Dark Heresy™

Disciples of the Dark Gods™



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SECRETS, AND CONSPIRACIES

WARHAMMER® 40,000™ ROLEPLAY

Dark Heresy™

Disciples of the Dark Gods™



ROLEPLAYING IN THE GRIM
DARKNESS OF THE 41ST MILLENNIUM

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Fantasy Flight Games
1975 West County Road B2
Roseville, MN 55113
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ISBN: 978-1-58994-458-1 Product Code: DH05

Printed in China

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The poison was bitter in his mouth but filled his nose with sweet scent as he swallowed it down. Now I am truly amongst the dead, he thought and replaced the drained chalice on the dais before the iron crone.

"Thank you Inquisitor Herrod," the crone said and raised a calliper-braced arm to show an electoo glowing with a pale blue light on her withered palm. Herrod raised his hand and his own palm glowed with the fresh electoo of the star haloed chalice of the Tyrantine Cabal.

He had been permitted to pass far below the upper chambers and courts of the Bastion Serpentis, past the great seal of the Emperor's triumph over the wyrm where none save a bearer of the seal might enter, and far below into the catacombs of the outer archive where the lesser secrets were kept. Even in those outer levels, his steps were followed by gun-muzzles and the tread of sentinel servitors, their witch-tuned sensors and execution protocols forever vigilant. Such measures were not uncommon within a fortress of the Holy Ordos and he was not perturbed by their presence. Yet as he had approached the torch framed doors to this deepest oubliette and saw the alcove of the crone who watched over it, he had felt an unaccustomed dread rise in his well-trained mind: What awaits me beyond, and what then, after such knowledge?

"You have the time until the sand runs out," said the crone, up-turning two iron-bound hourglasses. The crone handed one to Herrod, placing the other on the dais next to the emptied poison chalice. "You must return and drink my second draught if you do not wish to remain amongst the dead," the crone explained with some relish, the crystals of the timer reflecting the cold blue of her eyes. She smiled, no mere servitor this one, something far older, far worse.

Herrod nodded and the door to the inner archive opened like a bronze flower. The darkness was complete and he did not realise that the curator was there until, with a hiss of gas, it ignited a burning torch. Herrod looked up to the elongated mechanical form looming above him. Its face was dead, waxen skin stretched over brass.

"What do you seek?" it said in a voice as dead and dry as its face.

"It concerns this," he said and he held up the artefact. Many had died for it to be in his possession and he owed a great debt to Marr for its retrieval from the House of Dust and Ash. He only hoped it was worth the blood paid for it. The curator was still for a second and then its frame folded with a clicking of clockwork, until its dead face was level with the object.

"There are several connections, many possible references and significances. I can only show you where, you must search for yourself." Suddenly, extending to its full, unnatural height, the curator turned and moved away into the dark. Herrod followed its soundless, slow flight to a waiting elevator cage.

They descended through chambers surrounded by the openings of dark ended corridors. It was like descending down the barrel of a clockwork gun, or the stilled mechanism of an ancient lock. All around were secrets stacked on secrets, overlaid with lies and conjecture–heresies and terrible truths all imprisoned here in darkness.

At last the cage shuddered to a halt in a pool of wan light. At the edge of sight Herrod could see pale surfaces, hints of form and structure that slowly came into focus as his eyes adjusted to the gloom. Cold feminine features cast in moon-white stone gazed down at him, robed arms crossed in the sign of the Aquila over the soft carved edges of her robes. Gazing back into the still face, vast and magnificent, he realised who she was, whose tomb he looked at–Cassilda Cognos, a dead legend, standing guard over the oldest and most dangerous section of the Tyrantine archive, serving in death the Cabal she had helped to found in life. He looked down at the object in his hand. It had brought him further than he had dared dream.

The cage door hinged open and the curator motioned Herrod towards the darkness beyond, passing a gas-torch into his hand. "Go. I cannot pass here," said its dead lips, and then after a pause, "I will return before the sand ends. You will be here waiting or join the dead."

Herrod stepped out and the cage ascended into the darkness above. Alone now, he could feel it around him, the weight of doom, of fragments of future written and atrocities past, all waiting to be reassembled in some dark configuration. But where to begin? Less than an hour's time bought for so many lives, I dare not waste it! With each beat of his heart he was closer to death and here simple fascination or curiosity itself could kill. The Cabal had seen to that. As he stepped into the darkness, his torch aloft, he heard a voice, strange and mocking. It echoed as if from a great distance above, yet at the same time, sounded like a whisper at his ear. The curator, the crone or something else?

"You will find what you seek, Herrod! You are here. You have always been here."

Introduction

The threat of conspiracy, dark dealings, and hidden power pervades the setting of Dark Heresy. Information is often incoherent, random, and conflicting, and those seeking the truth often risk not only their lives, but also their very souls. Yet to search out such hidden horror is the task of the Inquisition, for who else would save mankind from these insidious threats?

Disciples of the Dark Gods is your guide to the foul, horrific and bizarre cults who hide, often in plain sight, amidst the citizens and organisations of the Imperium. Whether it be the lure of false truths, the adoration of the alien, or the quest for power beyond reason, those who would subvert, control and damn humanity are detailed within these pages. The threats presented herein provide Game Masters with a plethora of antagonists and villains to confront agents of the Golden Throne.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

This sourcebook is divided into distinct chapters, each focusing on a variety of cults, organisations, and factions that fall within the remit of the major Holy Ordos—Hereticus, Xenos, and Malleus. Each section provides key insights into particular cults, their ideology, history, organisation, and purpose. Where relevant, Game Masters are presented with a range of suggestions on the use of certain cults and alternative origins as well as possible scenario ideas, tips, and hooks.

Chapter I: The Hereticus Tenebrae

This chapter contains disparate accounts, forbidden lore, and fragmentary whispers providing tantalising insights into the nature and dark purpose of the Tyrant Star. How much truth can be distilled from the ranting of madmen and the confusion of official reports rests upon the wisdom of the Game Master and the ingenuity of the Player Characters.

Chapter II: Hereticus

Mutants, Heretics, and Psykers threaten the Imperium from amongst its people. This chapter describes these internal foes in more detail and outlines specific groups that use treachery & apostasy alongside those warped in body and mind to further their own ends.

Chapter III: Xenos

The alien is the enemy lurking amongst the cold, bleak expanses of space where mankind is either slaves, pawns, or prey. This chapter exposes some of the remorseless inhuman antagonists who lurk within the Calixis Sector and plot the downfall of the Imperium of Man.

Chapter IV: Malleus

No more malicious and persistent opponent of the Emperor's will exists than the powers of the Warp. Herein you will find some of the daemons and warp-spawned abominations who corrupt and consume the human soul. Many residents of the Calixis Sector are tempted by the dark forces of sorcery or join the madness of Chaos cults detailed within this chapter.

Chapter V: The Enemy Within

This chapter focuses on what some consider to be the greatest threat to the continued survival of the Emperor's domain; the internal strife, misunderstanding, and outright hostility within the very structures built to maintain the Imperium.

Chapter VI: The Hunted: Wanted Heretics of the Calixis Sector

Dark disciples, crime lords and infamous villains can be found in this chapter. Eight of the most notorious and dangerous heretics at large are detailed.

Chapter VII: The House of Dust and Ash

The final chapter presents an adventure scenario where Inquisitorial Acolytes are thrust into a deadly whirlpool of intrigue and alien malice as dark forces move to claim the legacy of an infamous Rogue Trader. Intended for advanced Acolytes, this chapter is not for the faint hearted!





I

Shadows of the Tyrant Star

Propheticum Hereticus Tenebrae

•

Using the Hereticus Tenebrae

•

Glimpses of the Truth

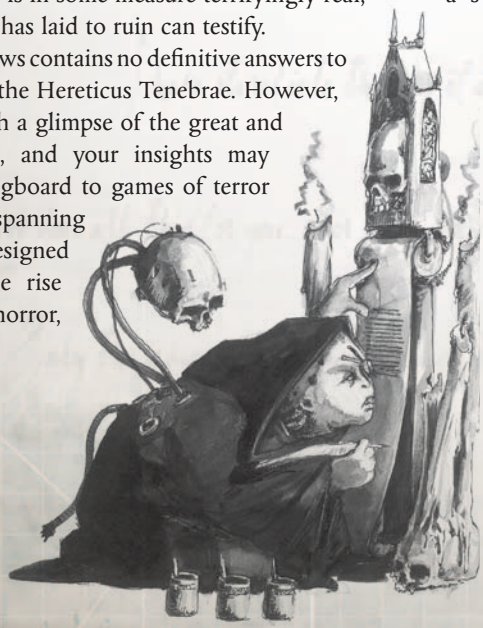
Chapter I: Shadows of the Tyrant Star

"Entry: 'Obscuro'—The nature of the threat is either unknown, resists analysis, is deliberately hidden, or falls outside the normal categories of danger. This threat classification is also in rare circumstances applied to forbidden dangers of mankind's own forgotten antiquity."
—Definitions of the Common Inquisitorial Threat Ratings, Tabernacle of the Conclaves Segmentum

In this chapter you will find fragments of material relating to the Propheticum Hereticus Tenebrae, the Prophecies of the Tyrant Star. Long ago, deep within the heart of the region of space that would one day become known as Calixis, whispers foretold a baleful black sun, drifting on aetheric winds, that would appear without warning and bring terror to all. Over time such myths gave form to prophecies concerning a nightmare star. These prophecies predict calamitous events and the coming of universal ruin, warning of a threat that once was and shall be again, of the death of nations and of worlds laid waste.

The prophecies are fragmentary, puzzling things that talk of events yet to come to pass, of a widening shadow of terror, destruction, and misrule. Yet the precise meaning of what is to come eludes even those scholars who have spent their lives devoted to the lore of the unknown. The Hereticus Tenebrae is a thing that hovers maddeningly close to revelation and understanding, and yet eludes the grasp of the sane and insane alike. Of course, the most troubling aspect of this mystery is that whatever the "thing" is that men have come to know as the Tyrant Star, it is in some measure terrifyingly real, as the planets it has laid to ruin can testify.

What follows contains no definitive answers to the riddle of the Hereticus Tenebrae. However, you may catch a glimpse of the great and terrible truth, and your insights may act as a springboard to games of terror and star spanning campaigns designed to thwart the rise of darkness, horror, and blood.



Guidance for the Game Master

Throughout this book are sidebars filled with information that may be of particular interest to Game Masters (GMs) running **Dark Heresy** campaigns. Content ranging from advice on incorporating a particular heretical organisation into an existing campaign to tips on roleplaying various traitors and villains can all be found within these sidebars. Naturally, it is up to each individual GM to determine how best to use such information.

Using the Hereticus Tenebrae

The Hereticus Tenebrae is a huge overarching mystery with massive implications for every person in the Calixis sector. It is also what you choose it to be. While the fragments presented in this chapter are intended to give you a sense of the doom that has come to Calixis and perhaps has always been here, there are many ways of assembling them. Some fragments may hold the literal truth while others may be distortions or allegories, or even outright lies and misinterpretations of things that the human mind fails to grasp. The truth is for you to determine and your Player Characters to discover.

The Hereticus Tenebrae need not only be concerned with the rise of the Tyrant Star. The conspiracies and heresies that both the Tyrant Star and the Propheticum Hereticus Tenebrae have spawned can also be used as the major focus of a game. An overarching conspiracy to ensure that the prophesied events come to pass can make an excellent recurring theme.

Alternatively, you may prefer to use a secret organisation working to stop the prophecy from coming to pass, an organisation willing to pay any price and make any sacrifice. Smaller and less powerful roaming bands of doom merchants, crazed prophets, and seers can also bring the Hereticus Tenebrae into a game at a less overarching level.

The Hereticus Tenebrae is perhaps best used as part of an ongoing campaign where a number of its qualities can be fully realised, and the all-pervasive and dire nature of its threat can be allowed to build over time. The Hereticus Tenebrae relates to world-shattering events, powers, and conspiracies. Thus, a game that includes it is automatically part of a larger and more dangerous stage—a battle that is being fought in the "now" of the Calixis Sector but whose outcome will do no less than decide the fate of the future, and perhaps not just for Calixis.

The Tyrant Star is a thing of mystery, truly an unknown (and if you wish, is literally unknowable), and you can use it as a thread to draw together several apparently disparate adventures and give an unexpected focus to an overall campaign. Or, of course, you can simply leave the mystery unsolved, just one of many housed comfortably in the grim darkness of the 41st Millennium.

++ Hope is the beginning of unhappiness ++

[774536.1]

FORM 88.443.xF66

Imperial Docket 31B

///Document desc.: Transcript of vox recording ORD. XENOS.1.33.4891.00/SWG9///

++ CLASSIFIED ++

DECLASSIFIED GEN FILING APPROV. ~CP

ADM.20

Preliminary Analysis of Obelisk Found During Expedition to Seedworld-Gamma-9

Author: Xeno-Arcanist Xoth Lyncarte

///Transcript begins///

The device, for that is what it is in truth, is a curved obelisk that stands approximately 7.5 meters high. The device was devoid of all signs of age, though I would say that it has stood for many millennia. A detailed analysis with the assistance of Magos Zephrin will be needed to fix its date of origin with greater certainty. The device is fashioned from the psycho-active substance used in all Eldar construction. However, my colleagues of the Priesthood of Mars have discerned that it is bonded to a seam of crystal that runs deep into the bedrock of this world. This I believe is of considerable significance and I shall return to it later.

On the surface of the device are a series of rune-like inscriptions in low relief. These inscriptions are consistent with a written form of the Eldar tongue. I am familiar enough with the language of the Eldar to give a crude assessment of the meaning of the inscriptions. The basic tone of their meaning is a warning, but a warning imparted not to an enemy but to kin, or those who share in an understanding. It is not the kind of warning I expected, a warning to trespassers in the domains of the Eldar that are all too common to the feral worlds they consider under their protection. Rather the warning was closer in meaning to "shun this place," an entreaty to flee in the face of dire peril.

The astropathic staff attached to the expedition inform me that the obelisk broadcasts a powerful psychic signal into the darkness of the surrounding stars. I believe the purpose of this device is to send its message into the void. I am forced to wonder whether other worlds in this volume of space might not harbour similar devices and to speculate at a possible connection with the relative scarcity of Eldar activity within the Calixis Sector.

///End transcript///

///This preliminary report was the only one to be transmitted prior to the loss of the entire expedition-Reasons unknown.///

Last night I dreamt of the tower again. I stood on its pinnacle and I felt the wind on my face. I watched the darkness spreading as the storm rose. My face was turned to the oncoming storm and I could not look away. The world shook and the stars were lost as the lightning struck. I saw in that flash that the world was turned into a pale thing over which clammy shapes crawled, their eyes lidless and black, but they cried out with the voices I knew.

The world grew darker with every peal of thunder. As always, I first saw him in the distance- a far away silhouette of a man unmoving, cut out of the sky, made bright by the lightning flash. The thunderclaps came faster, like measured and monstrous steps, and with every flash of lightning the still man was nearer. With the pace of a beating heart he drew closer and I could see his eyes. They were dark and filled with the stars stolen from the sky.

Each night I wake later and he is nearer to me than when I woke on the previous night. Last night he advanced to the foot of the tower.

///Gral went missing over eight years ago. My agents found the journal in the Tower of Artifice that was put aside by the King of that feudal realm for use by officials of the Imperium.///

///Liberated from the journal of Memnoth Gral, senior secretary of the Adeptus Administratum mission on Zillman's Domain. ++ADM.433, F19 Filed///

When the Tyrant Star Rises

The Tyrant Star can be used as a catastrophic event that can have profound repercussions for Player Characters and your campaign. Presented here are a few guidelines for how such an event can be represented.

Foreshadowed: The rise of the Tyrant Star is always foreshadowed by events that grow in severity. These omens could be in dreams and visions, in the ravings of madmen, or in strange and inexplicable events. There may also be other signs, such as palpable fluctuations in the warp that may be sensed by characters with the Psyniscience skill. Social unrest, panic, and the worst of human nature coming to the fore also precede the rise of the star. Whatever signs you chose to foreshadow the arrival of the Tyrant Star, the players should feel the tension and air of doom mount, day by day, hour by hour, and minute by minute.

Apocalyptic: When the star does rise, the effect should be apocalyptic. Mass riots, hallucinations, reality fracturing, daemons manifesting, and ordinary people filled with a lust for murder, as well as fires, eruptions of lava, and earthquakes, are but a few of the possibilities. Of course the actual rising of the star can have any or all of these effects; the most important thing is that it should feel like the end of all things for those caught up in it.

Lasting: Worlds do survive the coming of the Tyrant Star, but they never do so unchanged. Cults who focus worship around the "dawn of darkness" or adore light as a saving grace may spring up in the wake of the Tyrant Star. As the coming of the Tyrant Star is an apocalyptic event, the society and infrastructure of a world visited by it is bound to be profoundly scarred, with prosperity and optimism likely in short supply. There may also be subtler, long-term effects such as an upsurge in the number of psykers, children born with the same strange mark on their flesh, or greater instances of mutation and madness. These long-term effects can form the basis for investigations if you want to include the Tyrant Star in your campaign but do not want to have the Acolytes present at the actual rising of the star.

CLASSIFICATION: DARK OMEGA
DATE: 657.M41
AUTHOR: *** NAME CLASSIFIED ***
SUBJECT: Report on the mythical force known as the Servants of Twilight
RECIPIENT: Inquisitor Marr

This report represents all that I could find in response to your request for a summary report on the so-called "Servants of Twilight." I have included what primary sources I could obtain. In many cases, however, no sources exist. Such is the nature of the subject of this report that most information about them is held only in myth, rumours, and fragments screamed by heretics under question.

Whispers tell of a secret coterie of heretics capable of driving whole cities mad, who possess mastery of darkness as a physical force, and who can walk between worlds at will. They are said to manipulate others, even other cults, through bribery and threat into doing their bidding. A few of the most obscure tales say that they seek to sow discord or manipulate events in some inconceivable plan to bring about the "final dawn of the lightless star," an ultimate goal of unknown import or meaning (though I am sure Zerbe would jump to only one conclusion on the matter and perhaps already has). This is the myth of the Servants of Twilight as muttered between the vilest of heretics and scoffed at by many within our own noble ranks. I have in the further sections of this report attempted to give an overview of the manifestation of this fable within, and in regards to, the various environs where it persists.

Within the ranks of the heretic and blasphemer

Chiefly, the Servants of Twilight that circulates amongst heretics, recidivists, and cultists. It is not a rumour of the street but a story to terrify the vilest and most amoral members of humanity. The tale seems to be largely confined to the Calixis Sector, though I have found quaternary grade reports from Scarus and Mandragora Sectors that indicate that it has presence and force beyond the bounds of this sector of space.

In the main, however, the tales tell of a small group (or sometimes only one person) that comes amongst a cult/criminal organisation/sect/family conspiracy and demands a service. Details of these individuals vary greatly from descriptions of seemingly normal people clad in plain black clothes to empty spaces that cannot be looked at.

No matter what the appearance of these visitors, the tales agree that these visitors know everything about those they demand service from and have powers (also a subject of much contradiction) that make refusal or resistance most foolish. The reported retribution for failure to do as demanded is also similarly overblown and so inconsistent as to only lend credulity to the entire phenomena being a particularly persistent meme, or a flag of convenience for heretics and recidivists to use as an enhancement to the status of their own position.

I have included the distilled import of two reports that relate to the Servants of Twilight for illustrative purposes:

The Bearers of the Mirrored Visage were a small cult of warp dabblers, who thanks to the resource and influence of a few of its members had obtained a considerable body of esoterica and some of the knowledge to accompany it. Spiteful power seekers, they were discovered, interrogated, and executed by agents serving Inquisitor Ahmazzi. The following is a transcript of an interrogation of one of the captured heretics (hereafter referred to as the subject):

Interrogation by Explicator Brehan of the members of the Bearers of the Mirrored Visage, Malfi 599.M40

2.599.M40. The subject did not respond to normal levels of interrogation, but in view of the nature of the subject's crimes we proceeded to question with renewed determination. At times it seemed that the subject would die without revealing any further information. Thanks to the efforts of Questioner-Chirurgeon Xanti, our examination continued. After several hours, during which much of what we already knew was confirmed, the subject gave way to a series of utterances that are transcribed here:

[cont.]

[edited interrogation transcript begins]

[garbled speech] He came amongst us, his eyes burned. He killed Exalted Kireen, he reached out and my master was gone [garbled speech]. He was them! The Servants! It was them! We tried to run. He was always there, just behind us.

[transcript break]

A period of prolonged incoherent and intermittent speech ensued, punctuated by pleas for protection. A combination of serum to enhance nerve transmission and a level seven pain stimulus induced the subject to renew its testimony.

[transcript resumes]

It told us to destroy the Star Wanderer [reference—merchant craft destroyed in orbit around Malfi 167.598.M40]. It knew everything. [garbled speech]…like a live shadow. It said if we ever spoke of it then they would know and would come for us. What is that? What is that? I can hear it! They know! [it was unclear as to what the subject was referring to as no new noise could be discerned]

[transcript ends]

At this point the subject dissolved into oaths, curses, and eventual continual shrieking. The subject perished of organ failure shortly after its last coherent statement.

Statement of Colony Governor Braygan

Formally dictated to Investigator Legates Syranus and Tesson prior to the Governor's official execution by quartering 389.M40, Locara colony, Drusus Marches, Calixis Sector.

