their bottom lines are profit and odds of survival—anything else is a bonus.

SHUTTLE SMUGGLER (TROOP)					11
H 1 01-10	4	WS	BS	S	
AR 1 11-20	4	28	35	32	
AL 1 21-30	4	T	AG	INT	
B 3 31-70	6	32	41	38	
LR 1 71-85	4	PER	WP	FEL	
LL 1 86-00	4	41	29	33	
		IFL			
HALF 4	FULL 8	CHARGE 12	RUN 24	THREAT 5	
COMBAT SHOTGUN					CLASS BASIC
RNG 30M	RoF S/3/-	DMG 1d10+4 (I)			
PEN 0	CLIP 18	RLD 1 FULL	WT 6.5 KG	AVL SC	
SPECIAL: SCATTER					
CHAINBLADE					CLASS MELEE
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+4 ^{1+SB} (I)			
PEN 1	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 2 KG	AVL SC	
SPECIAL: TEARING					

Skills: Commerce (Int) +10, Deceive (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Criminal Cartels and Smugglers, Port Aquila), Navigate (Stellar) (Int), Operate (Aeronautica Spacecraft) (Ag), Security (Int) +10, Stealth (Ag)

Talents: Enemy (Greater Askellon Trade Combine, Imperial Navy)
Gear: Combi-tool, lho sticks, multikey, small cargo or transport vessel, armoured void suit, 2 ammo clips

Lose them in the Rocks: A Shuttle Smuggler gains a +20 bonus when attempting to elude pursuit or against attempts to track him when he is piloting his shuttle.

THE SHADOWED FACTIONS

Aside from the individuals who come seeking fortune, there are a few other people who cling to the rocks of Port Aquila. The normal adventurers and treasure-seekers are common enough closer to the independent outposts and watering holes. Some of those with a penchant for risk-taking have formed a portable refuelling service called the Fyceline Flotilla, a sharp contrast to the Imperium's fees and regulations at the *Pride of Askellon*. The quality of their plasma fuel is sub-par, but for many on the wrong side of the law, it is the only way to keep their ships running without making their presence known. Recently, some of their secret meeting places among the rocks have been compromised in a series of sneak attacks by the Combine, in an effort to curtail illegal activity not part of the Combine's grasp. Whether it has a mole in place or another way of detecting the lawbreakers is currently unknown.

Though well-known through their recent inclusion in the Combine's governance, the House of Roth is not currently known to have any established facility within the system. This may be changing, as ships bearing the Roth family crest have been spotted lurking in some of the darker areas of the asteroid field. Most of the areas they have scouted have been largely uninhabited and, thus far, the House of Roth has not begun any known construction.

There have also been several reports of upheaval and violence at many of the way stations and trading holes, the perpetrators bearing a set of mysterious marks on their wrists. They call themselves Anointed, and disappear soon after the violence is over. Thus far, no deaths at their hands have been reported, but they leave behind them a wake of continual unrest that often lasts for weeks afterward.

Of great concern to the Imperium's forces in the region are the growing rumours of cult activity and an influx of new players in the Faceless Trade. Some of the independent explorers in the region have found multiple sites used in what appear to be blasphemous rituals. None of them seem to be related to each other, as the rituals all seem different, and no set of markings or messages left behind indicate a pattern, but all of them are gruesome. Several guildsmen at one site were driven mad at the sight of the human remains, and the arcane runes carved into the walls of the asteroid caverns at another site allegedly inspired a blood-soaked mutiny on one vessel. If the rumours are true, no less than fifty different cults could be operating within the belt, and that might only be the beginning of the problem. Thus far, some of the sects that have so far claimed responsibility include the bloodthirsty Disciples of Konos, the chem-worshipping Omnipresent Awe, and a techno-gang known as the Proselytes of Lud.

LUMINOUS PSYKER

With psyker populations on the rise in Askellon, many of those captured for the tithes are always on the look for ways to escape. Those who do so often find their way first off-world and then in Port Aquila, ready to leave via the Illuminated Pathway, a network of hiding holes and means to spirit the unsanctioned away to other sectors. Occasionally, some of these souls find a reason to stay and help those on the pathway in making their own connections to freedom. They are often very skilled in the use of their own abilities, but are still in many ways oblivious to the threat they actually represent. These dangerous people work the shadows and pay attention to the signs around them, able to locate others like them and help hide them until the connections can be made with Those Who Walk the Path, a shadowy group who collects those they deem worthy and leave the rest. Very few are turned away, but those who have been left behind are often found dead or declared missing. Calling themselves the Luminous, these psykers have turned their power to profit, generating enough from their efforts to maintain small hideouts among the rocks. What happens to the people they aid is unknown, for those freed are never seen again in Askellon.

LUMINOUS PSYKER (ELITE)					14
H 01-10 3		WS 28		BS 29	S 31
AR 11-20 5	AL 21-30 5	T 31	AG 36	INT 41	
B 31-70 5	LR 71-85 5	PER 40	WP 48	FEL 25	
LL 86-00 5			IFL	—	
HALF 3		FULL 6		CHARGE 9	THREAT 12
STUB AUTOMATIC					CLASS PISTOL
RNG 30M		RoF S/3/-		DMG 1D10+3 (I)	
PEN 0		CLIP 9		RLD 1 FULL	Wt 1.5 KG
SPECIAL: —					
FORCE DAGGER					CLASS MELEE
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1D5+6 ^{I+PR+SB} (R)	
PEN 5 ^{2+PR}		CLIP —		RLD —	Wt 2 KG
SPECIAL: FORCE					

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Deceive (Fel), Dodge, Forbidden Lore (Psykers) (Int), Psyniscience (Per), Stealth (Ag)

Talents: Warp Sense

Traits: Psyker (PR 2)

Psychic Powers: Any three psychic powers from a single discipline tree.

Gear: Backpack, colourful flak cloak over rune-inscribed bodysuit, ration packs, 2 ammo clips

Psychic Bloodhound: Immediately before using the Psyniscience skill, a Luminous Psyker can spend a Half Action to gain a +20 bonus on the test.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: THE ILLUMINATED PATHWAY

Overview: In this template, the Acolytes' investigation of a smuggling ring of rogue psykers leads to Port Aquila. There, they must confront a cult devoted to both saving and selling its psychic captives. It can be used at the end of any adventure, especially if there were rogue psykers or others utilising Warp-talents without the Sanctioning of the Adeptus Astra Telepathica. It can also have special significance for any Acolytes who are not Sanctioned; players and the GM can weave the events within into the character's backstory, representing how he was part of the psyker smuggling operation earlier. Having even one Acolyte with this background could be a source of friction within the warband, as the smugglers saved his life, whether immediately at the stake or later aboard the Black Ships.

ACT I: THE MISSING PSYKERS

The Acolytes hear word of psykers escaping local roundups on their current location. The initial investigation shows that the psykers escape by shuttle to a ship marked to arrive at Port Aquila. The PCs follow the psykers there in an effort to recapture them and, when they arrive, an operative stationed in the asteroid field contacts them.

While not the safest part of the sector to be in, Port Aquila offers a useful degree of anonymity and discretion. The operative the Acolytes are slated to meet has been undercover, ferreting out who is aiding the psykers; he now fears, however, that his cover has been compromised. Upon their arrival at the asteroid installation, it is immediately clear that there is tension brewing with the current inhabitants.

As the PCs approach the meeting place, the deck they are on is attacked by a large group of psykers making a break for the main hangars. The Acolytes are thrown into the conflict, as their contact is viciously assaulted by one of the rogue psykers. The Acolytes are unable to save him, but get a mem-wafer from him before he passes. The psykers eventually disperse to hide in the shadows of the station.

ACT II: THE PSYKER TRAIL

Left with only the mem-wafer, the Acolytes investigate and decipher it. Their trail of inquiry or intimidation leads them to Roscoe D'Amitri, a disaffected member of the Combine's founding family. He is exceptionally skilled at cracking codes. The mem-wafer has information, vid-picts, and proof of a smuggling operation that helps unsanctioned psykers escape and leave the sector.



It indicates that the port is the hub which many of these psykers use to get free of the sector, though to where it does not say. The mem-wafer mentions a special holding area that prepares them for safe travel through the Warp, located on a large asteroid deep in the fields; the Acolytes need to go there to put an end to it.

Depending on how successful they are in deciphering the mem-wafer, they may also discover that the operation is being coordinated by individuals known only as the Brotherhood, who are pleased with their new recruits. The warband may also find data showing all the shipments of psykers and to which locations they went, along with correlated information showing increases in cult activity. As they approach the indicated asteroid, though, they discover it has automated defences.

ACT III: THE END OF THE TRAIL

Provided the Acolytes survive the automated defences, the interior of the station is equally dangerous. Housed here are no fewer than 50 psykers prepped for travel in cryogenic, psy-nulled sleep. The station is manned by humans and heretek Tech-Priests who fastidiously prepare all sleeping pods before loading them into massive shipping containers. The Acolytes likely have only one choice: shut it down. All conscious cultists fight with abandon to protect the secret, and bring the psykers out of stasis to help, all leading to a wild conflict that could rupture the thin hulls that protect everyone from the chill of space.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS:

- The Cyclopan Sub-Praefect is the one running the program, and has sent agents to terminate it and retrieve the latest batch of psykers. He knows that information has been leaked about the program, and his agents have been told to apprehend—or eliminate—any opposition.
- D'Amitri is actually an agent of the Combine trying to infiltrate the smuggling ring. His goal is to regain a place within the Combine and rebuild the family name. Once the Acolytes make it to the holding area, he summons the Combine's resources to arrive and clean house, including the Acolytes themselves.
- Upon the Acolytes' arrival at the holding area, instead of it being a preparatory zone for smuggling the psykers out of the Sector, they find a huge ceremony taking place to unleash a Warp portal in Port Aquila. The Acolytes must thwart the cult known as the Brothers of Celestial Enlightenment before they succeed.

RUND

"Hail, great Skylord, blessed of the Sky Father! We stand ready to wage war upon the accursed unbelievers! At your command, we will burn their lodges, halls, and long ships, and cast their worthless bodies into Uguathu, the smoking mountain, where they will burn in the pits of the Sky Father for a thousand seasons!"

—Rundeen Chieftain Maugdan, addressing Naval Underdeck Rating Remmick Stenz of the sloop *Emperor's Fury*

Rund is a recently-discovered world whose barbarous and feral inhabitants have endured uncounted millennia of isolation from the wider Imperium as a result of the vicious eddies and whorls of the Pandaemonium. The Adeptus Ministorum has eagerly leapt at the chance to draw primitive souls to the light of the Emperor. In the absence of immediately available agents of the Missionarus Galaxia, local religious authorities from within the sector are currently prosecuting an aggressive proselytisation campaign, which is generating civil war and conflict on a vast scale across the face of this once-isolated planet.

SALTWATER, BRIMSTONE, AND BLOOD

Rund is a geologically unstable archipelago planet, dotted with thousands of irregular islands across its entire surface. The largest island is only a few hundred kilometres from tip to tip, and most are much smaller. Each is a tiny enclave in a vast stormy ocean that spans from pole to pole. There are tremendous climatic variations according to latitude: there are hundreds of arctic, temperate, and desert islands, with many subtle variations between them. Violent geologies abound throughout the globe; new islands are created and old ones destroyed every year by the rapidly shifting tectonic plates that crumble and grind against each other beneath the raging waves. The seas are shockingly deep, violent, and stormy, and even though many islands are within sight of each other, traversing the channels between them is extremely hazardous.

The oceans are also filled with a variety of dangerous creatures. From the deeps come armoured predators larger than Imperator Titans, and tentacled horrors driven from the pelagic depths by seismic upheavals. Vast shoals of vicious flyers leap from the sea into the air alongside stinging jellyfish the size of halo barges, while clamperfish drag themselves aboard ships and pull sailors limb from limb. Worse are the repulsively intelligent Karkinaxi, the terrifying Sea Devils of Rundeen lore that are capable of cunningly luring men to their deaths through a variety of ruses. All these and more fill the planet's endless waters. Indeed, the world is so replete with such a rich selection of hostile creatures that some have speculated that they have all been brought here for some reason; perhaps the world was once a kind of pleasure world for big game hunters during humanity's Dark Age of Technology. Askellian Adeptus Administratum adepts still fervently debate whether Rund should be classified as a death world or feral world.

Rund appears to have been inhabited by humans for thousands of years. No clear evidence remains of how human settlers first arrived, but given that the majority of the native Rundeen share a certain commonality of physical characteristics, it is speculated that they are the descendants of some minor colony.

HOME WORLD: RUND

Players can adopt Rund as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Rund follow the standard feral world rules (see page 32 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook), but with the following new Home World Bonus instead of the usual one:

HOME WORLD BONUS

Zeal of the Convert: Characters from Rund start with the Hatred (Heretics) talent. They also count as having the Hatred talents possessed by any clearly identified member of the Adeptus Ministorum within 10 metres.

KARKINAXI

The Karkinaxi is neither the largest nor most ferocious aquatic beast on Rund, but it is the most widely feared. It resembles a giant aquatic scorpion, approximately three metres long, with a hard, chitinous exoskeleton and several pairs of spindly, eerily-dextrous clawed pincers. The creature is infamous for the insidious ways it draws humans away from their boats and into the water—imitating a crying infant, cutting a fisherman's nets, or blocking up a ship's rudder to steer it onto rocks. Any humans it catches are dragged under and drowned, their bodies used as loathsome, rotting brood-nests for its voracious spawn.

KARKINAXI (ELITE)										18
H ² 01-10		6		WS 37		BS —		S 39		
AR ² 11-20		6		AL ² 21-30		6		T 45		
B ² 31-70		6		AC 31		INT 28		PER 30		
LR ² 71-85		6		LL ² 86-00		6		WP 35		
								FEL —		
								IFL —		
HALF 4		FULL 8		CHARGE 12		RUN 24		THREAT 12		
FANGED MANDIBLES										CLASS MELEE
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1d10+5 ^{2+SB} (1)						
PEN 0		CLIP —		RLD —		WT —		AVL —		
SPECIAL: —										

Skills: Athletics (S) +10, Dodge (Ag), Stealth (Ag) +20

Traits: Amphibious, Dark-sight, Deadly Natural Weapons, Multiple Arms (6), Natural Armour (2), Size (5), Unnatural Senses (50)

Drowner: The Karkinaxi always elects to Grapple its opponent when in the water, with the Damage Opponent option as per page 221 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook. If successful in the Opposed Strength test, it inflicts two levels of Fatigue instead of one. It also pulls its target 1d5 metres further into the water; the GM should determine depth and whether this puts the target under the surface.

THE COMING OF THE SKY PRIESTS

Rund was only discovered several dozen years ago, deep in the stellar wastelands between the sub-sectors of Rubicon and the Asphodel Depths. Salawat McDunn, a minor Rogue Trader, encountered the planet whilst conducting a search to find less perilous Askellian Warp routes bypassing the Pandaemonium's clamour. While no such clear passages were discovered, the unlikely prize of the expedition turned out to be Rund, whose utterly unremarkable sun had lain obscured from distant Imperial astronomical auguries by an equally unremarkable dust nebula.

Lacking the resources to exploit the world himself in the short term, and aware that it lay well within the bounds of the Imperium—and as such beyond the terms of his Warrant of Trade—McDunn petitioned the Lords Sector and the Senatorum Imperialis for formal governorship of the world. Whilst he waited for the ponderous wheels of the Imperial bureaucracy to grind in his favour, McDunn, who had firm links to the Ecclesiarchy, delivered a small-but-fervent contingent of Ardentii Proselytisers to the northern islands. His hopes were that they would slowly convert and civilise the locals to a cultural standard more amenable to the commercial exploitation of the planet.

These fanatical emissaries of the Imperial Cult have endured, and even prospered. A score of the northern island tribes now exhibit genuine zeal in carrying the Emperor's holy word out to their unenlightened brethren on the other islands. However, in these early days of the mission to Rund, these new converts are unfamiliar with the appropriate modes of worship; their knowledge of the Imperial Faith is patchy at best, and many misunderstandings and ancestral feuds slow the proper transmission of the one true faith to the remaining heathens.

The Imperium's arrival, and the regular appearance of vessels, has caused a tremendous degree of culture shock. Misguided cults worshipping orbiting spacecraft have sprung up on the unconverted southern islands, and their inhabitants take to the seas in crude vessels crafted to resemble Imperial starships. These sailors war with those of the northern islands who have sworn loyalty to the Imperium. These conflicts escalate with each passing season, and hundreds of thousands have now abandoned their meagre harvests to war with their neighbours, both on the foaming seas and under the crimson skies of the volcano-studded islands.

SERVANT OF THE SKY FATHER/ STARSWORN WARRIOR

In years, the northern tribes of Rund have learned from the wise Sky Priests of the great Sky Father, the lord of all Mankind, who dwells forever in the skies in a vast tent constructed from the glittering hides of a thousand sea devils. The Sky Father sees all, knows all, and judges all. The Sky Priests say that those who have pledged themselves to form part of his shield wall and die in his service consequently join him forever on an isle of peace and plenty, where the surrounding seas are always bountiful and calm.

The southern Starsworn tribes, who have entered into pacts with offworld slavers, war with the Sky-Servants. Clothed in mud imitations of the slavers' bodygloves, they carefully burn carved images of starships on great pyres. They raid and pillage the northern isles, seeking captives to sacrifice to the Great Star Boats, and to trade with their slaver allies for lasgun lenses, pict printouts, inoperative dataslates, and other treasures.

SERVANT/STARSWORN (TROOP)										12
H ⁻ 01-10		3		WS		BS		S		
AR ⁻ 11-20		3		AL ⁻ 21-30		41		35		44
B ⁴ 31-70		7		T		AG		INT		
LR ⁻ 71-85		3		LL ⁻ 86-00		45		39		28
						PER		WP		FEL
						30		32		28
								IFL		—
HALF 3		FULL 6		CHARGE 9		RUN 18		THREAT 6		
NAKLAN-RIB BOW										CLASS BASIC
RNG 30M		RoF S/-/-				DMG 1D10 (R)				
PEN 0		CLIP 1		RLD 1 HALF		WT 2.5 KG		AVL SC		
SPECIAL: PRIMITIVE (6), RELIABLE										
JELLYFISH TENDRIL-WHIP										CLASS MELEE
RNG 3M		RoF —				DMG 1D10+4 ^{SB} (I)				
PEN 0		CLIP —		RLD —		WT 2 KG		AVL CM		
SPECIAL: CRIPPLING (1), FLEXIBLE, PRIMITIVE (6)										

Skills: Athletics (S) +10, Dodge (Ag), Survival (Per) +10

Talents: Iron Jaw

Gear: Fur loincloth, Sea Devil scale breastplate, 18 arrows

Mirrored Hatred: Sky Father Servants have the Hatred (Starsworn) talent and Starsworn have the Hatred (Sky Father Servants) talent.



THE RUNDEEN AND ASKELLON

The Rundeen are a highly-superstitious and spiritual people, and shamanistic beliefs were extremely common on the world before the arrival of the Cult Imperialis. The discovery of the wider human galaxy has generated much doctrinal confusion within the native beliefs, and the Imperium's religious emissaries are brutally exploiting this to spread the influence of the Imperial Creed. As is commonly done, they seek to merge elements of the Imperial Creed narrative with local traditions. In practice, this invariably means that Rundeen converts adopt religious practices that differ on the surface from other civilised worlds in how the Emperor is named and worshipped. This is of little concern to the Ecclesiarchy, which has for millennia accepted minor doctrinal differences as the fruit of a successful conversion to acceptance of the Emperor. However, the Rundeen regard themselves as seekers after the truth of the Sky Father, and are often angered and confused when they learn of the variety of modes of worship displayed by offworlders. Exposure to the wider Imperium often leaves Rundeen with their faith shaken, and thus ripe for corruption.

ARDENTII PROSELYTISER

The agents of the Missionarus Galaxia are the preeminent emissaries of the Cult Imperialis to newly discovered inhabited worlds. However, there are occasionally delays in their arrival. When these occur, a host of local orders rush to fill the vacuum, with varying degrees of ability. In Askellon, Arch Cardinal Harus has created a small army of Proselytisers, fanatically loyal followers of the mysterious Saint Valerius, who travel the sector bringing word of his teachings to pagan and faithful alike.

The Proselytisers mimic the methods of the great Missionarus Galaxia, though with far less skill and subtlety. Invariably, they crudely overthrow existing civilisations or remake them into forms which can more easily be controlled. On Rund, many dozens of these zealots are actively campaigning to spread the word of the Sky Father, as the Emperor is named by the local tribes.

ARDENTII PROSELYTISER (MASTER) 15				
H 01-10 4	WS 38	BS 31	S 37	
AR 11-20 4	T 41	AG 34	INT 38	
AL 21-30 4	PER 37	WP 47	FEL 45	
B 31-70 8				IFL 34
LR 71-85 4				
LL 86-00 4				
HALF 3	FULL 6	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 15
PLASMA GUN CLASS BASIC				
RNG 90M	RoF S/2/-	DMG 1d10+7 (E)		
PEN 6	CLIP 40	RLD 5 FULL	WT 18 KG	AVL VR
SPECIAL: MAXIMAL, OVERHEATS				
HEAVY IRON-BOUND TOMES CLASS MELEE				
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+3 ^{SB} (I)		
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 2 KG	AVL PL
SPECIAL: PRIMITIVE (7)				

Skills: Charm (Fel), Command (Fel), Linguistics (High Gothic, Rundeen) (Int), Scholastic Lore (Ecclesiarchy, Imperial Creed, Rundeen Shamanism) (Int) +20

Talents: Frenzy, Hatred (Heretics), Peer (Ecclesiarchy)

Gear: Dataslates and parchments on the Rundeen language and culture, tattered robes, huge iron-bound tomes, portable shrine, Rundeen charms, Sea Devil heavy breastplate, 2 plasma flasks

Convert the Heathen: Ardentii Proselytisers gain a +20 bonus when using the Charm or Command skill on feral natives.

THE RISE OF THE OUTWORLDERS

Salawat McDunn and his Ecclesiarchical allies are not the only parties interested in Rund. Over the past five years, slavers from Askellon's underworld have targeted the world. Many of its islands are being emptied of vulnerable inhabitants, who are spirited away to lives of backbreaking labour in regional mining and agri-worlds.

