

DARK MAGENTA

The Fickle Warp

The darker side of the aether in Inquisitor

By Ruairidh Dall

Complementing "The Sanctioning Brand", this article provides rules for sorcery, warp predators, psychic malignancies and provides gaming and modelling ideas specific to psychic characters.

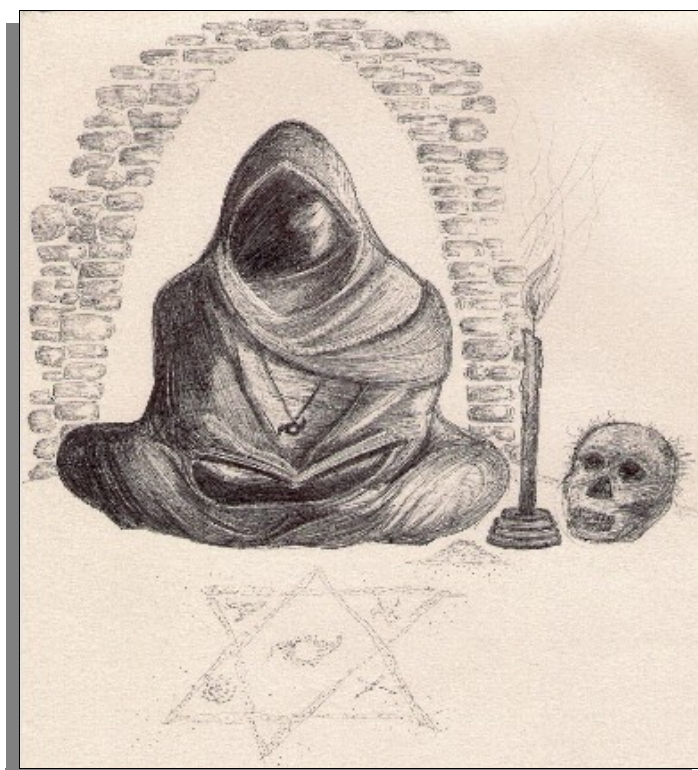
At Once a Boon and a Curse

While there is no doubting the potential power of psychic abilities, each and every time a psyker manifests a power, he is gambling with his soul. The warp cannot be thought of as a simple reservoir that can be tapped to fuel psychic abilities – it is a boundless realm of sentience, spite and malice that is home to things that wish for the total obliteration of the real universe. These predators are ever searching for a window into the physical realm, and the mind of a psyker represents a tempting target. Once latched onto, a psyker can suffer terrible mental trauma, die outright, have their soul ripped from their being as a daemon makes their form its temporary vessel, or at worst give birth to a portal to the Empyrean through which madness and death can flow. Though these incidents are at the extreme end of the scale for warp calamities, contact with the warp in general brings corruption, and few psykers live to old age without showing its effects. Mutation and malignancy can often strike, and those with an understanding of the psyker are quick to act should they notice either – better a psyker's life be ended swiftly before the long slow descent to Chaos. Despite the dangers the warp presents, there are those who would actively engage it to do their bidding. Such unbridled power is an obviously attractive proposition, and with sorcery, it can be gained. These dark arts are amongst the most forbidden in the Imperium, and there are few more dangerous foes than a sorcerer bent on dominating a world.

Sorcery

Interaction with the warp is not simply the preserve of the psychic. The warp is ever-present, just beyond the reach of most, but bending the endless energies of the aether to one's will is far from impossible for the common man. Almost all humans have a presence within the warp, and with it, they have the potential to manipulate the realm beyond. Through the study of the occult, the arcane and the forbidden, ritual and formulae can be learnt that allow the boundary between the real and that which lies beyond to be breached and the warp brought to bear. This art is known as sorcery, and its use is absolutely proscribed within the Imperium.

Though sorcerers command great power, such exposure to the warp is damning in the extreme. A sorcerer has but the most tenuous control of the raging energies of the warp, but its power over him is absolute. Unlike psychic powers, there are no safeguards a sorcerer can use to protect himself from the ravages of the warp, and taking up sorcery damns an individual's soul. The Emperor of mankind knew the dangers of sorcery and outlawed it in



the early days of the Imperium. Those who transgress this prohibition face the wrath of the Ordo Malleus and the malice of the powers they attempt to master.

