



Malleus Mortis

An Inquisitor Campaign Day.

By Ruairidh Dall

COMING UP WITH IT

Back in October I was struck by a sudden burst of inspiration and desire to make an Inquisitor campaign doable over the course of one frenetic day. This was a huge change from the meandering, plot hook-riddled, paranoid, months-long campaigns I'd been running in GW Glasgow at the time, but change is always a good thing. It was going to be a bit of challenge getting it to work, but I reckoned I was up to it, because I was pretty sure where to look for inspiration.

A few years ago, when Exterminatus magazine was the publication of choice for Inquisitor players, there was a report on a campaign weekend run down at Warhammer World for the Inquisitor playing fraternity in issue 9, called Shadows of Chaos. Sounded like it was an awesome event, and well, imitation is the finest form of flattery, so I yinked a couple of ideas. The report gave details on how a winner was picked at the end of the weekend, and as I wanted some sort of competitive nature to my event, I followed suit with the system that gave each player three agendas that needed to be carried out: an overall faction agenda, a team agenda, and a personal agenda. In doing so, it became clear that there was going to have to be a Puritan/Radical split between players, and that I'd need to have enough bodies along to fill enough teams to make things interesting. All I'd done was scan through an Exterminatus Magazine article and I already had the nucleus of a plan! I then just had to go and flesh things out a bit.

I needed a setting and a story for the players to sink their teeth into, and I went for the tried and tested big bad daemon entity theme, as one: it was easy enough to do; two, everybody likes a doomsday scenario, and three; it would give clear lines between the Puritan and Radical agendas. Ordo Hereticus Radicals just don't seem as mad and dangerous as Ordo Malleus Xanthites! For a good setting, I needed somewhere that was a plausible location for such a warp-saturated scenario as I'd devised, but somewhere not particularly big on the map of the Imperium, as I wouldn't want to upset the applecart in terms of mucking about with the Holy Background. While not fresh in people's memories, the Eye of Terror campaign was still a well-known event to a good proportion of the Inquisitor playing masses, and there was of course a lot of opportunity to come up with a tale of malefic daemons that would sit nicely with the established canon. I had a look at the Eye of Terror map poster that came with White Dwarf back at the time and found my world. On the fringe of the Scarus Sector, out of the way and little mentioned, was the agriworld of Vagera. This would be the planet that the Inquisition would clash over as they fought to stop the predations of Chaos.

The basic synopsis of the event was that a cult was running amok across the planet's surface, overwhelming the under-supported PDF companies, and threatening the future of Imperial rule on the planet. Ordo Malleus files deep within the archives on Nemesis Tessera suggested that the world was home to a daemon entity bound in an altar beneath the planet's capital, and that should the cult release the daemon, then all would be lost. The Puritans would approach the day with the desire to banish the daemon utterly and prevent its release, the Radicals,

following further information, would aim to release the daemon as they suspected it would in fact battle the cult. Once the cult was removed from the equation, the Radicals would then banish the daemon. But that was for another time - they had to battle past their brethren first.

So, with the overall faction agendas nice and clearly defined opposites of each other, I moved onto thinking about the teams. Ideally, I wanted the players to be able to pair off and take part in quick games, at the same time keeping things small enough for me and any assistant GMs to stay on top of. I also enquired about the number of tables I'd have available to me in the shop, and more or less had my mind made up for me by that - three would be the magic number. With three GMs, three games could be run simultaneously, so I began planning the day out on paper. I looked at how many games I could squeeze in and settled on 12 players, and three rounds of games. The players would be paired off within their factions, and set against NPCs in the first round of six games, then would fight against a team from the other faction in the three games of the second round and would then fight in one apocalyptic final battle in the third and last round. I came up with the scenarios for the first and third rounds first and then worked out a way to link them to each other through the three second round games. The team agendas that needed completing would be for the first round games, and weren't going to prove that hard to complete - I didn't want people losing heart right away. That was what the final round was for!

The third round would see the players attempting to complete their overall faction agenda with information gleaned from the first round games, such as the rites of banishment for the Puritans or the rites of release for the Radicals, and their personal agendas, which were a lot of fun to come up with. Everything from attempting to detain members of your own side, to settling old scores with hated foes was dreamt up to be handed out at the start of the final battle. It would make things that little bit more interesting: players would have to look at things differently and decide which took precedence, their faction agenda, or their own imperative.

