

DARK MAGENTA

Oh, To Be An Inquisitor

By Ben Hulston

The Inquisitor Induction Pack

Welcome, Inquisitor-to-be, to the Inquisitor induction pack. In here you will find bags of information on your future career and the kinds of exciting tasks you get to engage in. Please find the standard issue power armour, power weapons and bolt weapons with this hand book.

Please keep in mind, as a full seal wielding member of His Most Holy Ordos, that you have a fair amount of responsibility, so try not to make too much of a mess. Hopefully though, you'll be one of those bright souls promoted to Inquisitor by your dying master, a renegade prodigal psyker, a son out for revenge after the death of his father, or even a Jedi who has lost his way into this universe!

No set recruitment policies...

Okay, so we know that there isn't a set induction for all Inquisitors that must be followed in order to become a member of the Most Holy Ordos. So why does it seem that there are an extraordinary number of Inquisitors who appear to have come from the same background, similar circumstances and have all gained their seals through what appears to be a fairly standard recruitment and a training period that lasted all of five minutes with a sword?

It's a common theme I hope to tackle by providing an overview of the worst Inquisitor archetypes and blowing them apart in this article.

The next article will detail my own "Inquisitor Induction Pack", with a brief set of notes on how to harness that creative energy and compress it down into 54mm of Inquisitor goodness.

Archetypal Misery

Following on from here will be a few differing sections on the archetypes I find genuinely banal, irritating or down-right stupid and, with a little wordplay, reason and a bit of common sense, I hope to also state why I find them banal, irritating and down-right stupid.

Youthful Protégés

- Projections of the player

A young rough, tear away, rebel without a cause ganger who is out for himself; a young second-in-line aristocrat who lives by his sword and has misspent his youth fighting, hunting, practising with blade and bow; the prodigal son of an Inquisitor, born of good stock, a ready-made leader in waiting (more on the specifics of this later...); the young prodigious psyker with awesome powers – who all end up banishing a daemon as an Inquisitor (who, apparently, is not doing his job...) watches from the shadows, and ends up recruiting the young boy as his acolyte and heir.

To understand the root of this, I believe we must look to the players themselves. As a general rule, Inquisitor players tend to be younger males who enjoy a good flight of fantasy, and this method of recruitment is nothing more than a symptom of that.



The problem is that there is a fundamental conflict with the canon published background and there are problems with the practicalities of sending what is essentially still a child into a combat situation.

Banishing a daemon is not an easy affair – they will not smile meekly at any psyker and slink off softly into the Warp to lick their wounds, and physical combat is not going to be a simple tap on the side of the head with a sword and a swift kick up the rear to send the daemon packing back into the aethyr.

Remember, these are manifestations of a God, made by pure energy and bound together with an implacable will. They are terrible to behold, bringers of death, incarnations of the most horrible of human emotions.

DARK MAGENTA

Also consider that a child, even a teenager, will be considerably less physically, mentally, and emotionally resilient than a battle hardened veteran of many a war, a blood crazed sociopath, or even an adult cultist with a grudge. Many youths are given stats that seem to almost completely ignore the age of the character.

Further, it must be stated that combat is a horrendously brief, horribly final process which will be bloody, unnerving, and mentally distressing.

Can you imagine what effect combat situations would have on a child, no matter how you dress it up in handwavium, adrenaline, bravery, determination, motivation or any other motive? Is there really a solid grounding for this to be the reality of any situation in the given background on which Inquisitor is based?

In my opinion, from both a canon and a human perspective, there's not going to be much ground for this happening.



- Why youths do not make good acolytes

The next point is that a youth just simply wouldn't make a good acolyte to have out in the field. All that boundless energy and enthusiasm could perhaps be useful, but would it be useful in tense negotiations with a cautious third party, where experience, tact, and the skills of the diplomat are far more valuable? Would the youth be of any value when descending into a deadly pit of a cult, bound to be filled with traps, ambushes and the like?

These are the roles of an Inquisitor and retainers, and a halo of varied and wonderful other roles. From a field perspective, some raw youth, full of beans but of little self-control, would be a liability in the field - regardless of how we, as players, might wish to see a version of our youthful selves rampaging through the Imperium.

- Training, training, and the Inquisitor's time

Consider next whether an Inquisitor is truly likely to personally train any youth he picks up from any hole. The job of an Inquisitor is to be the final defence against the enemy within, without and beyond - they are constantly

engaged in the battle for the Emperor's soul.

Is any Inquisitor worth his salt going to spend however many years training a youth up to an acceptable standard before he can take him out in the field, where his real apprenticeship would begin?

There are hordes of resources an Inquisitor can call upon, without any trouble at all, that specialise in all kinds of training. Short of sending an acolyte off to an Officio Assassinorum temple to be trained, the Imperium is the Inquisitor's oyster. He can send his acolyte where he chooses, have them trained in whatever field is required, by the best the Imperium can offer.

Why would said Inquisitor linger for months and years on end simply teaching one acolyte, no matter how much potential they may have, what they could learn elsewhere and let the Inquisitor get on with their actual role?