This has angered many tribes, and a number of anti-Imperial cults have arisen. Many natives are poorly placed to distinguish between the sanctioned representatives of the Cult Imperialis and venal slavers, and this has led to tragic misunderstandings. In recent years, rumours have also surfaced of false or corrupt Imperial preachers who set themselves up as kings or messiahs.

AVENNITE SLAVER

Rund is currently a favoured destination for clandestine raids by the Avennite slaver clans, an outlaw collective of hereditary criminals operating throughout the Asphodel Depths. The Avennites prey upon isolated worlds, capturing natives for delivery to those seeking workers, pit fighters, or even subjects for mass sacrifice.

AVENNITE SLAVER (TROOP) 11				
H 01-10 2	WS 31	BS 34	S 30	
AR 11-20 4	T 29	AG 31	INT 29	
AL 21-30 4	PER 28	WP 30	FEL 28	
B 31-70 4				IFL —
LR 71-85 4				
LL 86-00 4				
HALF 3	FULL 6	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 6
WEBBER CLASS BASIC				
RNG 50M	RoF S/-/-	DMG —		
PEN 0	CLIP 1	RLD 1 FULL	WT 8 KG	AVL RA
SPECIAL: BLAST (5), SNARE (1)				
SHOCK TRUNCHEON CLASS MELEE				
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+4 ^{1+SB} (I)		
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 2 KG	AVL AV
SPECIAL: SHOCKING				

Skills: Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S) +10, Survival (Per)

Talents: Jaded, Takedown

Gear: Binders and gags, chains, armoured bodyglove, microbead, selection of trinkets, beads, and gewgaws, 2 ammo clips

Heartless: Avennite Slavers gain a +10 bonus to resist Charm or Intimidation skill tests made attempts against them.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: AT THE HEART OF MADNESS

Overview: The Acolytes investigate reports of a small number of mysterious unsanctioned psykers appearing on a variety of disparate worlds across Askellon. These traumatised psykers are all natives of Rund, transported by persons unknown to new lives of appalling exploitation. These pitiful individuals pose a lethal danger to all around them by virtue of their abilities, and this traffic in psykers must be stopped. These unfortunates were found working within the criminal underworld, and evidence mounts suggesting the infamous Avennite slaver clan are exploiting Rund's status as a fresh and practically defenceless world.

The Acolytes discover that the Avennite slavers are indeed kidnapping latent Rundeen psykers. The Acolytes also find that the slavers are in league with a corrupt and insane figure from within the religious delegation sent to convert the Rundeen to the worship of the Emperor. The Acolytes must investigate the trafficking back to its source, and purge the fallen priest in a climactic battle amid the burning volcanoes of Rund.

ACT I: THE LOST WITCHES

The Acolytes arrive among the frigid northern islands of Rund, the stronghold of the religious agents of the Askellian Adeptus Ministorum. There they meet Confessor Ragribadae, the head of the Ardentii Proselytiser delegation. They discuss their mission, and discover their first clue: many of the unsanctioned psykers are natives of a particular southern island, H'putia, in an area where one of the Proselytisers, Eparch Xaul, recently went missing. The Acolytes must prepare themselves for a long sea voyage in a Rundeen longboat, and must provision the vessel and gather a crew. This Act is primarily social and investigative.

ACT II: ROUGH WATERS

The Acolytes travel on a nightmarish sea voyage, crossing thousands of kilometres of ocean over several weeks. They are caught in monstrous storms and severe tsunamis that stretch across the entire horizon, and must defend themselves against Starsworn Rundeen tribesmen travelling in warships carved to resemble Imperial spacecraft. After enduring many trials and tribulations, all the while seeking to inspire and educate the Rundeen warriors who accompany them on their voyage, they are becalmed for days at a time. As water and supplies run low, the Acolytes are attacked by a pack of devious Karkinaxi, who clamber silently aboard the vessel while the Acolytes doze and begin dragging weakened sailors off one by one. The Acolytes must leap to the rescue of their Rundeen allies and ensure that they survive this seemingly endless voyage.

ACT III: ISLAND OF INSANITY

The Acolytes arrive at the southern Island of H'putia, the source of the unsanctioned psykers. The island is a tropical hellhole, swarming with hostile life forms, aggressive local tribes, and burning volcanoes. The Acolytes covertly scout the island, and discover that Eparch Xaul, the missing Ardentii Proselytiser, has apparently fallen to madness. He reigns over the local tribes, heretically posing as a cruel deity, brutally murdering those who oppose him.

Xaul occupies an ancient stone temple at the peak of the island's largest volcano. From there, he rants to his followers and treats with ruthless Avennite slavers in flagrant disregard of his holy duties to the natives who cower before him. The Acolytes must inspire and lead a violent uprising against this false prophet, choosing their moment carefully to coincide their attack with the growing Rundeen hatred and fear of their insane overlord. Under the lowering clouds of the erupting volcano, the Acolytes lead an army of Rundeen against Eparch Xaul, his tragically misguided followers, and his ruthless Avennite allies.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- The Acolytes are advised by Confessor Ragribadae that the Rundeen are at a critical stage in their growing understanding of the wider Imperium, and that they must not be exposed to Imperial technology, lest this process be disturbed.
- Eparch Xaul is himself a renegade psyker, unhinged by his developing powers. The Avennite slavers are trading Rundeen psykers for drugs that enable him to focus and develop his new abilities.
- Eparch Xaul is in fact being manipulated and controlled by Karkinaxi Sea Devils dwelling near his island, who are far more sinister and intelligent than realised. The Karkinaxi seek to remove all psykers from their world, as they interfere with their own evolving psychic powers.



SELVANUS BINARY

"Halt! The Fabricator insisted a purity of .000002%, else the pouring is invalid. Your result of .00003% is unacceptable. Expel the tonnage and prepare to re-pour the smelting."

—Smelt-Adept Baric Oreflow-Zeta

The trailing side of the Cycloplan Sub-Sector is a vast expanse of open space. On its inner edge sits the forge world of Selvanus Binary, known throughout Askellon for its high quality of products. One of the smallest of four planets in a dual-star system, it is the only one capable of handling life forms. Even so, the forges have irrevocably altered the planet to suit their needs, by covering the surface in all manner of refineries and manufacturing centres. It is now a strongly polluted planet, toxic to any human without protective gear or heavy augmentations, and very inhospitable—all as per the Omnisiah's wishes.

Though not the seat of power for the Askellian Mechanicum, Selvanus Binary holds itself as the true bastion of the Omnisiah's Will, as made manifest in the creations of his followers. Their strict adherence to this code and the Universal Laws has enabled them to refine the production of the most common STC patterns into wholly superior products. Their obsessive attention to detail also significantly reduces their capacity to produce the quantities other worlds demand—one of the reasons, most assume, that the forges of Askellon are ruled instead from Cerix Magnus.

Selvanus is also home to the Vaults, an artificial moon that remains in geosynchronous orbit above the High Fabricator's forge complex. Many believe that items of incredible technology from aeons ago lay housed on that satellite, waiting to be studied and possibly replicated. Only the revered members of the Quorum Primus and the most revered of the Selvanian Priesthood are allowed inside, and even they do not all have equal access. All members of the leadership know that there are many secrets they are not privy to, for there are levels upon levels within the complex that deny them entry. Those who have entered are only able to speak of their detached amazement and fear at what lies beneath its surface, but no one is able to describe a single item. It is believed that only the Quorum Primus has access to the entire contents of the Vaults, and most have not accessed it in many decades.

The relationship between Selvanus and the other forge worlds is a tenuous one, for it is isolationist even by the measures of the Tech-Priesthood. Surrounding the planet are the standard defence platforms and satellites, but also a series of twenty very large space stations designed as its interface with the rest of the sector. No one outside the Adeptus Mechanicus has been closer to the surface than these stations for many centuries, or at least none admit to the deed. Only a handful of the Fabricator-General's emissaries have been inside the forges. The Selvanian Priesthood dislikes disturbances from outsiders as much as intervention from within its own order, and the defence platforms have a standing order to shoot down any unauthorised craft that approaches the surface.

The forges are run by High Fabricator Dinuum, a longtime protégé of several on the Quorum Primus, and ostensibly the third in line to govern the Askellian forges, after his mentor and Arch-Magos Vas-Rhia of Rhodin IV. Dinuum is a true devotee of the Omnisiah, having realised that only by being as precise as possible can they, as his followers, truly create his works.

HOME WORLD: SELVANUS BINARY

Players can adopt Selvanus Binary as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Selvanus Binary follow the standard forge world rules (see page 34 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook), but with the following new Home World Bonus instead of the usual one:

HOME WORLD BONUS

Obsession to Tech-Ritual: A character from Selvanus Binary always seeks to follow the proper rites associated with correct usage of holy technology. As a Full Action, he may make a Difficult (–10) Logic test before using a device. If he succeeds, the device counts as being one level of craftsmanship higher (Poor becomes Average, Average becomes Good, etc.) until the end of the encounter. If he fails with a number of degrees of failure greater than his Willpower bonus, he gains 1 Insanity point.

His overzealous interpretations of the Universal Laws have carried down through the ranks of the forge world, to the point where they are unquestioned in the forges. Given the command of Selvanus at a fairly young age, Dinuum has been in control for over 250 years, largely due to his heavily augmented body and the aid of his own personal staff of Magi Biologis, who perpetually keep his few remaining organics healthy and strong. He seldom leaves the system, and usually only because he is summoned to Cerix Magnus. He has, however, made many trips to the Vaults as of late, a fact not lost upon others of the Arch-Magi.

PURITY OF FORM

The working doctrine of Selvanus Binary is that the Omnisiah's Will can only be seen in the works of his chosen ones. To that end, the Tech-Priests slavishly devote themselves to purifying and consecrating every step of the manufacturing process. From adding sacred oil into vats of liquefying metal to the recitations of each of the Universal Laws in-between each strike of the pneumatic hammers, the devotion to their faith is heard and seen in every stage of development. It has been this way for centuries, and though the end results are almost flawless devices, the quantities they produce are minuscule. The Quorum Primus has tried for many years to convince the Logi and Artisans of Selvanus to balance out the desire for quality with the need for quantity, and has always failed because they agree on one simple belief: a decrease in quality is considered failure in the eyes of the Omnisiah.

This has driven the Selvanian Priesthood to scrutinise every single detail to degrees most other forges would not even fathom. Materials are routinely cast away as being impure should any substance not part of the consecrated pattern accidentally find its way into them. Stories of immense cauldrons of molten metal being poured directly into crust-drains due to a thread from a Tech-Priest's robe falling into them, or sacred unguents deemed unfit for use because they were stored on the incorrect shelf, have been told for ages.



There is considerable waste in these actions, both in raw materials and time, but there is no arguing with the results, however. The craftsmanship from the Selvanus forges is, in many ways, the pinnacle of the Adeptus Mechanicus' capabilities, and there is never a shortage of buyers willing to pay the price.

This obsession with precision has come with a cost, however. Not everyone on Selvanus Binary adheres to the code as strictly as Dinuum would like. As the procedures and processes grow ever more stringent, some of the more aggressive Tech-Priests have begun to question the High Fabricator's logic and his sanity. The constant stream of production data from his attendant servo-skulls has occasionally driven him into a fugue state where he is immobilised often for hours on end, only to emerge from it re-engaging with whatever activity he was doing before. Many other of the senior Artisans and Magi have attempted to decipher the data coming from the skulls, but it is in a code that only the High Fabricator is able to understand. Attempts to aid Dinuum have been rebuffed, and anyone questioning his judgement often faces severe retribution.

According to furtively canted tales, one such occurrence happened soon after his ordination. One of Dinuum's peers, Artisan-Magos Karpathos, questioned the new High Fabricator as to what it was that he had seen in the Vaults that made him depart from their previous beliefs. Dinuum rebuffed the Artisan-Magos with a furious burst of binaric chatter before turning away to leave, a cloud of unfamiliar servo-skulls protectively floating about him. Karpathos was never seen again, but even without his presence, a much larger movement was sparked—one that operates in the shadows cast by the glow of molten metal.

THE FORGED ARISE

Karpathos' protégés began to ask about the Vaults and when they would be able to study its mysteries. They were told by their superiors-in-knowledge that as the Machine God deemed them worthy, they would be allowed to understand the greater secrets contained there. Many of these Tech-Priests reapplied themselves to their lines of study, but they never forgot the loss of their greatest teacher. Several of them claimed he had perished at Dinuum's hand, others that he had made a final trip to the Vaults to discover the secrets for himself. All said, however, that Karpathos had sent them coded transmissions to keep asking questions, each one marked with his personal rune, now subtly changed with fractal micro-crenulations. Calling themselves the Forged and believing that perpetual growth tempers and makes them stronger, they searched for further signs of their mentor, and showed others eager to learn the mysteries of the Vaults. Their hope was that they could help Dinuum see the failed logic of his position and thereby change it. That was not to be.

What started as an ideological break evolved into something entirely different. Following the disappearance of Karpathos, Dinuum continued to purge those with dissenting views. The most senior members of the Forged, those who maintained the original ideologies, calculated that they could engage the High Fabricator logically. Instead, they were made examples for the rest of the Selvanian Mechanicum to see. Dinuum had them stripped of all augmentation and sprayed the flailing, fleshy remains with a molten mix of impure metals, a monument which still stands outside the personal forge of the High Fabricator. The rest of the Forged immediately went into deep hiding, until recent times.

Most now who claim to be a part of the Forged have only a rudimentary knowledge of its origins. They have either forgotten or abandoned the hope of its founders, but they still know what they want: the knowledge of the Vaults. The vast majority of their membership comes from the lower-level Tech-Priests and novitiates soon after their initial augmentation by the Magi Biologis. They understand the dictates of Dinuum, but also have a strong belief that the Ommissiah has created all technology for humanity's benefit, and therefore must be studied. Those who have been proven members of this cult have been removed from the forges. None have seen them again, though the increased numbers of servitors leads many to conclude they still remain on the planet, in body if not mind.

Dinuum has struggled to keep this schism contained within the atmosphere of his planet. He has sought to locate the leaders of the Forged and bring them out into the open, to make examples of them and their treachery. To date, not one of the leaders has been captured, a testament to their cunning and their technical skill. Caught between the demands of Cerix Magnus, the binaric agitation of his own people, and the guardianship of the Vaults, Dinuum is very rarely able to leave the system. In his place go the other Artisan-Magi and Logi to provide all the basic data that the Askellian Fabricator-General requires; any other questions meet with elusive responses and plausible deniability. It is a stalling tactic at best, as the Quorum Primus threatens to place an ultimatum on Dinuum to personally attend at the next convening, or else be stripped of rank. Given the escalation in the tactics by the Forged, he may not maintain power that long.

THE PURE OF SELVANUS

Torn between the demands of Cerix Magnus, the growing rebellion in his own forges, and the terrible, ancient secrets within the Vaults, High Fabricator Dinuum holds to his path, desperately hoping that he can outlast the madness. He knows of the Forged and seeks to re-indoctrinate them with the help of the Magi Biologis. The rebels are becoming more overt in their actions, though, and he has thus far been unable to apprehend enough of their leadership to slow them down. More and more frequently, the High Fabricator goes to the Vaults, almost as though he is seeking new answers to his dilemmas; each time he comes back more determined to obtain higher levels of purity and adherence to the Ommissiah's sacred plans.

Dinuum believes with utter certainty in the aeons-old dangers to the Askellian Mechanicum, and that they must stay sealed away in orbit above him. He has seen the horrors of knowledge gone too far, and the terrors it unleashed upon Askellon many millennia ago, even before the arrival of the Imperium. Even though Knowledge is the underpinning of Understanding, much of what is in the Lower Vaults is too dangerous to know about, much less understand. As the Keeper of the Vaults, he has made this inner core inaccessible to anyone other than himself, the Lord Fabricator of the Quorum Primus, and Arch-Magos Vas-Rhia, for he knows that any lesser members of the priesthood would succumb to the temptations of forbidden technologies.

He guards against the impurity of new ideas and processes unless they can be proven consecrated and safe, designations he has personally vowed never to give. Under this direction, the last hundred years have improved the quality and purity of Selvanian products fifty-fold, but even now Dinuum cannot see how much more he can do. Already, the machine spirits of the forge equipment seem to express anger and reluctance to work with him or those who follow his edicts. This only serves to fuel his obsession with maintaining and raising his already incredibly high standards in attempts to appease the spirits, but to less avail each year.

This drive makes him more and more dependent on the swarm of mysterious servo-skulls providing him the latest production data. They appeared shortly following his ordination and first visit to the Lower Vaults, and he insists they have proven invaluable in helping the forge world achieve its pinnacle of excellence and purity. They never leave his side and never stop providing data, a nonstop flow of information that is slowly crushing even his incredible processing abilities.

Dinuum feels that his tireless efforts to keep the sanctity of his forges should be enough, and chafes under the Quorum Primus' suggestion that his production rates are insufficient to meet the needs of the Imperium. He alone has seen the price of straying from the Ommissiah's path, and he is caught between that potential betrayal to the Machine God and the reality of a rebellion on his doorstep, and perhaps has chosen the evil he knows over the one he cannot comprehend.



THE EBON SENTINELS

The Tech-Priests of Selvanus Binary pride themselves on their craftsmanship and devotion to the Ommissiah, and their guards are a stunning reminder of their skills. The greatest weapon of the

Ebon Sentinels, however, is the imposing presence they possess, a combination of their skull-faced masks and the subsonic emitters that terrify foes and demonstrate the superiority of the machine over flesh. Impressed with the efficiency and precision of Selvanus Binary's work, the Fabricator-General of Cerix Magnus ordered that they be used at all Mechanicum installations throughout Askellon. Though used predominantly as bodyguards and shock troops elsewhere, on Selvanus Binary they represent the bulk of the armed forces.



EBON SENTINELS (ELITE)					18
H ^{6 2} 01-10	13	WS	BS	S	5
AR ^{6 2} 11-20	13	48	42	42	
AL ^{6 2} 21-30	13	T	AC	INT	
B ^{6 2} 31-70	13	50	31	35	
LR ^{6 2} 71-85	13	PER	WP	FEL	
LL ^{6 2} 86-00	13	32	25	13	
		IFL			
HALF 3 FULL 6 CHARGE 9 RUN 18 THREAT 15					
SENTINEL PLASMA RIFLE					CLASS BASIC
RNG 120M		RoF S/5/10		DMG 1d10+5 (E)	
PEN 3	CLIP 40	RLD 1 FULL	WT 20 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: RELIABLE					
POWER HAND AXE					CLASS MELEE
RNG 5M		RoF —		DMG 1d10+10 ^{5+SB} (E)	
PEN 4	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 3 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: POWER FIELD, THROWN					

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Linguistics (Low Gothic) (Int), Parry (WS), Scrutiny (Per) +10, Security (Int), Tech-Use (Int)

Talents: Ambidextrous, Iron Jaw, Jaded, Rapid Reload, Strong Minded, Two-Weapon Master, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged), Unarmed Specialist

Traits: Machine (2), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (1)

Gear: Ebon Guard robes, Praetor Armour, 2 plasma flasks

Fearsome Visage: Whenever a character would make a melee attack against an Ebon Sentinel, he must make a Fear test against a Fear rating of 1. If he fails, he suffers a -10 penalty to his Weapon Skill test instead the regular Fear effects.

LEXILOCUTOR

The current protocols of Selvanus Binary's Tech-Priests with regard to uninvited guests do not engender positive relationships with their neighbours.

Their strict interpretation of the Ommissiah's code focuses on the purity of the machine through the edicts of the Quorum Primus. In accordance with this practice, Selvanian Tech-Priests developed a use for those in their fold who could not comprehend the full majesty of the Ommissiah's design, yet still wished to remain in the Priesthood. The Magi of Selvanus Binary created the Lexilocutors: lightly-augmented liaisons to help procure the materials they need and interface with any other dignitaries from Askellon.

Though still technically part of the Priesthood, the Lexilocutors do not function in the fabrication duties of Selvanus Binary. Their sole function is to be a more "human" face for the Priesthood on their orbiting stations, thus leaving the true Artificers and Magi to continue their work undisturbed. Following contact with outsiders, they are mind-wiped and cleansed of any impurity bestowed on them by the humans with whom they interact. Unless the visitors are from other forge worlds or have direct business with a specific Magos on Selvanus Binary, the Lexilocutors are likely to be the only Tech-Priests to be seen in this system.

LEXILOCUTOR (TROOP)					10
H ^{1 1} 01-10	6	WS	BS	S	
AR ^{1 1} 11-20	6	35	38	45	
AL ^{1 1} 21-30	6	T	AC	INT	
B ^{1 1} 31-70	6	45	40	52	
LR ^{1 1} 71-85	6	PER	WP	FEL	
LL ^{1 1} 86-00	6	48	32	33	
		IFL			
HALF 4 FULL 8 CHARGE 12 RUN 24 THREAT 4					
BINARY LAS PISTOL					CLASS PISTOL
RNG 30M		RoF S/2/-		DMG 1d10+2 (E)	
PEN 0	CLIP 30	RLD HALF	WT 2.5 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: RELIABLE, TWIN LINKED					
POWER SWORD					CLASS MELEE
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1d10+9 ^{5+SB} (E)	
PEN 5	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 3 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: BALANCED, POWER FIELD					

Skills: Charm (Int), Commerce (Int) +10

Talents: Jaded, Luminen Shock, Strong Minded

Traits: Machine (1), Mechanicus Implants

Gear: Luminen Capacitors, 2 ammo clips

Calculated Charm: A Lexilocutor uses his Intelligence instead of Fellowship when making Charm tests.

SELVANUS BINARY AND THE UNIVERSAL LAWS

The Universal Laws are the litany that all new Tech-Priests must absorb before they are inducted into proper schooling. At most Adeptus Mechanicus installations, the interpretations of these words are studied and interpreted in largely similar ways. Following his installation as High Fabricator and Keeper of the Vaults, however, Dinuum made a radically different interpretation altogether of the 6th and 7th Laws. The standard interpretation states that *Understanding leads to Comprehension* and *Comprehension is the Key to All Things*, and both of these leave the proverbial door open to deepening Understanding. Dinuum, after experiencing the full extent of the Vaults' contents—and perhaps comprehending more of the terrible secrets within than any before him—returned to Selvanus Binary's surface a changed man.

Coming back with a sense of both abject wonder and undeniable terror at what he had seen, he decreed that from that day, the sum of all sacred knowledge is already known and therefore cannot and should not be deepened—to go further is to blaspheme the Omnissiah's perfection. It is paramount, in his view, to master what is known and follow each step in the known processes to the highest level of precision. As a result, Dinuum constantly monitors the processes of his forges through an omnipresent choir of hovering servo-skulls, who constantly chatter production data at him, almost goading him into action.