> I am Calid Braygan, formerly Governor Braygan of the Locara colony. I am a heretic. I make this confession before the servants of the Emperor in the hope of gaining absolution for my soul and the soul of my child.
>
> My first crime is greed and coveting the rightful goods that are the due of the Holy Imperium:
>
> I had an understanding with the criminal conspiracy called the Watchful Hand. The agreement was for trade in illegally misreported trade surplus. I also let them conduct business under my protection within the colony and used them to dispose of a number of my enemies. This agreement lasted two decades. I made this agreement with the knowledge that any of these crimes would be enough to condemn me in the judgement of the most Holy Emperor.
>
> My second crime is having dealings with those who I believed were heretics and blasphemous in nature:
>
> A year ago a woman visited me. I cannot remember what she looked like—I have tried and failed in this. She informed me that my understanding with the Watchful Hand was at an end and that my understanding was now with those whom she represented. When I asked why the agreement had transferred, she replied that the Watchful Hand no longer existed. I asked whom she represented, and she said simply that she was a Servant of Twilight. I do not know what she meant.
>
> She said that there was no need for a long-standing arrangement. One "gift" was all that was required. I was afraid, most afraid, and I do not know why. She said that I had one night to decide whether or not to agree to her terms and that I would have another option presented to me during that time.
>
> The next day there was no dawn, no sun rose. The people went mad with panic, there were riots. The darkness, one night as she had said, did not end. When she returned, she asked for the single gift. I was afraid and I gave them what they wanted. The next day the sun rose.

[cont.]

My third crime is that I gave my son to the heretic. I do not know what they wanted him for. I know though that he was alive when they took him. I do not know why they needed me to "give" him to them.

These are my crimes before the God Emperor of Mankind and for these I shall be judged.

—Calid Braygan

Within our own ranks

The Servants of Twilight are a divisive topic amongst our august colleagues of the Calixian Conclave. Many, I might even say most, consider them to be a mere warp-dabbler's myth—a phantom used by charismatic heretics as a name of terror to further terrify their thralls and enhance their mystique. Some go even further, naming other supposedly mythic cults such as the legendary Sleepers of Solomon or even the so-called Night Cult that caused all the trouble recently between Nonoro and Sennacharib as the true cause of these distorted rumours. I cannot deny these claims, as truthfully there are numerous similarities to be found in these tales and many others besides!

A small few genuinely believe that the Servants of Twilight are quite real and represent the direst threat to the sector. I have spoken in private to members of the Adepta and even to cultists who would not dare voice the opinion publicly, but who live in terror of this cult, real or imagined. One particularly vile and obscure strand of rumour says that the Servants of Twilight count members of the Holy Ordos among their number and have control of several Inquisitors. I personally consider this last sentiment risible, though of course I know that you always consider it good to know these things. You devour knowledge as a starving man might bread in the desert. Mayhap were I to consider the worst, I would perhaps say that their myth might well be exploited for some faction in the Conclave's own ends—and I don't have to tell you whom I mean…

In truth, I do not know what to make of it. I find that despite my years of experience and the judgement your service has honed in me, I cannot allow myself to come down on one side of the argument or the other. Nor am I able to shake the feeling of dread that these phantom whisperings bring. I find myself wondering what the consequences are if even a single word of it is true. Though I found her a vile fanatic, her words echo now in my mind: "lest the truth devour all."

I remain, as ever, your most faithful servant.

*** NAME CLASSIFIED ***

///The following text was recovered from a sealed scroll case found clutched to the chest of a desiccated corpse on the hulk Lost Pilgrim, found drifting in the Hazeroth Abyss. The identity of the corpse could not be ascertained. ++ADM2567///

Sinophia Magna, Third Day, Eve of the Emperor's Ascension M41

Our negotiations go well, though I am anxious about the credit that my master is proposing to offer to these Sinophians. Their wealth is rotting out from beneath them and I doubt that they will be able to fulfil our terms for long. The weather is appalling and the locals worse.

Sinophia Magna, Fourth Day, Feast of Emperor's Ascension M41

In deference to the God Emperor, who watches over all, we conduct no business today. My master and I attended service at the cathedral in the morning. The cathedral is most peculiar. I like this place less and less. Though it is ridiculous, I feel I must report that during worship I found myself at one point staring at the glass of the stained windows. I could have sworn for a moment that I saw a dark orb, haloed with light, rise behind the glass. I blinked and it was gone. I did not mention it to my master. Maybe the damp in this place is breeding a fever in me.

Sinophia Magna, Fifth Day

Our business is not going well. At the negotiations this morning there was almost violence. A disagreement flared up so quickly that I am at a loss to recall what the point of contention was. Bloodshed was averted but our business is now voided. Our transit back to Scintilla is not due for five more days and I doubt we can travel earlier from this forsaken place. I am sure I have a rising fever. The light seems dimmer.

Sinophia Magna, Sixth Day

We were woken early in the twilight hours. There is trouble in the streets and we have had to confine ourselves to the manse. I heard shots fired several times throughout the day. I have developed a rash on my arm. My master seems tense. So am I.

Sinophia Magna, Seventh Day

The clouds cleared in the night though I wish they had not. I could not sleep and my fever rose in intensity. In the starlight, the city looked like the flesh of a rotting corpse. The fires from the riots still burned and I was sure I saw pale figures in the shadows on the street. The rash on my arm has spread; I think it looks like the claw marks of a bird.

Sinophia Magna, Eighth Day

When I woke, it was still dark. I thought that I was passing into a deep fever. People were in the streets. It was dark but people moved around as if conducting the normal business of the day. I went out and stopped a woman to ask why people were going about their business at night. She answered me but I did not hear what she said. She had the mark on her face, like a bird's claw mark pushed into soft clay. I awoke face down in the street. The city still burns.

Sinophia Magna, Ninth Day

The enforcers have declared a curfew and forbidden all travel. I hope my master can find a way of persuading them to let us leave. I did not sleep last night. When I close my eyes I see dead eyes looking back at me.

Sinophia Magna, Tenth Day

I must record what is happening. I was awake in the half-light of the morn and watched the sun rise. It rose, Emperor save me, but it rose black. At the moment of its rising, the city screamed. Things roam the streets and I see the claw mark on them all. They are changing. I do not know what they are becoming. I saw my master, his skin pale and stretching, eat the corpse of a servant. I have barred the door. The house is burning. I seal this record and someone must find it, someone must know. I dared to look in the mirror. I have the mark on my skin and I am not sure that it was my reflection looking back at me.

/// The above events described as taking place in Sinophia Magna correspond to no record of past events. ++ADM2190///

[13.666.4X]

++ Educate Men without Faith and you but make them clever devils ++

FORM 88.443.xF66

Imperial Docket 89

++ CLASSIFIED ++

///Document desc.: The Return of the Herald-Transcribed passages from the Heresy of the Dark. All extant copies burnt during the scourging of the Merates Cluster, text theorised to date from late M35, translated from unknown xenox-script source.///

OM-9741-272-4811B

XXIII In that place shall be a gathering,
XXIV Among them will be the deluded, the damned, and the lost,
XXV They shall take their place beneath the light of a sun that shines not and whose power they will know not,
XXVI The herald shall return from that great and echoing place,
XXVII He will return and there will be great power with him,
XXVIII But his power shall be that of the lost and others, even the damned, shall know it not,
XXIX Fools will be his bearers, his coming will be the coming of ruin and death though it be not of his own making,
XXX And so with all in motley and blood the players shall wait and the darkness shall pour, clawing from out of a dark sun and vomit darkness into the offering bowl.

[927.119.WB]

++ Be strong in your ignorance. ++

FORM 88.443.xF66

Imperial Docket 89

++ CLASSIFIED ++

///Document desc.: Communique found in an autoscribe spindle in the quarters of Senior Astropath Temerisa, following her death. Never transmitted or copied prior to this report.///

OH-141-4892-113D

///COMMUNIQUE BEGINS///

SUBJECT: Notification of abnormalities in the proper recording and classification of messages between crusade forces.
TO: Lord Militant Angevin.
FROM: Senior Astropath Temerisa, attached to the 1st Battle Group.

My lord, though I would hesitate to bring matters of calibration and administration to your personal notice, I must bring to your attention certain anomalies that pertain to the operation of accurate communications, and perhaps a deal more besides.

The temporal fixing of our sendings, even across relatively short range, are subject to a non-standard error. Though the error is always small, it is noticeable. It is not consistent in magnitude and has eluded all efforts at compensation.

Such errors are sometimes present around localised warp anomalies or during times of tempestuousness in the immaterium, but we are not subject to such conditions now. Indeed, as predicted, the light of the Throne waxes strong here and our vessels make good and steady progress.

In short my lord, time slips here. In small amounts it is true, sometimes more, sometimes less, but slip it does.

I can divine no cause for this, but I have checked with my fellows on other ships and other fleets, and they experience it too. No cause can be found.

Although the error has limited implications for functional communications between the forces under your command, such matters bear consideration by your lordship as they might be linked to matters best dealt with by higher authorities. I am minded, if you will forgive me to mention it, to recall the treatise first penned by the Great Voyager himself, the Rogue Trader Solomon Haarlock, who first marked the boundaries of this place a thousand and more years ago and dubbed it by the name of the Calix Expanse. He called it so for he claimed it to be "a chalice of ancient and slumbering wickedness," and I cannot help but believe that he understood matters aright.

Your most humble servant,
Temerisa, Astropath Ultra

///COMMUNIQUE ENDS///

///A final note was also found on the same parchment roll as the above text. It read:
"Sometimes I think I can hear it. Sometimes I think it is like a pulse."///

CLASSIFICATION: DARK RHO
DATE: 128.811.M41
AUTHOR: *** NAME CLASSIFIED ***
SUBJECT: Partial Account//Attrib. Unknown//ZD//KOMUS
RECIPIENT: Inquisitor Shakletarn

I know not the value of the following towards your principal direction of investigation, yet consequent to our last meeting and in view of your resolute determination to pursue this course against all reason, I supply here all that remains of the transcript.

Prime: The account is alleged to have originated on Zillman's Domain (designate Feudal - Josian Reach), author unknown, and I believe it remains amongst the most viable accounts of the manifestation of Komus. Efforts to confirm its veracity have continued to remain elusive. I leave it to your judgement and discretion.

[TRANSLATED INTO LOW GOTHIC FROM DIALECT LOCAL TO ZILLMAN'S DOMAIN]

> Within mine own heart a blackness festers and no dawn shall radiate its clean wash over me. I script this missive in trust that mine own soul shall be taken into the arms of the most Holy Emperor regardless of the sins of mine eyes, tongue, and inked fingers. Forgive me.
>
> First in dreams it came. Twisting mine own thoughts of fancy into deep sinful pools of nothingness. Visages of corruption, turning thought upon thought, calling—announcing. A personal herald of woe. Night upon day it returned to burn my mind, engulfing colour with darkness, and within, an unholy white light targeted at mine own soul. The clutch of terror beguiled me, and I had no thought to mine life or mine work.
>
> On the sixth day, I awoke ragged and unwashed. A pressing weight removed from mine mind—I felt the departure of the herald. I climbed from my chambers to the world without, expectant of normality, yet no normal world had I stumbled upon. Unclean vision filled mine eyes. A gauzy haze of unholy light filtered mine vision, and I was unable to distinguish form or face. Cries of horror were about me, and it seemed the people shared my condition—a mass of unworthy sinners, cast down in to a torrent of fear and damnation.
>
> My senses returning, I dragged mine self back to mine chambers, needing to fend off a multitude of assailants with rocks and blows, until I made it through mine door and bolted it firm. Soon the clamour began and the door shook.
>
> They surround me now. Are they mine own friends? I know not. Their form is disfigured and unclear; a gaudy whiteness obscures their visages. I am undone. The herald has returned. I hear his mocking laugh and it is mine own.

/// Komus—Analysis of reference and meaning
Memorandum found among the effects of the late Victus Karon. ++ADM.2239 ///

My Lady,

The word "Komus" as a title or name has very few references within the literature that one would expect for a phrase used in the context of a blasphemous prophecy. "Komus" is a term utterly absent from all the restricted literature that relates to xenos and their history, artefacts, culture, or blasphemous religions. In similar analysis of daemonological and occult matters, it is also absent.

The only references that I could find are scattered across a number of pieces of archaic literature. In these works of our long dead ancestors, Komus (or variously Comus, Comos, Komos, Kamos etc.) has associations with revels in the dark, anarchy, and excess. Some references tell of masked gatherings and processions of those who lost their minds. Laughter, mockery, and the dissolution of order are also associations. Most worrying is a reference to a master of misrule, who abducts those who strayed, although whether this figure is Komus, its herald, or its adversary seem to vary from one line of text to another. It was indeed a very disturbing reading, and one that quite unnerved me.

The final reference I found is relatively recent (from the time of Lord Militant Angevin's crusade) and very specific. It is a description by a long dead rogue trader of the Haarlock line, describing the sound made by the dust wind through the bones of dead cities in the Halo Stars.

Were I subject to superstitious fears, I might not sleep this night!

Until I have once more the pleasure of Service,

Victus Karon

Chief Curator Obscuro of the Tricorn Palace

///Printout fragment recovered in the wreckage of an unknown lander vessel, the Ghrendaline Swamps, Dusk 201.M41 by acolyte team under command of Explicator Laracan Wolfe. Craft designation and origin unknown. ++ADM.3170///

-reance: Hvss/ip.admin-45567888

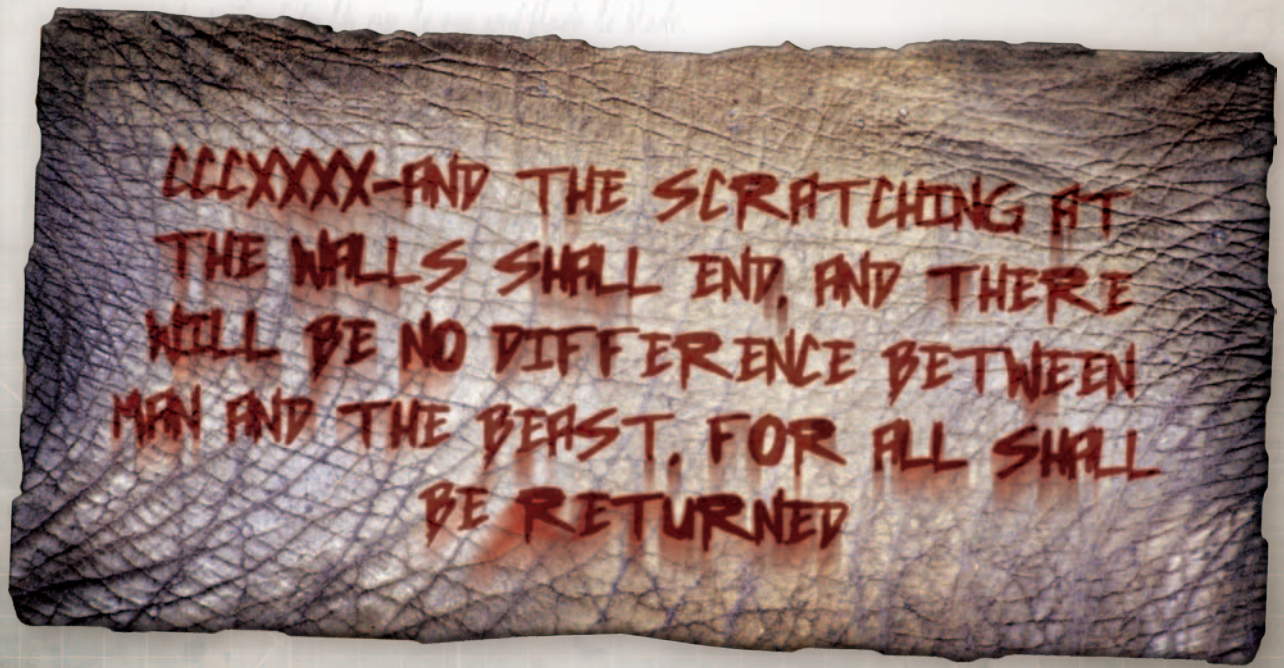
+++Red/Note+++

Auxiliary Hardcopy
Encrypt/Transmit/Destroy
High Security Archive: Prol X
Access restricted
Date/Ref: 710.M40
Query: Change in Tithe Status-Tanis System.
Query: Population Status-Tanis System.
Query: Designation Status-Tanis System.
Reply: Tithe Status reduced by Emergency Measures, from Exactus Meridian to Exactus Minima forthwith.
Reply: Revised Population Status: Tanis Prime: 0 (Formerly 90,000,000)
Sekmet Orbital: 0 (Formerly 770,000)
St Astrid's Fall: 11,000 (formerly 18,000,000)

Reply: Designation "Tanis" is no longer to be used. All records, maps, and tithe logs are to be retroactively corrected accordingly, under provision Alpha of the High Lord Emergency Powers Act (Administratum) 5-Omega-1. COMPLIANCE MAXIMUM PRIORITY-FAILURE IN COMPLIANCE WILL RESULT IN FATAL SANCTION. Once compliance archived, signal readiness-transmit code 2345/d: Channel Tenebrae.

+++Further Inquiry Is Not Permitted+++

+++DESTROY HARDCOPY AFTER USE+++





II

Hereticus

The Nature of the Enemy

•

Psykana Obscura

•

The Temple Tendency

•

The Pale Throng

•

The Logicians

•

The Night Cult

The battered old chron edged closer to thirteen. It had been three hours or more since his wife had gone out into the darkness of the night-cycle. Exhausted from his shift on the work gangs, he had eaten the thin gruel of starch broth and collapsed asleep. But tonight he woke suddenly and found her gone.

He paced the rockcrete-lined box of their meagre hab–from their bed, to the stove, to the small shrine in the corner and back, until the old wound in his hip began to throb again.

He collapsed on the bed and stared at the shrine: a small plinth of old flakboard, a hand painted Aquila on a sheet of brass, a few candles, and the tags of course–their son's tags. Taken from his cold body on a dark and distant world by his unit Confessor and returned to them. Not much to look at, but few shrines were so well tended.

He was angry and confused, but mostly afraid. Afraid of the darkness outside, afraid she already lay dead somewhere. He knew he couldn't take it, losing her, not after so much else had been taken. He took the tags from the shrine, wrapped the chain around his hand, and prayed. Behind him, the door opened slowly, letting a wave of cold air seep into the room, guttering the shrine candles.

His wife crept in from the dark, her grey canvas shawl drawn up around her head and shoulders. Relief and anger flooded him all at once. He opened his mouth to call out to her, to shout something, but then he saw her eyes. They were wide and blazed with feverish light, and her expression was animated, strange, as if she was trying to repress a smile but couldn't. Suddenly he was afraid again, more than before.

"Husband!" She whispered urgently, "I'm so glad you are already awake!"

"I don't understand...where have you been?" The words sounded dead in the freezing room.

"I prayed. I prayed every day and night to the God-Emperor for a miracle."

"Please..." he could say no more. The words left him with his steaming breath in the cold air. He noticed that when she replied, no such exhalation rose.

"The chapel confessors said I was foolish to wish it, mad, blasphemous even. But I went down to the old vaults, to the statues raised long before the hive, and they found me. They knew I was pure and he was pure, and the God-Emperor has granted us a miracle!"

The door swung wide and darkness came as the candles died.

"Hello, Father."

The tags slid from his grasp and shattered, ice-brittle on the hard floor.

Chapter II: Hereticus

"Burn them all. The Emperor will know His own."
— Joachim Quais, the judgement on Xieros Prime

The Ordo Hereticus has a single, fundamental task—to defend humanity from the threat of the mutant, the heretic, and the psyker. This battle is both constant and unremitting, allowing for neither mercy nor remorse. When the average Imperial citizen thinks of the Holy Ordos, he imagines the dread Witch Hunter of the Hereticus, black shrouded and bearing fire and steel. There is much truth in this imagining, for the Ordo Hereticus is the most numerous and publicly active face of the Inquisition. Fiery purges, mass trials and summary executions are the favoured methods of the Ordo Hereticus' public face.

However, many Witch Hunters, for all the awe and terror they deliberately inspire, know the value of secrecy and stealth in the execution of their duties. The Ordo employs a myriad of agents, investigators, informants, savants, and infiltrators for this purpose. The reason for such tactics are simple. For a heresy to be purged, it must first be uncovered. The Ordo Hereticus can match the most labyrinthine plotters and secretive cults with dark machinations of their own, as many unsuspecting traitors and heretics have learned.

Although the Ordo Hereticus is extreme in its methods and utterly unforgiving in its persecutions, it has every cause and right to be. The Imperium, though vast and seemingly invulnerable, faces the ever-present danger of a slow death by rot from within. This rot must be discovered and cut out. The eternal war of the Ordo Hereticus is one with no bystanders and no innocents. It is a war waged without pity or relent, not just to defend the status quo or enforce the Imperium's rule, but because the body and the soul of humanity itself is at stake.