Using Sorcery

Sorcerous powers are analogous with psychic abilities, for ease of implementation in game, though they are manifested slightly differently. Using sorcery does not however equate to being a psyker, and any weapons, special or exotic abilities or indeed psychic abilities that have special effects against psykers will affect sorcerers as they would any other non-psyker (though it is entirely possible for psychic characters to be sorcerers too, in which case they will be affected normally). To use a sorcerous power, a character must be able to freely speak and have use of at least one arm to allow them to invoke their powers with words and symbols.

The use of sorcerous powers follows the rules for using psychic powers with one major exception: sorcerers test their Sagacity characteristic rather than their Willpower characteristic to activate their abilities. All modifiers to the chance of activating an ability – concentration, range, line of sight and difficulty rating – apply to sorcery in the same fashion as they do to psychic abilities. Sorcerers can attempt to nullify psychic and sorcerous powers, and

psykers can attempt to nullify sorcerous powers. Should a sorcerer fail to activate a power, or fails his risky action roll, he loses double the amount of Willpower rolled. In addition, each time the sorcerer loses Willpower in this fashion, he will gain a Warp Malignancy as detailed later in the article.

Sorcery is designed to show the inherent danger of forbidden knowledge in the 41st millennium. Though a sorcerer will not lose Sagacity and lower his ability to cast sorcerous powers should he fail to activate his powers, his Willpower will degrade leaving him open to suggestion and at risk of succumbing to domination by others. The corruption of the warp claims all sorcerers in the end.

Sorcerer Characters

Any *Inquisitor* character has the potential to turn to sorcery should they desire the power it brings and are willing to turn to the forbidden lore that instructs on its use. Any character that does so crosses a line from which there is no return: their soul is damned, and should any other find of their new abilities they will be hunted with no respite. A character who becomes a sorcerer gains a +20% bonus to their Sagacity to represent the terrible knowledge they have acquired to allow them to practice their dark abilities, but must also take two Warp Malignancies as detailed later in the article to represent the irreversible damage done to their souls. A sorcerer is free to choose which psychic abilities he would like to take as his powers. For ease of reference when creating NPCs, a sample profile for a sorcerer is included below (the character is assumed to be a recidivist from within Imperial society, though increasing his stats by about +15% across the board would for example make a good rebel Imperial Guard commander who had turned to Sorcery).

| | WS | BS | S | T | I | Wp | Sg | Nv | Ld |
|-----------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Sorcerer | 45 | 45 | 40 | 40 | 50 | 55 | 70 | 40 | 40 |
| Random | 35+2D10 | 35+2D10 | 35+2D6 | 35+2D6 | 40+2D10 | 45+2D10 | 55+3D10 | 30+2D10 | 30+2D10 |

Sorcerers created as NPCs aren't likely to be equipped with anything other than common equipment, though their links with cults could provide rare, exotic or even legendary equipment. A sorcerer may come to be attuned with the warp enough to benefit from the Psyniscience Exotic Ability.

A sorcerer will have 2 Warp Malignancies.

From Beyond

Warp space exists as a realm of pure energy, ever-shifting and treacherous like the sea. Like the oceans, currents, tides and eddies exist that allow ships to traverse it under the guidance of a Navigator, and like the oceans, it teems with life, if life can truly be attributed to the entities whose very existence mocks the material universe. Warp leviathans, astral spectres, vampyres and daemons are just some of the creatures that call the Empyrean home. But just as man intrudes on their realm, they intrude on his, more often than not to hunt.

Psychneuein

Psychneuein are dangerous warp entities drawn to the minds of psykers to propagate in the material universe. Eggs laid in the minds of unprotected and weakened psykers hatch into larvae which feast upon the brain of their host, slowly turning the psyker insane. Once the gestation period is complete, the larvae erupt from the psyker in a shower of blood as wasp-like creatures, though once fully grown they can be up to two metres in length. Formidable opponents, adult psychneuein have been known to massacre any who would threaten the hosts of their young, appearing from the warp in an instant of charnel slaughter.

The Infested

Psykers carrying psychneuein larvae have their mental faculties eroded as the creatures feast on their grey matter. They exhibit irritability, photophobia, and suffer from seizures and night terrors. Few realise the true nature of their illness until it is far too late.

| | WS | BS | S | T | I | Wp | Sg | Nv | Ld |
|---------------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| The Infested | 45 | 45 | 40 | 40 | 50 | 70 | 35 | 70 | 40 |
| Random | 35+2D10 | 35+2D10 | 35+2D6 | 35+2D6 | 40+2D10 | 60+2D10 | 30+2D6 | 60+2D10 | 30+2D10 |

Typically rogue psykers, the Infested are unlikely to have anything beyond basic equipment. If they are sanctioned psykers, perhaps weakened by a psychic malignancy, then equipment appropriate to their background is allowable. The Infested are not limited in what psychic abilities they can take, but are unlikely to have abilities from more than one discipline.