His changes have also led to an unwillingness to explore information brought back by the Explorator Fleets, despite orders to the contrary from the Fabricator-General. Any previously unapproved deviation from long-held sacred plans, whether within allowed tolerances or not, is considered impure and therefore anathema. Dinuum insists the technology brought back from the Fleets has been exposed to unknown influences, and must thusly be purified before research can begin. The Quorum Primus recently

demand a compilation of the research done within the Vaults, seemingly unaware that the only things being collected there are dust and ignorance.

SUBDUAL SERVITOR

The Askellian Mechanicum views the rest of the sector with suspicion and disdain. Creatures of flesh are fallible and weak by nature, but also curious. This often brings the unwary to the doors of the Tech-Priests, who mete out their own justice for trespassers. The Subdual Servitors are designed for apprehension and retention of any who dare tread on Mechanicum ground without sanction. They have also been used to capture and reclaim heretekes for “repurposing.” On Selvanus Binary, these servitors are used as primary lines of defence aboard their stations to slow enemy combatants until the Ebon Sentinels arrive. In an effort to reduce the waste of raw resources, their armaments are designed for non-lethal results, so that offenders can be taken for questioning—or processing to replace any servitors that fall in the conflict.

SUBDUAL SERVITOR (TROOP)										14
H ^{2 3} 01-10 10		AL ^{2 3} 21-30 10		WS 31		BS 45		S 7		48
AR ^{2 3} 11-20 10		B ^{2 3} 31-70 10		T 8		AC 22		INT 20		
LR ^{2 3} 71-85 10		LL ^{2 3} 86-00 10		PER 45		WP 20		FEL 05		
				IFL —						
HALF 3		FULL 6		CHARGE 9		RUN 18		THREAT 8		
INTEGRAL SUBDUAL WEBBER										CLASS BASIC
RNG 50M		RoF S/-/-		DMG —						
PEN 0		CLIP 6		RLD 2 FULL		WT 10 KG		AVL VR		
SPECIAL: BLAST (3), SNARE (2)										
IMPLANTED SUBDUAL CLAW										CLASS MELEE
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1d10+10 ^{3+SB} (R)						
PEN 0		CLIP —		RLD —		WT 12 KG		AVL RA		
SPECIAL: CONCUSSIVE (0)										

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20

Talents: Sturdy, True Grit

Traits: Machine (3), Mind Lock, Unnatural Strength (3), Unnatural Toughness (3)

Non-lethal Force: Whenever a target would suffer Critical damage from a Subdual Servitor, the target instead gains that many levels of Fatigue.

THE CULT OF THE FORGED

Originally starting as a counter-discussion to High Fabricator Dinuum's proclamations, the Forged have taken a more aggressive stance in recent times, creating situations that test Dinuum's ultra-purist views. From adding trace amounts of fluorescent dyes into cooling moulds to slightly diluting sacred unguents for the gears of purity scanners, the Forged tread the line of sabotage very carefully. None of them desire to do permanent damage to the forge complexes, but they do want to shake the cage in which their High Fabricator has placed himself. Many find evidence of the work of other cells, such as brass shavings that reflect colours beyond the visible spectrum, iridescent feathers littering exhaust vents, and eruptions of screeching harmonics that cause servitors to stumble and fall. No cell has taken credit for these actions, but all calculations show more favourable probabilities for their cause with each occurrence.

The Forged maintain a semblance of normal duties, but allow themselves a moment before their short sleep cycle to commune and await new transmissions from their lost mentor. Those members proven sufficiently worthy now have a new tech-rune encoded into their cranial implants—the sigil of the First Questioner, Karpathos. Woven into it is a link to new data, data that generates new thoughts beyond those permitted by the regimentation of Dinuum's dictates. These new ideas are treated as proof that their cause is just, and that the Omnissiah has bestowed them with new Knowledge and Understanding bringing them all to deeper Comprehension.

Though the Forged treat discoveries like this as proof of their connection to the Ommissiah, they cloak their findings from those who adhere to the strict guidance of the High Fabricator. They know that the day of enlightenment is coming, and only then can the entire priesthood bask in the glory of the new ideas and capabilities they have found.

Those in leadership roles at each forge complex know that the power to reach that point lies in having numbers outweighing the resistance. Many of these leaders have sought new ways to instruct novitiates as they receive their implants, as well as finding new ways to place the rune in the heads of more people. There are even rumours that the Felstaff Complex, the enormous forge responsible for making the majority of the implants used locally, has created circuitry incorporating the elaborate rune, but thus far none have been detected.

MAGOS BIOLOGIS OF THE FORGED

Often the bottom of the unspoken caste system of the Askellian Tech-Priesthood, the Magi Biologis are nonetheless vital to the survival of the Machine Cult in the sector. Tasked with the upkeep and maintenance of the flesh which house the implants, these individuals understand the balance of the machine and man better than most, knowing that without one, the other cannot endure.

On Selvanus Binary, where the prevailing wisdom venerates the machine even more so than on other forge worlds, it is this minority voice that has often been drowned out. The obsessive adherence to the word of the Universal Laws is the nature of all the Selvanian Priesthood, but for the Magi Biologis, this has manifested in compulsive research into making the flesh also perfect. Though more human looking than their brethren, there is no mistaking their zealous devotion to ensuring that the hosts of the Ommissiah's implants are more than just acceptable. The Forged, followers of a new Selvanian interpretation of the code, have adopted these Magi as part of their fold. The Biologis priests have lent support in many ways, but their ability to hide modifications to many of the implants used by the sect has made them valuable allies.

MAGOS BIOLOGIS OF THE FORGED (ELITE) 15

H ^{2 2} 01-10 10		WS 48		BS 39		S ⁶ 43	
AR ^{2 2} 11-20 10		AL ^{2 2} 21-30 10		T ⁶ 46		AC 36	
B ^{2 2} 31-70 10		PER 52		WP 43		INT 55	
LR ^{2 2} 71-85 10		LL ^{2 2} 86-00 10		FEL 21		IFL —	

HALF 3 FULL 6 CHARGE 9 RUN 18 THREAT 9

SELVANIAN NEEDLE PISTOL CLASS PISTOL

RNG 30M		RoF S/-		DMG 1D10 (R)	
PEN 1		CLIP 6		Wt 1.5 KG	
RLD 1 FULL		AVL ER			

SPECIAL: ACCURATE, FELLING (1), RELIABLE, TOXIC (5)

SELVANIAN POWER MAUL CLASS MELEE

RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1D10+11 ^{S+SB} (E)	
PEN 4		CLIP —		Wt 3 KG	
RLD —		AVL ER			

SPECIAL: BALANCED, POWER FIELD, SHOCKING

Skills: Logic (Int) +20, Medicae (Int) +20, Scholastic Lore (Biology, Chymistry, Genetics) (Int) +20, Tech Use (Int)+20, Trade (Chymist, Morticator) (Int) +10

Talents: Jaded, Luminen Shock, Mechadendrite Use (Utility, Medicae)

Traits: Machine (2), Mechanicus Implants, Unnatural Strength (2), Unnatural Toughness (2)

Gear: Adeptus Mechanicus armoured robes, luminen capacitors, medicae mechadendrite, 2 ammo clips

Weaknesses of the Flesh: When performing a Standard Attack action against Tech-Priests or others with extensive cybernetic parts in melee combat, the Magos can make a Tech-Use test instead of the normal Weapon Skill test.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: THE INNER WORKINGS

Overview: In this template, what starts as an action against a Faceless Trade group becomes a larger matter of conspiracies. It can be used as a diversion as the warband begins an Inquest into forbidden artefact smuggling, or as a follow-up after it finishes uncovering a new smuggling group. The template offers the PCs strong opportunities for social investigations and high-Subtlety actions. It also offers any Acolytes from forge worlds or with an Adeptus Mechanicus background interesting avenues for roleplaying, as it delves into secretive activities on one such world between opposing factions within the Askellian Mechanicum.

ACT I: A DEAL GONE BAD

The PCs are contacted twice to arrange for a meeting, from others clearly assuming they are part of the smuggling group the Acolytes are either actively infiltrating or have just taken out. The goal is an item the Acolytes recently recovered, perhaps a sealed container they have not opened or an inert, inactivated device. The PCs arrange for the meet, possibly adopting disguises for the smugglers they are assumed to be, but what they do not know is that the contacts were from two separate groups, each eager for the item.

When the Acolytes arrive at the agreed-upon location, it is clear that a firefight has just finished between what look like heavily-armoured troopers (Ebon Sentinels) and Tech-Priests (members of the Forged). There are no survivors, only bodies and questions. Searching the bodies provides information that ties both groups to the forge world of Selvanus Binary. There are orders to the Sentinels to capture the heretical Tech-Priests, and communiqués to the Tech-Priests warning them of pursuit by the Sentinels.

ACT II: INITIAL QUESTIONS

The Acolytes probably want to learn more about their situation. Luckily, they can use the resources left behind at the meet. They also have channels to contact both groups, either from smuggler gear obtained earlier or vox systems the firefight victims carried. Research is called for at this stage, to uncover more about the two groups and why they would desire the same item. The PCs need to understand the terms of the trade and what is expected in return for the item (this can vary according to the GM's plans). Attempts to get information from the surrounding public about the two groups or their markings bring very little information, but attracts unwanted attention from other members of these groups.

The Acolytes likely notify one group to arrange another meeting, but if so, then the other group contacts the warband with strong threats that they must gain the item. If this is their first time with the Faceless Trade, the PCs might need to do research into the group they are impersonating, and even attract the attention from other members of that organisation. The Acolytes can also scout out their chosen location and prepare it for the next meet, knowing the groups involved do not shy away from violence.

ACT III: CULTS OF THE MACHINE

The Acolytes arrive at the second meet, and their chosen group is there waiting. The PCs must follow the agreed-upon trade deal, as well as impersonate the original smugglers. Based on their successes or failures in gathering the correct information, they may be properly ready, or might be displaying the wrong colours or use out-dated code phrases. If the trade goes smoothly, the Acolytes receive a small number of Selvanian-made arms. Once the deal is made, though, the opposing party appears to steal the item. During the fight, it is damaged and releases a small cloud of noxious vapour. Any remaining Forged cultists try to contain the effects, but the gas rapidly eats away at their metallic forms, reducing them to piles of decaying flesh and rusted implants.

The Sentinels quickly move away from the cloud, using miniature melta-bombs to reduce the cultists to piles of ashes, and then move to leave. If the Acolytes try to get information from them, the Sentinels act as though nothing has just happened and inform them that the exchange is complete. If the Acolytes press them further, the Sentinels attempt to intimidate them using their subsonic masks or worse; with nothing left of the item or the cultists as evidence, they clearly desire the matter forgotten. The arms the Acolytes receive are exquisitely made, but fail after only one use as the internal mechanisms fuse into a solid mass. The Acolytes are left with only mysteries and the knowledge that there is something on Selvanus Binary that requires further investigation.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS:

- During the final meeting, one of the Forged plants a Chaos icon on the Sentinels or calls them heretics, a plan suggested by their unseen mentor in yet another mysterious transmission.
- If the Acolytes never arrive at the second meeting, either deciding to ignore the directions or were delayed, the group expecting them is violently upset and arranges for a series of technological failures on the PCs transports and other devices.
- The item is revealed to be an obvious fake, perhaps when its container opens up during the final meeting by accident. It is unlikely any of the other parties involved believe this, though, and both assume the Acolytes are out to keep the real item.

SNOPE'S WORLD

"Then I beheld the verdant land towards which the Blessed Saint had guided me these many years I wandered. I fell to my knees and wept tears of joy, for the Emperor's Hand was upon me, and by His Will would we forever reign among the stars."

*—from The Chronicle of Lord Drazitine
and the Path of the Iridescent Saint*

Snope's World was once one of the most prominent worlds within Askellon, and it is said that, at the height of its power, its influence stretched well past the distant spires of the Pellucid Tower. Now, however, it is little more than a poisonous swamp, its towering spires gradually falling into ruin as its rulers squabble over the last scraps of wealth like starving canids. Even more distressing is the evidence that the planet's once lucrative trade routes are becoming weaker every year, and many now fear Snope's World imminent isolation, its seething masses falling on each other as their last vital links are severed.

AN AUSPICIOUS HERITAGE

According to legend, Snope's World was originally a beautiful world of pristine, flower-filled forests and glittering emerald seas teeming with life. Strangely, it was also one of the few worlds left uninhabited during the sector's founding, though it is believed that the first sector lords were aware of both its presence and splendour prior to its disappearance into the maelstrom many millennia ago.

The man credited with its discovery is Lord Drazitine, fourth scion of the Hadaeko Trader Dynasty, and heir to that failing legacy. Drazitine's fortune had been in perpetual decline since the loss of a frigate that passed through the tumultuous wake of a dying star during Warp transit. Legend says that the insane and anguished wails of the doomed vessel's occupants, including those of his wife and sole heir, echoed from every vox on his flagship as he helplessly watched the Immaterium swallow the vessel.

Believing that luck and the Emperor had forsaken him, Drazitine sank into despair, his fortune wasting away as his ships aimlessly plied the void. Then one night, as the grief-stricken lord stared out an observation blister into the riotous confusion of the Sea of Souls, a figure swathed in pious robes of shimmering starlight appeared before him, revealing to him a virgin world that would forever secure his family's legacy. Though Drazitine never explicitly revealed the figure's name, Askellian scholars believe it to have been Saint Coronia the Iridescent, and have subsequently added this apparition to her other miraculous deeds.

The saga of Drazitine's epic voyage has since passed into myth and legend, and after years of trials, tribulations, and catastrophes, the remains of his battered convoy finally arrived within the distant Askellon Sector. Upon re-emergence into realspace, the great storm Pandaemonium inexplicably parted before the weary vessels, thus granting passage to a region of space that had hitherto remained unexplored for millennia. Afterwards, the fleet soon discovered an emerald globe in orbit around a bright and vigorous star, and Drazitine's ships quickly took up high anchor as the Rogue Trader himself led the first shuttles down to its idyllic surface.

HOME WORLD: SNOPE'S WORLD

Players can adopt Snope's World as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Snope's World follow the hive world rules (see page 38 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook), but with the following new Home World Bonus instead of the usual one:

HOME WORLD BONUS

Attention to Nuance: A character from Snope's world starts with one rank of the Deceive skill and one rank of the Scrutiny skill. He also gains a +20 bonus to tests he makes to determine the warband's Subtlety value.

Following this discovery, the great technological leviathans of the Imperium quickly arrived to strip Snope's World of its mineral resources, and centuries of mining eventually replaced the verdant jungles with chemical bogs and squalid swamps. Meanwhile, massive trawlers, each the size of a small city, dredged the river beds and tropical coasts for rare silicates, or probed the ocean depths in order to plunder the vast reserves of raw promethium waiting beneath the waves. Most of the indigenous species did not survive, their teeming multitudes replaced with unnatural mutations and hardy predators better able to endure the resulting pollution and deadly acid rain. After centuries of unchecked exploitation, though, the planet's resources have begun to decline, and with them the legacy that Drazitine had bequeathed to his successors.

HIVE SATURNA AND THE SATURNAL COURT

Currently, only a dozen of the hundreds of production hives that once covered Snope's World retain any vestiges of power, the planet's aristocracy having largely abandoned the others as their crumbling infrastructure became too hazardous for their ornate soaring spires. The oldest and most influential is Hive Saturna, whose venerable foundations are said to be situated upon the exact spot where Drazitine first set foot planetside those many centuries ago. This towering hive is home to not only the planetary governor and the ruling Saturnal Conclave, but also to the illustrious Platinal Palace, which Lord Drazitine himself commissioned to honour the divine figure who guided him. It is believed that each of the millions of glittering angles set upon the spire represents a soul lost during the treacherous voyage, though Imperial scholars have long debated the significance of the bizarre gestures of supplication displayed among the immense, angelic host.

The Saturnal Court still dwells within this masterpiece of Imperial architecture, and it is from the ranks of these corrupt remnants of the world's gentry that the Saturnal Conclave draws its delegates. During the height of its power, the Court encompassed the wealthiest inhabitants of Askellon, a status that led to struggles for dominance as the planet's wealth began to wane. Such conflicts often ended violently, and each family is rumoured to have had a sizeable cadre of bodyguards, combat and sniffer servitors, assassins, spies, and others skilled in the deadly arts at its disposal.

THE LURE OF THE OCCULT

Across the many worlds that humanity has claimed, worship of great historical figures is extremely widespread. Snope's World is no exception to this, as there are many here for whom the name Drazitine is held in particular reverence. Within the great Hive Saturna, faith in the Cult of the Iridescent Saint or pledges to the devout Children of Coronía are also particularly prevalent, though similar shrines often appear in the many cathedrals across the planet.

The denizens of Snope's World are also notorious for their intensely superstitious customs, a practice that the frequent wars of propaganda among the noble houses only exacerbates. Yet interspersed with these harmless beliefs are other, darker traditions that involve macabre and gruesome offerings in exchange for protection from the myriad dangers believed to lurk in the dark, polluted depths. Occult beliefs are natural extensions of such activities, for it is often only a small leap from simple charms and wards to more dangerous paths of corruption and power.

The sheer variety of occult activity on Scope's World is almost beyond comprehension, as the numerous factors and conflicting motives for the activities of these groups have spawned countless expressions of blasphemy over the years. Cults infatuated with various Dark Saints are often popular warrens for recidivists and other malcontents with deviant political ambitions. Meanwhile, other groups such as the Cult of the Deceiver, the Society of the Celestial Façade, and the Enclave of Obscure Erudition run the gamut from eccentric social gatherings to dangerous heretical cabals that threaten the very foundations of Imperial rule. Even more alarming is the rise of innumerable cults dedicated to the power of the great Warp storm Pandaemonium, such as the Disciples of Disorder, Pathos de Tenumbrae, Tempestial Brotherhood, and Chosen of the Storm. Many are consumed with the insane goal of enticing the swirling maelstrom to engulf their world in an unstoppable tide of unrestrained madness. The Inquisition and other servants of the Emperor have destroyed countless such cults among the increasingly disheartened populace, yet for every heretic that faces judgement, another arises, a pawn of the baleful shadow the storm casts across the minds of those it chooses.

However, following the notorious Dinner of the Poisoned Blades, when fully one in five of the members of the noble households were messily murdered during a three-day banquet, the then planetary governor Viceroy Nadrathor decided to take drastic measures. He decreed that even the consideration of such dishonourable and underhanded tactics was unworthy of a true servant of the Emperor, and would henceforth result in the severest of punishments for any so accused. It is rumoured that the resulting opposition within the Saturnal Conclave was formidable, though Imperial records are vague as to which of the delegates survived the subsequent debates and which merely resigned in protest.



The effects of his actions were two-fold. First, the level of deception in Saturnal politics escalated, as the countless plots became an even more twisted morass of deceptions, false rumours, and covert assassinations. Second, it prompted an immediate deluge of charges brought before the High Juriducial Courts, as the noble houses sought reparations from their rivals for every real and imagined offence ever inflicted on them and their ancestors.

The ensuing litigation resulted in an impasse that has persisted to this day; by the time a case finally comes before a magistrate, laws have changed, evidence is lost or fabricated, or one of the principal parties has died of old age, thereby opening up countless avenues of objections which force the case back to square one.

This rampant atmosphere of collusion and deceit has bred all manner of secret societies that continue to thrive, even as Snope's World slips further downwards. It is widely believed that nearly every member of the Saturnal Court is a member of a secret order of some sort. Many are merely social affairs, their members seeking a clandestine way to advance their respective agendas or indulge their private vices away from the constant scrutiny of courtly life. Others are more insidious, their existence serving only to entrap fellow nobles or gain exploitable knowledge. There are even some whose sole purpose is to supplant or exterminate any rivals, acts that constitute treason if detected.

Yet scattered amongst this impenetrable web of deceit are other, more diabolical cabals dedicated to any number of forbidden pursuits and heretical practices. A great many of these began as simple pleasure cults or harmless acts of rebellion that inevitably serve as fertile breeding grounds for darkness and corruption. Others have instead become tools for devious recidivists, dangerous radicals, and other heretics who use their newfound wealth and influence to advance their hideous designs. Such cults represent the single greatest threat to Imperial rule on Snope's World, and despite countless investigations and repressive actions, the true perpetrators often manage to melt into the shadows, only to reappear elsewhere and continue their activities anew.

PRAVOSIAN ADJUDICATOR

A Pravosian Adjudicator is an agent of the Court who specialises in various acts of covert assassination, espionage, and counter-intelligence. He is also master of the social and political niceties that characterise the Saturnal Court, a trait that allows him to glide undetected amidst the profligate nobility. The powerful houses of Snope's World employ such an individual to advance their incessant schemes of intrigue and misdirection, as well as safeguard themselves from the many hazards of genteel life within the gleaming Platinal Palace.

As per his profession, a Pravosian Adjudicator is absolutely dedicated to the secrecy of his employer, and few ever have reason to contact one directly. Instead, the agent receives his fees and instructions via a formalised system of compensation and collaboration, using pre-established covert networks and clandestine organisations. In addition to protecting his benefactor's persona, this system has the added benefit of making the agent a more effective tool of subterfuge, as none can say for certain whether an agent's orders are compromised before their delivery.

PROVOSIAN ADJUDICATOR (ELITE)					16	
H 3 01-10		AL 2 5 21-30		WS 43	BS 46	S 35
AR 2 5 11-20	B 2 5 31-70		T 33	AG 40	INT 45	
LR 2 5 71-85	LL 2 5 86-00	PER 43	WP 31	FEL 47		
				IFL	—	
HALF 4	FULL 8	CHARGE 12	RUN 24	THREAT 7		
SILENCED LASPISTOL					CLASS PISTOL	
RNG 15M	RoF S/2/-	DMG 1D10+1 (E)				
PEN 0	CLIP 15	RLD HALF	WT 1 KG	AVL SC		
SPECIAL: COMPACT, RELIABLE, SILENCER						
POISONED MONO-STILETTO					CLASS MELEE	
RNG 5M	RoF —	DMG 1D5+4 ^{1+SB} (R)				
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 1 KG	AVL AV		
SPECIAL: TOXIC (3), THROWN						

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Awareness (Per) +10, Charm (Fel) +10, Deceive (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag), Linguistics (High Gothic) (Int), Medicae (Int), Parry (WS), Scrutiny (Per) +10, Security (Int), Sleight of Hand (Ag), Stealth (Ag)

Talents: Ambidextrous, Constant Vigilance, Counter Attack, Quick Draw, Precision Killer

Gear: Absolution capsule (single dose), armoured bodyglove beneath stylish and expensive clothing and jewellery, disguise kit, ornate chrono, vial of gerna fish venom, 2 ammo clips

Deceitful Aspect: An Adjudicator scores 2 additional degrees of success on successful tests to avoid notice, hide, or avoid suspicion when he is part of a group.