The Sins of the Past

Although the central tasks of the Ordo Hereticus are widely known, there are other rarer kinds of crimes that also concern them. The veneration of false gods and forbidden lores that hearken back to the sins of humanity's ancient past merit the direst enmity of the Ordo. Some are crimes so proscribed that even to know of them is enough to warrant summary execution. Others, such as the worship of the false godhead known as "progress" and the pursuit of technologies and sciences proscribed since the time when the Emperor walked among his people, are treated with the same scorn and hatred as any mutant cult. The Ordo's involvement in such matters has brought it into conflict in the past with other powerful groups such as the Adeptus Mechanicus and the Ordo Xenos, who might dispute both its involvement and its methods.

The Nature of the Enemy

"Thought Begets Doubt, Doubt Begets Heresy and Heresy Begets Retribution."

—Codex Imperialis

Heresy, false belief, political corruption, the danger of religious schism, treachery, apostasy, rebellion, and disorder are all utterly corrosive to the unflinching order that sustains civilisation. Unity of purpose is needed if the Imperium, indeed humanity, is to survive. Since the dark days of the Age of Apostasy, it has been the sacred task of the Ordo Hereticus to sustain that order by any means necessary.

The foes of that order are diverse and widespread, from the false priest to the dissolute noblemen, demagogues and seditionists of every stripe, the mutant skulking in the shadows, and those who would sell out humanity to the alien or worse. But of all its enemies, it is witches and rogue psykers that are the Ordo Hereticus's prime targets and their pursuit, suppression, and destruction its most fervent goal. For any psyker who escapes discovery or flees from his just fate as part of the Black Ship's tithe, the Witch Hunter's pyre awaits.

HERESIES OF FAITH AND THOUGHT

"True heresy" as it concerns the Ordo Hereticus is crudely defined as: adhering to, promulgating, or acting on a theological or political doctrine contrary to the orthodoxy of the Ministorum Creed or Lex Imperialis (which is itself considered of divine impute, being based upon the word and gift of the Emperor).

In practical terms, the crime of heresy covers a multitude of sins ranging from the denial of the Emperor's divinity and direct rebellion against the rule and rights of the Adepta to all manner of blasphemies and irreligious practice. In broader use, heresy, as expounded from the pulpit by Imperial confessors, is coined as a pejorative term to define any crime, sin, or deviancy of thought that the Imperium's moral guardians find objectionable. However, the Imperium is a truly vast place with countless variations of culture and doctrine, not all of which fit together comfortably. The extent of the fervour with which heresy in this sense is treated and just what is considered "heretical" by the fanatics and extremists of a given world over another can vary enormously.



THE CRIMES OF BODILY CORRUPTION AND WITCHCRAFT

The fundamental nature of what it is to be human is under constant threat by the mutant and the psyker. Corrupted in flesh, to the Ordo Hereticus the mutant represents deviation from the physical norm and a potential taint of Chaos. With mutation, it is commonly believed that spiritual corruption and depravity often follows as naturally as carrion draws vermin. Under Lex Imperialis and the pronouncements of the Ministorum Creed, to be a mutant is to be removed from humanity. It is to be accursed and become the enemy simply by virtue of existing.

Many mutants, who are more rightly classed as abhuman because their bodies have been deformed by generations of industrial pollution or exposure to alien biospheres and are thus utterly blameless of warp taint, are still rendered suspect and are often the victims of the zealot's wrath. However, more measured and reasoning factions within the Ordo Hereticus do see and make the distinction, preferring not to waste their time rounding up a few chem-dregs when real deviants may be hiding behind a wealthy façade. These elements favour a pragmatic approach of brutal enforcement and vigilance. Others of a more Puritan mind favour the simpler solution of simply destroying them all…just to be safe.

This latter course of action meets stiff resistance and can make such Inquisitors powerful enemies on worlds whose entire economies rely on an underclass of abhuman labour to survive and prosper. On the whole and for the good of the wider Imperium, the pragmatist's approach of the control and repression of mutants wins out. However, when warp taint or rebellion rears its head, the powers of the Holy Ordos let slip the Emperor's hounds and whole worlds may be heaped high with pyres as a result.

The witch, by comparison, poses a danger far greater than any other traitor or heretic, embodying a constant threat to the souls and lives of all those around them. Not only are such individuals potential avenues by which the horrors of the warp may be unleashed on the unsuspecting mass of humanity, but their unrestrained and often untrained psychic powers make each and every one of them a potential cataclysm waiting to happen. Each is capable of crimes and atrocities (by accident or design) unimaginable to the average citizen, from causing spontaneous fires and waves of nightmares, to the wilful enslavement of others as living puppets and the slaughter of innocents by no more than a stray thought.

The persecution of the witch and the rogue psyker is the central goal of many within the Ordo Hereticus and it is a dangerous task indeed. It calls for the utmost guile, ruthlessness, and savvy, for few prey are more dangerous.