Exotic Abilities: Psyniscience, Corpus Conversion

Special Abilities: Nerves of Steel, Force of Will

Telepathic abilities will automatically fail against the Infested and result in the psyker removing 2D10 from his Willpower due to psychic backlash. Should the Infested ever fail to use a psychic ability, the psyker will die and D3 adult Psychneuein will erupt from his body. If the psyker is slain in combat, there is a 25% chance of D3 adult Psychneuein being born. Otherwise, D10 Psychneuein larvae escape from his body.

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Psychneuein Larvae

The larval form of the Psychneuein are no more than six inches in length, and relatively harmless. However, should they find another host they are quite capable of burrowing into a psyker's brain and resuming their gestation process. If the larvae are almost fully gestated when their host is killed, they can draw on reserves of warp energy ingested from the psyker's link to the aether and metamorphose into adult Psychneuein in the blink of an eye.

| | WS | BS | S | T | I | Wp | Sg | Nv | Ld |
|--------|---------|----|--------|--------|---------|---------|-----|---------|-------|
| Larvae | 25 | 0 | 15 | 15 | 20 | 60 | 5 | 70 | 10 |
| Random | 15+2D10 | - | 10+2D6 | 10+2D6 | 10+2D10 | 50+2D10 | D10 | 60+2D10 | 5+D10 |

Due to their small size, Psychneuein larvae count as small targets (-30% to hit) and have one target location, which counts as the head. In addition, they can move no faster than a crawl.

Exotic Abilities: Fearsome

Alien Abilities: Fangs (Exterminatus article "*Dead or Alive, You're Coming With Me*")

Whenever Psychneuein larvae take damage, but isn't killed outright, there is a 25% chance of it metamorphosing into an adult Psychneuein.

Adult Psychneuein

Adult Psychneuein are truly horrifying to behold: flying monstrosities with slaver mandibles capable of tearing a man in two and barbed ovipositors capable of piercing human bone and armour with equal ease. Coupled with the ability to slip in and out of the warp at will, Psychneuein are amongst the deadliest of warp predators the archivists of the Ordo Malleus have catalogued.

| | WS | BS | S | T | I | Wp | Sg | Nv | Ld |
|--------|---------|----|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|---------|
| Larvae | 80 | 0 | 50 | 65 | 85 | 90 | 10 | 80 | 50 |
| Random | 70+2D10 | - | 40+2D10 | 55+2D10 | 70+3D10 | 80+2D10 | 5+D10 | 70+2D10 | 40+2D10 |

Psychneuein are large targets (+30% to hit). When working out which location has been hit when a Psychneuein has been targeted, consider hits to the legs to have hit the psychneuein's wings, and hits to the arms to have hit the psychneuein's legs.

Exotic Abilities: Terrifying, Sense Presence (the Psychneuein is aware of all characters with a warp presence within 30 metres)

Alien Abilities: Wings, Ovipositor (counts as Secondary Jaws with Razor Sharp Claws (Exterminatus article "*Dead or Alive, You're Coming With Me*")

Psychic Abilities: Blood Boil, Instability, Regenerate

As warp creatures, Psychneuein never lose Willpower for failing to activate psychic abilities.

Enslavers

An ancient threat to all sentient life in the galaxy, Enslavers are warp entities that seek domination over all mortal creatures. Gaining access to the physical realm through the minds of unguarded psykers, Enslavers conquer planets by overpowering the will of the world's inhabitants and use them as slaves to do their bidding. Enslavers, like many warp predators, are drawn to the souls of unguarded psykers in the currents of the aether. Enslavers work in trinities, using their prodigious psychic abilities to transform a target psyker into a warp gate of twisted, still-living flesh. Once this horrific pulsing arch is formed, the three Enslavers are free to enter the material realm and seek out more psykers to convert into new warp gates to attract more of their warp-spawned kin. Often described as floating sacs of flesh awash with tentacles and grasping mandibles, Enslavers are revolting to behold, just as well considering the dire threat they represent.