PORT LANGUIN

Situated off the coast of the second largest landmass, this thriving port city is constructed atop the remains of a gigantic mobile refinery. Hundreds of these devices once roamed the planet in their never-ending search for promethium and other mineral deposits. Now their valuable mechanisms and technological secrets make them targets for the treacherous nobility and enterprising raiders.

The behemoth on which Port Languin is constructed was designed to dock with the towering nautical drilling wells. Laden with promethium, its internal processing plants then refined the crude for a variety of industrial, military, and void-faring applications on its journey back to the bustling orbital docks. Centuries ago, this particular machine halted, its massive servos seizing and its towering front legs buckling, as it gradually settled down into the thick muck within sight of the nearby coast. Luckily for the occupants, their home did not sink entirely below the waves, and generations later it has grown into a massive, thriving city.

Space on Port Languin is generally at a premium, with the more affluent constructing additional levels at higher altitudes or residing in great domiciles formed from the original berths that housed the walker's crew. Meanwhile, the majority of the city's inhabitants live on massive floating pontoons or in ramshackle sheds, attached directly to the corroded superstructure and supported by salvaged parts and rickety walkways that sway and creak in the pungent ocean breeze. For the average citizen of Port Languin, life is bleak, wet, and—with the exception of the occasional acid storm, rogue wave, oil fire, or accident at sea—uneventful, and most spend their entire lives toiling in the refineries or unloading crude on the pontoon docks.

The port's lifeblood is promethium and other valuable fuels, and its attendant fleet of archaic tanker ships, civilian patch jobs, and other ramshackle craft continue to supply it with a steady supply from those few wells and rigs that still function. The crews of these vessels transport their precious cargo any way they can, and many of the countless skirmishes, bitter feuds, and costly accidents among these vessels occur when ships either lose their cargo overboard or collide in their frantic attempts to offload their steadily leaking payloads.

The refineries aboard Port Languin still function despite the centuries that have passed since the massive walker's last step, and as a result the port enjoys regular trade with nearby hive cities, as well as the occasional interstellar vessel. The Fuel Barons of Port Languin have become quite wealthy in their own way; most even enjoy fair relations with the other noble houses, many of whom are rumoured to loathe intermingling with the descendants of their former servants.

As with much of Snope's World, instances of corruption and heresy are increasingly common among the citizens of Port Languin, including numerous attempts to usurp or sabotage the Fuel Barons' tight control over their precious promethium reserves. The ready availability of such a viable fuel source has also made the city a convenient location for trafficking in profane and prohibited items among the unscrupulous traders that frequent the port city. However, the true extent of such deals can only be guessed, for few imagine what horrors change hands within the rickety, oil-slick undertown that sways unsteadily beneath the city's gloomy bulk.

THE MELDORIAN TRENCHES

The Meldorian Trenches refers to both the massive quarries that originally comprised the boundaries of Hive Meldorf, as well as the sprawling city that sprung up amidst the corpse of the great hive that formerly overlooked them. Situated at the mouth of the Thidillic River, this teeming megalopolis was one of the most prosperous hives represented within the Saturnal Court, and its glittering palisades were home to the countless bulk lifters and cargo shuttles that once flocked to the wealthy spire.

Yet the lords of this celestial marvel delved far too greedily and too deeply into the mountain that formed the hive's foundation, for one day, the spire toppled and collapsed, and with it one of the planet's main trade empires. It is said that the impact of this dreadful event was felt across Snope's World, and that the fallout from the resulting earthquakes and dust clouds devastated the surrounding ecology and human settlements for years.

Instead of killing off the great hive, though, the fall merely changed its direction, and soon the dazed survivors began to slowly rebuild their shattered city amidst the skeletal ruins of their former home. The spire's catastrophic failure had irreparably destroyed the once lucrative manufacturums, while the massive quarries and mighty river were then inundated with vast quantities of toxic runoff and debris. Currently, the river is little more than a series of interconnected mires and murky pools whose banks are choked with slag weed, barbed keratin creepers, and other stunted vegetation. Though the trenches have fallen into disrepair, the people of the sprawling habs who cling desperately to its precipitous slopes continue to eke out a wretched existence, their workers either scrabbling across the muddy slopes for ore and other refuse, or refining the putrid gases that bubble up from the flooded caverns below.

The sprawl itself is a confused hodgepodge of salvaged buildings, repurposed equipment, and cavernous, exhausted mines, all crammed with habs, improvised shops, and manufacturums. Each of these uneven structures is attached either to anchor points or bolted directly to the nearby trench walls. A journey from one hab block to another is apt to include numerous detours, rickety walkways, endless stairwells, and perilous climbs. Meanwhile, the many cranes and maglev systems once used to carry ore from the great mines now serve as lifts for workers to and from the rank, stagnant muck that pools beneath the city proper.

The toxic pools below this massive city are the bane of its citizens, for those that spend their lives near the putrid water risk all manner of maladies from exposure to this viscous, contaminated filth. Yet instead of ending their misery, many of these foul impurities only prolong their victim's suffering, as the vile toxins rot them from the inside out.

Now the wretched inhabitants of this city's underhive have begun to view these painful maladies as the Emperor's divine judgement, and the afflicted as sinners worthy of persecution. This belief has inspired countless radical throngs of religious zealots to engage in purges of the lower levels, through cleansing chemical fire and acts of mob violence that defy rational comprehension. Yet their fears are often justified; those afflicted that embrace their condition frequently turn on others in grotesque displays of unnatural strength and resilience, and ferociously drag their victims down into the stagnant swamps below.

THE DREGS

Though most of Snope's World's mineral resources were exhausted long ago, the planet's downtrodden multitudes continue to toil day and night within the surviving manufacturums, which provide the bulk of the income for the various noble houses that cling desperately to their precarious positions of power. The most powerful of these houses maintain scattered ties with the rest of the Askellon Sector, their ancient merchant pacts and mandatory trade accords supplying the majority of the ores and other raw materials needed to continue production. Most hives specialise in various luxury spaceship components, including magnificent fractal viewing blisters and ornate void-shielded observation bays, in addition to any necessary industrial and military manufacturing.

However, there are still a few houses among Snope's World's nobility that continue to claw futilely at the remains of their hereditary holdings, in order to extract the last dregs of mineral wealth. The most common of these efforts involve the collection of industrial runoff from the vacant mineshafts below for reprocessing, or the employment of vast hordes of conscripts to seek out any remaining deposits beneath the scarred and toxic surface. However, this steady proliferation of increasingly desperate mining tactics has had a profound impact on the structural integrity of many hives in recent decades, and instances of collapse among the outlying districts are now appallingly frequent occurrences. Yet such matters are of little importance to the members of the Saturnal Court, even as their ruthless exploitation threatens to destroy the very foundations of their ill-gotten power.



By contrast, life outside these decrepit hives is an incredibly desperate affair, with far-flung communes struggling to scratch out a living amidst exhausted claims, and huge worker caravans migrating across the poisoned landscape in search of work within the isolated labour hives that still stand. Employment within these rickety, corroded structures is far from ideal, however, and countless battles and massacres frequently erupt over jobs so hazardous that a constant stream of workers is required just to maintain the estimated production quotas.

HEXACATION SPECIALIST

The cavernous mines beneath Snope's World's hives are rife with opportunity for those unscrupulous individuals trained in the proper placement and detonation of explosive charges. Though ostensibly employed as part of deep mine expeditions or attempts to combat the inevitable collapse of the decaying industrial infrastructure, most make their living as hired killers willing to cause havoc in the name of the highest bidder. Whether an ex-Guardsman or a ruthless mercenary, Hexacation Specialists are cruel and twitchy killers whose penchant for destruction and frequent forays into the perilous underhive have garnered them a nasty reputation for instability and violent devastation.

HEXACATION SPECIALIST (TROOP)					12
H ² 01-10 5		WS 38		BS 41	S 30
AR ² 11-20 5	AL ² 21-30 5	T 37	AC 40	INT 37	
B ² 31-70 5		PER 36	WP 32	FEL 26	
LR ² 71-85 5	LL ² 86-00 5	IFL 47			
HALF 4	FULL 8	CHARGE 12	RUN 24	THREAT 7	
AUTOPISTOL			CLASS PISTOL		
RNG 15M	RoF S/-6	DMG 1D10+1 (I)			
PEN 0	CLIP 9	RLD 1 FULL	WT 1.5 KG	AVL AV	
SPECIAL: COMPACT, RELIABLE, SILENCER					
EXCAVATION CHARGE			CLASS THROWN		
RNG 9M ^{3xSB}	RoF —	DMG 2D10+3 ^{INTB} (X)			
PEN 0	CLIP 1	RLD —	WT 1 KG	AVL AV	
SPECIAL: BLAST (2), CONCUSSIVE (0)					

Skills: Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per), Intimidate (S), Tech-Use (Int) +10

Talents: Quick Draw, Technical Knock

Gear: Demolition kit with 3 excavation charges, claim map, flak-reinforced survival suit, glow-globe, grapnel & line, 2 ammo clips
 Shaped Charge: A Hexacation Specialist adds his Intelligence bonus to the damage he inflicts with thrown weapons with the Blast quality, and adds his Intelligence bonus to the penetration of any explosives that he places instead of throws.

BENEATH THE MASKS

Life within the Saturnal Court is an increasingly fragile pageantry of which every participant is painfully aware, yet no one is willing to shatter. Instead, the lords and ladies cloak their every action in elaborate veils of serenity and luxury, even as their social hierarchy continues to fracture. Many have even become so self-deluded that they are easily disconnected from reality, their minds retreating into the opulent fantasy of Saturnal society's relentless succession of balls, dinners, grand coronations, and other frivolous formalities.

Status is everything among the elite here, and any Court member who successfully garbs himself in the trappings of authority can quickly become a formidable opponent. As a result, the nobility of Snope's World go to great lengths to outdo each other with incredible displays of affluence and status. Though such spectacles are not uncommon amongst the unfathomably wealthy of the Imperium, here such demonstrations are elaborate in the extreme, including grand parades of press-ganged marchers and pampered aristocrats whose ostentatious titles take hours to recite.

In order to survive in such a society, one must not only appear powerful but also perfectly calm and composed, for even the slightest hint of uncertainty can betray weakness to a potential adversary. For this reason, the nobles of Snope's World are masters of the art of dissembling, with many further augmenting their abilities with neural implants and delicate servo-muscular modulators designed to hide their emotions behind veneers of tranquillity. Others instead choose to conceal their face entirely, through the use of rictus masks of flawless vat-grown flesh, or intricate carvings of delicate porcelain or pearlescent silicate.

In light of such rampant duplicity, reliably untainted information is a rarity, and its acquisition and exchange has become a lucrative profession for those who conduct business among the elite of Snope's World. Such returns come at a high price, however, as witnesses to even the most circumstantial evidence of wrongdoing or weakness are often subject to assassination, torture, and other unspeakable atrocities in order to protect the image of the individual in question. Personal servants and fellow conspirators are often highly suspect in this cutthroat world of information dealing, and it is now customary for noble houses to entomb senior or favoured servants alive with their deceased lord in order to ensure his secrets die with him. These servants go willingly, in the belief it is a true honour for themselves and their families to accompany their masters on these final journeys.

Environments as adapted to deception as this are ripe breeding grounds for heresy and recidivism, and the Court is no exception. Here, among the power hungry nobility, the promises of Chaos—of power, wealth, endless pleasures, freedom from mortality, or the blood of a hated enemy—are tempting offers for aristocrats so desperate to regain their former glory. Among such individuals, the countless secrets of the Court shield their dark ambitions from discovery, thus allowing their malevolent intentions to grow and fester among the shadows and furtive whispers. This influence is usually subtle at first, often taking years to manifest within the blighted souls of its victims; they plot and scheme against their rivals in an attempt to sow seeds of corruption among their fellow citizens. By their very nature, any such individuals must always keep their affiliations a closely guarded secret, meaning that, by virtue of their upbringing, the heretics of Snope's World are amongst the most devious in all the Askellon Sector.



TEMPESTIAL BROTHERHOOD MALEDITE

As one of the myriad cults of Snope's World dedicated to the worship of the Pandaemonium, every member of the Tempestial Brotherhood is obsessed with the massive maelstrom's inexorable advance on the planet. At the core of their madness is the belief that, through embracing this inevitable doom, they can call upon the powers of the Warp to hasten this great envelopment, and thus free themselves from the shackles of their physical existence. To this end, they are harbingers of anguish and despair, each working tirelessly to undermine the faith of Saturna's denizens with little consideration for their own wellbeing.

BROTHERHOOD MALEDITE (TROOP)					11
H ² 01-10 3		WS BS S 35 38 38			
AR ¹ 11-20 4	AL ¹ 21-30 4	T AC INT 36 35 27			
B ³ 31-70 6		PER WP FEL 37 38 28			
LR ¹ 71-85 4	LL ¹ 86-00 4	IFL —			
HALF 3	FULL 6	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 5	
AUTOGUN			CLASS BASIC		
RNG 100M	RoF S/3/10	DMG 1d10+3 (E)			
PEN 0	CLIP 30	RLD 1 FULL	WT 5 KG	AVL AV	
SPECIAL: —					

Skills: Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Warp) (Int)

Talents: Resistance (Fear)

Gear: Brotherhood robes with reinforced flak padding, heretical parchments, 2 ammo clips

All is Lost: At the beginning of an encounter with a Maledite, every opponent must pass a single Challenging (+0) Willpower test or suffer 1d10 points of Willpower damage. This effect does not stack with multiple Maledites.

PURVEYOR OF DISCORD

Purveyors of Discord are insidious agents of rebellion who delight in spreading their profane creed and forbidden lore to every corner of the various worlds they inhabit. Within the teeming hives of Snope's World, these heretics assume any number of guises, and many that turn from the light of the Emperor do so under the influence of these vile traitors.

As devoted servants of Chaos, their true talents lie in deceit and manipulation, their honeyed words belying the malefic intent lurking beneath masks of benevolence, as they lure the disheartened and the ignorant towards everlasting damnation. Such talents serve them well among the elite of Snope's World, and many succeed in amassing enormous influence among the degenerate natives of the ailing world.

PURVEYOR OF DISCORD (MASTER)					19
H ² 01-10 5		WS BS S 43 46 36			
AR ⁴ 11-20 7	AL ⁴ 21-30 7	T AC INT 39 41 45			
B ⁴ 31-70 7		PER WP FEL 44 46 46			
LR ⁴ 71-85 7	LL ⁴ 86-00 7	IFL 47			
HALF 4	FULL 8	CHARGE 12	RUN 24	THREAT 28	
BOLT PISTOL			CLASS PISTOL		
RNG 30M	RoF S/2/-	DMG 1d10+5 (X)			
PEN 4	CLIP 8	RLD 1 FULL	WT 3.5 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: TEARING					
CHAINSWORD			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+5 ^{2+SB} (R)			
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 6 KG	AVL AV	
SPECIAL: BALANCED, TEARING					

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Charm (Fel) +10, Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Warp) +10, Parry (WS)

Talents: Jaded, Peer (Heretical Cults), Resistance (Psychic Powers), Strong Minded

Traits: Touched by the Fates (2)

Gear: Black iron censer, mesh cloak under brotherhood robes, profane leaflets, scrolls of heretical calculations, 2 ammo clips

Disparaging Whispers: A Purveyor of Discord can, as a Full Action, make an Ordinary (+10) Opposed Deceive test, which each enemy within 40 metres must oppose with an Ordinary (+10) Willpower test. Each character who loses the Opposed test can only take a single Half Action during his next turn.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: CONTEMPT OF COURT

Overview: The PCs must capture a dangerous heretic on the planet Snope's World, while unravelling a deadly conspiracy that threatens the planetary rulers of the Saturnal Conclave. This template allows for both combat and investigative characters to shine, as the investigation requires players to deal with both agents of the Platinal Palace and blasphemous followers of a heretical cult. It can be introduced as a conclusion to a current investigation, a tie-in to a previous encounter, or the beginnings of a new investigation originating within the hive's perilous depths.

ACT I: MISTRIAL

The Acolytes arrive on Snope's World to witness the formal execution of a known heretic whom they have either captured themselves or who has escaped them in the past. Now their Inquisitor has ordered them to attend the event, in order to ensure that the prisoner does not escape the Emperor's Justice. If openly showing their identities, the Acolytes are welcomed as guests of Viceroy Delarius, and have been given seats of honour at the grand tribunal that shall publicly pass judgement on the condemned. Otherwise, they might pose as simple gawkers or pious citizens eager to see a heretic perish. Unfortunately, the rules of Saturnal Tribunal etiquette prohibit projectile weapons within the grand amphitheatre, and the violation of such rules can have lasting consequences during future investigations.

Unbeknownst to the PCs, another lord by the name of Silvis Grandthorne, plans on freeing the condemned prior to his execution, and then using the foul heretic's knowledge of sorcery in a bid for power. Before the executioner's tri-blade can sever the heretic's neck, a terrible explosion opens a hole within the amphitheatre's lowest levels, and a group of vile cultists rushes the dais and frees the prisoner. Following this daring escape, the Acolytes must sift through the evidence to uncover who is behind the attack. Though they soon unearth evidence implicating one of the noble houses, things are not as they seem.



ACT II: AFTERMATH, ACCUSATION, AND SHADOW PLAYERS

As the Acolytes continue their investigation, they eventually discover evidence of tampering and manipulation by an unknown third party, composed of a highly-skilled Pravosian Adjudicator or another Saturnal Agent and his hired thugs. This evidence takes any number of forms including tampered vid logs, deleted access codes, evidence from a difficult interrogation, or the discarded body of a Tribunal guard whom the perpetrators impersonated during the attack. In addition to casting doubt over the results of the initial investigation, this new evidence also suggests that whoever is behind the attack has considerable connections within the Saturnal Court.

Using this newfound evidence, the Acolytes have to track down the agent and either convince him to aid them, or apprehend him and his associates before they can cover their tracks.

ACT III: TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE

Assuming the Acolytes discover the location of the escaped heretic in time, they must now stop him and his thralls from completing a powerful Chaos ritual to destroy several key members of the Saturnal Conclave. Luckily for the Acolytes, Silvis Grandthorne has decided to oversee the ritual's completion in person along with a small detachment of his elite house guards. If during the course of the encounter the heretic is killed, Silvis attempts to kill the Acolytes before saving himself, possibly even fleeing offworld in what becomes an ongoing investigation. However, if the noble dies first, the heretic tries to use the ritual's power to engulf the entire Platinal Palace before he and his followers disappear into the cavernous depths beneath the hive city. Any of these results should have profound implications on the hierarchy and power struggles within the Saturnal Court, any number of which provides tie-ins to future adventures.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS:

- Additional agents of the Saturnal Court and other mercenaries attack the Acolytes if they get too close to uncovering the true architect of the heretic's escape.
- Other members of the Saturnal Court try to interfere with the Acolytes' investigation in order to achieve their own political aims.
- Viceroy Delarius applies political pressure to act on the initial evidence, thereby further hampering the Acolytes' endeavours.

TEMPERANCE

"That's the old road to Thirdstone. We don't go there anymore. Folks go there, they don't come back."

—Agricultor Primus Orna Everild

Sustaining the Askellon Sector's spiralling population requires unending amounts of food and other resources, yet even agri-worlds have their limits. Frontier worlds such as Temperance offer new opportunities to those hardy enough to brave the dangers, and given enough time, these faithful citizens might one day raise their world to match planets like Cel or even Kalto. However, Temperance is more than just a potential resource, with cults and recidivists lurking beneath its surface, archaeotech bandits out in the wastes, and a dark history that stretches back long before its founding.

A TROUBLED FOUNDING

Temperance's inclusion in the sector's fragmented planetary records dates back slightly more than a century. The world's initial survey records remain scattered, and the only concrete information lists the reason for settlement as the hope that it might one day become a bountiful agri-world. There was much to support this goal, as Temperance is quite fertile and lacks any complex native life besides the dreaded mind-mould.

Temperance's first settlers originated from Kalto, and consisted of strongly-knit family groups whose farming expertise made them ideal for Temperance's untouched landscape. Their strong ties to the Ecclesiarchy also made them model colonists, and many hoped that the strong bonds between each family group and their mutual devotion to the Emperor would keep the fledgling agri-world on a safe and straight path to productivity. Unfortunately, the planetary surveys failed to acknowledge the world's extremely rocky surface. The land was fertile just as reported—perhaps more than expected—but the ground beneath the thin soil was harsh and impeded any rapid transformation to heavy agriculture. What reports remain from the first months after arrival speak of rock formations that appeared scorched or melted from some unknown cataclysmic event, with molten scarring dating back thousands of years. The cause is as yet unexplained, and speculation has suggested everything from massive seismic shifts to terrible orbital bombardments. Some whisper legends of past heretical acts, continent-spanning wars, and the death cries of billions, all of which rose to create a myth that now fuels the doctrine of Temperance's dominant cult—the Sons of Temperance.

Hardship and death marked the first few decades, as the population struggled to sustain themselves. Mind-mould ate away at their farming land, and more crops ended up burnt than gathered. On several occasions, the mould nearly claimed the entire population, leading to the hasty development of a jury-rigged "mouldsuit" that kept the deadly spores at bay. The situation only worsened during periods of heavy rain, as Temperance suffered from long storms that started without warning and occurred in no discernible pattern—yet another detail the planetary surveys somehow failed to mention. Mind-mould thrived in the muddy quagmire left by each downpour, and even with the mouldsuits, infestations often lasted months and claimed hundreds of lives.

HOME WORLD: TEMPERANCE

Players can adopt Temperance as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Temperance follow the frontier world rules (see page 28), but with the following new Home World Bonus instead of the usual one:

HOME WORLD BONUS

Cleansing of Flames: Due to the constant threat of mind-mould infestation, every Temperance citizen masters the use of flame weapons from an early age. A character from this world begins with the Weapon Training (Flame) talent.