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##ORDO HERETICUS 1.5839.117.40##     Logged In
---------------------------------------
>>CLEARANCE LEVEL: Crimson-Five
>>Cults Targeted/Purged
>>Sector Calixis: Malfian Sub
>>Time Ref: 107.3-107.71.M41
  +The Ghost Heart (Endrite/Malfi)
  +The Epicures of Kos (Malfi)
  +The Raknun Clan (Void)
  +The Adrodyne Iconoclasm (Malfi)
  +The Glorious Workers Unity (Synford)
  +The Sightless Gaze (Malfi/Sleef/Dusk)
  +The Lament of Charity (Aunuath)
  +The Sorrowful Brethren (Landunder)
  +Goarca Sul (Kenov III)
  +The Broken Wheel (Lind/Clove)
  +Shard 12-4-57+ (Void)
  +The Balthus Apostasy (Sub-Sector)
  +Guardians of the Opal Fountain
    (Lacusta)
>>Cogitation Interrupted
>>Machina Interdictus
***137 Records Yet to Display***
+INITIATE PROTOCOL "APOSTASY GAMBIT"+
```

THE NATURE OF CULTS

The business of the Ordo Hereticus is largely centred on the discovery and destruction of heretical or otherwise illegal cults and groups. The usage of the term "cult" within the Inquisition, and the wider Imperium for that matter, is a general one used to encompass the bewildering variety of possible religious sects, secret societies, creeds, political parties, associations, guilds, and conspiracies that are commonplace in the Imperium's many cultures.

Outside what might be termed the two great cults of the Imperium—the Ministorum Creed and the Adeptus Mechanicus—many other cults exist. The most common take the form of sects of the Imperial faith who devote themselves to a particular aspect of doctrine or the veneration of a particular saint or miraculous event. Second to these are warrior societies of various forms, which are especially prevalent on feral or feudal worlds, followed closely by the numerous cult-like groups, most often preferring the term "guild," who cater to a particular specialised craft or trade. Beyond these, most worlds often boast scores of other local cults whose exact nature often baffles outside scrutiny, tied to some idiosyncrasy of culture, planet, clan, or historical event. It is only when a group becomes considered heretical and is judged to espouse an ideology that is contrary to the Imperium's law or broad strictures of the Ministorum Creed that a cult merits the Holy Ordos' attentions.

Heresy can be a contagious thing in itself, and when it spreads, a cult is often formed from those that subscribe to it. In other cases, a powerful or charismatic leader will often

draw a coterie of devoted disciples and followers into forming a heretical cult, and by the same token, deviants and like-minded individuals often join together for mutual support and protection.

Cults exist in the main for very good reasons, the most obvious being secrecy—the protection and greater resources of the larger group allows it to better organise and conceal itself from prying eyes, rivals, and outside threats. The second is power, as the strength of a cult's membership united is often far greater than what an individual would possess. This is a truth that remains constant on many levels, from pooled finances to sustaining and reinforcing the loyalty and adherence of its members. Isolation, after all, promotes cohesion in-and-of-itself, whilst division will destroy a cult as easily as any Witch Hunter's purge.

Heretical cults often share several common attributes despite their many differences. Most seek to conceal themselves behind the disguise of a more benign (or at least accepted) front organisation, or remain completely hidden from the authorities in order to avoid discovery. Cults also often favour a particular milieu in which to operate and recruit fresh members, which is often determined by the cult's own nature. For example, a cult centred on fermenting rebellion amongst mutant labourers will confine itself to the shatters and barrens where the mutants dwell, recruiting from the disaffected and outcasts among their numbers. Meanwhile a malefic conspiracy of daemon worship among the depraved nobility will often limit itself to the salons and private estates of the elite for its haunts and recruiting grounds. Many cults also share similar organisational structures despite their differing goals and natures, the most common of which are detailed in this chapter. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses, and in many cases, the structure may involve many minor differences in practice and effect. While a particular cult may favour one structure over another, it will often include other structural elements as well.



Charismatic Cults

Charismatic cults are the simplest in structure, as their organisation is based around the authority of a single figure—the cult's leader. Personal authority is usually the norm in these cults and is maintained by the leader's force of character, natural charisma, oratory skills, or simple personal power. Cults led by a single powerful figure such as a witch or magus are often of this type, although any place where malcontent or religious schism breeds can throw up a charismatic leader. This individual will exploit the weakness of others for his own personal power or gratification, or the fulfilment of his own apocalyptic vision.

Mystery Cults and Secret Societies

Mystery cults are centred, as their name implies, on secrets. These secrets may concern a hidden network of power, a cache of forbidden lore, access to ancient prophecies, or other esoteric truths and important information. These secrets are held by a select group, forming an inner circle or oligarchy (often with several sub-tiers of rank), and are the foundation

of their power and authority. The cult's members must submit to this group's leadership and direction if they are also to gain access to the hidden secrets, and perhaps one day wield the cult's power for themselves. Many mystical cults, religious sects, and those focused on occult lore follow this pattern, as do a surprising number of institutions who hide their inner workings with elaborate ritual and labyrinthine secrecy. Within the Imperium, arguably the largest single mystery cult is the Adeptus Mechanicus. The Priesthood of Mars hides their secrets well, even from their own numbers.

Cellular Cults

Perhaps the most efficient structure for a cult carrying out activities that risk regular exposure and persecution is the "cellular structure." This kind of cult's structure breaks down its membership into a series of small sub-groups, the cult's cells. Cells, which range from a handful of individuals up to perhaps hundreds of members, are each devoted to carrying out a particular specialisation or a certain task or goal. Other than the select few, or an individual, who control the cell, none of the cell's other members has any direct contact with the wider cult or even other cultists outside of his immediate circle and cell.

This structure has the profound advantage that if any of its rank and file are captured or compromised, they may betray nothing that does not concern their own immediate cell, keeping the wider cult safe and its dealings and purposes secret. Indeed, this shell game may be carried further, with a particular cell's leadership forming the rank and file of another, smaller cell senior in authority, and that cell's leadership part of another and so on. This can prove a phenomenally hard structure to successfully track and destroy and by its nature is highly adept at covert and independent operations. Many of the most dangerous cults and heretical groups who are sufficiently well organised operate a cell structure or at least organise their field agents into cells for this reason, as does, ironically enough, the Inquisition.

Death Cults of the Imperium

Death and blood underpin human existence. It is a common truism that only through continued blood-sacrifice in the face of a hostile universe will mankind prevail, a sacrifice likened in the Imperial Creed to the bodily sacrifice of the Emperor himself. So it is in these beliefs that death cults flourish within the Imperium, a dark shadow of the more readily recognised sects of the Imperial faith, making them some of the most dangerous heretical cults that the Inquisition can encounter.

Some are no doubt deluded, corrupted by the Ruinous Powers or swayed by far older and more terrible influences, but many are devout followers of the Throne. To these individuals, every death, every cut, every welling of blood is an act of worship to the Immortal Emperor of Mankind. Such death cults can vary widely in purpose, creed, makeup, and scope, but even the least suspect walks something of a tightrope between the sublime and the damned. Most so-called death cults, despite their differences, can be divided into three broad categories:



Sanguinary Cults

Perhaps the most commonplace and famed sub-division of the death cults, sanguinary cults focus on the act of bloodshed itself—the manifold art of killing and the moment of extinction. Often honing the skills of the assassin beyond the ken of normal men, such cults are tolerated or at least wilfully ignored by the Imperial authorities despite their heretical and even vampiric tendencies. This tolerance is because they are known to be implacable in their hatred of mankind's enemies, supplying the Ministorum and the Inquisition with invaluable adepts of murder and fanatical killers loyal to the cause. Some have even more shadowy connections to the mysterious Officio Assassinorum, the secret organisation that provides unparalleled adepts of murder for the High Lords of Terra.

Many sanguinary cults spring into being in the fertile soil provided by the harsh conditions found on many feral and feudal worlds. However, the shadows of the underhive, the viperous intrigues of the noble's court, and even the travails of deep space can equally create the conditions where ritual societies dedicated to the deadly arts of the blade, bullet, and poison can flourish.

Calixis has numerous such sanguinary cults and sacrificial societies present scattered across many worlds, and indeed, the population of the outcast feudal world of Fervious is largely governed by them. The most famous of the death cultists, without doubt, are the assassin-mystics of the Moritat, which has sub-cults and cells operating right across the sector and indeed beyond. More information on the Moritat and other Calixian Death Cults can be found in the Inquisitor's Handbook.



Necrophagic Cults

Necrophagic cults are the most blatantly heretical and terrible of all death cults, with sects often springing up on worlds ravaged by incessant warfare or planet-wide famine, pandemic disease, or other terrible disasters. In desperation and often goaded by outside influence, the people's faith and devotion take on an increasingly malign turn, with human sacrifice, cannibalism, and necrotic rituals becoming widespread. In such cases the members of these cults rapidly become irretrievably insane and physically corrupt, and are often the playthings of warp entities, while the vile leaders of such cults walk a tightrope between burgeoning malefic power and utter madness. Necrophagic cults are never tolerated by the Imperial authorities and are hounded to destruction wherever uncovered.

Within the Calixis Sector, necrophagic cults have been known to spring up in the wake of long-burning wars (as has happened on Tranch and Malice in recent years), on isolated and savage worlds such as Endrite, and in the dark hulks and vessels in space where stricken survivors or desperate stowaways devolve into a form of mutant cannibal known to the voiders as Ghillam or hold-gaunts. But of all these tales, none can compare to the ancient stories of the appalling Saynay Clan of Dusk, whose half-mythic ghoulish histories have given the children of the Calixis Sector nightmares for centuries.

Resurrectionist or Revivicator Cults

Rarely encountered but insidious in nature, resurrectionist cults ultimately seek to conquer the secrets of life and death itself. Some resurrectionist cults preach a doctrine of the Emperor's triumph over death and the conquest of human weakness, while others entreat darker masters, pursue utterly forbidden sciences, or hide baleful xenos or warp-spawned influences at their hearts. Often they espouse the goal of attaining physical immortality for the faithful and will go to unspeakable lengths to obtain their ends.

More so than even the sanguinary cults, these groups attract insane and desperate individuals to their ranks, those who have lost everything, become the most degenerate heretics or follow the wildest of deviant creeds.. Some resurrectionists even practice ritual revivification to indoctrinate their members. The most extreme examples of such sects believe that the Emperor's plan is for mankind to follow him into a blessed "immortality of the flesh." They even claim that it is possible through the use of utterly forbidden archeaotech to free the Emperor from the Golden Throne to walk among his people, "dead-but-alive-everlasting" to quote the darkly renowned Credo Mortifex. Such cults are hated by both the Ministorum and the Adeptus Mechanicus and must throw up a murderous veil of secrecy and superstition in order to survive.

Psykana Obscura

"The light that burns brightest, burns briefest of all."
—Ancient proverb

The following section details a number of psyker Talents and powers that manifest themselves more rarely than those found in core rules in the **Dark Heresy** rulebook. Such abilities are uncommon, even among psykers, and are often the providence of the witch and the renegade whose powers have developed in isolation without the guidance of Imperial Sanctioning. These abilities often take a particularly macabre or sinister turn or represent the heights of mental power few can hope to reach. This section also contains information and rules for individuals with the equally rare "Pariah Gene," more commonly referred to as Untouchables.

These abilities are primarily intended for use with villains and NPC antagonists (and are found used in the various cult and character entries in this book), but GMs are free to also make them available to Acolytes if they wish, as Elite Advances.



New Psyker Talents

Psychic Spite

Prerequisite: Psy Rating 4, Corpus Conversion.

Few emotions echo louder in the warp than unrestrained malice and hatred, particularly when driven by the madness and bitterness that consumes many rogue psykers and witches. Some powerful psykers learn the art of channelling their own pain and spite into their powers, rending and blasting their enemies with the force of their hatred.

When manifesting a Psychic Power that causes direct injury (i.e., has a Damage listing) in conjunction with the use of the Corpus Conversion talent, the attack's Damage roll gains the Tearing Quality.

Psychic Supremacy

Talent Groups: Biomancy, Divination, Pyromancy, Telekinetics, Telepathy.
Prerequisite: Psi Rating 5, Discipline Focus Talent for the chosen Talent Group.

The levels of godlike power attained by the greatest psykers are enough to set themselves apart from their inferiors. This preeminence is not simply in terms of the raw force they wield, but the ease and subtlety that they are able to apply when they focus their minds to manifest their abilities not as a sledgehammer, but as a scalpel.

When using half or less of their maximum possible Power Dice when manifesting a power from their chosen Discipline, the psyker ignores the first "9" rolled when determining if Psychic Phenomena are generated (although the number still counts towards beating the power's Threshold, etc.). A second or subsequent "9" result in the same Power Roll generates phenomena as normal. Additionally, detecting or tracing a Psychic Power used in this way suffers a –10 Penalty.

Psychic Vampire

Prerequisite: Psy Rating 4, 30+ Corruption Points (if a Player Character), one or more Psychic Powers that can be used to directly kill with psychic energy (Bio-Lightning, Blood Boil, Psychic Blade, Soul Killer, etc.).

Some of the most black-hearted witches and rogues develop a taste for killing with their powers that goes beyond mere sadism or megalomania, becoming a terrible addiction. In time and if they have the power, some eventually learn to feed upon the release of psychic potential that occurs when a sentient creature's life is extinguished, stealing the merest fraction of their victim's life energy to feed their own.

Every time the psyker kills an intelligent, self-willed creature not of the Warp (this power does not work on daemons, servitors, animals, and machines, for example) directly with psychic energy, he may immediately heal 1d5–1 lost Wounds by passing a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**. He cannot gain "extra" Wounds. The use of this Talent is a Free Action.

For Player Characters, each use of this Talent inflicts 1d5–2 Corruption Points and is Addictive (see Mental Disorders on page 234 of **Dark Heresy**).

Table 2-1: New Psychic Powers

Name	Threshold	Focus Time	Sustain
Minor Psychic Powers			
Endure Flames	8	Half Action	Yes
Open Wounds	9	Half Action	No
Space Slip	11	Half Action	No
Suggestion	9	Half Action	No
Time Fade	13	Full Action	No
Biomancy Powers			
Agony	13	Full Action	Yes
Drain Vigour	20	Half Action	Yes
Flesh Like Iron	18	Half Action	Yes
Pyromancy Powers			
Molten Man	27	Full Action	Yes
Telekinetic Powers			
Psychokinetic Storm	12	Half Action	Yes
Telepathy Powers			
Seed Mind	26	Extended	No
Soul Killer	25	Full Action	No
Zone of Compulsion	19	Half Action	No

ADDITIONAL PSYCHIC POWERS

The following Psychic Powers represent some of the more unusual or dangerous forms that a psyker's abilities can take and are most often the province of the witch and the warp-touched. They are, however, available to Imperial Psyker PCs who may select them when learning new Psychic Powers.

New Minor Powers

Endure Flames

Threshold: 8
Focus Time: Half Action
Sustained: Yes
Range: You

You can endure the most severe flames, allowing you to walk unscathed through fire. You are immune to Damage from fire and Flame weaponry and reduce the Damage inflicted on you by Plasma or Melta type weapons by half before reduction for armour and Toughness Bonus. The effects of this power extend to your clothing and equipment.

Open Wounds

Threshold: 9
Focus Time: Half Action
Sustained: No
Range: 10m

You can cause a previously injured victim's wounds to burst open and gush with blood, rapidly exsanguinating them in an extremely messy fashion. The victim must pass a **Difficult (–10) Toughness Test** or suffer 1d5 R Damage, bypassing their Toughness Bonus and armour (applied to their most recently wounded Location). Additionally, if the target is Heavily Wounded, it immediately suffers Blood Loss (see page 211 of **Dark Heresy**). This power is useless against an unwounded or unliving target.

Space Slip

Threshold: 11
Focus Time: Half Action
Sustain: No
Range: You

You push yourself through the edge of the warp, slipping out of reality for a brief instant and reappearing in a different nearby location. A powerful trick, but dangerous and unpredictable in its effect.

If this power is successfully manifested, the psyker is immediately moved to a point 1d5 or 1d10+2 metres away (chosen before rolling) from his starting location in a direction of his choice without regards to any intervening matter. However, he may not bypass warded barriers, void shields, Geller Fields, or the like.

Special: If the use of this power means that the psyker would appear inside solid matter, he must pass a further **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test**. If this Test is successful, he is thrown backwards 1d5 metres away from the offending object and is Stunned for 1d5 Rounds. If this Test is failed, he is still hurled back and Stunned as previously described, but also take 1d10 X Damage (Body Location), which is not reduced by Toughness Bonus or armour. If the solid object encountered is another living thing, it too must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or become Stunned.

Suggestion

Threshold: 9
Focus Time: Half Action
Sustained: No
Range: 6m

You introduce a single telepathic suggestion into a target's psyche, making him more open to a line of thought, experience a brief sensation, lend credence to what you are saying, or momentarily experience an emotional state of your choosing.

The psyker and the target make Opposed Willpower Tests. If the psyker wins the contest of wills, he can introduce a suggestion into the target's mind.

This in not true mind control in the sense of the Compulsion power, but rather a subtle manipulation of the victim's perception and attitudes. You could, for example, convince a target that he likes you, that he is hungry, that he's seen your identity card, or that what you say is likely to be true, or create a sudden feeling that there is a scorpion crawling up a guard's back. You could not, however, get him to perform specific actions that are entirely out of character, believe things that are utterly implausible, change his fundamental beliefs, or harm himself.

Special: This power is best used in conjunction with an Interaction Skill (e.g., striking fear into the heart of an informer who you are questioning, or charming the clerk into believing that he really has met you before in his master's company, etc.). You gain a +20 bonus for using an Interaction Skill in this way.

Time Fade

Threshold: 13
Focus Time: Full Action
Sustained: No
Range: You

You remove yourself briefly from the normal flow of space and time, flickering briefly out of existence like a failing holo-lantern slide. You immediately disappear…and return to exactly the same spot 1d5 Rounds later. If this location is now occupied, a repulsion effect occurs identical to the Space Slip power.

Special: This power can have a profoundly disturbing and dislocating effect on the psyker. If successfully used, he must make a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** in order to be able to act in the Round that he returns. If this Test is failed by more than three degrees, the psyker must roll on the **Table 8-4: The Shock Table** (see page 233 of **Dark Heresy**) as if this had been a failed Fear Test.

Advice to GM: If it is possible, one way of handling this is to get the player of the Acolyte to leave the room you are playing in until their character reappears. This gives him a genuine gap in his knowledge of what has occurred during the time that he has been away.

Untouchable (Special Trait)

Untouchables are extraordinarily rare individuals who cast no shadow in the warp. Their mere presence acts to inhibit and disrupt psychic energy to such an extent that even humans with no psychic ability whatsoever grow uncomfortable and fractious around them. There are different levels of this force, just like Psychic Powers, and the Trait represented here indicates perhaps the most "common" level of this ability—or, as some would call it, curse. As can be imagined, the Inquisition has many uses for such singular individuals in its wars against the witch and the daemon, but by the same token, so do some cults and nefarious groups!

Psychic Invulnerability: An Untouchable is completely immune to Psychic Powers, and psychic energy and effects directed against them (as well as warp powers, possession, sorcery, Corruption from warp shock, etc.). Also, they cannot be detected by means of Psyniscience, Sense Presence, or similar abilities; powers of this type directed at their person, even though successfully manifested, simply fail. If they are caught in the effect of a Psychic Power over a wide area, it simply fails to affect them—although it may affect other people normally, subject to their disruption effect.

Psychic Disruption: All Psychic Powers and abilities manifested in the immediate area (a radius equal to the Untouchable's Willpower Bonus in metres) have their Threshold increased by 10, plus any associated Test by the psyker (such as Willpower Tests, etc.) have their Difficulty increased by 20. Additionally, entities subject to Warp Instability will suffer double damage from its effects while in this area.

Note: It may still be possible to indirectly affect an Untouchable with a Psychic Power—for example, a boulder telekinetically dropped from a great height on an Untouchable will still flatten him. This is left entirely left to the discretion of the GM.

Untouchable (Elite Advance)

With the GM's permission, players may elect to create an Untouchable Acolyte. Such individuals are very rare, even in the ranks of the Inquisition, but their singular gift can make them invaluable tools in the God-Emperor's service. The Untouchable trait may be bought only during Character Creation (such individuals are born, not made) as a special Elite Advance.

Cost: 400 xp

Prerequisites: Available to any non-psyker character, may only be taken during Character Creation.

Effects: The character gains the Untouchable trait as shown previously. Additionally, their Fellowship Characteristic is halved and they suffer an additional –10 penalty to Fellowship Tests involving any character who has a Psy Rating. The character may never gain Psychic Powers, Pure Faith, Sorcery, or related Talents.

New Biomancy Powers

Agony

Threshold: 13
Focus Time: Full Action
Sustained: Yes
Range: 10m

Reaching out with your power, you lash out at your enemies with acute and all-consuming pain. The target must make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** at the beginning of each of its rounds. If it fails the check, it may only take a Half Action that Round. If the target fails by more than three degrees, the target may take no Actions that Round and suffers a level of Fatigue. In addition, if used as part of an interrogation, this power grants a +10 bonus to the psyker's Interrogation Test. This power has no effect on unliving matter or targets incapable of feeling pain.

Overbleed: For every 5 points by which the Threshold is exceeded, a second target within range and line of sight may be affected.

Drain Vigour

Threshold: 20
Focus Time: Half Action
Sustained: Yes
Range: 20m

You drain the vigour and energy of a living creature, sapping its vitality and strength, and ultimately incapacitating or even killing it. The target must pass a **Difficult (–10) Willpower Test** or its Strength, Toughness and Agility Characteristics are all reduced by 1d10 (roll once for all characteristics). In addition, if the victim fails the Willpower Test, it must Test again in the following Round, risking more Characteristic Damage. This process continues until it passes the Test or dies (one of its Characteristics reaches zero). The effects of this Characteristic loss last for the power's duration plus 1d10 Rounds. This power has no effect on unliving matter.

Flesh Like Iron

Threshold: 18
Focus Time: Half Action
Sustained: Yes
Range: You

You draw on the power of the warp to make your flesh as hard as metal. For the duration of the power, your Toughness Bonus is increased by 2 and your Agility Bonus is reduced by 1.

Overbleed: For every 5 points by which the Threshold is exceeded, you gain an additional increase of +1 to your Toughness Bonus for the duration of the power, up to a maximum of triple your normal Toughness Bonus.





New Pyromancy Power

Molten Man

Threshold: 27
Focus Time: Full Action
Sustained: Yes
Range: You

You become a thing of pure heat and flame, a raging inferno with a humanoid form. The following effects apply to the psyker for the duration of the power:

- All weapons and equipment you are carrying are permanently destroyed, as they're consumed by your flames.
- You are completely immune to all hits from fire and Flame weapons, and suffer only half Damage (before reduction for armour and Toughness Bonus) from Plasma, Las, and Melta weapons.
- Gain The Stuff of Nightmares trait and add +3 Toughness Bonus while this power lasts.
- Anything within 5 metres of you suffers 1d5 E Damage each Round, and any flammable objects within this radius will quickly ignite.
- Your unarmed attacks inflict 1d10+SB E Damage with a Pen of 5 and count as having the Power Field quality. Any weapon that strikes you has a 75% chance of being destroyed, as by a weapon with the Power Field Quality.

Special: After this power lapses, the psyker suffers 1d5 levels of Fatigue.

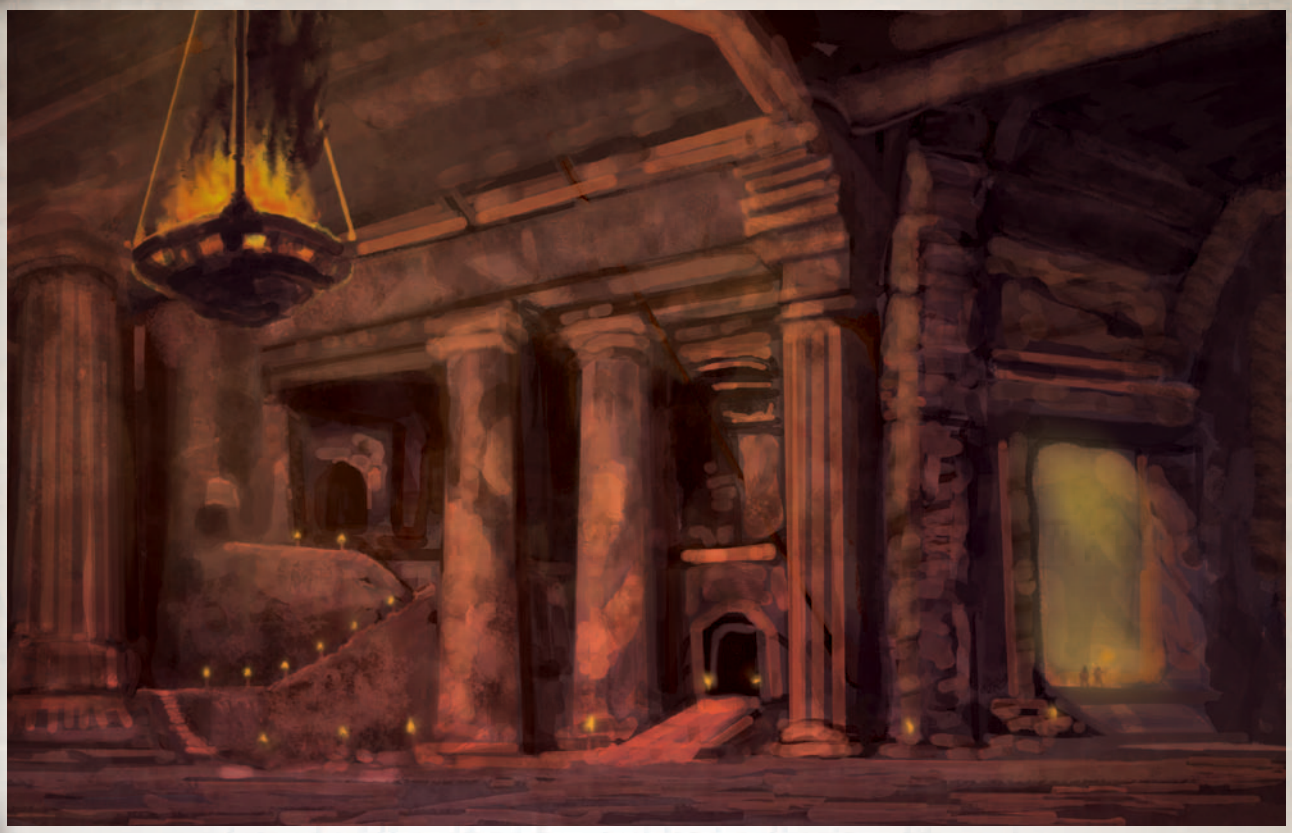
New Telekinetics Power

Psychokinetic Storm

Threshold: 12
Focus Time: Half Action
Sustained: Yes
Range: 10 Metre Radius from the Psyker.