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| | WS | BS | S | T | I | Wp | Sg | Nv | Ld |
|----------|---------|----|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| Enslaver | 30 | 0 | 50 | 75 | 50 | 90 | 60 | 60 | 20 |
| Random | 20+2D10 | - | 45+2D6 | 70+2D6 | 40+2D6 | 80+2D10 | 50+2D10 | 50+2D10 | 15+2D6 |

Enslavers are large targets (+30% to hit).

Exotic Abilities: Fearsome, Psyniscience

Alien Abilities: Tentacles (Exterminatus article "*Dead or Alive, You're Coming With Me*")

Psychic Abilities: Telepathy, Terrify, Mind Scan, Psychic Shriek, Levitation, Puppet Master (as written, except characters can only resist and break free from the power's effects with a -20% modifier to their Willpower).

As warp creatures, Enslavers never lose Willpower for failing to activate psychic abilities.

The Enslaved

Victims of the Enslavers' terrible powers of domination, these wretched souls are charged by the will of the Enslavers to protect them at all costs.

| | WS | BS | S | T | I | Wp | Sg | Nv | Ld |
|----------|---------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| Enslaver | 30 | 30 | 50 | 50 | 40 | 60 | 20 | 60 | 60 |
| Random | 20+2D10 | 20+2D10 | 45+2D6 | 45+2D6 | 30+2D10 | 50+2D10 | 15+D10 | 50+2D10 | 50+2D10 |

The Enslaved are unlikely to be armed with anything more than basic equipment, and are incapable of self-preservation.

Special Abilities: Nerves of Steel, Force of Will

Destroying the warp gates the Enslavers create is the only way to prevent a full-blown Enslaver invasion. These immobile structures are likely to be heavily defended by the Enslaved and possibly Enslavers. They should be treated as large targets (+30% to hit), with a Toughness of 80, one target location that has suffers no effects for injury level, and must be "killed" – suffer damage equal to or more than their Toughness - to be considered destroyed.

Warp Malignancies

Long-term exposure to the warp leaves human bodies ravaged and minds twisted by its teratogenic effects. Few indeed are the psykers who avoid the perils their connection with the warp brings. The corruption closeness with the immaterium brings is not by any means limited to

psykers however. Most at risk of succumbing to the touch of the warp are sorcerers, whose unprotected contact with the darkness beyond quickly drags them down to damnation. The devotees of the dark powers unsurprisingly feel the touch of the warp, but even the righteous and good can come to suffer the predations of the aether. Daemonhunters and witch-seekers have fallen to madness and mutation due to their exposure to the power of the realm beyond suffered while fighting its worst excesses and only the purest of the pure can truly resist its malevolence.

Warp Malignancies can be applied at character creation or at the GM's discretion during campaigns. An appropriate time for psykers would be after losing Willpower due a failed psychic test. The overload of warp energy could be seen to have ravaged their bodies and tinged their souls. Other appropriate times for the application of malignancies to any character include coming into contact with daemons, cursed artefacts and texts on the malefic. Sorcerers are a special case, and must have two malignancies applied at the time they turn to sorcery, and must have an additional malignancy applied every time they lose Willpower through the failed activation of their abilities.

Whispers in the Dark - The character is plagued by voices from beyond; soft whispering always out of earshot, or foretellings of his own demise. The distraction caused by these voices means that the character may never gain



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bonuses for aiming. In addition, if the character is a psyker or sorcerer, he never gains a bonus from concentration actions.

Brainwyrms - The character's mind begins to fail, and memories deserting him until one day he awakes with no concept of who or what he is. The character loses -20% from his Sagacity.

Enfeebled - The character's form becomes gaunt and soon he resembles skin stretched over bones as the warp feasts upon his physical form. The character loses -10% from both his Strength and Toughness. In addition, if the character is a psyker or sorcerer, he must deduct D3 from both his Strength and Toughness each time he uses a psychic or sorcerous ability. Characters whose Strength or Toughness characteristic reaches 0 die.

Fate-Hexed - The warp has chosen failure for the character. To avoid failing a risky action roll, the character must now roll more sixes than ones, not equal.

Hunted - The character feels eyes watching him, and every night he awakes suddenly to see a shadow vanish from above his bed. Convinced something from beyond hunts him, the character loses -20% from his Nerve characteristic.