To make matters worse, the Pandaemonium cut Temperance off from the wider sector almost as soon as the settlers arrived. As crops failed and mind-mould killed more families, many turned to superstition and apocalyptic preaching. The settlers splintered under the weight of their total isolation, with administrator Drest Ovidius powerless to stop each new doomsayer and his legions of hungry followers. As the years dragged on, Ovidius saw his population dwindle to less than half its original number and desperately clawed at any idea to stave off total societal collapse, even going so far as to dedicate his few Astropaths to a programme of constant broadcasts. The exertion killed or crippled almost all of them. Eventually, the small choir fell silent as a particularly heavy storm brought about the largest mind-mould infestation on record, and the psychic spores killed all remaining Astropaths within a matter of days. As Ovidius' most loyal retainers burnt the bodies to prevent further infections, the people of Temperance turned on one another. Entire sections of the starved population openly renounced the Emperor for abandoning them.

It was at this moment, with Temperance's future as a productive Askellian world in doubt, that the Legion of Twelve arrived. For some reason, perhaps even divine intervention, the Pandaemonium lifted, and a few days later a small fleet of transports entered Temperance's orbit. Apparently, some of Ovidius' desperately exaggerated cries for help had been received, as the recovery fleet contained a small craft staffed by an abnormally large compliment of twelve Adeptus Arbites.

Despite the false pretence that summoned them to the planet, the Arbitrators immediately broke into small teams once they saw the flagrant disorder amidst the scattered peoples. They pacified the remaining population quickly, and within weeks Temperance's near-collapse was a memory, with crops replanted and recidivist leaders burnt in promethium pyres. Ovidius himself disappeared during the uprising. Some suspected he fled into the wastes and now lives as an anonymous grox herder on some remote farm, whereas others believed he died at the hands of a ferocious mob. With the colony's leader missing and with no orders to leave, the Adeptus Arbites took an unusual step and formed a provisional authority that rules over Temperance's the main settlements of Bastion and Beacon, as well as the outlier farms, to this very day.



BASTION

The centre of life for Temperance's earliest families, Bastion is the frontier world's capital city. Built from the ground up by the planet's first colonists, records of Bastion's original name vanished after the upheaval and the Legion of Twelve's arrival. The town's current name derives from the prefabricated precinct-fortress the Arbitrators brought with them, although whether the name came about out of reverence to the Adeptus Arbites, or from the second wave colonists not knowing the original, remains a mystery.

The massive precinct here is the largest single structure on the planet, outside of Thirdstone's abandoned cathedral, and due to Temperance's flat landscape, the main tower is visible for kilometres in every direction. Bastion's other buildings rarely go above three stories, and each dwelling and produce storehouse tells the tale of the first colonists' hardship. Torrential rain and the need to burn away mould infections limited the populace's ability to build larger structures, and every building contains a mishmash of different materials. Light metal and wooden levels sit atop haphazard stone foundations, and each house is a ramshackle development built out of need, rather than from any specific plan or template.

Most on Temperance consider Bastion's society ideal, with limited criminal activity and most citizens too concerned with crop yields and potential mould growth to really care that the Arbitrators rule their world. In the nearly seventy years since their arrival, the famed Legion of Twelve now numbers only seven, and their leader—Proctor Aureliana Vigdis—is well into her second century, and rarely leaves the precinct bastion.

A large corps of deputies now keeps order across not just Bastion, but also the world's second largest city of Beacon and the thousands of outlier farms. This task grows more difficult with each passing season, as Beacon grows larger and more influential. Many old superstitions from the time of Temperance's near-collapse hold sway in the outer reaches, and clashes between deputies and emergent cults happen frequently. Many within Bastion see it as only a matter of time before they suffer open rebellion from their sister town, and the recent incident in Thirdstone did nothing but fan the flames of apostasy.

BASTION DEPUTY

Equal parts police and civil enforcers, most deputies start as ex-farmers. The difficulty of cultivation on Temperance is a continual one, and during particularly lean years, the ranks of the deputies swell with hundreds of new recruits. Proctor Vigdis and the remaining members from the Legion of Twelve never turn these eager individuals away, but the sheer size of the deputy force within Bastion makes the citizens of Beacon nervous and more resentful.

Bastion Deputies form the first line of defence during mind-mould infestations. Drilled constantly in effective methods of countering Temperance's most lethal calamity, it is common to see deputy squads patrolling produce storage yards clad in heavy mouldsuits and with flamers at the ready. Recently, a number of outlier farms registered complaints of overzealous deputies that burnt entire crops without hard evidence of infestation. With so many thousands of scattered farms spread out across Temperance's near-oceanless surface, response to these complaints is slow at best.

BASTION DEPUTY (TROOP)										11	
H ¹ 01-10		4	WS		25	BS	35	S	30		
AR ⁻ 11-20		3	AL ⁻ 21-30		3	T	35	AC	35	INT	30
B ³ 31-70		6	PER		30	WP	35	FEL	30		
LR ⁻ 71-85		3	LL ⁻ 86-00		3	IFL		—			
HALF 3		FULL 6		CHARGE 9		RUN 18		THREAT 6			
SHOTGUN										CLASS BASIC	
RNG 30M		RoF S/-/-				DMG 1d10+4 (I)					
PEN 0		CLIP 8		RLD 2 FULL		WT 5 KG		AVL AV			
SPECIAL: SCATTER											
HAND FLAMER										CLASS PISTOL	
RNG 10M		RoF S/-/-				DMG 1d10+4 (E)					
PEN 2		CLIP 2		RLD 2 FULL		WT 3.5 KG		AVL RA			
SPECIAL: FLAME, SPRAY											

Skills: Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per), Interrogation (WP)

Talents: Quick Draw, Takedown

Gear: Flak vest, helmet, manacles, magnoculars, mouldsuit (one spare rebreather unit), mouldsuit repair kit, 2 ammo clips

I Aid the Law: Whenever operating in the presence of an Arbitrator, Bastion Deputies gain a +10 bonus to Weapon Skill tests.

BEACON

With the upheaval thwarted and relative peace restored, Temperance's second-wave colonists made planetfall. The Legion of Twelve looked at the state of Temperance's shattered capital and decided to establish a new city to house the incoming colonists, and to expand the farming lands so desperately needed by the growing population.

Located several thousand kilometres from Bastion, Beacon is a more ordered and structured town. Lacking a history of devastation, its buildings are simpler and clean, built quickly and efficiently to house its three-million-strong population. A far larger city, Beacon stretches outwards over an area six times greater than the capital. Sadly, the exploding population and increased urban sprawl sits at the heart of Temperance's major problems.

Large portions of Beacon's population see themselves as the real planetary leaders. They resent the continued presence of the Arbitrators, and with their more successful crop yields and growing herds of grox, the Beacon citizenry cannot see why they must answer to a smaller and less successful city. The Bastion Deputies only make the situation worse, as the population see them as little more than hired thugs, and numerous gangs offer bounties for the heads of captured deputies.

Despite the threats, the gangs are little more than a sideshow compared to the emergent cult activity within Beacon. Dozens of would-be preachers and proclamators stand daily before large gatherings of angry farmers preaching the "truth" of the Legion of Twelve, that the Pandaemonium proved the Emperor's disdain for Temperance, and how there were other, older powers more than willing to fulfil the wishes of each and every farmer.

The largest of these cults call themselves the Sons of Temperance. Originally a charity dedicated to helping outlier farms recover after periods of heavy rain, the Sons admonished Temperance's sinful history and spoke of an inevitable reckoning, where the wicked and lazy would vanish into the turmoil of the Pandaemonium. They preached how years of rebellion against the Imperium and the foul acts of past millennia created the mind-mould, something that made little sense given the frontier world's relative short history. Soon after that, the bombings began. Specially-designed explosives and spore bombs detonated across Bastion and Beacon in a campaign of terror that lasted weeks. The subsequent mould infestations cost the lives of thousands, but wherever the infections flared, the Sons of Temperance emerged to ease the suffering of the afflicted.

When the population of Temperance's newest city, Thirdstone, disappeared overnight, the Sons claimed the event as vindication of their beliefs. Beacon elevated many of the cult's leaders to positions of prominence, as scores of fearful farmers bolstered the cult's ranks, opening themselves to the wisdom of the cult's "prophets." From that fateful day forward, the cult has only grown, and now the Sons' ranks outnumber those of the Bastion Deputies. Reluctant to turn the unrest into a full-scale civil war, Proctor Vigdis maintains a level of patience with the Sons' activities. Moreover, with Adeptus Ministorum representation on Temperance abnormally low since the Thirdstone incident, she needs someone to manage the spiritual wellbeing of her people, and until the Pandaemonium subsides and greater numbers of colonists arrive, the Sons of Temperance remain her only choice.



FAR AND WIDE

Lacking large bodies of water, Temperance is essentially a single world-spanning continent. Across this vast landscape, farmers grow crops and drive herds of grox in isolated settlements, where populations barely reach into the thousands. These small outlier farms constitute the majority of the frontier world's population.

Life in an outlier farm is more dangerous than within Temperance's larger population centres. Out in the wastes, mind-mould infestations might claim an entire community, and years may pass before a roving group of Bastion Deputies discover the deserted, infested remnants. Wild grox herds might eat a community's crops (and even some of its inhabitants) overnight, leaving them to starve slowly. Bandit sects sometimes raid small towns, pressing the strongest into service, and leaving only the weak and frail behind. Some settlements simply evaporate, leaving nothing but bloodstains and unfamiliar, vicious striations across the empty pre-fab structures. As each year passes, more Temperance citizens die unnoticed and unremembered out in the bleak rocky farmlands than anywhere else on the planet, and life exists as a depressing daily battle to stay fed and stay sane.

SONS OF TEMPERANCE CULTIST

Clad in white robes with golden embroidery, Sons of Temperance cultists appear almost benign at first glance. With warm smiles and outstretched arms, they speak of the Emperor's peace and the blessings of Holy Terra. However, anyone that spends time with them soon hears their true message: retribution, inevitable death, and endless suffering for past sins. Temperance's isolation and the continued malevolence of the Pandaemonium make the cult a somewhat isolated problem, but some worry about the cult's apocalyptic message and tactics. The cult's links to the peculiar incident at Thirdstone only serves to cause further worry, and has even gained attention outside of Temperance.

SONS CULTIST (ELITE)					12
H 1 01-10 4	WS 30	BS 30	S 40		
AR 1 11-20 4	T 32	AG 41	INT 35		
AL 1 21-30 4	PER 33	WP 45	FEL 39		
B 1 31-40 4	IFL —				
LR 1 41-50 4					
LL 1 51-60 4					
HALF 4	FULL 8	CHARGE 12	RUN 24	THREAT 8	
HEAVY STUB REVOLVER					CLASS PISTOL
RNG 30M	RoF S/-/-	DMG 1d10+4 (I)			
PEN 0	CLIP 4	RLD 2 FULL	WT 2.5 KG	AVL SC	
SPECIAL: —					
SPORE BOMB (2)					CLASS THROWN
RNG 12M ^{3xSB}	RoF 1	DMG —			
PEN 0	CLIP 1	RLD —	WT 2 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: BLAST (5)					

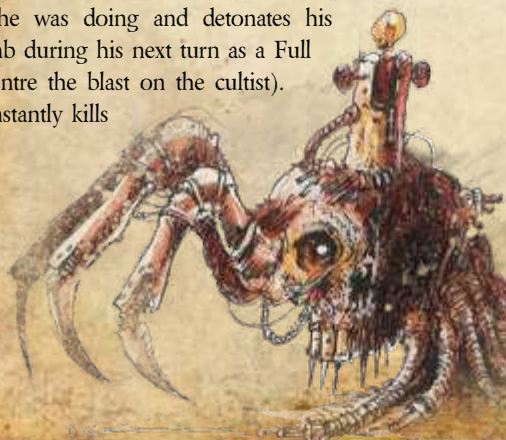
Skills: Charm (Fel) +10, Common Lore (Askellon Sector) (Int) +10, Dodge (Ag), Deceive (Fel) +10, Scholastic Lore (Heraldry, Legend) (Int) +10

Talents: Frenzy

Gear: Devotional icons, white robes, 2 ammo clips

Mould Martyr: Sons of Temperance cultists often lose their friendly façade when challenged, turning into a ball of rage in an instant before ending their own lives in a toxic spray of mind-mould spores. When a Sons of Temperance Cultist suffers Critical damage (if it does not kill him), he stops whatever he was doing and detonates his spore bomb during his next turn as a Full Action (centre the blast on the cultist).

This act instantly kills the cultist.



THIRDSTONE

The brainchild of Proctor Vigdis, the few members of the Ecclesiarchy on Temperance, and a council of senior farmers, Thirdstone was to be the new jewel of the planet. Designed with a desire to push the frontier world into the next phase of development, Thirdstone would serve as its new Ecclesiarchical centre. Rumours hinted that upon completion, the Legion of Twelve might cede full planetary authority to the head of Temperance's Adeptus Ministorum contingent—Deacon Christoff Mannicus.

Yet trouble hampered Thirdstone's construction, even before the first groundbreaking ceremony. The Sons of Temperance declared the plan an abomination, and the chosen site lay upon the ruins of Askellon's worst sins. Daily sermons described how building the city upon what they called the "Danestone," or "Sinful Foundation," would only hasten the Emperor's judgement, and that if Vigdis followed through with her plans, the new city would share the same fate as "those that had come before." Congregations of Sons cultists held up material convoys, and false reports of mind-mould outbreaks slowed construction to a crawl. Anyone who joined the building efforts began receiving threats, although indirectly and never with enough evidence to implicate the Sons. The Bastion Deputies did what they could to keep construction on track, but the cult's influence, especially with the people of Beacon, made any sort of public repression next to impossible.

Eventually, not even the daily protests slowed construction and, after two years, Deacon Mannicus officially opened Thirdstone with a week-long series of blessings and sermons. Weeks after the visitors to the opening had departed, though, every soul in Thirdstone vanished, seemingly overnight.

How it happened remains the frontier world's most enduring mystery, but all citizens know where they were when news broke of the city's sudden emptiness. Proctor Vigdis ordered every member of the Legion of Twelve plus a large contingent of Bastion Deputies to ascertain the truth. The Arbitrators found a pristine city with everything in order, but devoid of any living creature. Uneaten meals and lit candles sat inside silent houses. Prayer books and still-smoking censer burners lay within the empty cathedral. Thirdstone was a ghost town, and the Adeptus Arbites and deputies returned to Vigdis without any clear explanations.

The Sons of Temperance poured into the streets of Beacon, their wails of recrimination loud and unfettered, and if not for the dedication of the Bastion Deputies, the Thirdstone calamity might have sparked another societal collapse. On that fateful day, Temperance shifted from a frontier world grasping at the hem of greatness to an Askellian curiosity, especially to the Adeptus Mechanicus, who sent several survey teams to observe Thirdstone and determine, if possible, what became of its populace. Several Inquisitors caught wind of the events as well, but the unpredictability of the Pandaemonium made any significant investigations difficult.

In the dozens of years since that day, Thirdstone remained a quarantined zone, as untouched as it was the day everyone disappeared. Proctor Vigdis now fears that any attempts to repopulate the city might result in another tragedy, and many believe that the elderly Arbitrator's self-imposed seclusion is also a result of the Thirdstone incident. For their part, the Sons of Temperance still preach of their vindication, and their leaders stand on every Beacon street corner with prophecies of more divine retribution to come.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: BREAKING THE MOULD

Overview: The Acolytes discover a cult using dangerous terror weapons—spore bombs—and must uncover who is creating the horrid devices. This template puts an emphasis on investigation/interrogation, along with careful use of subtle social interaction to deal with various factions. It can be introduced midway through a campaign to draw the Acolytes' attention. Alternatively, it could act as a complication towards the end of a campaign, where their prize escapes or is even eliminated by a spore bomb, leading to a further investigation over where the device came from.

ACT I: OUTBREAK

The Acolytes, in the course of carrying out the wishes of their master, either witness or come across the aftermath of a spore bomb attack. Those who inquire about the event learn that it is the latest in a series. Local authorities know nothing of the bombs' origins, but Acolytes with *Medicae* and *Common Lore* (Askellon) skills might identify the substance as mind-mould, the only native life known on Temperance. Alternatively, interviewing/interrogating witnesses from other bombings could uncover a cache of spore bombs marked with a peculiar sigil, owned by a den of hostile thugs hired to sow discord and misery for a group called the Sons of Temperance, leading the Acolytes to the frontier world.

ACT II: WHISPERS

The Acolytes arrive in Temperance's capital—Bastion. From here, they might look for spore bomb related leads, or go after information on the Sons of Temperance. Asking too many questions about the spore bombs might draw the attention of some overzealous Bastion Deputies, so the Acolytes need to maintain a level of Subtlety. Inquiring about the Sons within Bastion leads to stories of the Thirdstone incident, and the potential links the cult has to that event. The Acolytes might decide to question Sons within the world's second city of Beacon. Here questions about the Sons of Temperance garner a positive response at first, but accusations regarding the spore bombs, and especially the events at Thirdstone, might cause the citizens to attack the Acolytes with an assortment of clubs, knives, and the occasional stub revolver. Cultists of the Sons might join the fray should the Acolytes openly accuse them of orchestrating the bombings, and any cultist that attacks the Acolytes condemns them to the same fate that befell the citizens of Thirdstone.

ACT III: SHOWDOWN

Be it through the fearful tales from the Bastion populace or through the fiery threats of a Beacon cultist, the Acolytes make their way to the abandoned town of Thirdstone in the hopes of learning the truth. Entering should be difficult, as Bastion Deputies bar their way; entering the town without mouldsuits is also extremely risky. Clever Acolytes might try to join an Adeptus Mechanicus survey team and gain entry that way, but any Tech-Priest leading a team would require serious convincing. Inside Thirdstone, the Acolytes must contend with patches of mind-mould, but investigating these patches should show that someone is cultivating and harvesting the fungi. Clues should lead the Acolytes to the town's largest structure, the abandoned cathedral, where cultists chant in unison around a misshapen mould covered edifice.



The cultists attack upon discovery and fight to the death, sacrificing themselves with spore bombs should the Acolytes gain the upper hand. Investigating the bodies reveals sigils that match the ones found on the black market spore bombs. The marks are similar to the ones the Sons of Temperance members in Beacon display, but different enough that they can disavow the group as a breakaway sect. Ultimately, the Acolytes should succeed in stopping the flow of spore bombs, but be left with more questions about the breakaway group, how complicit the Sons really are, and what the cult was attempting to do in their ritual. The Sons give no answers as to why this off-shoot cult exists, preferring to look into the matter "internally," and claim ignorance about the cult's motives and even the peculiar stone the cultists used in their rite. Only further investigations might unravel these mysteries.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Some natives secretly support the Sons of Temperance, and trick the Acolytes into heading in the wrong direction, stranding them out in the frontier world's endless rocky wastes with feral grox and worse eager to meet them.
- The warband draws the unwanted attention of the Legion of Twelve, and the Acolytes could find themselves undergoing interrogation at the hands of angry Arbitrators.
- The Acolytes might find themselves stuck in one of Temperance's powerful rainstorms, dangerous not only because of deadly flash flooding, but also because of the rapid mind-mould growth that always occurs during storms.

CREATING CULTS

"The greatest monster of all is Man. The Daemon does not choose to dwell outside the blessed Materium, nor does the xenos cast aside the holy form of Man to walk another path. Both are terrible and foul, it is true. But the heretic and the traitor were given every gift in the universe, and chose to cast them aside. There is no greater crime than this."

—Inquisitor Malakai Wernhardt

The varieties of heresy and sedition are as vast as the populations of humans across the galaxy. On every world, a thousand new ways exist to flout the rule of the Imperium. Acolytes working to oppose the Enemy Within must become accustomed to the infinite variations of its workings, and learn to see past the surface to the rot beneath.

This section offers narrative aids to GMs for creating varied and interesting cults for use in their Hereticus-themed adventures in the Askellon Sector. Details such as the cult's origin, leadership, and practices can be generated randomly, or the tables can be used as inspiration for custom creations.

CULT BACKGROUNDS

Few things influence a cult's nature and structure as much as its origins. Although many of the most powerful and influential cults spread through a wide range of cultures and organisations, even they are beholden to the past. Some sign of the cult's inception typically shows through in their rituals and devotions, and for younger or more localised cults, these signs may dominate the foul groups entirely.

Game Masters can roll on either Table 3-1: Cults of Society or Table 3-2: Cults of Idea (on page 128) to begin development of a new cult. Societal cults are especially common, as they easily spread along the lines of class or culture that spawned them. They are also the most mutable, and many widespread cults of this nature find their members completely unable to recognise their farther-flung fellows. Much rarer but perhaps more dangerous are ideological cults, devoted to an abstract concept. There are few things more dangerous to the Imperium than a deviant mind allowed to think freely, and these groups cultivate them as their primary resource for whatever poisonous cause they seek to enact.

Table 3-1: Cults of Society

1d10

ROLL CULT BACKGROUND

1-2	Desperate Underclass: Although the Imperium's ponderous bureaucracy is the only institution vast and powerful enough to keep humanity alive in these dark times, it does so at a terrible cost. Innumerable cults have risen from those ground between the gears of empire, seeking only to better their own admittedly miserable lot. While pitiable, their actions invariably threaten the lives of many millions more.
3-4	Decadent Nobles: The elite of the Imperium are required to earn their position through meritorious service and self-sacrifice, rather than simply bask in the luxuries accumulated through an inherited position. In actuality, though, many Imperial holdings are plagued with idle nobility with few occupations other than amusing themselves. From this wellspring of casual indolence, heresy almost inevitably follows.
5-6	Warrior Brotherhood: Military strength is prized by the Imperium like few other virtues. It is this strength, and the will to wield it, that is valued above almost all else in protecting the holdings of Mankind. Those entrusted with this task sometimes let their heady burden take control of them, and devote their lives to war as a craft, hobby, or even religion, rather than a duty. Such cults can arise within militant forces such as the Adeptus Arbites or planetary Enforcers as easily as the Imperial Guard or Navy.
7	Worker's Collective: Open organisations of labourers rarely survive for long in the Imperium, as the Adeptus Administratum does not tolerate any potential threat to production for its tithes. As such, fledgling labour groups are forced to rely on more secretive methods to survive. As they scheme and manoeuvre for their cause in the shadows where they dwell, they become as much a threat to the structures of the Imperium as any malefic coven.
8	Primal Devotees: These cults form around an aspect of their surroundings or environment. This might be such elemental aspects as the burning flame, life-sustaining water, an essential native vegetation, the primordial darkness, or even the unending depths of space.
9	Trade Compact: Commerce in the Imperium is heavily regulated, ensuring it works to the benefit of the Adeptus Administratum's tithes and quotas, rather than in competition with them. From underhive market stalls to the immense starships of Chartist Captains, the traffic of goods is carefully monitored. Some merchants chafe at these restrictions, and conspire with their fellows to orchestrate greater profits at the expense of others.
10	Errant Adeptus: The Imperial Adeptus are as vast and labyrinthine a collection of organisations as it is possible to be. Disagreements and quarrels between the different branches are regular occurrences, and considered part of the intrinsic grinding of the Imperium's colossal gears. In such an environment, illicit elements occasionally arise from one faction or another. Nevertheless, a rogue group within the Adeptus is one of the gravest threats Acolytes might face, as the Adeptus are the only group capable of mobilising a response to a perceived threat on the same scale as an Inquisitor.