- Youth and the Inquisition

So, where does youth come into the Inquisition?

I think it's important to understand the definition of youth in the context of the 41st millennium and, more importantly, the Inquisition.

The definition that I shall use as "youth", related to the Inquisition, is "a member of the Ordos, or a servant of a member of the Ordos, who is relatively new to the role he has been exposed to." I believe this definition is a good one as it is specific, but still leaves many options for the player to explore. A youthful Inquisitor may have had twenty or more years experience previously in the various roles behind his Inquistorial tutor.

These could have varied from being trained by an Imperial Guard regiment on the rigors of survival, passed into the Commissariat for leadership training, to the Ecclesiarchy for spiritual enlightenment, and finally seconded into the Inquisitor's staff, to learn the day to day work required of an Inquisitor - administration, intelligence work, research, negotiations with related parties, networking and communication with Inquistorial allies; and all this before he is turned loose as an acolyte!

This is before the formal apprenticeship in the context of Inquisitor games, where by the acolyte is exposed to conflict in the field.

Even after, say, a decade or even two of this field exposure, the promoted acolyte who is privileged enough to be promoted to Inquisitor can still be considered to be "youthful"! In human years, they may be forty, fifty, or sixty years old, but given the rejuvenation therapies in the Imperium, this may be comparable to a young man of his twenties, fresh out of university and stepping into his new career.

Exceptional People

- Talented vs Exceptional

I think there's also a problem that arises when creating Inquisitor characters - the difference between people with talent, and exceptional people. What do I mean by this?

To give an example to work from for this part of the

DARK MAGENTA

discourse – a professional footballer would be considered to be talented. An example of an exceptional person would be a triathlon-running, First-Class-degree-holding leader of men who is liked by all, sharp as a razor and packed with common sense to boot. And this is really where there must be a distinction in the people recruited into the Inquisition to specifically become an Inquisitor (assuming that such a thing happens, as many player-created character backgrounds seem to imply).

Talented people tend to be quite one-dimensional, focusing on a single ability they excel at to the ignorance of other skills, and all too often this will show through in the construction of the character. Giant weapon skills are generally the order of the day, with arbitrary numbers in the high 70s thrown into the mix with no real explanation as to what they represent, how they contribute to the character, or how this person has such statistics if they have simply neglected everything else to train with weapons all their lives.

Back stories rave about how gifted this Inquisitor is with said sword, usually a Katana or similar oriental derivative, and how he has spent year after year honing himself into a startlingly effective killing machine with said sword. How can it then be stated that this master of the blade is also startlingly intelligent and an expert problem solver (Sg 70+), a dead eye shot (Bs 70+), a master tactician and filled with charisma (Ld 70+), with a mind made of steel protected from protracted psychic assaults (Wp 70+) and a dash of absolute resolve in the face of even the most horrifying abhorrence from the Warp (Nv 70+) without some time on his side?

- Hard work

The fact of the matter is exceptional people are born of dedication, discipline, application and hard work. Of course, some talent is likely to come into play – but this would never make up for the piles and piles of hard work that must go into becoming exceptional. And, after all, that is what an Inquisitor is - exceptional.

There are some things an Inquisitorial apprentice will not naturally excel at, but the kind of mentality they have means they will apply themselves to learning about all areas of an Inquisitor's role. One cannot discount the sheer volume of dedication that must go into being such a person. If we apply this to an Inquisitor, who by definition of the role must be exceptional, then it follows logically that surely the average age of those even promoted into the position of Inquisitor must be venerable by today's standards and certainly not much younger than 60.

This is simply to ensure they have the requisite amount of time to learn about all of the areas of the role, including Imperial Law (while it may not apply to them, it would be more than a slight benefit to at least be au fait with it), Imperial custom, languages, culture, leadership skills, fitness, some technological aptitude and a dash of

detective training, and presumably countless other fields and schools of thought.

Family Affairs

The next unfortunate archetype I want to examine is that of the family of Inquisitors.

Consider that an Inquisitor is going to be a stone hearted killer of men. It goes without saying – it is part of the job description. They would be aloof and inhuman beyond what we, with our 21st century understanding and morals, could possibly comprehend. These are humans who rely solely on their own personal sense of right and wrong for their actions; they are essentially only accountable to themselves and have infinite resources at their disposal.

They can slaughter billions with a single word.

This hardly seems to be the profile of a family-orientated person.

This doesn't necessarily preclude having a family, but consider next that if someone, having seen the worst of the horrors that the galaxy has to offer, actually had a child that they truly adored, would they want to place them in the way of such horror? Rationally, there isn't much justification for having Inquisitorial dynasties. Does the image of an infant happily dancing around Daddy while he files his latest report on the absolutely terrifying Genestealer infestation he has just put down really seem all that feasible, even in the midst of the insanity of the 40k universe?

Inquisitorial Seals for All!