Palsy - A slight tremor begins to affect the character's hands, robbing him of fine control. The character loses -10% from both his Weapon Skill and Ballistic Skill. The GM may also rule that a character with a palsy cannot perform intricate actions with his hands, such as picking locks or re-wiring cogitator consoles.

Blood Debt - The warp hungers for the character's lifeblood. Any Heavy wound starts bleeding along with any other injury effects.

Immaterial Hypersensitivity - Years of exposure to the warp have sensitised the character's soul to the energies of the aether. As a result, the character is particularly susceptible to damage from warp-attuned weapons and psychic attacks. Any psychic powers that target the character directly have their difficulty rating lowered by -5% to a minimum of zero. In addition, non-psychic characters that suffer damage that inflicts extra damage on psychic characters, such as psycannons, count as psykers in that instance.

Painsong - The warp delights in the suffering of mortals, and every knick, cut and impact the character suffers is amplified a hundred-fold. The character reduces his base injury value by one.

Blight - The character erupts in sores as a warp-borne pathogen ravages his body. The scars left by the blight leave the character horribly disfigured. He now counts as Fearsome while his scars are visible.

Truth Speaker - A voice from beyond reveals secrets to the character, and he comes to rely on the whisperer for every choice he makes. The character gains +10% Sagacity, but loses -10% Willpower.

Brute - The touch of the warp begins to wreak havoc on the character's body: bone and skin harden, muscles bulge and his stature increases. The character gains +10%

Strength and Toughness, but loses -10% Initiative.

Aetheric Fibrosis - Every breath the character takes is ashen, his lungs filling with the cinders of the heretics' pyre. The character may never sprint, and every run action taken adds +D3 to his injury total.

Mind Flux - The character's mind becomes overridden with thoughts, not all his own. The character must pass a Sagacity test every turn or loses a point of Speed for the duration of the turn as the conflicting plans and ideas in his mind leave him unable to make decisions for himself.

Visions - The character's mental faculties begin to unwind, and he becomes subject to visual and auditory hallucinations. The character must pass a Willpower test every turn or suffer the effects of Hallucinogen toxin.

Haemovoric Tendency - The character begins to find no amount of food nor water will sate his appetite or thirst, while the smell of fresh blood excites his senses. Giving into temptation one day, the character finds his thirst quenched by the lifeblood of another. The character gains the Exotic Ability Vampirism, and should he come within two yards of any stunned or out of action characters he must pass a Willpower test should he wish to avoid feasting on them.

Murder Sight - Every night the character dreams of carnage, himself a butcher in a sea of crimson. He becomes cruel and vicious to those around him, and erupts into homicidal rage when he encounters his enemies. The character becomes subject to Frenzy.

Protean - Those around the character notice a definite change in him. They cannot put their finger on it, but he is not the man they once knew. Broken down and reshaped by the warp, the character must deduct -2D10 from a random characteristic (roll a D10: 1=WS, 2=BS, 3=S, 4=T, 5=I, 6=Wp, 7=Sg, 8=Nv, 9=Ld 0= GM's choice), and add the same value to another random characteristic.

Mutation - The touch of the warp twists the character's flesh. Roll on the Mutations table found in the Exterminatus article "Dead or Alive, You're Coming With Me" and apply the result.

Wyrldling - The mutating touch of the warp creates a link with the aether in the character's mind, granting him psychic potential. The character may take a psychic power, though the difficulty rating is doubled (or 5 if difficulty 0). Psychic characters may not take this malignancy.

Unleashing the Potential

With these two articles, I hope that the thought of using psykers in games of Inquisitor has become more appealing to players and Games Masters alike. There will always be a risk when using psychic powers – quite rightly so – but that is part of the excitement of the Inquisitor game. I always try and play Inquisitor in as dramatic a fashion as possible, and I would encourage other players to forget about the percentages and just start doing things because they are cool. Having found the dice to be perennially against me as it stands, I have resolved to start taking risky actions and damning the consequences – perfectly appropriate with using psychic abilities! Apart from getting

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more psychic player characters on the table then, I'd like to use this section to suggest some scenario ideas with a psychic edge, as well as introducing some sample characters from which I hope people will take inspiration for creating their own characters.

Scenarios

The Gamma Strain

A parasite on a distant world has infected the populace, reducing them to slaves. Wary of the warp, the parasite avoids bonding with psykers and uses those under its dominion to hunt down the psychic. As thousands of mindless colonists descend on the planet's remaining sanctionites, can they hold out long enough for rescue?