This power manifests an uncontrolled storm of unleashed psychokinetic potential around the psyker, raising a tumult of squalling winds from nowhere and causing small objects to jump and topple, glass to shatter, electrical contacts to short out and spark, flames to leap, cogitators to spit gibberish, and other distracting phenomena. Everyone within the radius of the power other than the manifesting psyker suffers a –10 penalty to all physical actions while the power is in effect, in addition to any damaging effects the Psychokinetic Storm has on the surrounding environment.

Overbleed: For every 10 points by which the power's Threshold is exceeded, the radius of the storm is doubled.



New Telepathy Powers

Seed Mind

Threshold: 26
Focus Time: Extended Action
Sustained: No
Range: Touch

This power allows you to subvert the minds of others by planting a seed of influence within a person's mind; a psychic keyhole that you can use in the future to unlock their psyche and enslave their will to your own.

The psyker must be in contact with the target of this power for the length entire process of using this power. If contact is broken before the psyker or the target has won the contest of wills the power must be used again from scratch.

Every round the psyker and the target must make opposed Willpower Tests. This continues until either the psyker or the target has achieved a cumulative total of five degrees of success. If the target is the first to achieve five degrees of success then the process has failed and their mind is locked off from the psyker who may not use this power on the target again.

If the psyker achieves five degrees of success, they have seeded the target's mind with their influence and the target will now automatically be effected by the Psychic Powers: Compel, Dominate, Suggestion and Zone of Compulsion when successfully manifested by the psyker, with no rolls allowed for resistance.

Overbleed: For every 10 points by which the Threshold is exceeded, you gain an additional +10 bonus on your Opposed Willpower Test.

Soul Killer

Threshold: 25
Focus Time: Full Action
Sustained: No
Range: 5 Metres x Willpower Bonus

This baleful power slays the psyker's enemies with an invisible splinter of annihilating psychic force.

The attack inflicts 1d10 X Damage plus double the psyker's Willpower Bonus. This attack ignores armour unless the armor is warded (see page 120 in Chapter 4: Malleus). Any Critical Hits scored are applied simultaneously to the victim's Body and Head Locations, though Critical Damage is not doubled. This power has no effect on inanimate matter but may be used against warp entities.

Overbleed: For every 10 points by which the power's Threshold is exceeded, another splinter of force is created which may be directed at the same or a different target.

Zone of Compulsion

Threshold: 19
Focus Time: Half Action
Sustained: No
Range: (5 + Willpower Bonus) radius in Metres

You send out a wave of telepathic force that carries a single command. Every person (both friend and foe) within range must make an Opposed Willpower Test against you. You only roll once to oppose all those who may be affected. Anyone who loses the battle of wills must follow your command as per the Compel psychic power (see page 178 of **Dark Heresy**). The command must be identical for all those within the zone.

Overbleed: For every 10 points by which the power's Threshold is exceeded, you gain a +10 bonus on your Opposed Willpower Test.

The Temple Tendency

"You have betrayed your god. You have defiled His temples with the unworthy and sold His divinity to beggars…"

—Parchment writ nailed to the door of Confessor Ishmael Xandus (found murdered on Sentinel 712.M41)

The Temple Tendency is the vengeful remains of a cult of the Emperor's divinity that once held sway over the entire Imperium. The Temple Tendency does not have truck with aliens or worship infernal powers; it is composed of the faithful devoted of the Emperor, who claim to follow the heritage of those who first declared the Emperor as a god.

Once their faith was the faith of all the Imperium. Their armies and ships were as numerous as the stars, their power all but unrivalled, and below the Golden Throne none was mightier. This might was long ago lost in the cataclysm known to Imperial history as the Age of Apostasy, and they have been reduced to perpetuating their faith in the shadows, nursing their hate and contemplating their vengeance.

Millennia of subterfuge have made the Temple Tendency a deadly and thirsting shadow of the holy organisation it once was. Its poisonous presence slipped into the foundling Calixis Sector during the days of its birth, where the Tendency has festered and grown slowly down the centuries. The Calixian Temple Tendency is stronger now than it has ever been, and a threat to which even the Inquisition is blind, lurking unseen like a serpent poised to sink its fangs into the sector's heart.

Deacon Priam

High Priest of the True

If anyone most represents the subtle threat of the Temple Tendency in its purest form, it is Deacon Priam. As Arch Deacon Procurator of the Golgenna Reach, Priam administers the Ecclesiarchy's physical holdings in the wealthiest sub-sector of Calixis. Born of a noble bloodline, which has also produced an Inquisitor of the Calixian Conclave, Priam has influence and connections that spread far outside the cult itself. He has the ear of Cardinal Ignato, the most senior and highly respected member of the Ecclesiarchy in the Calixis Sector.

All of Priam's public dealings, however, are a lie. He is in truth a hidden Pontifex of the Temple Tendency and its leader in the Calixis Sector. Moving behind the scenes and using his connections, Priam has ensured that the plans of the Tendency in the Calixis Sector go far beyond petty acts of spite. He is the most dangerous variety of heretic: able, ruthless, and filled with a vision and purpose. Easily the most capable man to lead the Calixian sect in generations, he has greatly increased its power base and scope in the last few decades, and has the ambition to do much more.

Tenets, Goals, and Heretical Beliefs

At the core of the Temple Tendency lies the absolute belief by its members that they are the true and pure worshipers of the God-Emperor of Mankind. Furthermore, they are convinced the Ecclesiarchy is a heresy of the highest order that has usurped the faithful and damned the souls of countless billions by perpetuating a faith that is a tainted lie. This belief, warped and poisoned by millennia, informs all they do in what they regard as the battle for the Emperor's soul. To the Tendency, the Ecclesiarchy is a heresy and all who are part of it should be put to the flame. All those that acknowledge the authority of the heretic usurpers are also heretics and so have cast themselves to the darkness. Thus does the Tendency believe that only by the return of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor to its rightful place can the ignorantly damned billions gain repentance, and only the purging of the heretical Ecclesiarchy can save humanity.

Guided by these convictions the Temple Tendency's activities work to further three goals for the salvation of all.

The Preservation of the True

Those who maintain the ways of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor are few in number, and preserving the faith of those few comes before the Tendency's other goals. Those who are part of the Tendency are often linked by blood or fealty to a noble lineage that has passed allegiance to the Tendency down the generations. The sect is acutely aware that, if discovered, a single member of their faith can quickly lead to the discovery of others by way of family association or background. To counter this inherent weakness in their structure, the Tendency has evolved thorough and rigorous methods of protection, concealment, and misdirection that can baffle all but the most sophisticated and subtle of enemies.

Given the Tendency's small size, any depletion in its ranks weakens its ability to work towards its other goals, and so the Tendency will go to the most extreme and extraordinary lengths to preserve its security and anonymity. Assassination, misdirection, planting false evidence, re-building identities, and even provoking atrocities and open warfare to distract those who might discover the Tendency are all tactics employed by it.

The Return of Might and Majesty

The Temple Tendency's central aim is to return the control of political and military might to the hands of the pure and the true. Such a grand goal could only be truly achieved by the overthrowing of the Imperium as it currently exists. Therefore the Tendency works towards gathering military and political power to its service through the placement of its members and manipulation of the organs of Imperial power through infiltration, blackmail, and bribery. It slowly erodes, where it can, the influence of the Ministorum and the cohesion of the Adepta.

The Return of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor

Ultimately, all of the Temple Tendency's energies are channelled to one end—the overthrow of the heretics who have suborned the Ecclesiarchy and led the Imperium astray. The protection of those who still keep the pure and true worship of the Emperor alive, the gathering of military power, and the subversion of other organisations of power are all but steps to this final goal. The Tendency knows it will have to win victories in small pieces—a soul, a city, a planet, a sector at a time, and that millennia of failure and bloodshed lie ahead. This knowledge has done nothing to blunt the potency of the Temple Tendency's dedication to this ultimate end.

A SECRET HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE TENDENCY

The story of the Temple Tendency is the story of faith in the God-Emperor and its forging by the most bloody times of an age when war was rife across the stars. Its roots are in the birth of the Imperium itself, and its downfall is the consequence of its own domination of humanity.

To understand the Temple Tendency is to walk through a story of apotheosis and apostasy and see mankind in both its glory and in its ruin.

The Foundation of The Emperor as God

The Imperium of Mankind is an empire of faith—it guides its actions, gives solace to the masses, and is its shield against the dark. It was not always so. Once, the Emperor was not seen as a god but as the perpetuator of an enlightening truth that would heal and unite humanity, and free it from the tyranny of demagogues and the worship of false idols. Then came the mythic times of the Horus Heresy.

The Emperor's favoured son ripped apart his father's dream, and the price of the Emperor's victory was eternity in the Golden Throne. In the wake of this disaster, the Imperium was shaken to its core, and a belief that had been growing in secret became reality as people searched for comfort and purpose—that the Emperor was not a man, but a god. Cults emerged on thousands of worlds, each declaring and embracing the Emperor as divine. Over time, sects merged, warred, and prospered until, amongst the powerful, one emerged to tower over all others. This sect was the Temple of the Saviour Emperor, and over time it became the One Faith—the Ministorum.

Over the following millennia, the power of the Ministorum grew, its leader earned a seat with the High Lords of Terra, and its influence extended to every facet of the Imperium. Only the Adeptus Astartes and Adeptus Mechanicus were immune to the demands of the Ministorum, and then only because none dared to enforce their submission. Soon the Ministorum was the most powerful organ of the Imperium, commanding fleets of ships and legions of crack troops—all used to wage



wars of faith and bloody crusade at the command of the priests. At the height of its power, the word of the Ecclesiarch could make or unmake laws, decree wars, and refashion the Imperium at a whim.

The Age of Apostasy

As the Ministorum bloated with secular power, its need for wealth to sustain its holdings became an insatiable hunger. Huge tithes levied with the authority of the Ecclesiarch pushed worlds into open rebellion. The Frateris Templars punished such defiance without mercy, with governors and officials burnt as heretics for defying the Emperor's will. Entire populations were decimated to drive home the lesson that those who did not bow to the Ecclesiarchy would find death their only reward. The lesson was not heard.

As rebellion spread across the Imperium and the wrath of the Ecclesiarchy grew, storms blew up out of the depths of the warp and the burning Imperium was blinded. Thousands of systems were completely isolated, travel between all but the most local systems became impossible, and the psychic messages of astropaths became desperate shrieks at the rising maelstrom. Anarchy boiled up across the Imperium. Rogue zealots led thousands in turning their worlds into funeral pyres where cults and sects spawned and struggled in a cloud of blood, dragging mankind down into dark nightmares of extermination perfumed with the smell of burnt flesh. The few pitiful worlds still open to warp travel became the focus of the Ecclesiarchy's attempt to assert its authority on a dream that had gone astray. Millions lay dead at the hands of the Frateris Templars.

The storm had broken, but the initial anarchy of bloodletting was only the harbinger of worse to come. As the Ecclesiarchy rose to its position of near supreme power, it was in constant struggle with the Adeptus Administratum—the galaxy-spanning bureaucracy that administered the Emperor's realm. The balance of power shifted several times between the two great organs of the Imperium but neither achieved decisive control over the other. However, as the Imperium began to pull itself apart, one man would break the deadlock. That man's name lives on in infamy down even to the current age. He became master of both the Ministorum and Administratum, a tyrant whose rule would be called the Reign of Blood in an age already mired in conflict. The name of the man who came as close as Horus to destroying the Imperium was Goge Vandire. His dark reign was a time of absolute authority executed without restraint or sanity, where worlds were virus–bombed at whim and vast armies mustered to destroy Imperial subjects for suspected or imagined sedition.

At the last, it took the forces of the Mechanicus, Astartes, and the rise of one of the greatest saints ever known to bring down Vandire. The man who broke Vandire's power and later became Ecclesiarch, reformer of law, and after death was declared foremost among Imperial saints was Sebastian Thor. Thor was the leader of The Confederation of Light, a faith cult declared heretical by the Temple of the Saviour Emperor. He was imbued with great charisma and vision but was also supremely humble and, if the current creed is to be believed, performed miracles by the God-Emperor's grace. High Lord Goge Vandire was to die under the sword of his once most loyal servants and thereby be immortalised in infamy. Usurper and corrupt though he may have been, Goge Vandire was the last Ecclesiarch of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor. With his end also came the end of the Temple's dominance of faith in the Imperium.

A Tendency to Heresy

The Temple Tendency is so called because of the lingering elements of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor that exist in parts of the Imperium and within the Ecclesiarchy. The tone of rituals, dress, even the layout of chapels can bear a style or flourish that marks them as being linked to the ways of the pre-reformation era of the Ecclesiarchy. In places once closely linked to the early Ecclesiarchy, these distinctive features can be marked enough to elicit a feeling of "tending towards the temple" or having a "temple tendency."

Over time, this phrase has become a euphemism within the Ministorum for marked greed or the desire for worldly power within its own ranks. In the millennia since the reformation, heretics following the old ways have been unearthed. They have been similarly labelled as being of a "temple tendency" rather than admitting what they truly were, and so the label has been perpetuated. To these sects, they are of course not the "Temple Tendency" at all, but the members of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor, champions of the old and "true" faith. To them it is the Ministorum's faith that is false and corrupt—a morally bankrupt upstart that has doomed mankind to a slow death.

A Fallen Family: House Verence

House Verence is one of the preeminent noble houses of Scintilla with extensive holdings in Hive Tarsus and Gunmetal City. Lord Verence is a member of the inner circle of Lord Sector Hax's court and has grown in Hax's favour for his insights into dealing with the politics of Scintilla's other hives. Lord Verence appears a juvinat–softened, gaudy degenerate with a taste for epicurean pleasure that is well known amongst the upper echelons of Scintillan society. The truth is somewhat at odds with the mask. House Verence is one of the oldest noble houses of the sector, able to trace its blood back to an aide of Angevin during the early stages of his crusade. They are and always have been faithful to the pure and true faith of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor, and Lord Verence is not a slowly decaying libertine, but a skilled and dangerous manipulator who has used his position to further the ends of his faith and shield those who share the faith of his house.

Knowledge of The Temple Tendency

There are only two organisations within the Imperium that have significant knowledge of the Temple Tendency—the Ecclesiarchy and the Inquisition. The Ecclesiarchy is unlikely to be forthcoming about the Tendency and will likely resist the idea that it actually still exists. Acolytes, inside or outside of the Ecclesiarchy, may uncover some inference or stumble across information whilst attempting to pursue rumours of a so-called Temple Tendency. Presented here are guidelines for what Acolytes with the Forbidden Lore (Heresy) skill may know about the Temple Tendency, with a base Difficulty of **Challenging (+0)**.

Table 2-2: The Echoes of What Was

Degrees of Success	Details Known
Standard Success	There are heretics who still hold to the old tenets of faith that existed prior to Sebastian Thor. The Ecclesiarchy's teachings were based on the Temple of the Saviour Emperor prior to the fall of Goge Vandire, during the Age of Apostasy in the 36th Millennium. The heretics who still follow those old ways are nowadays referred to as the Temple Tendency.
One	The heretics referred to as the Temple Tendency believe that all that came after the fall of Goge Vandire is heresy. They see themselves as the one true faith and all others as heretic usurpers. They are reputed to have secret adherents in many arms of the Imperium, and some say that the sect may still exist as an organised group.
Two	The Temple Tendency wishes to overthrow the Ecclesiarchy and rebuild the secular and military might of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor. Tendency members are known to have infiltrated the Ecclesiarchy in the past and be well connected to the ruling elite in some areas. However, there is little evidence of them in the history of the Calixis Sector.
Three	The Temple Tendency is a large and highly organised group of heretics with semiautonomous cells governed by a shadowy elite. In the past, the Ordo Hereticus has found it to be a difficult group to detect and break. Members have been suspected of being involved in crimes and atrocities against the Ecclesiarchy, and it is believed that they aim to erode the power of the Adepta in favour of the nobility.
Four or more	The Temple Tendency has a hidden priesthood which mirrors that of the Ecclesiarchy, far back to the Age of Apostasy in lineage. The sect's core is usually centred in old, wealthy and well established families who have followed the heretical faith of the Temple Tendency for millennia. All members of these families and those intimately connected with them must automatically be considered suspect; however, the extent of their influence and infiltration remains unknown.

Sebastian Thor's Reformation

Six thousand years of religious rule by the Temple of the Saviour Emperor came to an end with the fall of Goge Vandire and the Reformation that took place in the wake of Sebastian Thor's ascension to Ecclesiarch. Many things changed within the Imperium as a whole, but most importantly to the Adeptus Ministorum, Thor brought with him the penitent teachings of the Confederation of Light. In an ironic reversal of positions, the followers of the teachings of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor found themselves heretics.

Though the old ways of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor were not completely supplanted, the excesses of power and wealth, untempered by sacrifice and humbleness, were the subject of the most brutal change. So it was that the Reformation brought the end of the military might of the Ministorum fleets and the Frateris Templar. The political and spiritual power of the Ecclesiarchy was split between Ophelia VII and Terra, and the power of individual Cardinals was diminished. The message was clear—the old ways were gone and the power of the Ecclesiarchy was now a part of the Imperium rather than its sole regent.

The Ecclesiarchy had been born anew, and it was not a bloodless birth. The tales the Calixian Temple Tendency tell to themselves claim that key pillars of the old order slipped away to be lost in the vastness of the Imperium, or had their lives ended in its darker corners. The reformers were ruthless and subtle; however, they could not excise all those who had been part of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor. So it was that an enemy was cowed and humiliated but ultimately allowed to survive and nurse its malice. A few of the followers of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor who survived the Reformation kept their "faith" alive as an outlawed sect. They endured mostly in places where the Temple of the Saviour Emperor had previously held great sway. Today, this sect is known as the Temple Tendency.

The Temple Tendency in the Calixis Sector

The Temple Tendency came with the crusade that carved the sector from the godless and infested margins of the Halo Stars. In all likelihood they were refugees from some other purge. Today, who these "pilgrims" were remains largely unknown even to the Tendency's masters. Perhaps they were senior officers in Angevin's forces or part of the Ecclesiarchy's army of missionaries that moved in the wake of the conquering Imperial soldiers. No matter who they were, they came to newborn Calixis and brought their heretical faith with them, infecting their successors with paranoid secrecy and fear of discovery.

Since that time, the Tendency has made great efforts to solidify its position with near infinite patience. Its two main goals have been supporting and protecting high–born families of the faithful and building its shadow priesthood to hold them together with the far distant dream of using Calixis to further its true goals of a restoration of the faith. Over the centuries. the Tendency has weathered the storms of history, surviving plagues, wars, reversals of fortune, and unforeseen disasters and gaining ground and influence with measured precision and intent, until today its position in the shadowed hierarchies of the Calixis Sector is stronger than it has ever been.

The old ways of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor and the priesthood which exists to keep them alive live in the shadow of the Ecclesiarchy. The priests minister to an exclusive number of highly–placed families and hide almost in plain sight among the masses of the faithful. Although the Temple Tendency is strong and highly placed, it is geared more to survival and secrecy than open rebellion. It might be argued that it is troubled both by complacency in its current state and the fear of showing itself openly. It has also lost contact with any branch of the sect outside of the sector—a fact that the hidden Pontifices who command the sect have long concealed from their followers.



Using the Temple Tendency

The Temple Tendency is a true heresy, a rival cult to contest the mastery of the Ministorum over the hearts and minds of the people. It is patient, highly secretive, and uses unwitting proxies to fulfil many of its designs. One way that the Tendency can be used in this way is for it to act as a shadowy opponent behind apparently unconnected enemies or events. On a more tactical level, the Temple Tendency offers the perfect opportunity to throw the power and methods of the Imperium back into the face of the Acolytes—preachers, guardsmen, zealots, law enforcement, or even the Inquisition itself can all be manipulated from within by the sect. A GM can also exploit the moral ambiguity of the Tendency's being condemned as heretical—are its members really heretics or are they crusaders who will restore the true faith to an Imperium that has fallen to heresy? For characters with particular religious conviction this feature can be used to make them question their own motivations; what if the Temple Tendency is right?

Lineages of the True and Pure

The Tendency has chiefly survived through the efforts of its hidden priesthood and the powerful noble families that secretly cling to its creed. The majority of the Tendency's scattered congregation is made up of families who have passed their hidden faith down by word of mouth and who have a strict code of silence. Most families are well-established and thought of as being either part of the local elite or, in a few cases, powerful and influential clans with sector–wide influence. In secret, these families maintain their worship and have formed a symbiotic relationship with the sect's priesthood, providing the Temple Tendency with resources and influence, while benefiting from its secret network and alliance. These families seldom know each other, being tied together instead only through the Shade Priests who come and go to minister to them in secret.

The Shade Priests

The Inquisition's archives call them the Vandiran Apostates or Shade Priests, but to the faithful they are the "True." These individuals move through the Calixis Sector like ghosts from family to family bearing messages, coordinating the actions of the sect, and performing religious ceremonies. They are the key to the workings of the Tendency—the means by which the organisation is administered and bound together.

Outwardly, Shade Priests may appear to be merchants, traders, pilgrims, or practitioners of other roaming professions, allowing them to move throughout the sector unheeded. Beneath their appearance and mastered methods of deception, the priests are fanatics, often educated from infancy in the ways of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor and meticulously trained in the field craft that allows them to move and disappear like ghosts within the teeming masses of the sector. Most are drawn from the illegitimate children of noble families who are part of the Tendency, but perhaps the most dangerous are those whom the Tendency has taken from within the Imperium and converted to its faith. There are perhaps hundreds of such priests at large within the sector, and not even their masters know their full spread or extent.

The Chantries

Hidden beneath the manses of powerful Tendency members or concealed in the bowels of trading vessels are the Chantries of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor. These are the sacred places where members worship the Emperor as was once done throughout the Imperium in ages long past. Surfaces covered in gilt glimmer in the light of candles and crystal lamps, while from all around the Emperor looks down, His gaze frozen in precious metal. The Chantry represents not only a place of true and pure worship to the Tendency but also a reminder of what once was, and which the cult prays, will be again. Huge wealth is poured into the construction of these hidden places, and to keep them hidden and safe. Each chantry is guarded by cloisters of mute Chantry Guards, a long distant echo of the lost elite of the Frateris Templars. These devoted warriors have the finest muscle grafting, weapons, and training lavished on them, and they will guard their Chantry with their dying breath.

The Hidden Pontifices