Table 3-2: Cults of Idea

1d10

ROLL CULT BACKGROUND

1	Freethinkers' Enclave: The Imperium is too vast and ponderous to truly possess a unified culture, but local planets usually have their own traditions and rigid thought. Where groups grow dissatisfied with their hidebound way of life, a cult devoted to questioning and seeking truth can arise. It is neither seemly nor safe for the common citizens of the Imperium to be concerned with such matters, and these freethinkers can cause mass panics by pulling down the comforting veil of ignorance that protects their fellows.
2-3	Pleasure Cult: The pursuit of pleasure, whether through partaking of exotic stimulants, the mingling of flesh, or gorging on epicurean delicacies, is a common focus for many cults. Although simple hedonism may seem to be a minor threat at first glance, those willing to place personal indulgence above the Imperium can be surprisingly dangerous if they see their delights threatened.
4-5	Secessionist Conspiracy: The Imperium provides protection in exchange massive for tithes and harsh laws. Occasionally, some grow weary of this bargain, deciding that they would be better off beyond Imperial rule. Whether they seek to openly throw off the yoke of the Emperor or to withhold resources for their own use, they endanger not only the lives of those who depend upon them, but their own worlds should they succeed in pulling free of the Imperial aegis.
6	Progressivist Plot: The golden age of Mankind has come and gone. The wisdom of the past can be found with care and caution, but some are reckless enough to believe in seeking new answers instead. Cults of progress may lack reverence for old knowledge, or they may believe themselves up to the task of recreating it from first principles. In their pursuit of new and arcane secrets, they echo the hubris of the Dark Age of Technology, and may bring down ruin to match.
7	Inhuman Ideals: It is acknowledged by the Ecclesiarchy and the Priests of Mars alike that humans are the pinnacle of life in the galaxy. In form, mind, and spirit, they are beyond the deviant xenos and twisted mutant. However, there are those who reject this truth, pursuing some perceived alternative to the natural perfection of humanity. There exist cults revering mutation, unhallowed cyber-augmentation, or even xenos assimilation as a form of apotheosis.
8-9	Forbidden Worship: The Emperor of Mankind is the only god acknowledged in the Imperial Creed. All others are seen as primitive deviancy at best, and Daemons or echoes of the Warp at worst. On some planets, proscribed rites still thrive, and ancient powers or xenos races are worshipped in the Emperor's place.
10	Sorcerous Cabal: The most immutable law of the Imperium states that all psykers must submit to the Adeptus Astra Telepathica and the Black Ships, to be judged and used for the benefit of Mankind. Those who flout the ban, whether natural wyrds or sorcerers dabbling in forbidden lore, are among the greatest threats a world can harbour. When they gather in numbers, for mutual protection or to seek power, they are truly a menace to be feared.

CULT LEADERS

The leader of a cult shapes his group in dramatic ways. Whether he uses personal charisma, threats of force, or unholy powers of witchcraft, a cult leader almost inevitably installs himself as the central figure in the life of each and every one of his followers. Even when operating with a more subtle touch, a cult leader's power to influence through manipulation and misdirection is not to be underestimated.

Given all this, generating details about the cult leader can be crucial in allowing the GM to make a cult memorable—above and beyond any need for a villain at the end of the story arc. Table 3-3: The Cult Leader and Table 3-4: Leadership Style (both on page 129) provide ideas for the origin and leadership style of the cult leader, elements which should have a strong impact on how his presence is felt throughout any relevant adventures.

Table 3–3: The Cult Leader

1d10 ROLL	CULT LEADER'S NATURE
1-2	Demagogue: The cult is held together by the personal magnetism of a central figure. He may be a particularly driven madman or a charming orator, but in either case, it is his words that hold his power.
3	Thug: The cult's leader is a simple, brutish figure whose tactics are often simple but effective. Such cults rarely last long or grow to great size, but each can be a dangerous threat nevertheless.
4	Military Figure: Some figure with experience in one of the Imperium's military organisations, from a local warlord to an officer of the Adeptus Arbites or Imperial Guard, heads the cult. A leader of this sort is most common among cults with ties to war or violence, but his force of personality and unflappable nerve made him capable of commanding anywhere.
5	Noble: A scion of one of the Imperium's noble bloodlines has taken charge of the cult. Raised from birth to accept leadership, an Imperial noble often has a commanding air that serves him well in such a role.
6	Religious Authority: The direst sort of heresy follows the cult's leader, who is initiated in the mysteries of one of the central religious groups of the Imperium. Whether his knowledge of spiritual matters originated from the Ecclesiarchy or the Red Priesthood of Mars, he now perverts his gifts to twist the minds of his followers with deviant philosophies.
7	Imperial Official: The cult's influence is extended greatly by their leader, who holds a position within the Imperial Adeptus. He may be a powerful and influential Adept, or a minor functionary with great ambition, but his place at the heart of power makes him dangerous in either case.
8	Mutant: A monstrous taint marks the leader of the cult, twisting his flesh into something inhuman. He may conceal his deformity or use it as a sign of his supposed greatness, but his position outside the human race shapes his perspective more than anything else.
9	Psyker: Whether an unnaturally-born wyrd or a scholar in the profane arts of sorcery, the cult's leader is able to maintain his position through his psychic prowess. Operating without the safeguards offered to sanctioned psykers, he is a terrible threat to all around him even when he does not use his power.
10	Multifaceted Leader: Roll again twice, combining elements of both results.

Table 3–4: Leadership Style

1d10 ROLL	STYLE OF LEADERSHIP
1	Figurehead: The cult's apparent leader is actually a stand-in for another, hidden figure operating behind the scenes. Generate this secret mastermind separately.
2–3	Hands-on: Even the lowliest dregs of the cult are familiar with their leader, who personally involves himself in every aspect of its operation.
4	Charismatic: Through force of personality or sheer charm, the cult leader is universally revered by his followers. His influence is felt even when he is physically absent.
5	Force of Arms: Using his own personal strength or even psychic powers, the leader rules all around him with displays of brute force and physical intimidation.
6	Dread Aura: The cult leader uses terror to control his minions, all of whom fear his wrath above any other threat.
7–8	Shadowy: Little is known of the cult's leader, who surrounds himself in a shroud of mystique. He avoids appearing in person whenever possible, and hides what he can about his nature even from his lieutenants.
9–10	Puppet-master: The cult leader favours elaborate schemes of manipulation, sending chosen pawns to act in his name for inscrutable ends. Some are elevated to the upper ranks of the cult, while others are reviled for failure, but the true meaning of his actions is always reserved to the leader alone.

CULT ELEMENTS

Cult elements provide specific tools to use for building adventures with cults, from the equipment the cultists favour, or potential tip-offs about cult allegiance that can be used during an investigation, to the methods a cult might use to gain or ensure loyalty. These can be used when creating a cult from scratch, or the GM can generate new results during an adventure to reflect the cult adapting in response to the Acolytes' actions.

EQUIPMENT

While cultists attempt to hide their natures, they often still leave clues in their choice of weapons, clothing, or other possessions. At times, this is a side effect of a favoured method of action. In other cases, these signs are deliberate, secret signs used within plain view to identify the cult's members to each other. Table 3-5: Armaments and Defences and Table 3-6: Tokens of Allegiance (see page 131) outline these cult aspects.

ACTIVITIES

Cults do not simply skulk about in shadowy corners doing malefic deeds, waiting for the Acolytes to confront them. Although inimical to the Imperium, the defining feature of a Hereticus cult is that it is made up of people, with all the wants and needs of their kind. This means that cults need to recruit new members in order to expand their power base or replace losses, and that they must affirm the validity of the decision to those who join. Table 3-7: Cult Allure (page 131) and Table 3-8: Rites and Observances (page 132) detail the draw with which cults present themselves to new members, as well as the rituals they use to maintain or prove loyalty within the cult.



Table 3-5: Armaments and Defences

1d10

ROLL NOTABLE EQUIPMENT

1–2	Plentiful Ammo: The cult favours solid projectile weapons, grenades, and other armaments that rely upon easy access to large stores of ammunition.
3	Intricate Craftsmanship: Items possessed by cultists, whether utilitarian gear, deadly weapons, or ritual implements, tend to be finely made and ornate.
4–5	Brutal Weaponry: When forced to action, the cult uses simple, direct weaponry. Heavy axes, huge mauls, and similar weapons are common. More advanced armaments follow similar trends, with chainswords, autoguns, and bolt weapons being preferred when accessible.
6–7	Fortified Protection: It is particularly hard to put down these cultist forces, thanks to their tendency towards extensive protections. Military-grade flak armour, or sometimes even carapace plating, is not uncommon among their ranks. The elite may even possess force fields or psychic defences.
8	Heavy Firepower: For a shadowy cabal or coven, the cultists have far bigger guns than might be expected. They make frequent use of powerful weapons in their battles, such as heavy stubbers, grenade launchers, or more devastating devices.
9	Advanced Technology: The cultists are unusually familiar with unusual devices, as evidenced by their use of encrypted vox channels, multi-spectral scanners, or even xenos weaponry.
10	Wyrdcraft: The elite of the cult bear amulets imbued with witch-inscribed charms, or wield blades inscribed with runes of hellish power. Their unnatural armaments are nearly as deadly to the wielder as to his foes, but they remain a threat that should not be underestimated.

Table 3-6: Tokens of Allegiance

1d10

ROLL SIGNS OF CULT AFFILIATION

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1 | Symbolic Colour: The cultists show their affiliation through outfits that incorporate a specific colour to reflect their beliefs. It may be a shade uncommon among the local populace, or always worn on a particular garment. |
| 2 | Special Material: Some of the garb or gear used by the cult incorporates materials rarely used by those outside the cult. Offworld fabrics, the bones of rare beasts, or even xenos trinkets could all be possible signs of cultist ties. |
| 3 | Favoured Craftsmanship: The maker's mark or factory stamp of a particular craftsman or facility can be found on a great deal of cultist equipment. |
| 4-5 | Hidden Sign: A rune or other visual motif identifies the cultists. They might wear the sign on hidden pendants, hide it amidst other signs at businesses they control, or otherwise display it to those who know where to look. |
| 6-7 | Secret Cant: Code phrases and passwords are used by the cultists to confirm their allegiance. In extreme cases, they may have even developed an entire language of false meanings, allowing them to secretly converse wherever they please. |
| 8 | Marked Flesh: The perfidy of the cultists is worn on their very flesh. They may bear a hidden brand or tattoo declaring their membership, or a worse deformity might mark them as among the ranks of an inhuman throng. |
| 9-10 | Complex Signs: Roll again twice, combining elements of both results. |



Table 3-7: Cult Allure

1d10

ROLL ALLURE TO ADHERENTS

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1-2 | Refuge: Cult members are drawn into the organisation by the promise of shelter from other threats. This could be an offer of protection from a specific threat, such as the grasp of the Black Ships, or a general mentality that the cult looks after its own. |
| 3-4 | Purpose: Some citizens of the Imperium find themselves yearning for something more fulfilling than endless labour to support a war machine they never see. These empty souls often turn to cults that claim to provide meaning or purpose to an otherwise pointless existence. |
| 5-6 | Indulgence: By existing outside the sanctioned Imperial structure, cultists are often able to avoid restrictions on behaviour that might be imposed by law or propriety elsewhere. Even outside a true pleasure cult, there are groups who appeal through a sense of luxury or freedom not to be found elsewhere. |
| 7-8 | Power: While true power within a cult almost invariably resides within its upper echelons, if not within a single leader, some are able to maintain the illusion that their members can gain power by joining. This may even be true to an extent, if advancing the position of an individual advances the cult's goals or reputation in turn. |
| 9 | Entrapment: Many cults are not what they initially appear. They may have a public, or at least less secret, face that seems entirely wholesome and safe, with a secretive inner circle that uses this false cover for dark purposes. Once lured into these cults, blackmail and manipulation can draw the hapless dupes further into their schemes and deeper into heresy. |
| 10 | Mystery: A skilful cult leader can draw in followers with promises and allusions to a greater purpose or meaning that is never truly revealed. Elaborate structures of hierarchy and ritual are created to mask the cult's true nature, and ascending towards the supposed truth becomes a coveted prize. The most devoted seekers end up being led in circles and convinced that still more valuable truth awaits, if they serve but a little longer. |

Table 3–8: Rites and Observances

1d10

ROLL SAMPLE CULT RITUALS

1–3	Mass Devotions: The most common form of cult ritual is a gathering of the cultists for a shared devotion. For some, this may be more akin to a business meeting than a religious ritual, as the defining element of mass devotions is a gathering focused on the cultists' shared purpose. Such gatherings may have the cultists or their leaders remain masked and hidden from each other, or they may reveal their affiliation brazenly.
4–5	Foul Communion: Simply being in the same place is not enough for some cults, who seek to become still closer to each other than mere proximity. This communion may take the form of debauched rites, shared hallucinations, or invasive psychic melding, depending on the cult's focus.
6–7	Blood Sacrifice: The sacrifice of living beings, from livestock to captured enemies, is a common way for cults to express their power. The ritual is usually symbolic, although some cults have found ways to harness the spilled life for power.
8	Flesh Twisting: Most common as a ritual of initiation or advancement, the deliberate mutilation or mutation of a cultist's flesh is often seen as a show of dedication.
9	Sorcerous Arts: Most cultist rituals are primarily symbolic. At most, they usually make use of weapons or technology available to their members to make a dramatic point. But in rare cases, the ritual itself is a means to otherworldly power, by drawing on the Warp or the Daemons within.
10	Elaborate Rites: Roll again twice, combining elements of both results.

FOCUS OF WORSHIP

At this point the Game Master should have many fundamentals to make up the new cult, and there is but one essential item left: Chaos. A truly dangerous cult is devoted to one of the Ruinous Powers, either knowingly or unknowingly, and that god's aspects permeate all it does. No matter its goals, elements, or leaders, the essence of the cult is driven by its god, and Table 3–9: The Ruinous Powers gives the GM this last part for his creation.



Note that this can result in seemingly odd combinations, such as a warrior cult devoted to the Chaos God Tzeentch.

This is perfectly fine—Chaos should indeed be chaotic and unpredictable at times. Such a cult could indeed excel in martial arts, but might use mental disciplines to attune mind and body or psychic powers to strengthen muscles as it seeks out mystical tomes. The Game Master is encouraged to use these unusual results to fashion a unique cult that might not be thought of otherwise, and thus truly create unthinkable dangers for the Acolytes.

Table 3–9: The Ruinous Powers

1d10

ROLL CULT DEITY

1–2	Khorne: The cult thirsts for conflicts in all forms, from unleashing voracious scrapcode datavores to launching savage planetary uprisings. It always seeks out violence and bloodshed, the better to show its frenzied devotion.
3–4	Nurgle: Morbid enthusiasms about death, but also rebirth, anchor the cult's beliefs. Its members thrive on disease and decay, their appalling forms energetically eager to share their blessings with everyone around them.
5–6	Slaanesh: The cult is enthralled with excesses in all forms, and might pursue sensory experiences beyond imagining or seek out perfection in the blade. There are no limits to its desires and no sating the appetites of its followers.
7–8	Tzeentch: Hidden secrets, forbidden lore, and intricate schemes dominate this cult's goals of change and transformation. Psykers can form a large part of its membership, the better to divine the infinite whirls of fate within the Warp.
9–10	The Hidden Mark of Chaos: The cult is unaware that the subject of its devotion is a Ruinous Power, perhaps instead believing it worships an aspect of the Emperor it has made its own. The GM can either select one of the above powers directly, or keep any hint of the cult's true god a careful secret until a time of momentous revelation.

HERESIES

WITHIN HERESIES

"The marks on those remains are quite similar to those used by our quarry, yet they are fresh and seem to have been planted for us to find. There is more to this inquiry than previously imagined."

—Personal vox-log of Acolyte Galt Fennex, during the hunt for the Sisters of the Red Teeth

It is often the case that, when rooting out the most insidious heresies, a group of Acolytes discovers that the wellspring of corruption runs deeper than they anticipated. For adherents of the Ordo Hereticus in particular, no one is free from suspicion, regardless of influence or power. Often, these Inquisitors turn their dread gaze upon the most unlikely suspects for even minor infringements whilst tracking down their quarry. What this means is that, in the paranoia-fuelled investigations of a Hereticus mission, it is very easy for players to go off-track, to chase red herrings or end up pursuing a criminal who was never intended to be the primary target, but who certainly has dark secrets of his own.

Every Game Master knows that unexpected player actions can become either a defining moment of a campaign, or the bane of it. It is impossible to prepare for every outré decision a player might make, and the very nature of an Enemy Within adventure makes these tangential encounters all the more likely. After all, when the Acolytes are encouraged to jump at every shadow, and to scrutinise every action with the burning gaze of the Ordo Hereticus, who knows what unexpected evils may be uncovered? In the Askellon Sector, heresy lurks around every corner, and Inquisitorial Acolytes may well uncover corruption during the course of their duties that the GM had not planned for.

To this end, what follows is a set of sub-plots, themed to use in Hereticus adventures, but useful in DARK HERESY games of all types. These can be inserted at any point during an adventure—whether deliberately by the GM to add an extra twist to an adventure, or generated randomly and inserted on the fly as the Acolytes deviate from the expected or planned path. They can be used to reward creative players with a gritty encounter when they have role-played their way in clever directions, to provide unexpected twists when it looks like the Acolytes might solve a mystery too easily, or even to form the basis for entirely new adventures generated randomly from a series of sub-plots.

USING THE SUB-PLOT GENERATOR

The tables that follow allow Game Masters to generate exciting sub-plots randomly. However, they can also be used as a menu of plot ideas with which to populate moments where the action lags. The sub-plots provided use fairly general terms, allowing them to be used in any adventure, although they are primarily designed for Hereticus-themed campaigns. They are not detailed adventures, although some certainly lend themselves to further development—the Game Master is encouraged to simply roll up a sub-plot and see where it leads!

Many of the sub-plots call for the creation of cults, cult leaders, and mutants—if these are not present in the current adventure already, then the GM can consult the **Creating Cults** section (see page 127) to come up with some random elements. Others call on or use specific settings or groups; the GM should feel free to adapt or change these as needed to best fit the settings and other items within his adventure. Otherwise, Game Masters should note that antagonists of the sub-plots should ideally be drawn from the ongoing campaign, in order to more easily weave the sub-plots into the story.

STEP 1: SELECT THREAT TYPE

As with the all the sub-plots presented later, the Game Master may simply choose the type of encounter he wishes to generate for his players. For example, if the adventure up to that point has been heavy on investigation, then the Game Master could decide to roll on the Reprisal or Combat table to generate a more action-focused sub-plot for his players. However, to create a truly random plot thread along which to lead the players, simply roll 1d5 on Table 3-10: Threat Type.

Table 3-10: Threat Type

1d5 ROLL	RESULT
1	The Acolytes' mission is jeopardised when an old enemy strikes. Roll on Table 3-11: Reprisal Sub-Plots on page 134.
2	Unexpected lines of inquiry uncover a mystery to be solved. Roll on Table 3-12: Investigation Sub-Plots on page 134.
3	A secondary objective manifests—it must be captured at all costs. Roll on Table 3-13: Acquisition Sub-Plots on page 135.
4	The heresy runs deep; the Acolytes must use all their guile to expose it. Roll on Table 3-14: Infiltration Sub-Plots on page 135.
5	All else has failed, and the Acolytes must fight for their lives! Roll on Table 3-15: Combat Sub-Plots on page 136.

Once a threat type has been determined, roll on the corresponding table or, if desired, choose a corresponding sub-plot from one of those listed.

STEP 2: DETERMINE SUB-PLOT

Once the threat type has been determined, simply find the sub-plot table that corresponds to that threat type, and roll a d5 to work out the specifics of the sub-plot. Most of the sub-plots detailed here are fairly ambiguous, allowing the Game Master to incorporate his own NPCs and locations into the sub-plot's narrative as he sees fit. As always, the GM should feel free to choose a sub-plot rather than roll, especially if he does not feel that the generated sub-plot fits his adventure.

Table 3-11: Reprisal Sub-Plots

1d5

ROLL RESULT

1 Surprise Attack: The Acolytes are aboard a crowded vessel travelling as part of an ongoing investigation. The ship soon comes under a sudden attack, presumably from piratical raiders. When the raiders board the ship, however, and start to systematically hunt for the Acolytes, they know that an old enemy has resurfaced to exact his revenge. How he knew where to find them is another matter entirely.

2 Blackmail: Old deeds, perhaps ones others would find criminal or even heretical, often have a way of coming back to haunt an unwary Acolyte. When evidence of the Acolytes' (or their Inquisitor's) past transgressions are discovered by an old enemy, they must either give in to blackmail, or try to defeat the blackmailer before the evidence is revealed. The repercussions of this blackmail could range from the Acolytes being investigated by rival Inquisitors, to their status and Influence in the immediate system being irrevocably damaged.

3 Left for Dead: The Acolytes uncover a vital clue that leads them deep into hostile territory. However, the "clue" is merely a ruse enacted by a capricious Rogue Trader or other powerful foe whom the Acolytes crossed months earlier. As soon as they enter hostile space, their ship is attacked by pirates and forced to crash-land on a barren world filled with marauders, mutants, and xenos. There is heresy aplenty to uncover in such a place, if they survive long enough.