In order to effect some sort of control on the size and make up of the warbands that were to turn up on the day, I slapped a limit of 350 ready reckoner points on the warbands, and stipulated that there had to be two characters minimum, one of which needed to be an Inquisitor. Doing so pretty much eliminated any chance of a dreaded Space Marine turning up and making things a lot less fun for the other players and also meant that there would be representatives of the Emperor's Holy Ordos on the tables, which was pretty much what the day was about: Inquisitors fighting against each other to save a world.

With it all planned, all that remained to be done was to get it all typed up and approved by Andy, the manager, get a date set, get models and terrain together, and most importantly, begin recruiting!

THE DAY ITSELF

February the eighteenth came around a lot quicker than I had expected, and I had to shove studies out of the way for a bit to get things finalised. I had wanted 12 players for the day, and almost got close to the total, but for some very late call offs (they know who they are). It did mean however that I had to include myself in the playing total, which was an absolute shame, to bump the numbers up to a nice round 8. However, this did absolutely screw up my plans for pairing everybody off into teams of two to satisfy the way the campaign was laid out. But thanks to my ability to think on my feet (Lightning Reflexes I'd guess), I made two guys on each side pair off, and let the other two be their own teams. Wasn't such a bad thing at all. The real pain was not having two assistant GMs as I'd hoped to have. One had had his shift changed at work and couldn't make it, and the other had to concentrate on his real job in the shop. So I had to run things more or less myself, which meant the first two rounds ran over time. I had to alter my plan for the last game as a result, and ditched everyone's followers and left the Inquisitors to battle over the final table. In hindsight though, this is probably what the plan should have been all along, as it really let the players concentrate on their Inquisitors and their personal agendas. Letting your followers do the work isn't very heroic at all now, is it?

Everyone came through the first round games more or less intact (except from my stand-in Radical, who fried his brain while attempting to make himself Instable, and then stabbed through the top of a promethium filled barrel and was turned a little crispy), with some serious destruction caused to one table by the unstoppable Inquisitor Magnus Von Helgenstrom, and a teensy-weensy spot of daemonic possession on the ironically named Inquisitor Jacobus Daemonbane, and after a brief lunch break, filled with discussions of alcohol consumption for some reason, moved onto the second round games. In these games, the Puritans and Radicals would actually fight against each other, and the stage was set for some bloody showdowns.

Memorable moments included my daemonhost taking a heavy bolter round full in the chest and then having its arms and head snipped off by the servitor Saul; Inquisitor Darkov being Psychic Impelled clean off a table; Inquisitor Sails being shot to pieces by the gunslinger Vinny Argentio; Sara Williams finding that knives aren't very effective against Cyber Mastiffs; Inquisitor Genswich deciding that it's better just to leave one of your minions to do the talking before high-tailing it off the table; Techpriest Marvellus using his Temporal Phase Distort Generator to good effect and escaping without any trouble, while his boss took a bolt round to the chest; and Von Helgenstrom again proving that power fists are unnecessarily evil things to pick someone up by the leg with.

After the dust settled, only two of the eight Inquisitors had failed to make it through the three conflicts: Inquisitor Sails, the recipient of far too many unwanted stubber and revolver rounds, and Inquisitor Black, who had his crotch removed by a Cyber Mastiff, on top of his exploding barrel inflicted injuries! I got my list of personal agendas and handed them out amongst the remaining players, and got them ready for the final game.

The Puritans had to get Inquisitor Charles De Grande into contact with the altar in the centre of the table to chant the rites of banishment for five actions in order to complete their team agenda, while the Radicals had to assist Inquisitor-Magos Konstantin Garibaldi-Racavna's advance to the altar to recite the rites to release the daemon from its prison.



A Chrono-Gladiator Gladiator and Enforcer storm a position.

Things started off violently, and continued in that fashion for the rest of the game. Inquisitor Darkov spotted Inquisitor Genswich at the fringes of the chamber, and charged him, knowing of his Recongregator philosophies that put him at odds with the Ordo Hereticus that she represented. Her charge brought her to within yards of her enemy, before he turned and blasted her to the ground with his stubber. Elsewhere, Garibaldi sent Von Helgenstrom flying backwards into the wall of a building with a spike of telekinetic energy that left the Untouchable power armoured behemoth shocked and confused. In revenge, De Grande took aim from afar and downed Garibaldi with a headshot from his lasgun. Von Helgenstrom regained his footing, and found a form as imposing as his own bearing down on him: Daemonbane. Magnus drew his bolt pistol, and let loose a pair of Kraken Penetrator rounds that punched through Daemonbane's shoulder pad, causing him to drop his own gun.