The Pontifices are the ruling elite of the Tendency. In them the ancient authority of the first men to proclaim the Emperor as a God is preserved. While the noble families are the bedrock of the Tendency and the Shade Priests the web that holds it together, the Pontifices are its guiding hand. There are no more than a handful in the Calixis Sector, each watching over a sub-sector and answering only to the High Priest of the True.

Each Pontifex also leads a double life, usually having a position of some importance within the organisations of the Imperium from where he can exert influence or be privy to useful information. Some may be members of the Administratum or planetary government, while others are members of the Ecclesiarchy itself, working to undo the very organisation that they are part of.

Current Conspiracies and Plots

At any one time in the Calixis Sector, members of the Temple Tendency may be pursuing a number of schemes for the furtherment of their outlawed faith: the corruption of an individual mission to spread the Ministorum Creed, the assassination of a perceived threat, or the obtaining of illegal arms and equipment. Its most abiding concerns however, are maintaining the faith and the shield of secrecy that hides it. The Temple Tendency is also hampered somewhat in that it must always operate under a paradox that further complicates matters—while it hates and despises the Imperium as it is currently manifested, it cannot afford to see it fall to outside forces, for that too would be a betrayal of the Emperor. The Tendency is as firm in its hatred of the witch, the alien, and the tainted as the most hardline Puritan and its faithful act accordingly.

Currently, the Holy Ordos are ignorant of the Temple Tendency's entrenched presence in the Calixis Sector. This is a state that has been maintained by the sect at the cost of the lives of several Inquisitorial Acolytes and numerous cell members. This ignorance on the part of the Calixian Conclave is in part due to the fact that the sector is young in terms of the Imperium and the fact that the Tendency is often found tied to places where the Temple of the Saviour Emperor was once powerful—an age long passed by the time Calixis was born. This fact has hidden the Temple Tendency, and while the Inquisition is aware of certain incidents, it does not suspect a single heresy or group to be behind them, much less that the heresy is the Temple Tendency.

Vengeance and Loathing
The Temple Tendency and the Adepta Sororitas

Of all arms of the Ecclesiarchy, the Temple Tendency nurtures a special malice towards the Sisters of the Adepta Sororitas. The holy sisters were once called the Brides of the Emperor and served as Goge Vandire's personal shock troops and bodyguards in the last bloody decades before the Reformation re-forged the Ecclesiarchy. Consisting of many Orders, each following a different calling, the Adepta Sororitas have been the pure heart of the Ecclesiarchy for over five millennia. Most famed of the holy Sisters are the Battle Sisters, the military arm of the Ecclesiarchy and Chamber Militant of the Ordo Hereticus; they are manifestations of the Emperor's judgement.

No matter what their Order, all sisters of the Adepta Sororitas are despised by the Temple Tendency. To this day, the Tendency will take any opportunity to revenge themselves on the sisterhood, even acting with uncharacteristic recklessness to inflict harm and suffering upon them. The poisoning of the Sister Famulous adviser to Lord Sector Hax two years ago and the "accidental" unleashing of reprogrammed arco-flagellants on a Sister Hospitaller medical facility on Tranch are but the most recent manifestations of the Temple Tendency's vendetta against the Adepta Sororitas.

The Assassination Cells

The Temple Tendency has a long history of venting its hate of the Ecclesiarchy in episodes of spiteful bloodletting. In the last half century, however, High Priest of the True Priam, the sect's Calixian leader, has charged his flock with supporting and enacting the murder of members of the Ecclesiarchy with greater vigour than his predecessors. The assassination cells formed by this edict are made up of members of the secret faith and are often of diverse profession and appearance.

Trained to move amongst the Imperium without notice, the members of a cell may appear to be aides to a merchant, pilgrims, or other innocuous travellers. The members of a Tendency assassination cell usually work together for years, selecting and executing their own targets. Many kill opportunistically, slaying a lone preacher or missionary and thus making the most any given advantage. Others are more selective and aim to strike at key members of the Ministorum presence in the sector. Indeed, the poisoning of the previous Sororitas adviser to Lord Sector Hax was one such assassination that was the result of careful planning by a Tendency assassination cell.

The assassination cells are allowed and encouraged to roam free, killing and working against members of the Ecclesiarchy at will so long as they maintain their veil of secrecy. These activities, however, are only to hone them for their real tasks. Their true duty is revealed to them when they receive a name or a series of objectives by the word of a Shade Priest at the behest of one of the sect's Pontifices.

> I have stood upon the towers and watched the fell radiance of the tyrant star. I have glimpsed things that follow in its wake, vast and terrible, lurking like leviathans in the warp. I could never look upon anything ever again without seeing that horrid, dark glimmer. It was obvious. The only answer was to cut out my eyes. Only then would I truly see.



The Infiltration of the Red Redemption

The Temple Tendency has recently set its sights on the Red Redemption. Redemptionists are an ultra militant sect of the Imperial Creed that sees humanity as saturated with sin and who can only be redeemed by fire and blood. Followers of the Redemptionist creed are militant to a frenzied degree, and groups of different sizes are found across the Calixis Sector, varying from small Underhive gangs to the huge army of Seth the Voice on Iocanthos. Redemptionists see heretics all around them, yet are often blind to those that stand amongst them. The Temple Tendency began its infiltration of the Redemption a few years ago, starting by funding the Redemption and then infiltrating members into the Redemption's local leadership. So far it has not managed to penetrate the Redemption enough to exert any real influence over the sect, but should its plans progress unimpeded, it will eventually have gained control over a fanatical army of followers to use as unwitting cannon fodder in a war yet to come.

The Manipulation of the Lucid Court

The Temple Tendency's chief achievement in the Calixis Sector is the extent to which it can influence the sector's governance. The Temple Tendency has caused the dismissal of officials so that it could substitute its own pawns and thereby influence the balance of power in the sector. To this end, it has taken advantage of aspects of Lord Sector Hax's character to bring about a political situation that favours its schemes, not least of all his innate paranoia and dislike of outside interference to his rule. This goal has been achieved by the placement of trusted followers of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor within the inner circle of Lord Hax's court, a thing that has taken centuries of positioning and bribery to achieve.

Chief amongst these secret heretics is Lord Verence, who coordinates the manipulation of Hax and his court fellows with the delicate and invisible hand of a master. Others work in ignorance for the sect, believing instead that their petty corruptions fuel noble vendettas or simple greed, not realising their paymasters' true natures. Ultimately the sect wishes to push Hax into ever more tyrannical actions, turning his suspicion and wroth against rival noble families, competing powers, and troublesome members of the Adepta, all in the furtherance of its own long-term power, and perhaps even provoke a carefully managed sector civil war.

INQUISITORIAL THREAT BRIEFING

The Temple Tendency is a known heretical movement, under millennia old standing orders for purgation. Historically its followers have been found in various bodies of the Imperium and have a degree of organisation and coordination behind their actions. The presence of the Temple Tendency in the Calixis Sector is currently considered doubtful by the Ordos Calixis. Several cells of regressive heretical faith have been encountered and purged in the past, but none can be concretely linked to an organised or widespread sect.

SERVANTS OF THE OLD FAITH

The Tendency can call upon almost all Imperial organizations at a low level thanks to the diverse roles its adherents play in the Imperium. The Tendency has a number of priests and allied family members who are reasonably senior members of the Administratum, Ecclesiarchy, and the Imperial nobility. It also has extensive contacts with merchants, smugglers, and the criminal underworld, often through false identities and intermediaries.

The Cult Fanatic and Cult Initiate in **Dark Heresy** can be used to represent low-level members of the sect. The Dissolute Noble and Merchant Magnate can represent members of the powerful and wealthy families who follow the ways of the Temple.

Temple Tendency Assassination Cell Package

To create cell members from the Dramatis Personae from the **Dark Heresy** rulebook, add the following Skills and Talents to their profile:

Characteristics: Increase Ballistic Skill and Willpower both by +10.

Skills: Ciphers (Temple Tendency) (Int) +10, Concealment (Fel) +10, Demolition (Int), Deceive (Fel)+10, Disguise (Fel) +10, Inquiry (Fel), Secret Tongue (Temple Tendency) (Int) +10, Security (Ag) +10, Shadowing (Ag) +10.

Talents: Hatred (Clerics of the Imperial Creed), Melee Training (Primitive), Pistol Training (any two), Unremarkable, Unshakable Faith.

Temple Tendency Assassination Cell

The assassination cells of the Temple Tendency are small groups of seemingly ordinary people who are in fact highly trained covert agents and fanatic adherents to the cult. They operate as semi-autonomous executioners of the enemies of the Temple Tendency (both perceived and real) and engage in the cult's plots.

To represent a Tendency assassination cell, take a number of suitable Dramatis Personae from **Chapter XII: Aliens, Heretics and Antagonists** in the **Dark Heresy** rulebook and apply the Assassin Cell Package presented here. Assassination cells normally consist of between four to six people drawn from several walks of ordinary life. Dramatis Personae to consider are Citizen, Enforcer, Entertainer, Merchant Magnate, Ministorum Preacher, and Scribe.



Shade Priest

Shade Priests are the bonds by which the Temple Tendency and its enterprises are held together. Each is chosen at a young age from amongst the children of the faithful and schooled in the creed of the Temple of the Saviour Emperor along with the skills that he will need to keep that faith alive. Each is a controlled, capable fanatic who will do anything to preserve what he sees as the true creed, trained to slip unnoticed through the Imperium like a ghost in order to do the sect's work—either by secretly spreading the faith or executing the apostate.

Shade Priest Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
30	30	30	30	30	39	35	40	40

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 11
Skills: Awareness (Per), Charm (Fel), Ciphers (Temple Tendency) (Int), Common Lore (Ecclesiarchy, Imperium, Imperial Creed, Underworld) (Int), Command (Fel), Concealment (Ag), Disguise (Fel) +10, Deceive (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (Heresy, Temple of the Saviour Emperor) (Int), Intimidate (S) +10, Interrogation (WP), Literacy (Int) +10, Scholastic Lore (Imperial Creed) (Int) +10, Secret Tongue (Temple Tendency, Fateris Templar Hand Sign) (Int) +20, Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int).
Talents: Air of Authority, Concealed Cavity, Hatred (Clerics of the Imperial Creed, Adepta Sororitas), Light Sleeper, Litany of Hate, Master Orator, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Paranoia, Peer (Temple Tendency), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Resistance (Interrogation), Unshakable Faith.
Armour: None.
Weapons: Compact laspistol (15, S/–/–; 1d10+1 E; Shots 15; Rld Full; Reliable).
Gear: The clothing and identification corresponding to whatever identity the priest has assumed, ceremonial robes, Temple of the Saviour Emperor liturgy, numerous small devotional items.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Majoris.

Chantry Guard

The Chantry Guard watch over the hidden temples of the sect and serve as the secret bodyguards of the Pontifices. Encased in gilded plate and implanted with synthetic muscle grafts, these warrior-fanatics are a distant echo of the now forbidden Frateris Templars that served as the cult's vast army during Vandire's reign. Most are drawn from the military retainers of faithful noble families. Each Chantry Guard is bound to protect a sacred place or guard his Pontifex until he dies or is too feeble to fight. Occasionally a Chantry Guard will be dispatched incognito to watch over a member of the sect on an important mission or an ally who might prove false.

Chantry Guard Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
30	35	55	45	36	30	35	40	18

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 15
Skills: Awareness (Per), Climb (S), Common Lore (Imperium, War) (Int), Forbidden Lore (Temple Tendency) (Int), Interrogation (WP), Intimidate (S), Literacy (Int), Secret Tongue (Temple Tendency, Fateris Templar Hand Sign) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic, High Gothic) (Int), Search (Per).
Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Bolt, Las, SP), Blademaster, Chem Geld, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive, Power, Shock), Nerves of Steel, Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, SP), Unshakeable Faith.
Traits: Mute[1].
[1]**Mute:** The Chantry Guard operate under a vow of silence enforced by the voluntary removal of their vocal cords. They understand spoken language perfectly and communicate in an adapted form of battle sign language (including vox tap) that goes back to the earliest days of the Imperium.
Armour: Gilded plate with enclosed helm, best quality storm trooper carapace (All 7).
Weapons: Mono edged great weapon (2d10+5† R; Pen 2; Unwieldy) or power blade (1d10+8† E; Pen 6; Power Field) or shock maul (1d10+5† I; Shocking), and bolt pistol (30m; S/2/–; 1d10+5 X; Pen 4; Clip 8; Rld Full).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Micro-bead vox, respirator, photo-visor, three spare bolt clips.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Minoris.

Arco-flagellants

Arco-flagellants are heretics who have been implanted with brutal weaponry and drug injectors and boosted by muscle grafts so that they become terrifying cyborg berserkers who can be unleashed on those who have fallen in the sight of the Emperor. The sentence of arco-flagellation is reserved for the worst of sinners and heretics. The condemned are mentally and physically transformed into engines of destruction, kept in check by a pacifier helm.

With a word, the implanted aggression inhibitors and stream of sacred chanting from the pacifier helm shuts down. Then, huge quantities of combat drugs, muscle stimulators, and pain suppressors are dumped into the arco-flagellant's body, instantly turning it into a superhuman blur of taut muscle and thrashing weapons.

Arco-flagellants are created and controlled by the Ecclesiarchy, though thanks to the Temple Tendency's infiltrations, the cult has gained the use of a number of these once-human weapons. The Temple has even turned a small number of kidnapped Ecclesiarchy priests into arco-flagellants in a spiteful reversal of the Ecclesiarchy's own justice.

The arco-flagellant profile is presented in two modes: active and passive. Although the abilities vary, Wounds are carried over between the two modes, and severe injures sustained in the active mode may cause the creature to drop dead once deactivated.

Arco-flagellant (Passive Mode) Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
—	—	30	40	30	10	20	40	—

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 12
Skills: None.
Talents: Fearless.
Traits: Dark Sight, Machine 2, Trigger Word[1].
[1]**Trigger Word:** Arco-flagellants are fitted with pacifier helms that keep them in a state of docile dormancy. This state is changed by a word or phrase, and once the trigger word has been registered the arco-flagellant immediately switches modes (from passive to active) and switches its profile to the active profile presented here. An active arco-flagellant is returned to passive mode by another trigger word. Trigger words can be delivered by speech, electronic signal via vox, or by psychic message using the Telepathy psychic power.
Armour: Machine plating (Head 2, Arms 2, Body 3, Legs 2).
Gear: Internal micro-bead (to receive/relay instructions only).
Threat Rating: Hereticus Minoris.

Arco-flagellant (Active Mode) Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
40	—	(8) 40	40	(6) 30	10	20	40	—

Movement: 6/12/18/36 **Wounds:** 25
Skills: Awareness (Per) +10.
Talents: Berserk Charge, Combat Master, Fearless, Heightened Senses (Vision), Iron Jaw, Lightning Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Primitive, Power, Shock), Swift Attack, Unnatural Strength (×2), Unnatural Agility (×2), Unnatural Speed.
Traits: Dark Sight, Fear 1 (Disturbing), Kill Programming[1], Machine 2, Physical Overload[2], Trigger Word, Unstoppable[3].
[1]**Kill Programming:** An arco-flagellant must always charge into combat when it can (utilizing its Berserk Charge talent), and when in combat, it must take a Multiple Attack option when it can (using its Lightning Attack talent).
[2]**Physical Overload:** Every combat Round, after the arco-flagellant has acted, a 1d10 should be rolled, and on a roll of "9" the arco-flagellant suffers 2d10 Damage (ignoring armour and Toughness Bonus).
[3]**Unstoppable:** An active arco-flagellant is immune to the effects of Critical Hits (except those resulting in the destruction of limbs or death), Fatigue, or Stunning and must be reduced to –10 Wounds or be completely dismembered in order to be destroyed.
Armour: Machine plating (Head 2, Arms 2, Body 3, Legs 2).
Weapons: Implanted chain axes (1d10+12† R; Pen 2; Tearing) or implanted power blades (1d10+11† E; Pen 6; Power Field) or implanted electro-flails (1d10+10† I; Pen 0; Flexible, Shocking).
†Includes Strength Bonus for active mode.
Gear: Internal micro-bead (to receive/relay instructions only).
Threat Rating: Hereticus Minoris.



The Logicians

"Once we were Gods, but what are we now? Wilfully ignorant savages and self-deluded fools, little more than helpless children scattered and lost in the cold dark. But I tell you, we have been Gods and we shall be Gods again."

—**In Defence of the Future: A Logical Discourse**
Author unknown, banned M.36

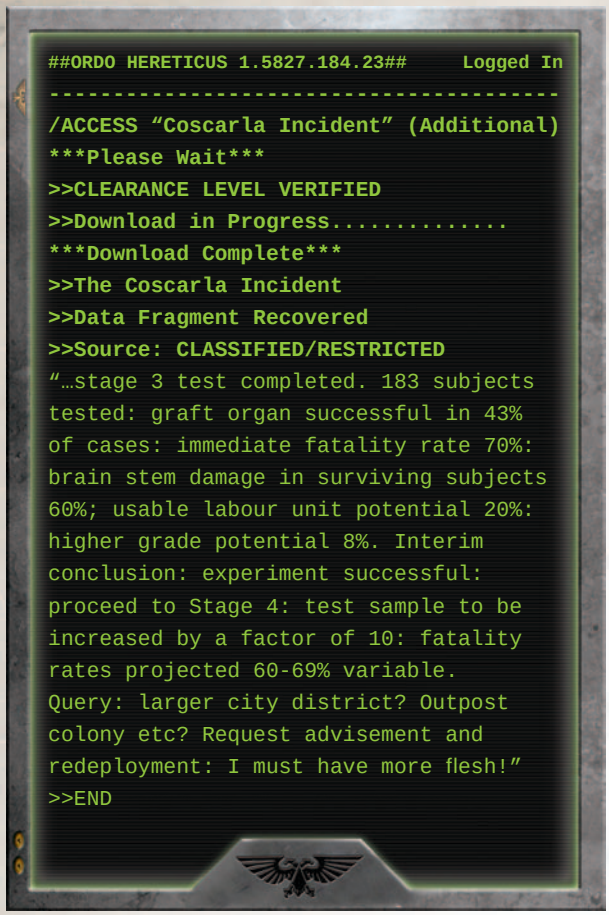
The Logicians are an alliance of heretical factions and tech-cults who have long been a thorn in the side of Calixis and the nearby Ixaniad Sectors, but whose origins go back considerably further into the Imperium, and indeed humanity's past. Founded not around a single charismatic figure or dark religion, they find their inspiration in a forbidden heretical text called "In Defence of the Future: A Logical Discourse," a work declared blasphemous by both the Ministorum and the Cult Mechanicus and banned for several millennia.

By nature, the Logicians are a so-called "progressive" cult. They favour the advancement of mankind through progress and the acquisition of technology, believing that they should cast off the oppression of the Ministorum, overthrow the High Lords of Terra, and put an end to the Adeptus Mechanicus' stranglehold on scientific and technical lore. Ultimately, the Logicians aim to bring about a return to the mythic power of the Dark Age of Technology and the enthronement of humanity as the omnipotent and indeed single surviving sentient race in the galaxy.

Finding adherents through a secret network of ruthless mercantile interests and power-hungry nobles, the Logician cult is a haven for hereteks and rogue tech-priests, and is highly organised and well equipped. The Logicians are calculating, secretive, and patient in the execution of their plots and intrigues, utterly callous in their pursuit of power, and unceasing in their hunt for ever better weapons and tools by which to achieve their ends.

For centuries the Calixis Sector has known the corrosive influence of the Logician cult, and although the power and reach of this tech-cult and its splinter factions have waxed and waned over the years, the group's presence and its insidious teachings have proven impossible to entirely stamp out. In the past the Logicians have been responsible for countless deaths in the pursuit of power and progress, and once even threatened the stability of the Calixis Sector thanks to their shadowy role in the Meritates Uprising.

Although purged and hounded to near destruction following those dark times six centuries ago, the Logicians have returned, seemingly even more subtle and insidious than before. There are those who argue that the threat they now pose is greater than ever. Some even whisper that the cult has powerful backers among the Calixian elite and perhaps even members of the Holy Ordos itself.



TENETS, GOALS, AND HERETICAL BELIEFS

The proscribed work around which the cult has its foundation, a document entitled "In Defence of the Future: A Logical Discourse," first appeared more than four millennia ago in the Segmentum Solar, at the very heart of the Imperium, and some say parts of the text itself were copied from ancient and utterly proscribed works buried deep in the vaults of Holy Terra itself, although its author or collator remains unknown.

The book itself promulgates the dangerous philosophy of progress, that the advancement of technology and science should be immediately pursued at all cost and regardless of its source for the ultimate "benefit" of humanity and the restoration of the lost "Golden Age" of mankind. In such a new age, humanity would again bestride the stars like a colossus, the ancient domains of man would be re-conquered, held, and expanded, and all the threats to human existence posed by the xenos or the warp could be confronted and crushed utterly.

To this end, the work posits the destruction of the Cult Mechanicus and the overthrow of the "stifling grip" of Imperial authority and an end to what the book refers to as the Ecclesiarchy's "tyranny of lies" concerning the Emperor and the Imperial Creed. Instead, the "logical course" for the restoration of order and a rebirth of humanity's destiny among the stars is that power be placed in the hands of a new absolutist oligarchy of "forward thinkers" and those "fitted by vision and superiority" to rule—namely the Logicians themselves.

The doctrines and arguments contained within the work expound the need for utter ruthlessness in order to attain the "glorious coming age" to which humanity is heir, and goes on to advocate the forging of a secret empire within the body of the Imperium itself as the agency of its overthrow, and the unrestrained pursuit of conquest and victory through the arts of technology and science at any cost. The work supports this dangerous creed with numerous worthy sounding and elaborate justifications for any needed enormity of slaughter or sacrifice to gain the ends it glorifies, regardless of the cost in human life or freedom. In short, to attain such a living, tangible paradise—a future on which the universe itself is held in the palm of mankind's hand—no price is too high to pay in the present. It is, the book contends, a matter of simple logic.

CULT STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITY

Like many widespread and successful cults, the Logicians operate a largely cellular structure to their organisation and are bound largely by doctrine and shared goals rather than a rigid hierarchical structure. Some in the Holy Ordos argue that the cult's only true members are the oligarchs that govern and fund its many independent cells; however, for such an organised and well-funded group, additional manpower is seldom a problem. Theses cell directors, or "techtrarchs" as the Logicians call themselves, are often mercantile lords, trade officials, guild masters, and in rare instances, rogue members of the Adeptus Mechanicus who have allowed themselves to be blinded by their own lust for power and profit. Due to their high standing in society, the Logicians are very circumspect in their activities and highly organised, often acting far removed from the cult's activities on the ground. They prefer instead to operate through small units of highly trained agents, specialists, and mercenaries to carry out their plans and protect their interests.

The cult's activities are principally centred on the acquisition of power. Power to them is political influence, the might of such forbidden arts as science and technology, and, of course, wealth. To this last end, the Logicians secretly nurture and fund coteries of hereteks and renegade tech-priests who have the purpose of developing advanced tools and weaponry with which to fight their battles, boost their wealth, and ultimately make them powerful enough to overcome the Imperium from within. The Logicians provide these renegades and recidivists with the backing, manpower, and resources (regardless of how unethical or abhorrent in nature) to pursue their projects, insane theories, and dark desires—just so long as the Logicians profit from the results of their labours.

As a part of this doctrine of power through technological superiority, they are also heavily involved in the study and replication of captured xenos-tech and in particular the pursuit of archeaotech—the ancient relics of humanity's advanced science in millennia past. They have no love of the alien and follow a recognisably Monodominant perspective. They simply have no compunction in taking whatever the

xenos might have of value and using it to their own ends. The cult strives to maintain a widespread and efficient intelligence gathering network in order both to shield it from outside intervention and to keep it informed of matters and discoveries of interest. Likewise the cult's suspected links to local planetary organised crime groups, archeopirate factions, and the more disreputable of Rogue Traders are also noteworthy, as the Logicians see these outsider groups as perfect avenues by which their goals can be reached, as well as eminently disposable lackeys to be used and abandoned as the need arises.

The Iron Techtrarchs

Over recent decades one particular faction within the Logicians of the Calixis Sector has grown to power, known as the Iron Techtrarchs. If the rumours among recidivist crime lords and the testimony of interrogated cult members are to be believed, these Techtrarchs form a ruling council of sorts (the number of which varies depending on the source, ranging from three to as many as a hundred members) for the Logicians of the Calixis and Ixaniad Sectors. This council operates in concert to determine policy and coordinate long-term planning for the cult's diverse cells. It also administers the Logicians' seemingly massive commercial and financial resources to their countless individual plots, expeditions and experimental projects, as well as to punish the failure of their underlings. Failure is a thing they will not tolerate.

Although several high-ranking Logicians supposedly linked to the Iron Techtrarchs, have been exposed and purged in the last decade, conclusive proof of this elusive group has never been found. This lack of proof has led some factions within both the Adeptus Arbites and the Holy Ordos to doubt the existence of the Iron Techtrarchs, believing them to be either a simple vainglorious myth or a deliberate fabrication of the cult's leaders to paint themselves as part of a wider and "all-powerful" conspiracy—the better to inspire loyalty and obedience in their followers. Were the Iron Techtrarchs to exist as the rumours claim, then they would have to be made up of highly placed members of the greatest noble houses or commercial powers of the two sectors. They would need to have amongst their number ranking members of the Adepta or even the Holy Ordos in order to wield their rumoured power and resources claimed for them and remain hidden—a prospect that fills some Inquisitorial factions with the deepest unease.