4 Moment of Madness: A shadowy figure waits for an opportune moment to strike—perhaps as the warband is recovering after a battle. One random Acolyte is unknowingly drugged with a powerful cocktail of hallucinogens and stimulants. He starts to become paranoid, hearing whispers of heretics all around him, until he becomes convinced that the true heretic is within the warband itself. He might act immediately, or possibly later turn on his comrades. The others must try to calm him before he attacks, or worse, betrays them to their true foes.

5 Hunted: During the course of their investigations, the Acolytes have made many enemies. Yet the party that has been tailing them since they left the spaceport is not one of the groups currently under investigation. Unbeknownst to the Acolytes, an old enemy from a past mission still harbours a grudge, and has dispatched a group of assassins to take them down.

Table 3-12: Investigation Sub-Plots

1d5

ROLL RESULT

1 The Locked Room: The Acolytes hear a rumour of a "haunted room" in the home of a noted Praefect, from which several visiting dignitaries have gone missing without a trace. The presence of certain clues, such as a unique odour or burn marks specific to their current quarry, convince the Acolytes that the mystery must be related to their current mission, and they head off to investigate. Yet they quickly realise that all is not as it seems in the Praefect's household.

2 Ghost Ship: En route to their next destination, the Acolytes encounter a bulk mercantile freighter drifting aimlessly. Its records show that the vessel collected a cargo only two days ago, and left the orbit of the forge world Rhodin IV with a full complement and heavily armed escort. Yet now it is a derelict hulk, with only one anomalous life sign that can be detected.

3 Discovery: An Explorator team recently reported discovering a network of ancient xenos ruins on a backwater moon. Contact has been abruptly lost, but not before an encrypted vox-transmission was intercepted by the Inquisition. One of the Explorators went mad, killing most of the others before disappearing into the labyrinthine tunnels. The Acolytes' Inquisitor has given strict instruction: find the rogue Explorator and learn the nature of his heresy, before extinguishing it from the galaxy.

4 Murder by Design: The Acolytes' investigations take them to a crowded setting, whereupon they hear reports of a spate of mysterious killings. These rumours suggest that the victims were all devoted to blessed Coronica, the Iridescent Saint, and that each was found with a blasphemous sigil etched into their flesh. Upon identifying the body, the heretical, ritualistic nature of the killings cannot be denied. Indeed, the murders are possibly entwined with the Acolytes' current investigation.

5 Deadly Cargo: The Acolytes have taken a ship to their next destination, but a stowaway also boards the ship. But this is no ordinary runaway—it is a shadowy xenos killer (or daemonically possessed cultist, malfunctioning servitor, etc.), which has escaped the "private collection" of a debauched merchant princeling. One by one, crewmembers fall prey to the creature, and the Acolytes must investigate. Even when the creature is defeated, there is a certain merchant with much to answer for...

Table 3-13: Acquisition Sub-Plots

1d5

ROLL RESULT

1 The Rift: As the Acolytes learn more about the heretics they are investigating, they hear repeated whispers of a frontier world. There, it is said, the head of the thrice-cursed cult was first corrupted, and brought back an item of power. If they investigate, they find a set of ancient ruins upon the otherwise barren rock, of unknown design. There, the veil between realspace and the Warp is thin, and Daemons whisper honeyed words into the Acolytes' ears.

2 The Artefact: At the heart of a heretical coven lies a blasphemous artefact. However, no sooner do the Acolytes lay hands on the artefact than it begins to exert its subtle influence upon them. One of the Acolytes sees that the artefact was once a holy relic, one which should be returned to its former glory; another is certain that the artefact should be kept, for use against the enemy; a third believes that it must be destroyed at all costs. The artefact's pernicious whispers make it impossible to discern which is truth and which is lie—and the Acolytes' final choice has dire repercussions in the future.

3 The Auction: The Acolytes hear whispers of Faceless Traders out to recover a so-called blessed relic from a hive's sump-depths. This relic is set to be sold at a secret auction attended by eager Askellian nobles. Unfortunately, the gangs sent to retrieve the relic are causing huge unrest. The relic is also protected by a devout cult, who believe its presence has kept the hive safe for centuries. If the Acolytes decide to leave the relic where it is, they may never discover the identities of the nobles; if they try to break up the auction ring, the underhive could erupt into war—or worse, if the superstitions are true.

4 The Overlords Return: The Acolytes realise that the cult they are investigating has been gathering components for some kind of beacon—a device of alien origin, designed to summon their xenos masters. Unknown to the cultists and to the Acolytes, though, the plan is actually being enacted by covert Acolytes of an Ordo Xenos Inquisitor—the beacon is actually intended to ward off the alien menace. But what happens if the Acolytes thwart this plan before realising their mistake?

5 Hostage Negotiations: Realising that they are being hunted by the Acolytes, a cabal of dangerous witches infiltrate a Navis Nobilite manse and take a Navigator captive to use as a bargaining chip. A terrible clash between the Navigator House's forces and the psyker cult is imminent unless the Acolytes can rescue the hostage.

Table 3-14: Infiltration Sub-Plots

1d5

ROLL RESULT

1 Paying the Piper: An influential Rogue Trader carries a dark secret—his family bears the curse of the mutant. His own talent is almost undetectable; his kin, on the other hand, bear the curse in myriad ways. The profligate Rogue Trader's aberrant offspring are scattered across the sector, and one of them is part of the very mutant cult that the Acolytes seek. If they make the connection, they just as surely make a new and powerful enemy.

2 Insurrection: The Acolytes learn that plans are afoot to overthrow a planetary governor. At first, it seems as though a violent response is needed, until they learn that the enigmatic psyker who they currently hunt has been implanting psychic triggers into the populace's minds. It seems like no one is immune to the psyker's wiles—an entire population, soldiers included, is held in his thrall. Only subterfuge and cunning can root out the heretic and end his plans before it is too late.

3 Faceless Traders: The cult under investigation has many blasphemous items; it seems that many of these artefacts were sold to them by a legitimate group that is also involved in the Faceless Trade. It is high time these smugglers were brought to justice, but subtlety, not violence, is the key. If the Acolytes can recover the traders' records, many future heresies could be prevented.

4 Sanction Inviolable: During their investigation, the Acolytes are often mistaken as followers of another Inquisitor, one who has been thought lost. By passing themselves off as part of this mysterious lord's retinue, the Acolytes discover that he—or someone posing as him—sits at the heart of a vast network of spies and heretics, believing himself to be doing the Emperor's work while following Radical Horusian principles. He allies with Daemonehosts and rogue psykers, and it is clear he must be brought to heel. Reaching this half-mad Inquisitor is one thing; stopping him is quite another.

5 No One is Above Suspicion: A vid-capt discovered at the scene of heretical cult activity seems to implicate a high-ranking Cardinal in some deep-rooted corruption; perhaps he is even sponsoring the very heretics that the Acolytes seek. The Cardinal is currently en route to a shrine world—now would be the ideal time to track him down and question him. However, if there is even a sliver of doubt of the Cardinal's involvement, the Acolytes risk alienating themselves from the Ecclesiarchy, and undermining the Influence of their Inquisitor.

Table 3-15: Combat Sub-Plots

1d5

ROLL RESULT

1 Escort Mission: As part of their investigation, the Acolytes uncover an alien artefact of such import that they suddenly find themselves the target of every maniacal heretic on whatever planet, hive, or spaceport they are on. Their Inquisitor contacts them with details of a rendezvous point, to which the artefact must be delivered immediately. Unfortunately, the artefact attracts rogue psykers like moths to a flame, making hiding almost impossible. Several interested parties stop at nothing to capture the artefact, even if that means crossing swords with the Inquisition.

2 Spark in the Darkness: The Acolytes' investigations lead them to a remote Mechanicum outpost along the fringes of their sub-sector. Once there, they realise that the outpost is abandoned, its inhabitants mysteriously missing or slain. To add to their woes, something approaches from the depths of space, something that hungers once more for the blood of the pious...

3 The Source: As the investigation progresses, the Acolytes encounter more and more lost souls—innocent civilians driven to madness and murder by some unknown source. Perhaps cultists are poisoning the water supply, or a rogue psyker is bringing the maddening visions of the Warp to the populace. Whatever the cause, roving bands of frightened, crazy, and ultra-violent citizens stalk the streets, and the Acolytes must survive long enough to find the source and put a stop to the madness.

4 Behind Enemy Lines: The Acolytes' Inquisitor sanctions the use of force against a remote settlement that is harbouring dangerous mutants. The Acolytes make planetstrike and prepare to break up the heretical coven, and eliminate the aberrations that they apparently worship. Unfortunately, the corruption is more widespread than the Acolytes realise, and they are quickly overwhelmed by fanatics and monstrous mutants. Trapped in a hostile city, where heresy may lurk behind every door, the Acolytes must decide who they can trust.

5 Riot: The Acolytes' covert operation is in tatters when they end up caught in the middle of all-out war between rival factions (whether that be rival underhive gangs, rioting civilians and Enforcers, or other natural enemies). The Acolytes are beset on all sides, with not only the insurgents gunning for them, but also the psyker cult they were investigating—now all too aware of the Acolytes' true purpose.

EXAMPLE

The Acolytes are determined to follow up a seemingly innocuous lead, which takes them deep into the dangerous underhive of Desoleum. Their investigation of the various gangs, and masterful use of subterfuge, leads the GM to believe that their thoroughness and creativity deserves more than an investigatory dead end, and so he decides to keep the game flowing by rolling on the Sub-Plot tables to see what new heresy they unearth. Rolling a 4 on Table 3-10: Threat Type, followed with a roll of 5 on Table 3-14 Infiltration Sub-Plots, the GM generates "No One is Above Suspicion." He has the Acolytes catch sight of one of their suspect's hunch-backed servants, running from a long-abandoned Adeptus Arbites station. There, they find that the old panoptical vid-capt devices have been accessed by unauthorised personnel, and the databanks are in the process of being erased. Saving the last scrap of vid-data, they discover footage of a hooded figure meeting with their prime suspect—a figure who, on closer inspection, wears the personal sigil of a supposed ally, Cardinal Varyon, about his neck. When they learn that the Cardinal left the hive only a day ago to visit the shrine world of Ossuar, they know that the race is on to either condemn the Cardinal, or clear his name.

STEP 3: ADD A TWIST

Of course, simply throwing a sub-plot into the Acolytes' path and letting them solve it would be far too simple—all the best mysteries have unexpected twists to keep things interesting. A fleshed-out, convincing sub-plot not only has its own resolution, but also its own twists and turns. Table 3-16: Twists on page 137 contains five variations which, with a bit of work from the Game Master, can be made to work with any of the above sub-plots. As before, the GM should feel free to choose the twist to fit the campaign—but to generate a twist randomly, simply roll 1d5 against the table and see where it leads.



Table 3-16: Twists

1d5

ROLL RESULT

1 Mistaken Identity: As the Acolytes are drawn deeper into the sub-plot, they start to experience random attacks, or find that important witnesses are terrified or deeply suspicious of them. What they do not know is that one of the Acolytes has been impersonated on this world. The perpetrator of the very crime they investigate has committed his foul deeds in the Acolyte's name (either openly as an Acolyte, or using one of the PC's assumed identities). The warband must try to clear his name before the growing list of enemies closes in for the kill.

2 Enemy Within: One of the Acolytes' most trusted allies (preferably an NPC who earlier appeared in the campaign) is actually working with an insidious cult, which has carefully infiltrated every agency in the system. The heresy runs deeper than the Acolytes could have imagined, when it turns out that the sub-plot they have stumbled across is in fact one of the insalubrious dealings of their former ally. Catching him in the act is one thing—convincing the authorities of his guilt is quite another.

3 Interested Parties: The sub-plot turns out to be more than just an interesting aside—the subject of the Acolytes' new investigation is also of great interest to one of the NPC groups in the ongoing campaign. Perhaps Sable Traders are waiting for the Acolytes to dispatch a cult so that they can swoop in and claim the spoils; maybe a lord is secretly keeping tabs on the Acolytes to see just how much they know. Whatever happens, the final confrontation is complicated by others from a third, unexpected party showing up. But whose side are they on?

4 Rival Adepts—Competing: One of the other parties in this sub-plot has been infiltrated by another Imperial agency, which has goals that run counter to the Acolytes' mission. When (or if) their identities are revealed, they willingly work with the Acolytes up to a point, but once the heresy is put down, any outstanding agendas must be resolved, whether in the spirit of cooperation or hostility.

5 Rival Adepts—Hostile: As above, but the other agency is fully aware of the Acolytes' presence and mission. The other party has strict instructions—perhaps it is an Officio Assassinorum agent sent to kill a character who is vital to their plans, or a group under the orders of an Ordo Xenos Inquisitor who desires the artefacts of an alien cult. This other party brooks no opposition—the Acolytes must get out of the way, or face the consequences!

CREATING NEW ADVENTURES

As described earlier, the intent of the sub-plot generator is to give Game Masters a versatile tool to create random twists and turns in their adventures. These sub-plots can take the Acolytes' investigations in unexpected directions, confront them with new threats, and certainly keep them on their toes. However, for the more adventurous GM, the sub-plot generator is also a useful tool for creating new, full-blown adventures on-the-fly.

Writing an adventure using this generator can cut down on preparation time for a session, or to provide inspiration for a brand new homebrew adventure. When creating an adventure using this method, simply roll multiple times on the generator tables, and string each sub-plot together. The first sub-plot rolled becomes the opening scene. The second and third become the middle sections, and the fourth becomes the grand finale. Three or four linked sub-plots provide a short adventure, while five or six provide a lengthy adventure that should take several sessions to resolve. Table 3-16: Twists could be rolled on just once, to provide an interesting twist for the climax of the adventure.

This method of randomly generating an entire adventure comes with its own challenges. The GM needs, naturally, to fill in the blanks, create clues, and come up with plausible segues between sub-plots. Each sub-plot should be viewed as a "set-piece" and must segue to the next one. Details, such as key locations and NPCs, should be sketched in before play begins. The GM must also change and/or insert characters and locations if this is to be part of an ongoing campaign. When used in this way, however, the sub-plot generator is a useful tool for sparking the Game Master's imagination and creating memorable new adventures.

HERETICUS INVESTIGATIONS

"The signs of heresy and corruption surround us. We need but open our eyes and allow the Emperor to guide our sight."

—Preacher Cartien Dane

It is the Emperor-given duty of all Inquisitors and Acolytes to root out the enemies of Mankind wherever they hide, and to purge these threats. However, perhaps for no other Ordo is the process of examination so important as for the Ordo Hereticus. Whereas the xenos attacks in great hordes or invades from massive troopships, and the Daemon descends upon the worlds of the Imperium through breaches in the very fabric of existence, the heretic, psyker, traitor, and even mutant so often lurk unseen amongst the innumerable masses of humanity. In order to distinguish these enemies and find them amongst the masses of pious citizens, the servants and members of the Ordo Hereticus must hone their skills as detectives and investigators, until identifying clues and following leads to heretical activity is all but second nature.

HERETICUS CLUES AND LEADS

As described on page 280 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook, clues encompass all of the evidence Acolytes amass during the course of an investigation. Of course, Inquisitors or their servants are not concerned with proving a heretic's guilt in a court—their personal conviction is enough—but clues are necessary in order to locate the heretics, identify them, or discern the nature of their plan. Although clues can take nearly any form, virtually all can be ascribed one of the basic categories of physical, informational, or correlational, as well as the special category of unnatural (as described on page 140 of this book).

The following section examines each type of clue as it pertains to the work of the Ordo Hereticus. In addition, several new subcategories of clues specific to the Ordo Hereticus are described. GMs can use these new sub-categories as inspiration and building blocks for designing their own distinctly Ordo Hereticus investigations.

PHYSICAL CLUES

Physical clues are often vital to an Ordo Hereticus Witch Hunter's work. Potential heretics are everywhere, but Acolytes have not the time to question every worker who misses a shift, or every noble who idles his time in illicit pursuits. Inquisitors and their servants must constrict their attentions to only those heresies that truly threaten humanity, and the presence of physical evidence can be invaluable in narrowing their focus. The remnants of dark rituals, pendants, and markings showing allegiance, and myriad other clues can identify the presence of a threat.

HERESY OF DEED

Many acts are heretical in themselves, or serve as signs of heresy. Although Acolytes must often work from the scene of a crime in order to identify and pursue the heretics responsible, with the Emperor's guidance they sometimes are fortunate enough to directly observe a heresy in action. This might come about because the Acolytes are operating undercover or unseen, allowing them to observe a heretic's crimes unbeknownst to him. At the other end of the spectrum, directly confronting a suspect with their suspicions, or merely announcing their identities, might drive the heretic to act rashly and flee or attack the Acolytes—both great crimes in themselves, as well as indicators of guilt in previous matters.

HERESY OF FORM

It is well-known that physical mutation is often a sign of spiritual corruption. Although communities of mutants are tolerated on some Imperial worlds as an underclass, in most places, a mutation is a clear indicator of greater heresy. Even in locations where mutants are suffered to live, the presence of a mutant outside of strictly isolated areas might indicate rebellion or some other heresy. Of course, mutants who are able to conceal their mutations are certain to do so. Additionally, cult members sometime intentionally mark their dark allegiances on their flesh through ritual scarring, branding, or electroos. Although a powerful clue, the use of such marks can also be a liability to Acolytes attempting to infiltrate a cult, who might face the choice of accepting such marks or revealing their true loyalties.



HERESY OF CRAFT

Many heretics take a perverse pride in their treachery, creating blasphemous items to either celebrate their heresies or corrupt others. These vary greatly, and while some are obvious works of heresy, others are more subtle, such as paintings laced with fine iconography. The works of heretics come in countless forms. Weapons incorporating xenos technology, tomes of blasphemous lore, philosophical treatises questioning the divine right of Mankind to rule the galaxy, ritual masks depicting alien gods, talismans of profane symbols—these are just some of the examples. Heretics might create such items personally, or might purchase or inherit them, and many could be millennia old.

INFORMATIONAL CLUES

Although not as reliable as physical clues, Acolytes must often rely on informational clues. This might be because the heretics have taken pains to hide or destroy the evidence of their crimes, or because the nature of the heresy is such that it leaves no physical evidence—at least not until it is too late.

HERESY OF THOUGHT

Knowledge is power, and heretical ideas are just as dangerous and damaging as physical acts. The Acolytes might discover heresy of thought by covertly monitoring a suspect, or earning a heretic's trust to the point that he reveals his true beliefs. For those Witch Hunters who employ the gifts of psykers, telepathy provides an avenue to discover heretical thoughts when the perpetrator is wise enough to avoid giving voice to his blasphemies. Whether an individual intends to act on their heretical thoughts is irrelevant. Giving voice to such ideas spreads the seeds of heresy to others, which is a great crime in itself. In the eyes of some Inquisitors, even holding such thoughts is a crime against humanity, for such an individual might later make the transition from speculation to action, or might decide to share his dangerous ideas. Ideas hold great power, and the mere thought of the most dangerous ideas marks one as a heretic just as surely as any act.

HERESY OF TOLERANCE

In some cases, the knowledge of an ongoing heresy and failure to act on the information is truly a heresy in itself. Someone who knowingly harbours rogue psykers, sells weapons to rebels, allows friends or family to join a heretical cult, or otherwise tolerates actions that threaten Mankind, even in a small way, are surely heretics themselves. For by their inaction, they give strength to the enemies of Mankind.

ACCUSATION OF HERESY

The Adeptus Terra and the governments of many worlds constantly remind citizens to report heresy whenever possible (lest they become guilty of heresy of tolerance). Many citizens, whether out of fear or duty, report minor or imagined infractions that, while worthy of the attentions of local authorities, are not the concern of Acolytes. However, rarely, a dutiful citizen reports the presence of a truly grave heresy. In some cases, the citizen might simply be suspicious of a neighbour. For even if the informant does not understand the nature of his neighbour's crime (and it is good he does not), the Acolytes' efforts can reveal the truth. In some cases, an accuser might even be able to furnish additional evidence, or lead the Acolytes to clues.

CORRELATIONAL CLUES

Correlational clues often propel an investigation forward. They arise from other kinds of clues, allowing the Acolytes to make sense of seemingly random acts, insane writings, and illogical ideas. In the work of the Ordo Hereticus, correlational clues might take the form of a revelation that a series of seemingly unrelated murders is actually the work of a cult dedicated to the God of Blood, or that failures amongst a hive's vital systems are due to intentional sabotage.

DARK PATTERNS

As an investigation develops and Acolytes amass clues, patterns often emerge. These can sometimes be mundane and logical, such as narrowing down the location of a heretic by examining where his crimes occur. However, patterns also arise that can even border on the supernatural. Inexplicable occurrences, such as unidentifiable smells that linger in the wake of a cult's members, or nightmares disturbing the sleep of hivers at regular intervals, can identify the presence of heretical activity. Such incidents might seem to be random occurrences at first, their significance only becoming apparent as an investigation develops and the Acolytes learn of additional incidences. As the Acolytes identify such patterns, they might reveal the location of the heretics, the nature of the heretics, or even their plans. With the Emperor's guidance, such leads allow the Acolytes to find the culprits and halt their designs.

CIPHERS AND HIDDEN MESSAGES

Heretics, by their nature, often operate discreetly. Sharing their blasphemous ideals openly would quickly bring down the wrath of the Enforcers, the Ecclesiarchy, or even the Inquisition. To protect themselves and facilitate safe communication, cults, secret societies, traitors, and groups dedicated to protecting mutants or rogue psykers often develop codes and secret signs. To reveal the presence of these heretics, Acolytes must be able to at least identify ciphers as such, even if they are unable to decrypt them. Acolytes might notice repeated symbols associated with the heretics, even things as subtle as a feather of a certain colour tucked somewhere in their clothes, a particular hand signal, or a seemingly innocuous phrase. Although a single occurrence of such a sign is by design, unremarkable, the Acolytes can discern the importance of these hidden messages by being aware of repeated sightings. Once aware, they can use this information to identify the heretics through the very ciphers intended to keep them hidden.

HERESY BY ASSOCIATION

The most stringent and merciless of Witch Hunters often feel that association with a heretic is a sign of heresy in itself. Even if no other evidence is available, purging those affiliated with the heretic is safest. Friends and family of a heretic might claim ignorance of his deeds, but mere proximity to such a corrupting influence might leave a stain on the soul. Even if only one in a thousand such associates has truly been tainted by the acts or ideas of the heretic, it is safer to destroy them all. As it is said, innocence proves nothing.