At the edge of the battlefield, Darkov tried to sweep Genswich's legs from under him, but the Radical avoided the trip, and in response lowered his stubber to ruthlessly fire round after round into the prone Inquisitress until she blacked out from the pain. Around the altar, Daemonbane took off in a sprint towards the man who had fired on him, the man whose name was at the top of his personal agenda: Von Helgenstrom. His glittering daemon sword caught the Puritan's eye with its foul allure, but could not penetrate his armour. Magnus shook himself free of the trance and with his powerfist, landed a crushing blow in Daemonbane's abdomen, sending his opponent to the floor. The Puritan pushed onwards to join the newly arrived De Grande at the altar.

Daemonbane though was not down and out yet. Hefting himself to his feet, he charged after Von Helgenstrom and with his own powerfist, nearly tore the Puritan's left arm clean off. As the power armoured monsters grappled, De Grande completed the rites of banishment, and a deep howling filled the chamber, and energy began arcing from the altar: it all spoke of impending doom. In the middle of the maelstrom, Magnus struck Daemonbane one last time, knocking the Radical unconscious.

Garibaldi had come to after the head shot, and seeing the Puritans around the altar, unleashed more bursts of telekinetic power that sent De Grande sliding back across the floor and into a wall, and attempted to use Daemonbane as a weapon against Von Helgenstrom, but Magnus avoided the flying body.

With the Puritans' mission complete, all that was left to do for the Inquisitors was to complete their personal agendas and escape.

Inquisitor Charles De Grande weilds bis power sword.



De Grande got to his feet and rushed over to Daemonbane, knowing that he had to claim the Radical's head in order to increase his standing in his Ordo, and tried to drag the beast from the battlefield. Genswich finally entered the central chamber and targeted De Grande, the Puritan distantly involved with the failing of one of the Radical's plans. His stubber shots forced the Puritan away from Daemonbane's form. Seizing the moment, Garibaldi charged across the chamber, and lowered his power breacher at Daemonbane's head and skewered it from his shoulders. Even though he had come to see the daemon released, the Inquisitor knew that some Radicals are just too dangerous to be allowed to live. Still under fire, De Grande fled the scene, and Genswich left swiftly too, sensing that the chamber was soon about to come down around them. Von Helgenstrom was last to leave the chamber, but not before dragging Darkov's body with him. As a user of witches, the Inquisitress was unleashing unnecessary danger upon the Imperium. The altar chamber collapsed in on itself; forever banishing the daemon trapped there, leaving the fate of Vagera to the mortals battling across its surface.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ruaridh is a dental student at Glasgow University, but is actually not that twisted a person! When not looking at teeth, he can be found lurking on the Specialist Games forum and on the Inquisitor dedicated site The Conclave under the guise of Van Helser.

THE FINAL COUNT

After a thoroughly enjoyable day, with much destruction, death and backstabbing a plenty, it was time to work out just which character had won the day. With only one man successfully completing all three of the agendas that mattered to him, it was clear that Inquisitor Magnus Von Helgenstrom was going to come out of this with the biggest boost to his reputation. Congratulations to Craig Thompson for doing the business with his power armoured alter ego!

I was very happy with the way things turned out, even if I was exhausted and stressed out by it all. I hadn't planned to be a solo GM, and things would have been a lot easier if I had had the help I'd wanted. Better planning was definitely the order of the day!

All that remains to be said is thanks to the staff at GW Glasgow for providing me with space in the gaming room on a busy Saturday afternoon with which to

run this beast and making up posters to advertise the event, thanks to Duncan Brown for stepping in and running one of the games for me early on, and most of all thanks to all the players for turning up with great models and a real desire to have fun, even when their characters were reduced to bloody hunks of meat! Will I do another one of these days? Maybe, I've got everything laid out for picking up again, I just need to find a time when I'm not busy with real life. Do I recommend taking the plunge and running a campaign day to other GMs? Without doubt. It's a great advert for the game of Inquisitor - had lots of interested glances from the other shop goers - and most of all, it's great fun to get models on the table and play some fast and furious scenarios. Just go for it