Hereteks, Progressives, and Renegades

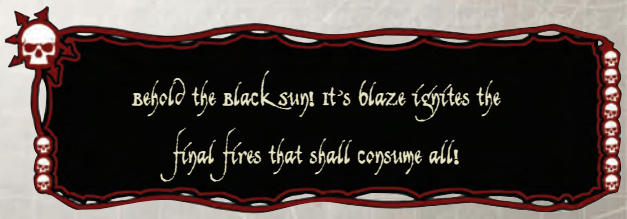
Arguably the real power base of the cult is the diverse number of hereteks, scholars and even renegade tech-priests within its ranks. This relatively small but potent group carries out much of the cult's real activities, and each serves in its own way to contribute to the Logicians' power and knowledge. They are a diverse group, often operating in cells either as individuals or small cabals on a single project, usually being quite ignorant of each other and their activities, and answering only (to a greater or lesser extent) to the Techtrarch that has sponsored them. They vary a great deal in power, knowledge, and specialisation, ranging from promising hereteks recruited from within organised crime groups or merchant guilds who might specialise in tech salvage, drug manufacture, or weapon crafting, to disbarred medicae and scholars of forbidden lore on the run from the authorities.

Outcast members of the Cult Mechanicus are a particular prize for the cult as few are able to match their skills and learning. Having already broken some ban or Edict of Mars, they are often drawn to the Logicians for protection while fleeing destruction by their own kind. In many cases, the loyalty of these individuals to the Logicians is questionable, to say the least, a fact that the Logicians view as an acceptable risk. Though there are some true converts to the cause and fanatic adherents to the Logical Discourse among them, many serve only through an alliance of convenience, bartering service and experimental data for protection, concealment, and the opportunity to pursue their obsessions uncontested.

The Dark Age of Technology

Little is known of the times long before the foundation of the Imperium when humanity first colonised other worlds, a time now known simply as the Dark Age of Technology. Even among the high echelons of the Adeptus Terra or within the fortress monasteries of the Adeptus Astartes, few facts are held certain about a time shrouded in superstition and ancient fears. Terrible sciences and dark materials exist as relics of those forgotten ages that are so grievous that they have been hidden beyond the use and knowledge even of their custodians. As the Priesthood of Mars well know, while the powers of Chaos whisper from the void beyond, the sins of the past have their own voices, and the power they promise is no less perilous.

In those ancient days, mankind reached a zenith of scientific and technological achievement. In doing so, man spread across the galaxy as conquerors and explorers, subjugating a domain of unimaginable breadth, striding amongst the stars almost as gods shattering aeons old alien empires, and remaking countless worlds into vessels fit for human habitation. This renaissance of power was not to last, and almost overnight the galaxy-spanning empire fell into anarchy, barbarism, and horror. Warp storms engulfed the cradle of mankind and humanity's realm was shattered. The long millennia that came afterward became known as the Age of Strife, and for these long years the worlds of man remained shrouded in nightmare and darkness, prey to the daemon and the alien until the coming of the Saviour-Emperor.



THE FORBIDDEN ARTS OF DARK TECHNOLOGY

The fundamental tenet of the Logicians, as enshrined in the great text, is the acquisition of power through unrestrained technological advancement. The great arrogance and sin of this work is as obvious as it is dangerous to anyone who believes in the Credo Omnissiah or the Imperial Creed, and it would lead mankind back to the terrors of the Age of Strife if it were allowed to bear fruit.

Here are but a few examples of the dark paths down which forbidden technology might wander and the legends that cloak them:

Engines of Destruction: Weapons are the foremost goal and desire of many tech-heretics, whether it's the discovery or theft of heavily restricted designs—such as atomics or the dread life-eater virus used as a tool of Exterminatus, the acquisition of sophisticated relics like the secrets to creating the induction coils used in plasma weapons, or the pursuit of alien designs of terrible power.

Gholam and other Forbidden Fleshworks: A Gholam is an artificial construct made primarily of flesh and synthetic tissue by the arts of a gene-sculptor. Although a widespread technology within the Adeptus Mechanicus, many branches of this lore are considered heretical and forbidden. These, in particular, include so-called "Murder Gholams"—horrific organic fabrications solely intended for violence, and homonculites—bio-forms fashioned from harvested human organs, alchemical serums, and vat-grown tissue in the shape of a living thing with no natural origin. Rarer creations include "Chimerics"—strange amalgam creatures that combine many sources of DNA to form twisted monstrosities with utterly unpredictable results, forced psychic mutation, and unspeakable "slaver parasites"—artificial organic grafts that subvert the will and the bodily functions of those unfortunates they are inflicted upon.

According to sacred legend, such fleshworks were forbidden by the word of the Emperor during the days of the Great Crusade in response to the horrors that he and his superhuman warriors encountered in the wars to end the Age of Strife.

Transgenic Blasphemy: This field of research embodies the techno-heresy of combining xenos gene-matter or surgical grafts with human organic matter. It is an utterly forbidden practice, considered both a pollution of the divine pattern by the Adeptus Mechanicus and outright blasphemy by the Imperial Cult.

Knowledge of the Logicians

The Logicians have long been known as a danger to the Imperium, being one of the more infamous cults in the Calixis Sector's history. The following table presents a rough guide to what a knowledgeable Acolyte might recall about them through use of an **Ordinary (+10) Forbidden Lore (Heresy or Cults) Test**.

Table 2-3: An Ancient Threat

Degrees of Success	Details Known
Standard Success	The Logicians are a tech-heretic sect whose history goes back long into the Imperium's past and far beyond the Calixis Sector. They were reputed to have been involved in the infamous Meritech border wars centuries ago, but have long since fallen from power.
One	The Logician cult was founded on the doctrines contained within a blasphemous tract rather than through a single heretic. The book's many sins include the advocacy of the sickness of the mind known as "progress."
Two	The Logician cult was widespread, highly organised, and dangerous. It concerned itself with acquiring technological might, pursuing forbidden science, and overthrowing Imperial rule and the dominance of the Adeptus Mechanicus. It is said that the Priesthood of Mars despises the cult even more than the Holy Ordos.
Three	The ultimate goal of the Logician cult is no less grand a sin than the restoration of the Dark Age of Technology, and it will stop at nothing to achieve its aims. The cult still exists secretly to this day, and the group is a haven for hereteks and even (it is rumoured) for Mechanicus renegades.
Four or more	Reports have begun to circulate in recent years of the cult's return to power in the Calixis Sector, linking it to several atrocities such as a plague on Fenksworld, numerous strange deaths, and monstrous perversions of forbidden technology in the Josian Reach sub-sector. Some sources indicate that it has links to a tech-assassin cult known as the Ashen Tear and its leaders style themselves by the ancient title of "Techtrarchs." If the stories are to be believed, with the Logicians' resurgence of power, they are as much a threat to the sector as any warp-dabbler or xenos-worshiping sect.

The Silica Animus: An artificial mind (rather than a simple cogitator) created from forbidden technologies, tradition holds that such unholy constructs are inherently evil and a perverted abomination in the sight of Omnissiah. Mechanicus doctrine states that the machine spirit of a Silica Animus is a twisted mockery of the soul of man, treacherous and insane. Ancient texts tell apocryphal stories, shrouded in metaphor, of such murderous and powerful creations during the Dark Age, and the legions of iron men that served them, blaming them in part for many of the terrible wars that laid humanity low in that lost time.

Malifica: Perhaps the darkest and most arcane of all sciences is the technology created to manipulate the energies of the warp or psychic force. A necessary evil for the Imperium and a cornerstone of its existence, it is a dangerous and volatile field of study.

At the outer regions of the accepted uses and patterns of this tech lie terrible devices and desires, and the melding of daemonic spirits with machinery and the channelling of the raw power of the empyrean through technology has long been a thing forbidden by the Mechanicus. For those reckless or insane enough, the temptation to pursue such dark experiements is great, offering the possibility of creativity and function unfettered by reason or the surly bonds of the universe's physical laws.

The Proteus Protocol: Considered little more than a myth by many but the ultimate goal of an obsessed few, the Proteus Protocol is an ancient and heretical technology for transferring not only the engramatic knowledge and memory of an organic brain, but also the personality and will, granting in effect complete mental and spiritual immortality in an artificial physical form. Of the few legends that surround this tech, some state that the abominations created are soulless beings with dark desires and alien hungers that can never be satiated. However, these warnings often fail to deter the Protocol's most ardent seekers.

Cult Agents

Where possible, the Logician cult prides itself on directly employing only the best as its agents, and beneath the Techtrarchs the cult cells are made up of skilled organisers and administrators, as well as specialists such as pilots, scribes, financiers, and information-brokers. Most of these operate under a variety of cover identities to ensure their Techtrarch's bidding is carried out.

The ranks of the Logician cells are rounded out by a hard core of professionally trained killers and soldiers, all of the highest calibre and thoroughly tested for competency, ruthlessness, and loyalty to the cause. These militant agents are one of the most marked features of the tech cult, as their skill and efficiency sets them above many of the foes that the Imperial forces must face when dealing with petty insurrectionists, criminal gangs, or fanatic cult zealots. Highly motivated, tactically skilled, and well equipped, Logician cult agents have repeatedly proven to be the bane of unsuspecting enforcer groups and ill-prepared Acolytes when the cult has been encountered.



Using the Logicians in your games

The Logicians represent a paradigm of tech-heresy—the idea that heresy need not be distorted religious belief or the worship of the warp, but can instead manifest as a craving for progress and the rule of rationalism. In fact, this heresy is the clinical application of technology—something readily recognised as sinful arrogance and suicidal folly in the milieu of **Dark Heresy**. The Logicians perform the very crimes which nearly destroyed all humanity and toppled human civilisation from the zenith of its power in the dim horrors of Imperial pre-history.

The Logician cult can be used in your games both as a recurring villainous organisation, particularly suitable for campaigns focused on espionage, tech heresy, and forbidden science, as well as any number of one-off adventures where people delve into matters of technology and mankind's ancient past better left untouched.

One interesting facet of the Logician threat and cult makeup is that they are entirely and resolutely human—no daemons or aliens required—only old-fashioned human evil, avarice, lust for power, and the soulless pursuit of knowledge. Likewise the Logicians themselves make for an interesting change from the run of the mill cultists, daemon worshipers, and xenophiles. They are professional, competent, and coldly calculating, although no less dangerous and arguably even more chilling because of it.

An individual cult operation might then take a wide number of forms, but most will attempt to maintain a veil of secrecy through covert means to protect it from discovery and destruction by the authorities. Examples might include the activities of expedition cells sent to forbidden worlds and recently sighted space hulks, or teams dispatched to pursue rumours of xeno or archeaotech discoveries and black market sales of forbidden arms.

Secret experimental projects undertaken in hidden locations, distant outposts, or (when a supply of live human bodies is required) isolated communities are also possibilities. Almost any kind of traditional "mad scientist" or "experiment gone wrong" setup can be used with the Logicians, if viewed through the lens of misunderstood science, rampant superstition, and atrophied technology as found in the 41st Millennium of **Dark Heresy**, and can be used to illustrate a truth that the Imperium's rulers know only to well—"progress" leads only to damnation and destruction.

Project Ashen Tear

In the last several decades the Logician cult in the Calixis Sector has been repeatedly linked to a shadowy organisation of assassins, operating primarily within the Josian Reach area of the sector. Recent intelligence gathered by the efforts of Inquisitor Srax-Rhame has indicated that this assassin cadre known as the Ashen Tear is actually little more than a "cult within a cult" of the Logicians themselves. The Ashen Tear project was created to give the cult a purpose-built resource of living weapons with which it could strike directly at its enemies, removing with surgical precision any individual obstacle in the cult's path, or deal with anyone that would betray it. In structure, the Ashen Tear appears much like an Imperial Death Cult, somewhat an imitation of the great Officio Assassinorum itself. Its killers are selected from a young age and put through gruelling physical and psychological conditioning, harsh enough that few are likely survive to attain their majority.

As fitting the Logicians' doctrines, those that graduate to active service are further augmented with numerous discreet implanted cybernetic and alchemical systems to boost their abilities, making them extraordinarily dangerous combatants and highly adept stealth killers. While few in number, the Ashen Tear assassins represent a new and powerful weapon in the Logicians' arsenal, although some, like the infamous Moritat Reaper Esme Blackheart of Inquisitor Srax-Rhame's retinue, have taken great delight in besting such "faithless pretenders" when encountered.

THE LOGICIANS IN THE CALIXIS SECTOR

Although its threat has by no means been a constant one, the Logician cult in several incarnations has long been a foe of the authorities in the Calixis Sector. Some of the oldest case files in the Tricorn Palace archives deal with plots and incidents connected to the Logicians, dating back as far as the Angevin Crusade itself, including the exploitation and theft of several sophisticated relics recovered during the wars that forged the sector into being.

The Inquisition is not the cult's only foes. It is rumoured that within the oubliettes of Mechanicus Panopticon orbital in the Lathe System there exists an entire vault of castigation, furnished and equipped using only materials crafted from the bones and re-tooled implants of Logicians and their apostate renegades taken by the tech-priests over the years. As can be imagined, the roll of crimes and blasphemies that the Logicians have tallied in the two millennia since the sector's founding is a long one, ranging from simple thefts, murders, abductions, and political intrigues to forbidden experimentation causing the deaths of tens of thousands, and even the fomentation of a full scale rebellion that for a time threatened the stability of both the Ixaniad and Calixis Sectors. After several centuries of near silence, the Logicians have returned in force, and although their wider goals remain undefined, their doctrine is as unchanged as their heresy.



The Meritech Wars

Without contest, the greatest danger that the Logicians posed to the Calixis Sector was during the Meritech wars that threatened to destabilise both Calixis and the bordering Ixaniad Sector some six centuries ago. The Merates Cluster is a grouping of a dozen barely habitable worlds caught in the empty void of space between the two Imperial sectors, claimed fully by neither and largely considered more trouble than it is worth. The cluster was dominated by the scavenging Meritech clans, void-born families who maintained ramshackle caravan fleets that plied the space between the sectors, mining, trading, salvaging, and fighting off attacks by corsairs and marauding Ork vessels as best as they were able. Over the years the clans grew stronger and began to monopolise much of the border trade between the two sectors, and the size and sophistication of their fleets grew to be a serious concern to the local authorities. Unfortunately, other crises and events pressed and the matter was left to fester.

It finally came to a head when a Battlefleet Calixis patrol squadron of frigates pursuing suspected pirate activity in the cluster were ambushed. All but one frigate was destroyed by clan warships—the Merates Uprising had begun as the clans seceded from Imperial rule. The Meritech clans quickly took an aggressive stance and launched scores of raids and strikes deep into both sectors, causing widespread panic and discord. Their vessels were small, but their advanced jamming systems and compact yet powerful weaponry made them more than a match for their Imperial Navy counterparts. In addition, their boarding parties were made up of heavily cyber-augmented shock troopers that smashed through the Imperial opposition with ease.

For a time the whole Calixis Sector reeled with the shock of the Meritech assault and several worlds threatened to fall into civil war as rumours of the rebellion spread. While the powers of Ixaniad bickered and withdrew to defend their own borders, a newly enthroned Sector Governess took charge in Calixis. With the backing of the Calixian Conclave, she rallied the defence with merciless intent, purging the Lucid Court of dissenters and rivals in a single bloody night. Her plan, rather than fruitlessly chasing a hundred smaller threats, was to simply and mercilessly strike a blow from which the enemy could not recover. Regis Sectora Myram Harvala, in what is remembered to this day as the Proclamation of Scant Mercy, ordered the Sector Battlefleet to mass into an "armoured fist" and smash directly into the heart of the Merates Cluster. With the might of her armies pouring in behind, no pity, quarter, or mercy were given to any found there.

As the seventeen year purge of the cluster went on, Inquisitorial investigations revealed that the Logicians had been both the instigators of the crisis and the source of the clans' newfound technological might. It appeared they viewed the war that had cost millions of lives as little more than a massive series of field tests. The Logicians had



manoeuvred their conspirators into highly placed positions within the logistical effort behind the Imperial response, seeking to profit from whichever outcome might follow. The Holy Ordos' wrath was terrible, and in conjunction with the Mechanicus faction known as the Divine Light of Sollex, they systematically hunted down and scourged the Logician influence from Hive Tarsus on Scintilla, Fenksworld, and dozens of other commercial operations and military vessels where it had taken root. In the latter stages, much of the Merates Cluster was laid waste as a task force hounded the remnants of the Meritech clans and their Logician masters deep into the Ixaniad Sector, causing a major diplomatic incident and conjuring up the spectre of inter-sector conflict—had the Calixian Conclave not called upon the authority of the seat of the Holy Ordos of Segmentum Obscurus to intervene. In the aftermath of the Meritech Wars, it seemed that the power of the Logicians in the Calixis Sector had been broken, and so it remained at least for several centuries.

The Infiltration of the Josian Reach

Over the last several centuries, the Logician heresy has once again begun to feature in the incidents and intelligence monitored by the Adeptus Arbites and the Holy Ordos in the Calixis Sector. Reports and contacts have been registered from various worlds and locations, tracking a definite pattern over time. It is spreading toward the sector core across the Josian Reach, with isolated incidents reported as wide afield as Sinophia and Endrite. This latest infiltration seems markedly more ruthless in its execution and callous disregard for life than ever before, with its plans now featuring a "scorched earth" policy in covering its tracks and concealing any tangible evidence of its activities from the authorities.

New developments within the cult have also come to light, such as the role of the so-called Iron Techtrarchs and the use of the assassins of the Ashen Tear, as well as a distinct tendency toward mass-casualty events such as powerful explosions, diversionary terrorist attacks, and even indiscriminate bio-weapon releases. All of these are used to protect the Logicians from assault and mask their escape when confronted. The pattern of Logician activities so far has been one of covert action to remove opposition and infiltrate local authorities in order to pave the way for cell groups conducting horrific experimental tests, the focus of which seems to be forbidden fleshworks, weapons development, and augmetic research. Inquisitor Srax-Rhame of the Ordo Hereticus has made it his goal to confront and destroy the Logicians. In recent years he has put forth the theory that the Logicians are operating on some sort of rapidly accelerating timetable, seeking to quickly develop an arsenal with which to engage in some future war or prepare for some coming intrigue of importance to them—worth taking the risk of breaking their centuries of long silence. Whether or not the notorious firebrand Srax-Rhame is correct, it is certain that the number of contacts with the cult has increased drastically in the last decade and that it is moving toward some dark and heretical purpose of its own.

The Fenksworld Gene Atrocity

One of the most notorious incidents of tech-heresy in living memory, known popularly as the Gene Atrocity or the "Blight of Nova Castalia," can be firmly laid at the door of the Logician cult and has set the murderous standard for all of its activities in recent years. A powerful cabal of Logician cells, deeply rooted in the underbelly of Fenksworld's linked trio of hive cities, had created a network of gene-labs, holding pens, and testing arenas to conduct a dreadful program of secret human experimentation. The group sought to extract weapon-worthy chemicals and powerful augmetic drugs, as well as create chimerical bio-constructs from the monstrosities found within the depths of Hive Volg.

Unfortunately for the Logicians, matters spiralled quickly out of control as several test subjects escaped to wreak havoc in the maze of access tunnels between the hives, attracting the Inquisition's direct involvement. It remains unclear whether what happened next was an intentional act of mass-murder on the Logicians' part, or a further uncontrolled experimental disaster, but a powerful mutagenic virus was unleashed. Many of those that came into contact with it quickly died, their bodies twisting and boiling in biological meltdown as the viral agent ran unchecked within them, but a small percentage were transformed into insane hybrid things—pale horrors from beneath Volg wrought from the flesh of men.

Fortunately the virus was a victim in part of its own virulence, and its immediate and present threat triggered the swift and brutal action of Inquisitor Srax-Rhame and the Fenksworld government, which swiftly contained it. Ironically, the relatively affluent Hive of Nova Castilia suffered the worst from its privations with around 100,000 casualties, while the sweltering industrial hell of Magnagorsk suffered barely half that total. As for the nightmarish Volg itself, the effects were barely registered above the norm for that dark metropolis's daily death toll.

GM The Hidden Puppet Masters

Just what lies behind the Logician conspiracy, what force or alliance motivates the wider cult's actions, has been deliberately left for your own invention. There are, of course, several prime candidates, from a secretive cabal of merchants and nobles plotting to bring about their own rulership and aggrandisement to a renegade faction within the Adeptus Mechanicus or a shadowy conspiracy that leads back to some secret conspiracy in the Inquisition itself. This last possibility offers perhaps the most interesting plot, and the Logicians, as an organisation, would very definitely appeal to Radicals of the Recongregator and Xanthite persuasions, offering a very radical avenue by which the Imperium can be broken and perhaps remade stronger.

The structure of the Logician cult makes its very easily manipulated from on high by those with the resources and knowledge of how to do so. The truth, of course, may lie somewhere between these options and several others—even the Logicians themselves may remain blithely ignorant of the powers that are ultimately pulling their strings.

The Coscarla Incident

The most recent Logician plot to come to light has also involved the covert operation of monstrous bio-experiments on living human victims. More troublingly, this experimentation has occurred in the depths of Hive Sibellus on the sector capital of Scintilla, proving just how far the cult's network has spread. The Logicians' experiments in this case were thwarted by the actions of a team of freshly recruited Inquisitorial Acolytes. However, wider investigation, prompted by the unravelling of events in the Coscarla Division, have indicated that the cult cell was but one part of a larger conspiracy on Scintilla that remains to be exposed and destroyed, lest another gene atrocity be unleashed at the very heart of the Calixis Sector.

THE FRUITS OF FORBIDDEN SCIENCE

The Logician cells in the Calixis Sector have at their disposal a number of arcane and unusual weapons and devices, often incorporating a blend of unsanctioned and forbidden technology, and even in some cases materials of xenos origin. There are many such devices; here are but a few examples:

Cerebral Annihilator

Used to conduct covert murder and dispose of test subjects, this easily concealed palm unit uses a focused electromagnetic field designed specifically to destroy the delicate neural synapses in a living brain. The unit must be held within a few centimetres of the skull for at least one full round to function and is too precise and delicate to use as a weapon against any target that is not unconscious or completely immobile.

Any living creature so affected must pass a **Very Hard (–30) Toughness Test** or suffer immediate death from massive cerebral hemorrhaging. Victims killed by this device appear to have suffered a sudden natural death, unless when autopsied their examiner passes a **Difficult (–20) Medicae Test** to determine otherwise.

Grav-Flux Harness

These highly advanced suspensor systems are no larger or encumbering than a webbing belt. They allow their operators to move with blinding speed and defy gravity, leaping, climbing, and bounding with unnatural ease and facility. The materials and technological lore used to construct such harnesses are extremely rare, and their use is restricted to the finest assassins of the Ashen Tear and other senior killers employed by the cult.

In order to successfully use the harness, the wearer must have Pilot (Grav Harness)—a new Skill that works identically to the Pilot skill and has a prerequisite of Ag 35.

While the harness is worn and active, the air visibly ripples around the user, and he counts as having the Unnatural Speed (×2) trait and a +10 bonus to his Dodge skill. Additionally, by passing a Pilot (Grav Harness) Test, with a Difficulty determined by what he is attempting, the user counts as having Unnatural Strength/Agility (×2) for the purposes of leaping, climbing and tumbling only.