UNNATURAL CLUES

Unnatural clues include those obtained through means outside of the physical world, but can also include clues that defy categorisation, or that bear the unmistakable mark of the Warp. In the work of the Ordo Hereticus, such clues are inescapable and invaluable. Whereas a determined Witch Hunter might seek out signs of Warpcraft while eschewing its use himself, another Inquisitor might turn to psychic abilities to peer into the minds of suspects or into the very future in order to eradicate heresy—possibly before it even occurs.

WITCH-SIGN

The presence of the Warp is a certain indicator of heresy, unless it can be traced directly to a duly-sanctioned psyker or servant of the Inquisition. Of course, exactly where the line falls is a matter of debate amongst Inquisitors. However, detecting witch-sign and positively identifying it as such often requires the service of a psyker, for the stain of the Warp or a lingering psychic presence is often undetectable to those without the psyker's gift. Whereas another might feel a slight unease, or nothing, a psyker can detect where the veil of reality is thin, where psychic powers have been used, and even when another psyker is attempting to conceal his nature.



OMENS

Wise Inquisitors and Acolytes know the power of prophecies, portents, and omens. Some specifically seek out such signs, or consult ancient texts in search of insight into the present investigation. Others simply take note of possible auguries and carefully consider whether they are truly a sign, or simply a random occurrence. Those who deliberately use omens and prognostication in their investigations often turn to the Emperor's Tarot. Those practiced in this art can gain useful insights. The cards might confirm that a person involved in the investigation is a heretic, that Chaos is present, that death threatens a member of the warband, and more. Acolytes hold a wide range of beliefs in omens and signs, often related directly to their cultures of origin, which might directly contradict each other. What one culture might view as a sign of good fortune, another might see as an indicator of looming catastrophe. A diviner's psychic powers can reveal even more, allowing the Acolytes to see into the future or elsewhere in the present.

TRIALS AND ORDEALS

Some Inquisitors, particularly those of staunchly Puritan beliefs and with strong ties to the Adeptus Ministorum, utilise trials and ordeals to determine the guilt of accused heretics. Although the faithless often call such acts random or predetermined, depending on the particular ordeal, believers know that the Emperor guides the outcome. Countless trials and ordeals have been developed over the millennia, both by Inquisitors and the Ecclesiarchy. One example is the trial by balance, in which a drop of the accused's blood is placed on a scale and weighed against the same quantity of blessed water; if the blood is heavier, this shows that sins weigh it down, and the accused is guilty of heresy.

In an alternative approach, rather than trusting to the Emperor's intervention to decide the outcome, a trial is designed to expose the presence of supernatural power in the accused. These ordeals are used to expose rogue psykers and witches. In one example, of which variants are found across Askellon, the accused psyker faces a means of execution, which he can avoid by making the correct choice. In one version, he faces a firing squad, with one member's weapon unloaded. The accused chooses a single member of the squad to fire first; if he chooses the one with the empty gun, this is a sign that he used his Warp-spawned powers, and so the remaining members execute the witch. If he chooses incorrectly, he is judged innocent of witchery and allowed a proper burial.

DESIGNING HERETICUS MYSTERIES

When constructing and running adventures for a warband of the Ordo Hereticus, or any adventure focussed on the Enemy Within, there are many ways for GMs to ensure it is distinctly suited to the Witch Hunters. This includes not only the identity of the Acolytes' enemies, but the nature of the threat they pose to mankind. These threats naturally lead to certain themes, which GMs can keep in mind when planning an adventure or mystery as it unfolds. Of course, not all Hereticus themes or ideas need to be present in every session or adventure, and GMs should use their own judgement and apply these suggestions when it seems suitable.

The approaches of the Ordo Hereticus are wide-ranging, from bombastic firebrands who lead bloody pogroms and whip up mobs, to sinister watchers who lurk in the shadows, to radicals willing to infiltrate a cult and commit unspeakable acts to better understand it and gain access to its leaders. There is no right or wrong way to approach the use of Subtlety and overtness in an Ordo Hereticus campaign. Whereas one warband might conceal themselves in order to monitor those suspected of heresy, another might ignite a frenzied, torch-bearing mob, leading a community to burn the heretics from its own ranks. For more on the use of Subtlety in Ordo Hereticus adventures, see page 143.

THE NAME OF THY FOE

Fundamentally, the target of the Ordo Hereticus is the threat individual humans pose to humanity. Rather than marshalling Imperial forces against invading xenos armies, they primarily deal with insidious threats from within. These take many forms, but the most widespread threats are those of rogue psykers, unchecked mutants, and treasonous rebels. The danger might come from the heretics' invisibility or numbers, or the virulence of their ideas.

The enemies of the Ordo Hereticus are not always twisted in mind or body. All too often, they are simply humans who succumbed to the worst of human nature. Avarice can lead a man to betray his species in ways both large and small, and even those of strong will routinely fall to temptation. The lust for ever-greater power might lead a ranking member of the Adeptus Terra to betray the Imperium and undermine his sworn duties, such as a planetary ruler plotting secession, or an Adeptus Administratum scribe embezzling from Imperial coffers. Such enemies might pose little physical threat on their own, but can be difficult to detect, and wield enormous influence.

Since heretics can be anywhere—or anyone—Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus and their Acolytes often cannot trust local authorities or even representatives of the Adeptus Terra. Even on those rare occasions that they cross paths with another Inquisitor or his Acolytes, suspicion is the rule, for Inquisitors who take drastically different routes to accomplish their goals often view each other as threats equal to those they hunt. For these reasons, some warbands choose to operate independently and covertly, but those who work alongside others must always be vigilant for signs of heresy or treachery.

UNEXPECTED ENEMIES

Although the Ordo Hereticus focusses its attentions on the threats arising from humanity itself, this does not always have to restrict the enemies Acolytes face. In order to ensure variety in the game and keep the players on their toes, GMs can introduce xenos or Daemons into a Hereticus mystery. If the warband's members are proclaimed members of the Ordo Hereticus, the players are likely to expect primarily the enemies within humanity itself—witches, heretics, and mutants—and so the appearance of Daemons and xenos creatures should be a rare exception. However, Inquisitors and their Acolytes often do not fully understand the nature of a threat until they subject it to a thorough investigation.

The major threats to humanity are known to overlap, and the line between one and the other can be quite thin in places. A suspected Chaos cult might actually be under the dominion of alien masters, or a rogue psyker might succumb to Daemonic possession before his capture. Another cult that worships the ancient stone idols of a dead race could attract the interest of Inquisitors from both the Ordo Hereticus and Ordo Xenos.



THE TOOLS OF THE WITCH HUNTER

The Ordo Hereticus uses many tools to accomplish its duties. Individual Inquisitors and Acolytes vary greatly in what tools they see as useful or even permissible. What one might see as an invaluable part of his arsenal, another might consider grave heresy. The tools of the Ordo Hereticus are not all physical, and while weapons, armour, and other equipment are of great use, many find intangible resources to be even more valuable. The following are amongst the weaponry of the Ordo Hereticus:

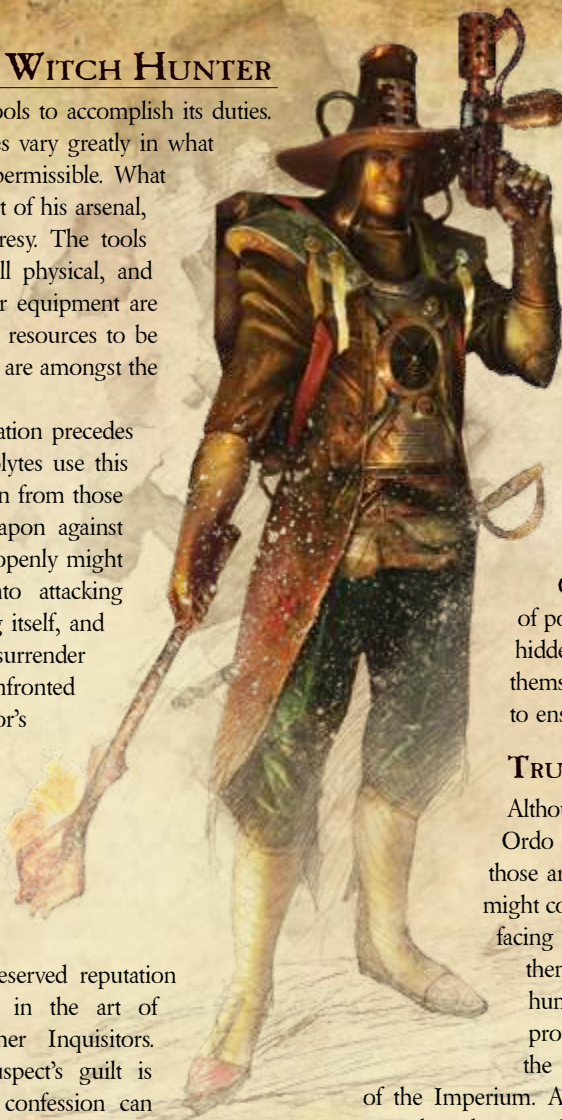
Fear: The Inquisition's reputation precedes it, and many Inquisitors and Acolytes use this fear as a tool to ensure cooperation from those around them, and even as a weapon against their foes. Warbands that operate openly might provoke a frightened enemy into attacking prematurely or otherwise revealing itself, and some lesser heretics might even surrender and beg for forgiveness when confronted by the servants of the Emperor's Inquisition. For Acolytes operating covertly, fear of the Inquisition can amplify the shock when a warband surprises its enemies or even local authorities whose services they now require.

Excruciation: The Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus have a deserved reputation for mercilessness and ingenuity in the art of excruciation, even amongst other Inquisitors. Although a firm belief in a suspect's guilt is enough for most Inquisitors, a confession can identify additional heretics. During the course of an investigation, it is often invaluable to capture the servants and lesser heretics of an organisation for interrogation. Some Inquisitors of great faith might also seek to redeem heretics before delivering them to the Emperor's judgement. Excruciation can extract a confession and lead a heretic to repent, which some believe is necessary for a heretic to find absolution in death.

Devotion: Some Inquisitors look foremost for devotion to the Emperor in their servants and others. Faith in the Emperor and devotion to the welfare of Mankind are powerful motivators, providing strength where others would fail, and the grim dedication necessary for the work of a Witch Hunter. Conversely, lack of dedication and faith in others is a sure sign of spiritual weakness and fertile ground for heresy. In the case of psykers, it is often devotion that makes the difference between whether one can master the power of the Warp, or be destroyed by it.

ORDO HERETICUS THEMES

The following are some of the major themes that often appear in Ordo Hereticus investigations. All of these themes can apply in different ways, filtered through the lens of the Acolytes' view, their Inquisitor's factional affiliations, and the nature of the enemy. The same theme might apply to the work of a warband following an Inquisitor of either Radical and Puritan leanings, but with its exact appearance varying greatly.



THE ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS

Each servant of the Throne adopts this common Inquisitorial maxim in his own way. For the most hard-line Puritans, it might mean reducing an entire hive, or even planet, to ashes in order to eradicate a threat, or even a single heretic. At the opposite end of the spectrum are those of a Radical bent, who believe that employing even the darkest of forbidden lore and tools is just, so long as it helps them accomplish a mission. Some Acolytes might openly debate the nature of this question, but it can also arise during the course of an investigation. Because the Ordo Hereticus must delve into the hearts of populated Imperial worlds to root out heretics hidden amongst the innocent, Acolytes often find themselves considering extreme measures in order to ensure a taint is eradicated.

TRUST NO ONE

Although true of all Inquisitors, those of the Ordo Hereticus in particular must be wary of those around them. Heresy is everywhere. Acolytes might come to realise the importance of caution after facing betrayal from those supposedly assisting them. All too often, the greatest enemies of humanity are those who openly appear as its protectors—Imperial Guard officers, deacons of the Ecclesiarchy, and other servants and agents of the Imperium. An Acolyte might not even be sure he can trust the other members of his warband. He might have a dark secret of his own to hide, perhaps as a result of Corruption gained during his duties, or he might notice odd behaviour from one of his team. Some Acolytes might not even know if they can trust their Inquisitor. They might fear that he intends to destroy them after a mission that brings them face-to-face with corruption, or they might even suspect that he has been corrupted, perhaps through the use of Radical means.

PURITY OF ESSENCE

Many Ordo Hereticus Inquisitors seek above all to maintain the purity of Mankind. The true goal of this quest could take many forms, and some Inquisitors focus on spiritual purity, belief in the divine right of Mankind to rule the cosmos, or in genetic and physical purity. In the course of an investigation, Acolytes might confront mutants, rogue psykers, and apostates who shun the Imperial Creed. All of these threaten to dilute Mankind's purity by spreading their beliefs or physical taint. However, Acolytes might discover such heretics in the course of an unrelated investigation, prompting a difficult decision. Do they take the time to deal with this small threat, and thus risk exposing themselves or allowing their true target the time to escape or come closer to his goals?

SUBTLETY AND HERETICUS ADVENTURES

"I have found simply killing everyone along my path a wonderful method of ensuring no one expects my arrival."

—Jallindi Esperol, Vouxian Pyrestarter

The Game Master's use of Subtlety as an element in planning adventures is never more prominent than when the warband is on the trail of a Hereticus foe. In such situations, the PCs are usually operating within the bounds of Imperial society, where their use of Subtlety (or failure to do so) has the most impact. As always, there is no definitive right or wrong approach to using Subtlety, but the choices made in that regard can have a profound impact on how an adventure plays out. Some elements of adventure design that should be considered for this purpose are detailed below.

SUBTLETY AND INVESTIGATION

The first stages of a Hereticus adventure are typically investigative, as the PCs may not know who or what the threat they face is at this point. Even if they do, they are unlikely to know how to bring it down without first learning more about it. The degree of Subtlety the PCs operate with at this stage can set the tone for the remainder of the adventure, and is likely to heavily influence the next steps they take.

SEE, BUT DON'T BE SEEN

Acolytes who want to keep their warband's Subtlety high need to find ways to gather information from others without revealing it themselves. This can make certain investigative techniques difficult. For example, soliciting reports of a cult gathering from those who witnessed it usually requires showing up and asking questions. Misdirection can be a great tool in this sort of situation, as the Acolytes only benefit if they can convince others that they are after different information or have false identification. Other useful techniques include eavesdropping on or shadowing those believed to be involved with a threat. Such surveillance is easier with access to certain kinds of technology or psychic abilities, giving characters with those aptitudes a chance to shine.

Nothing causes more problems for a high-Subtlety investigation than discovery. It can be useful for the Acolytes to selectively reveal themselves, but being uncovered by others is almost always going to cause them problems. Even if they are not found out by their enemies, whatever authorities are active on the planet are less likely to take the Acolytes seriously if they have been caught skulking about and hiding in the shadows.

LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED

Some Acolytes prefer to use every tool available to them, regardless of the impact it has on their Subtlety. They might sneak into an abandoned cultist lair one day, then raid an active hideout with guns blazing on the next. This sort of approach usually prevents the Acolytes from gaining either a high or low Subtlety value, as their actions in one situation undo any changes from the previous encounters. Despite this, it can still be a very effective method of investigation. By not concerning themselves with maintaining either a cover or an active presence, the Acolytes are free to follow whatever leads they find, and the Game Master has more avenues down which to lead them. It is still possible for this approach to gradually lead to a Subtlety value tilted in a particular way, in which case the Acolytes should probably adjust their tactics accordingly, or be faced with the consequences of ignoring how the world is reacting to them.

The primary obstacle Acolytes of middling Subtlety face is that they cannot rely on Subtlety tests resolving in their favour. They are as likely to gain a result detrimental to their current situation as they are to receive one that is in line with how they are acting at a given moment. The GM can make use of this by bringing up their past actions during the adventure to explain the effects of the Subtlety test.

LET THE HERETIC TREMBLE

At a particularly low Subtlety value, searching for a Hereticus threat becomes more akin to a feudal world grox hunt than a true investigation. Warbands here cannot rely on avoiding detection or notice, and so are best served by using their overt presence as a tool in its own right, attempting to drive their prey from their hiding places with direct and pronounced action.

When operating at low Subtlety, they must attempt to bait their quarry or intimidate them into making a mistake. For example, if their open actions allow the enemy to send killers after them, the assassins are best viewed as a means to track down the masters, rather than a simple threat. Overt action from the PCs typically demands response in kind from the perspective of their enemies, since no skulking cult or manipulative cabal can survive the kind of mobilisation against them that an Inquisitor's authority allows.

The primary threat low-Subtlety warbands face is getting in over their heads. Attempting to bait out or provoke a threat is a valid tactic, but sometimes the enemy is more resourceful or entrenched than anticipated, and can respond with overwhelming force. The GM should be careful not to simply punish the PCs for acting this way, but there is no obligation for NPCs to play along exactly with the Acolytes' plans, either.



SUBTLETY AND CONFRONTATION

Subtlety does not stop playing a role in DARK HERESY adventures just because the enemy has been discovered. Even as the Acolytes mobilise to root out the threat, they are likely to find it influencing how events play out.

THE SHADOW WAR

When warbands with high Subtlety prepare to confront their foes, they cannot easily rely on outside help. Gathering additional allies or resources risks alerting their foes to the impending assault, and they likely lack the necessary inroads for access to support in any case. They may be able to call in a Reinforcement Character if matters are truly desperate (though this will depress their Subtlety), but more likely they are in the final battle by themselves.

Despite these considerations, there are advantages to a high-Subtlety assault. If the Acolytes have been doing their work properly, the enemy is unlikely to be prepared. Whatever cults or conspiracies they target may not even be aware of the Acolytes' attention, and if they are, they are unlikely to be able to anticipate their moves. If warbands have maintained a high Subtlety value throughout their investigation, especially if they did so at the cost of other resources, the GM should reflect this in preparing the final confrontation. Guards should be less alert and/or less numerous overall, for example, allowing a devastating surprise attack.

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

Just as with earlier investigations, maintaining a balanced Subtlety value keeps a wide range of options open for Acolytes who favour this approach. They may not be as effective at infiltration or sabotage as a high-Subtlety warband, and they may lack the resources or firepower of a warband that disregards Subtlety, but they are not limited to a single avenue of approach, either. They can attempt almost any sort of strategy and have a chance of success, even if they lack the specialisation a more extreme Subtlety value might offer.

Warbands with balanced Subtlety even have the unique option of attempting a sort of "combined arms" approach, with regards to drawing attention. Because they are neither the sole target of their enemies' attention nor hidden from their allies, it could be possible for the Acolytes to draw in additional resources as a diversion while they strike at the heart of the threat, or to draw attention themselves while allied NPC specialists tackle other problems. In this way, warbands could include elements of both extreme approaches in a single plan, which would not be possible for a more focussed group.

TO BRING LIGHT INTO DARK PLACES

Low-Subtlety warbands are likely to face prepared, entrenched opposition once they have tracked their enemies to whatever foul lair they hide in. Overt tactics give the foes of the Imperium plenty of time to ready fiendish defences and brace themselves for battle. Of course, once the Acolytes have fully rallied their allies and prepared their own arsenal for righteous cleansing, they are not as likely to be impressed.

The final confrontation in an adventure with low-Subtlety warbands is typically a climactic battle more akin to a warzone than the lair of a shadowy menace. The additional man- and firepower available to both sides once they are aware of their foes means such confrontations are almost assured to be high in casualties, for the victors as well as their vanquished enemies. The GM can use this to play up the dramatic effect of the battle, resolving the struggles and deaths of entire groups of NPC combatants with a narrative flourish to emphasise the scope of the struggle.

SUBTLETY AND CLEAN-UP

The work of the Inquisition is never over. There is always a new threat to face, often rising from the ashes of the old. As such, adventures should often include an element of clean-up in their conclusion, where the PCs resolve the last dangling threads. In these situations, Subtlety does not offer new options or constraints. Instead, undertaking a clean-up operation in a particular style allows the Acolytes to further modify their Subtlety value in preparation for their next mission. The GM should reflect any clean-up actions (or the lack thereof) in their Subtlety at the start of the following adventure, if it changes by travel or other means.

WITHOUT TRACE, WITHOUT WITNESSES, WITHOUT REMORSE

Some Inquisitors and their Acolytes maintain that the Imperium's citizens are safest in ignorance. In their eyes, victory is not complete for as long as it is remembered. This approach is common among high-Subtlety warbands. Such warbands rarely leave signs of their passage in the first place, but when they do, they take time to remove them once the immediate threat has passed.

In extreme cases, this can mean permanently silencing any witnesses, even those who helped the Acolytes. If high-Subtlety warbands allow witnesses to live at all, it is typically after safeguards such as mind-scrubbing or neural blocks are put in place to protect the secrecy of the operation. Extremely valuable assets might instead be inducted into the Acolytes' support network, but this is typically saved for those who have proven worth the risk by going above and beyond what was expected of them.

THE PROPER ORDER OF THINGS

Acolytes who are not concerned with high or low Subtlety do not need to enact clean-up operations for that purpose. However, they may wish to tie up loose ends simply to better secure and order the world they leave behind them. In this case, they are likely to adapt methods from high- or low-Subtlety warbands as befits the situation. Whether their duty is best served by hiding evidence of any conflict or by making an example of their defeated foes, they do whatever is necessary to restore order.

THE FATE OF ALL HERETICS

Once a low-Subtlety warband has established their presence on a world, the populace often grows uneasy at the notion of any threat meriting their arrival. Acolytes can lay these concerns to rest with a public spectacle, demonstrating the utter defeat and ruination of the Imperium's foes with a witch-pyre or public execution. These grisly spectacles also serve a double purpose of reminding any other potential heretics of the penalty for such deeds.



ENEMIES WITHIN™

Vile cultists, unnatural witches, loathsome mutants, and other terrors represent the Enemy Within: the insidious rot eating away at the heart of the Imperium. Against them, the Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus and their Acolytes stand ready to defend Mankind with righteous hatred and cleansing flames.

ENEMIES WITHIN provides players and Game Masters with new weapons to use against these threats, from powerful wargear and vehicles to potent new psychic powers and even dread Profane Objects. Horrid cults and heresies await the Acolytes, with the fate of the Askellon Sector at stake!

This supplement for DARK HERESY SECOND EDITION also contains:

- New Acolyte creation options including the Sister of Battle elite advance.
- Gazetteers for new worlds of Askellon and their native cults, as well as unique investigation templates for crafting adventures on those planets.
- New rules for Inquests, allowing players to design, launch, and guide their own investigations against the dangerous threats within Askellon.

BURN THE HERETIC!

The **DARK HERESY**
SECOND EDITION Core Rulebook
is required to use this supplement.

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