Infinite Non-control

The Adeptus Astra Telepathica is ever searching for the unsanctioned. In a hive of billions, it is the Psi-hounds they rely on to sniff out the psykers amongst the masses. In the hab blocks of Hive One, Cralthyx, the witch finders come across more than they bargained for – an Alpha. They must act decisively to prevent a massacre, or worse, the opening of a gateway to the beyond.

Beacon

Two Inquisitors race to the top of the Astropathic tower on Sylak: one to summon aid against a rebellion, the other to prevent the defeat of his carefully orchestrated coup.

Blood Count

A sorcerer brings his diabolical plans to fruition with a mass sacrifice of innocents. Every drop of blood spilt fuels his ritual only further. The Ordo Malleus operatives must stop him with as little physical bloodshed as possible to prevent the ritual's completion.

Psi-Assassin

With weapons forbidden within court on the feudal world Hercule, a psyker stands the best chance of bringing down the world's heretical Oligarch and escaping his guards.

Lost Hope

The survivors of a shuttle crash on the Deathworld Omega-9 cling to life thanks only to the telekinetic bubble their sanctionite projects around him. As he tires, they must find shelter or fall victim to the hostile elements.

Tatiana Du'Phregne

Blessed with the ability to conjure warpflame with a thought, Tatiana Du'Phregne has served the Ordo Malleus under Inquisitor Tomashek Goddard for eight years. From simple upbringings on the feudal world Li Het, Tatiana has faced the beyond time and again, proving herself a natural foil of the daemonic. As she progressed under Goddard, Tatiana was inducted to the ranks of the Pyrists on Nemesis Tessera and taught new techniques to channel the warpflame that came so naturally to her. Now a living conduit of the Emperor's cleansing fire, Tatiana is one of Goddard's foremost weapons against the malefic.

Exotic Abilities: Psyniscience, Overcharge

Psychic Abilities: Burning Fist, Fireball, Holocaust

Equipment: Psykana mercy blade, psychic foci, stubber, flak armour on chest, abdomen, groin and legs, heavy robes on arms.

Modelling psychic abilities can be a challenge. To show Tatiana is a pyromancer, I used a spare hand from an old Tzeentch Horror replete with a ball of flame. For a telepath, a character modelled to be touching his temple with a hand would be a suitable conversion. A telekine could be modelled with an object "floating" above his outstretched palm with a thin piece of wire. Of course, none of this is absolutely necessary, but would look super-cool nonetheless...



| | WS | BS | S | T | I | Wp | Sg | Nv | Ld |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Du'Phregne | 44 | 52 | 46 | 48 | 53 | 68 | 53 | 62 | 66 |

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Slavos Marlik

Once the head seneschal of the Rogue Trader Novak Dalla Bona, Slavos Marlik turned his back on the Imperial Creed (and some would say his sanity) after injury on the frontier world Hargraft. Blinded in a hunting accident, Marlik's body rejected every bionic placed to restore his vision. Despairing at his condition, Marlik left the service of Dalla Bona and headed to his home world to see out his days in his family estate. In the time he had been away, his brother had turned to dabbling with the power of the warp, and convinced Slavos he could restore his sight. Desperate, Slavos joined his brother in sorcerous ritual and had the warp fashion him vision. Perhaps Marlik would not have brought destruction upon his family had he stopped there, but the former seneschal set about channelling the warp to his own ends, bringing him fortune enough to rival his former employer. The Inquisition intervened, and scattered his empire to the winds, leaving him a fugitive from the law of the good and holy.

| | WS | BS | S | T | I | Wp | Sg | Nv | Ld |
|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Marlik | 53 | 42 | 48 | 53 | 50 | 56 | 83 | 44 | 46 |

Exotic Abilities: Warpsight

Sorcerous Abilities: Dominate, Puppet Master, Telepathy

Warp Malignancies: Aetheric Fibrosis, Blood Debt, Mind Flux, Truth Speaker (characteristic changes included above)

Equipment: Laspistol, heavy robes on all locations



About the Author

Ruaridh lives in Inverness, and while not looking after other people's teeth in his surgery, tries his best to find time to dedicate to the Inquisitor hobby. He would like to thank David Knowles, Nick Garrett, Derek Gillespie and Julia Gibson for the use of models and artwork in the article.