The next grievance I have with the "Inquisitor Induction Pack" is the success rate with which Inquisitors have at picking the right people first time when selecting acolytes. Almost immediately, an acolyte slots into the role of Inquisitor without any trouble

whatsoever, picks it up quickly and excels!

Now, this is not to suggest that an Inquisitor would be a bad judge of character; but my argument against this is two-fold.

Not everyone selected would be cut out for the Inquisition. Some wouldn't be as skilled as the Inquisitor would necessarily have believed or been lead to believe, and would fall in battle or simply be discarded. Others would break under the pressure, the stress and the psychological strain. Others may simply be discarded because of a personality clash with the Inquisitor. My point is, it is very rarely the case that the characters I see regularly will have dragged themselves through the ranks, will have triumphed and failed, which in itself is always a useful learning mechanism, will have seen friends and peers fail and/or die, changed significantly in character since youth or even backstabbed some of his fellow acolytes to reach his new position as Inquisitor.



DARK MAGENTA

My second point against this method of selection is similar to a point I made previously; given an Inquisitor's actual role, would they ever engage in recruitment themselves? Do we see the CEO of large corporations having direct input into recruitment, apart from the delegation of such decisions to people who are experts in recruitment?

An Inquisitor could be considered in a similar way – would it not make more sense to delegate this to a trusted aide or advisor, perhaps someone the Inquisitor trusts to train their acolytes? They will know what to look for in an acolyte and be able to make good decisions. This would even allow the whole process to be clandestine and anonymous, leaving the Inquisition entirely out of the picture – surely a good thing when you consider the Inquisition is supposed to be all but a rumour to the vast majority of the Imperial population.

Luke, I am your... Inquisitorial Master

The next point has been covered by other writers, so I shall only gloss over this point. I believe there is a rather large wealth of information, sources, and true character to the 40k universe in itself, such that it is not necessary to translate, directly, character archetypes or even actual characters into the 40k universe from other sources.

Additionally, this is almost always done excessively badly with Inquisitors being created that revolve thematically around the lead of the latest action film, a more classical source, or characters from TV/books. The worst of these actually name check the character, or include the signature weapon / ability from the character almost entirely verbatim with little thought to how it would translate directly into the 40k fictional universe.

Now, not that derivative is something everyone can avoid, but I truly believe there's enough scope within the 40k universe for so many things that are true, consistent and individual to that fictional universe for players to not have to plagiarise so terribly other sources.

Acolytes = Death

Also known as "the death-bed promotion"!

It is a staple favourite of character creation, the dying master handing over his Inquisitorial seal to a doe-eyed, sobbing acolyte who swears revenge in her master's name...

Now, to me, this just seems lazy and out of synch with the concept of an Inquisitor. It seems much more likely that an Inquisitor will have planned quite meticulously for this eventuality. Death is a huge threat in an occupation like that of an Inquisitor, and not to plan for such an event seems awfully inept. This is before we consider how incredibly rash a death-bed promotion would actually be, given that the Inquisitor would be making an incredibly pressurised decision ("He's a traditionalist, believes acolytes should only ever get their seal once a master is on his death bed...").

I would even go so far as to say that it would be such a bad decision, it would likely lead to a cycle of death-bed promotions between acolyte and master as they gradually become more and more inept...

Final Thoughts

This article is only one gamer's take on the commonly-seen character creation problems and pitfalls in Inquisitor. This terrifying journey has highlighted the most heinous of all character creation crimes; from the protégés to the death-bed promotions, from Inquisitor Blade and his light sabre wielding ilk to the Inquisitorial Brady bunch, I've attempted to show just why these archetypes are so very wrong and, in particular, why they simply do not fit or are not necessary in the 40k universe.

That isn't to say that those stereotypes and clichés don't have a place in character creation; but they must be used in a smarter way. This article is meant to challenge those horrific stereotypes, and ask players creating an Inquisitor to step outside of those norms and say, "Who is my Inquisitor? How can I create an exciting character that I will enjoy gaming with, that represents all the great things in the 40k universe, and that will make other players respect the work I've done in creating him?"

Next time, I will attempt to give actual guidance - as opposed to my highly-opinionated rant – on how to create something unique and beautifully-true to the 40k universe.

Reading Further

While there may not be very many articles left online regarding Inquisitor, one that does remain is Summoning the Muse, which looks at the various GW background resources available to the player as they try to seek inspiration for a new character. You can find it [here](#).

Beyond that, if you're inclined to agree or disagree with Ben's opinion, why not get in touch and explain why? We'd welcome your responses to the usual address – editor@darkmagenta.co.uk.



About the Author

Mr Hulston is a disreputable miscreant, known for showing up at Warhammer World at the Inquisitor meets and making everyone feel rather uncomfortable with his incoherent babble and terrible GMing skills. His shady alter-ego, SlaaneshBen, is known for doing rather the same thing online at The Conclave.

When not fighting the eternal battle for the Emperor's Soul, he leads a life in an alternate universe where he is a trainee chartered accountant, IT consultant, and all round nice guy.

Models built and painted by Ruaridh Dall, known to the Conclave as Van Helser.