The harness contains a somewhat unstable integrated high capacity power-cell that lasts for about an hour of continuous use. If the wearer suffers Critical Damage from an energy (E) source to the Body Location while wearing an active harness, there is a 50% chance that the harness will short out, destroying itself and inflicting 1d10 E Damage (with the Shock Quality) to the user.

Berserker Thorn

A very unusual device, this arcane-looking heavy-pronged dart is laced with circuitry and power coils and contains a strange and baleful technology little understood even by the Logicians. When breaching a servitor or similar mechanism's control system, the penetrating barbs release a cascading pulse of electromagnetic force and poisonous machine sprits that can overload and burn out the imprinted command functions and drive such a machine into an uncontrolled murderous rage.

Placing a Berserker Thorn requires access to the target device's central control system and a successful application of the Tech-Use skill at a Difficulty rating determined by the complexity of the target.

Special Rule: Berserker Pulse

Targets with the Machine trait of at least 3 or higher, cogitator stacks, and the like are all subject to the pulse's effects. If they have a listed Willpower Characteristic, they may attempt to resist by passing a **Hard (–20) Willpower Test**; otherwise the effects are automatic.

Servitors and similar systems are driven insane and into an uncontrollable rage for 1d5 hours (or if the degrees of failure in the Test exceed their Willpower bonus, this state is permanent). During this time, they attack in the manner of a rabid beast, immediately entering a berserk rage as described in the Frenzy talent. During this time, they attack without reason or desire for self-preservation, firing indiscriminately with any weapon they possess or simply bludgeoning their targets to wreckage or a bloody pulp if they have no other weapons available. The insane machines' targets are any perceived threats, anything that moves, or anything within reach—in that order.

Devices such as data-stacks incapable of perceiving their environment or acting independently will simply be destroyed from within, their machine spirits driven mad and their memories corrupted and locked into an oblivion of spiralling collapse.

"The heretic's weapons are lies and deceit. What are they, against faith in the Emperor?"

Look at the fluting on this energy chamber. It's so elegant! Each piece fits in perfect harmony. Which xenos race did you say built it? We must have more samples.

INQUISITORIAL THREAT BRIEFING

The Logician cult and its attendant heresies of technology and doctrine are a clear and present danger to the stability of the Calixis Sector, the faith of the masses, and sacred auspices of the Priesthood of Mars. To be found guilty of being part of the cult, in its service, or even to have unlicensed possession of a copy of the Logical Discourse is enough to warrant a death sentence under Imperial law—a fate marginally more merciful than what the Adeptus Mechanicus prescribes for the crime in its own holdings.

Within the Holy Ordos, the direct persecution of the Logician cult is the chief responsibility of the Ordo Hereticus, and it is a task they shoulder gladly, as its anti-Imperial, secularist, and subversive agendas provoke the most profound loathing and antipathy in the Witch Hunter's ranks. Owing to the cult's tendency to delve into the forbidden lores of alien science, unrestricted progress, and the ancient past, both the Ordo Xenos and the authorities of the Adeptus Mechanicus are also bitterly opposed to the cult's activities. Finally, since the days of the Proclamation of Scant Mercy, both the Adeptus Arbites and sector enforcer cadres have the stated duty to take extreme measures against the cult whenever it is encountered.

Given the power and breadth of the forces ranged against the cult, it is perhaps surprising that the cult is not only still present within the sector, but seems to be increasing steadily in power and reach. It is a testament to both the highly resourced and focused nature of the Logicians' conspiracies and their sheer ruthlessness in maintaining their covert activities that they continue to operate despite such opposition. However, some fear privately that the cult may have secret backing from some renegade factions within the Adepta or the Inquisition itself.

All Inquisitorial forces in the field are briefed to expect a highly proficient and skilled enemy in the Logicians, one that will flee if not cornered, often inflicting huge death tolls while doing so in order to cover its operatives' escape. Accordingly, (and with perhaps uncharacteristic subtlety) the Ordo Hereticus's standing orders, issued at the vociferous petitioning of Inquisitor Srax-Rhame, is to match the Logicians' intrigues with intrigues of the Inquisition's own. Already on Scintilla and other worlds, the threads of a vast web of covert actions, espionage, and lies is being woven to ensnare the wider cult. However, when this web draws tight, the Ordo Hereticus will stay its hand no longer, and the Logicians will burn.



Logician Cult Agent (Elite Package)

For agents of the Logician cells and espionage networks, add the following to the standard NPC templates:
Characteristics: Increase Int and WP by +5.
Skills: Chem-Use (Int), Ciphers (Logician) (Int), Common Lore (Tech) and Deceive (Fel).
Talents: Pistol Weapon Training (Las, SP).

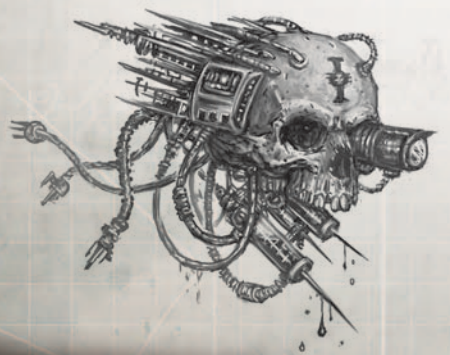
HARBINGERS OF NIGHTMARES PAST

The Logicians are something of an elite force as cults go, made up of professional agents and adherents chosen for their high degree of ability, ruthlessness, and loyalty above other factors. The Logicians' doctrines place their faith in the superiority of technology and skill and favour specialisation in their servants. A wide variety of NPCs might be used by the tech cult in its various experimental projects, infrastructure, and intelligence networks, as well as the substantial bodies of trained killers it employs to guard its activities and enforce its will.

From the Dramatis Personae section of **Dark Heresy**, several entries make suitable cell members, including the Heretek, Kill Squad Trooper, Merchant Magnate, Recidivist, Scribe, Skulker, and Tech Adept (for Mechanicus renegades in service to the cult, these are also likely to have several Forbidden Lore skills). In each of these cases, apply the Logician Agent Elite Package to indicate the level of training and human excellence expected by the cult.

Additionally, the cult seeks to increase its forces with a variety of "disposable" lackeys who may be entirely unaware of who they truly work for and makes extensive use of servitors (including combat types and cyber creatures) where appropriate to its needs and resources. Beyond this, depending on the nature of the Logicians' activities when encountered and the machinations of their renegade technologists, far more deadly agents and techno-arcane servants may be in evidence. Several of these are detailed here.

The free downloadable adventure Edge of Darkness found at www.FantasyFlightGames.com details a particularly disturbing Logician plot and the villains behind it, complete with the profiles of several Logician Agents, the insane arch–heretek known as the Churgeon, and her horrific bio-constructs.



Logician Crucible Agents

For their most secret intrigues and most dangerous covert infiltrations, the Logicians employ covert agents who have been specifically psycho-conditioned, chemically enhanced, and mind wiped of everything but their loyalty, their mission, and what their masters wish them to know. The Logicians maintain a few of these specialists for their more delicate infiltration procedures. They refer to these as "crucible agents," referencing the burning away of their old personalities and identities to create the mentally empty state needed so they can be filled with the cult's purpose.

Of all the Logician forces, it is these agents that fill some Inquisitorial factions with the direst suspicion, as aside from the Holy Ordos itself and the higher powers of the militant Adepta, few within the Imperium have the skill or resources to create such exquisitely empty-minded living tools.

Logician Crucible Agent Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
35	38	35	38	40	38	35	42	30

Movement: 4/8/12/24 **Wounds:** 13
Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Charm (Fel), Chem-Use (Int), Ciphers (Logician) (Int) +10, Climb (Ag), Common Lore (Imperium, Tech) (Int) +10, Concealment (Ag), Deceive (Fel) +20, Demolition (Int), Disguise (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Drive (Ground Vehicle) (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Heresy), Inquiry (Fel), Scrutiny (Per), Security (Ag), Silent Move (Ag), Speak Language (Low Gothic, High Gothic) (Int), Survival (Int), Tracking (Int).
Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Bolt, Las, Primitive, SP), Die Hard, Jaded, Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Power, Primitive), Nerves of Steel, Paranoia, Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, Primitive, SP), Street Fighting, Swift Attack, Unremarkable.
Cover Identity: The vessel agents will also have several additional Skills programmed into their minds to help them maintain their cover identities. Here are two examples:

Adept: Literacy (Int), Scholastic Lore (Bureaucracy) (Int), Trade (Copyist) (Int).

PDF Officer: Command (Fel), Common Lore (Military) (Int).

Brittle Psyche: The mental conditioning and mimetic programming that make these vessel agents such excellent spies and deceivers are, however, far from perfect. If they are subject to sufficiently powerful trauma, their minds can shatter or regress. If vessel agents fail a Fear Test, are subjected to truth serums or other powerful psychotropic drugs, or fall victim to some other severe mental assault such as a psychic attack on their minds, they must make a roll on **Table 8-6: Mental Traumas** on page 235 of **Dark Heresy**.
Weapons: As appropriate to cover identity, but will always where possible include a concealed weapon such as a compact laspistol (15m; S/–/–; 1d10+1 E; Clip 15; Rld Full; Reliable).
Gear: As appropriate to cover identity.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Minoris.

Ashen Tear Assassin

The use of the Ashen Tear Tech-Assassins is a relatively new but powerful development in the Logician arsenal. Each augmetically hardwired killer is more than a match for most of what they might encounter and delivers death with an enviable cold precision.

Ashen Tear Assassin Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
45	45	40	45	48	30	40	37	20

Movement: 4/8/12/24 **Wounds:** 15

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Chem-Use (Int) +10, Ciphers (Logician) (Int), Climb (Ag) +10, Common Lore (Imperium, Tech) (Int), Concealment (Ag) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Deceive (Fel), Drive (Ground Vehicle) (Ag), Secret Tongue (Ashen Tear Hand Sign) (Int), Silent Move +10 (Ag), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Security (Ag) +10, Silent Move (Ag) +10, Survival (Int), Tracking (Int).

Talents: Assassin Strike, Basic Weapon Training (Las, Launcher, Primitive, SP), Blind Fighting, Catfall, Combat Master, Deadeye Shot, Exotic Weapon Training (Needle), Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Nerves of Steel, Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Power. Primitive), Pistol Training (Las, Primitive, SP), Street Fighting, Swift Attack, Thrown Weapon Training (Primitive), Unshakable Faith (Logician).

Implants: Mind Impulse Unit (Common Quality), Bionic Respiratory System (Good Quality), Cybernetic Eyes (Good Quality, incorporating Dark Sight), Implanted Vox-Bead, Implanted Auto-Injector Rig (2 doses of stimm, 1 dose of slaught, and 2 doses of detox, usable as a Half Action), Natural Weapons (re-enforced hands and elbows). The subtle design of these implants allows the assassin to pass a cursory inspection as a normal unaugmented human.

Armour: Armoured Cameleoline Bodyglove (All 3).

Weapons: Silenced autopistol with red-dot sight (30m; S/–/6; 1d10+2 I; Pen 0; Clip 18; Rld Full), two spare clips and one clip of man–stopper rounds, MIU controlled shoulder rig with needle pistol (30m; S/–/–; 1d10 R; Pen 0; Clip 6; Rld Full; Accurate, Toxic) and two clips, mono sword (1d10+4† R; Pen 2), 3 mono knives (3m; 1d5+4† R; Pen 2), 2 frag grenades, 2 blind grenades, krak grenade, natural unarmed attacks (1d5+5† I; Primitive).

†Includes Strength Bonus.

Gear: Grapnel, clip harness, multi-key, portable stummer.

Threat Rating: Hereticus Minoris.

> Even a will forged by the Emperor may be undone.

Renegade Tech-Priest

The Logicians count among their ranks a small number of renegade tech-priests. These rare individuals are often skilled and experienced members of the Mechanicus who have, for one reason or another, rebelled against their masters. The life expectancy for such unlicensed and outlawed adepts is short, and many are forced to flee into the underworld in the hopes of evading the wrath of their erstwhile brothers. For the most radical, the Logicians' offer of protection and resources in return for their service is a small price to pay for survival. A few human lives lost here and there is entirely irrelevant.

Renegade Tech-priest Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
30	35	40	45	36	48	35	48	17

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

Skills: Awareness (Per), Chem-Use (Int), Ciphers (Heretek, Logician) (Int) +10, Common Lore (Imperium, Machine Cult, Tech) (Int) +10, Deceive (Fel) +10, Drive (Ground Vehicle, Walker) (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus, Archeaotech, Xenos) (Int), Inquiry (Fel), Logic (Int) +10, Pilot (Civilian, Spacecraft) (Ag), Scholastic Lore (Archaic, Chymistry, Numerology) (Int), Secret Tongue (Techno-Cant) (Int) +10, Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Security (Ag) +10, Tech-Use (Int) +20.

Talents: Autosanguine, Binary Chatter, Concealed Cavity, Electrical Succour, Electro–Graft Use, Energy Cache, Ferric Lure, Gun Blessing, Iron Jaw, Luminen Charge, Luminen Shock, Jaded, Maglev Grace, Mechadendrite Use (Gun, Manipulator, Utility), Meditation, Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Power, Primitive), Orthoproxy, Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, Plasma, Primitive, SP), Rite of Pure Thought.

Implants: Auger Arrays (Good Quality), Bionic Arms (Good Quality), Bionic Locomotion (Average Quality), Bionic Respiratory System (Good Quality), Ballistic Mechadendrite, Manipulator Mechadendrite, Utility Mechadendrite, Cybernetic Senses (all, Good Quality, incorporating Dark Sight, Photo-Visor, Recording Capacity, Sonar Sense and a full vox system), MIU interface (Good Quality).

Armour: Augmetic implanted armour (All 6).

Weapons: Ballistic mechadendrite (15m; 1d10+1 E; S/–/–; Pen 0; Unlimited; Reliable), chain axe (1d10+9 R†; Pen 2; Tearing), plasma pistol (30m; 1d10+6 E; S/–/–; Pen 6; Clip 10; Rld 4 Full; Recharge, Overheats), mechanised hands (1d5+4† I Primitive).

†Includes Strength and Augmetic Bonus.

Gear: Data-slates, power-cells, spare clip for plasma pistol, cipher keys, various spares, instruments and other paraphernalia, will often be accompanied by servitors, cult agents, and possibly other examples of their "work."

Threat Rating: Hereticus Majoris.

The Pale Throng

"Humanity has reached a dead end! It no longer has the means to sustain itself in the stars. Blind to its own limitations it kills the children that hold the key to its future. We are those children and the future is ours!"

—Broadcast to loyalist relief forces by the rebels during the Tranch War

Rightly regarded as the cause of one of the most dangerous threats to the stability of the Calixis Sector in recent years, the Pale Throng is a mutant cult whose origins lay on the bleak and oppressive world of Tranch. There it led the wave of bloody uprisings that ignited the infamous Tranch War, whose aftermath still lingers to plague many worlds in the Malfian and Adrantian sub-sectors to the present day.

No subtle cult or hidden conspiracy, the Pale Throng is a crazed and degenerate congregation of shambling horrors and decayed and sickening witch–breeds guided by sinister mutant overlords. Its only goal is to throw off the shackles of its oppression and visit bloody vengeance in an apocalyptic rebellion to destroy the Imperium and ultimately seize control of the future of mankind. Born on a world now made infamous for war and suffering, the Pale Throng has since created and inspired revolts on dozens of worlds across the Calixis Sector and beyond. But perhaps greater than the danger that this amorphous army of monstrosities possesses—in terms of the threat to civil order—is the fact that the Pale Throng and what it represents has become a blasphemous rallying cry for the twisted and disaffected. It has grown to become something of a heretical ideology that offers easy answers to the weak and feeds on the resentment and anger of the oppressed—a rebellious whisper far harder to stamp out that any mere physical foe.

TENETS, GOALS, AND HERETICAL BELIEFS

At the heart of the Pale Throng is a reciprocal hate for the Imperium's own abhorrence of the mutant and the psyker. Behind this simple hate is another subtler ideology that (flawed though it may be) guides the propagators and masters of the Pale Throng to create rebellion after rebellion across the stars. Theirs is the belief that the future of mankind belongs to the mutant and the psyker ascendant, and to achieve that ascendancy the Pale Throng must rise up and smash the Imperium's rule by any means necessary. This deeper motivation is based in a belief in the superiority of the mutant. The cult's higher circles believe that the future of humanity is as a psychic race. The Pale Throng not only denies that the mutant is a twisted abomination, but believes that the mutant is a manifestation of mankind's metamorphosis into something greater, something of beauty and purpose, and humanity's passage to this new life form is to be embraced. The mutant



(from the cult's outlook) is superior to the mundane human in any number of ways, sometimes stronger, sometimes able to survive the worst of conditions untouched, and more. The mutant is superior, and because of this, it is the mutant that will inherit humanity's future.

Expressed in simple terms to the brutalised and ignorant masses of abhumans, subs, and other outcasts that toil under crushing oppression, the Pale Throng's ideology offers the prospect of liberation and revenge. It promises an end to their sufferings and, most importantly, a sense of acceptance and an end to the shame and stigma that Imperial culture heaps upon them at every turn. This ideology is a heady and dangerous mix, one that appeals to both the downtrodden and the malign, whether they seek only an end to their pain or an excuse to inflict such pain on others.

To many of its adherents, this creed translates into a spiteful sense of self-deluded superiority over the loathed masses of humanity untouched by mutation, which justifies their grievances against the faceless powers of Imperium. This hubris is amplified a thousand-fold among the cult's wyrdlings and witches, who see those "blunts" untouched by the psyker's gifts at best as a natural enemy, and at worst as little more than playthings and cattle to be toyed with, used, and destroyed at whim. For many at the cult's higher echelons, the Pale Throng's Shroud Masters, mutant demagogues, and petty warlords, this is a creed worth risking all for and is the price of a victory in the coming war between human and mutant.

The Doctrine of the Psychic Ascension of Mankind

To the Pale Throng, the psyker is no foul "witch" to be abhorred but a wielder of power more subtle and profound in nature than any normal human can comprehend. This particular heresy is not a new one, but a viperous idea that has flared up time and again in the Imperium's history. According to such beliefs, to witness the gift of the psyker is to glimpse the future where man may re-order the physical, re-sculpt flesh, and see the true hearts of all. These then, the heretics claim, are the gifts of an evolution of human form that the Imperium loathes and fears. These heretics believe that the Imperium fails to comprehend the truth—that psykers are the foreshadowing of the magnificence that awaits the human race once it has ascended to its true potential.

INTERNAL SCHISM

From the beginning, one of the Pale Throng's greatest vulnerabilities has been its tendency towards internecine conflict and schism. On Tranch during the uprising, the sheer power and commanding presence of the Shroud Council was enough to hold the disparate mutant gangs, sub-cults, and witch factions together, at least for a time, in deadly united purpose. But in smaller revolts and other uprisings, various groups and individual leaders often fall into open conflict over their particular "truth" of the Pale Throng, their own fitness to lead, or thanks to their own paranoia and often inherent insanity. This instability can lead to a catastrophic failure of leadership in the face of Imperial enemies, leaving the Pale Throng open to manipulation by other, often darker forces.

Using the Pale Throng

The Pale Throng represents the paradigm of a bloody revolt—a rebellion of the twisted and damned by-products of the Imperium's own hidden sins and oppression rearing up to have their revenge. The Throng embodies everything that Imperial culture hates and fears in the mutant and the witch—horror unleashed and the whipped dog turning to bite the hand that feeds it. It can also be used as a template for any number of other mutant or witch cults of your own devising or simply as the wolf at the door in an adventure set around survival and horror.

One of the ways the Pale Throng can feature in an adventure or campaign is as the motivating force behind trouble brewing on a hive world, industrial outpost, or city. Increasing civil disorder and labour trouble, and incursions from the deep places of an underhive, rad zone, or scav enclave, combined with rumours of an unseen hand guiding these increasingly violent and dangerous events, make for a perilous investigation into the dark and rotting underbelly of the Imperium. The scope and intentions of the rebellion can emerge slowly in this setup and set the stage for a desperate race to behead the rebellion before its apocalyptic designs can be made reality.

Another way of using the Pale Throng is as an outstanding enemy in a war zone or ongoing rebellion into which the Acolytes are thrust, either to confront directly (perhaps they have been charged with taking out a powerful rogue psyker or recovering something or someone from behind enemy lines), or simply as part of a hazardous environment acting as a dangerous backdrop to other intrigues, threats, or investigations.

The Pale Throng, with its attendant hate and violence, can also make for excellent dupes and "stalking horses" for more sinister and ultimately far more dangerous threats. The Shroud Masters behind the rebellion may not be what they seem; perhaps they are little more than pawns in some wider scheme and a heretic of another hue is using the rebellion as a cover for some greater atrocity or grand and infernal design. The Logicians in this chapter, and the Pilgrims of Hayte or the Menagerie from **Chapter IV: Malleus**, fit this role perfectly, as does a Radical faction of the Inquisition itself. All are powerful enough to manipulate a Pale Throng (or similar) uprising in this way for their own dark ends.



Rebellion and Insurrection

The Tranch War

Tranch is a minor hive world whose ruling elite, the Oligarchs of Tranch, maintained the output of the their furnace hives by the use of a massive, enslaved mutant population and a downtrodden worker underclass kept in check by brutal controls and oppression. So harsh were their methods that the Oligarchs became a byword for tyranny. Such was the arrogance of the Oligarchs, and their confidence in their bloody-handed rule, that they did not dream the mutants and the worker underclass could mount more than the weakest challenge to their enslavement. Nor did they consider it foolish to leave the mutant population largely alone, contained in the lawless deeps of the Soot Warrens that descended into the bowels of Tranch's hives. After all, their reasoning went, they would always need a large population to meet their production demands, and the huge level of fatalities inherent in their industrial process required a steady stream of replacement workers.

For centuries, matters in the furnace-hot darkness beneath Tranch's hives worsened, and murmurs of discontent started to echo among the vast masses whose lives of brutality, poverty, and misery left them little to lose. Meanwhile, hidden in the deeps, an increasing number of the Tranch–born mutants displayed a tendency towards witchery and wild psyker talents.

Knowledge of The Pale Throng

The existence of the Pale Throng is not a secret, but rather embodies a widespread fear in the Calixis Sector. Anyone who has come into contact with a veteran of the Tranch War has probably heard the name, and in certain lurid stories, the term has become synonymous with the fear and hatred of mutants and witches. However, much of the precise and factual details of its makeup, ideology, and methods are restricted to those with more specialised knowledge of such dark matters.

Presented here are guidelines for what Acolytes with one of the following Forbidden Lores (Cults, Heresy, Mutants, or Psykers) may know of the Pale Throng, based on an **Ordinary (+10) Test**. Acolytes with Common Lore (Underworld) may also have some knowledge of the Pale Throng, but in this case the Difficulty increases to **Hard (–20)**.

Table 2-4: Murmurs of Revolt

Degrees of Success	Details Known
Standard Success	The Pale Throng is the mutant cult that led the rebels in the Tranch War in the Adrantis Nebula. Since then, the name has also been connected with a number of other mutant rebellions on other worlds.
One	The Pale Throng was led by a council of so-called Shroud Masters who coordinated the infamous Tranch Rebellion. The Pale Throng has also inspired rebellions by mutants on a number of other worlds, and its legend remains a rallying cry for abhumans and mutant malcontents across the Calixis Sector.
Two	The Pale Throng not only included mutants in its ranks but also a large number of psykers of varying power. The Pale Throng still exists both in terms of those who escaped Tranch and those heretics who have taken up the name and ideology since. The cult is infamous for its well developed terror and insurgency tactics, and if a rebellion inspired or led by it is not choked before beginning in earnest, the cost in bloodshed is usually very high and unprepared governments will fail in the face of its onslaughts.
Three	The ideology of the Pale Throng is that mutants represent mankind's next evolutionary step to survive the cruelty of the galaxy. The throng also believes that mankind's ascension to a psychic race is not simply necessary but inevitable, and that the Imperium only exists to selfishly trap humanity in a state of ignorance and powerlessness. Such a sophisticated heretical ideology has led to speculation that it originated from renegade elements within the Imperium or some wider occult conspiracy.
Four or more	The leading Shroud Council of the original Pale Throng that plunged Tranch into war was torn apart by internal factionalism, and most of the councilmembers died at each other's hands or that of the Inquisition. Those few that survived escaped to perpetuate their beliefs and the name of the Pale Throng, disappearing into the sector's shadows. It is believed that many of the mutant and witch uprisings that have subsequently taken up the name and methods of the Pale Throng are not directly related to the original rebels and that the cult itself has become something much harder to destroy—a true radical ideology.

Unknown to the Oligarchs, a group who called themselves the Shroud Masters sprang up amongst the mutant population. It remains unknown whether they were newborn in the sweltering blackness of the Soot Warrens or if they slipped in unnoticed from elsewhere, but swiftly their power grew and they began to make preparations to bring down Imperial rule on Tranch and bathe the Oligarchs' realm in blood. Those the "Shrouds" recruited to their cause they called the "Pale Throng"—an apt description for the numberless ranks of those that toiled in the sunless depths of Tranch's hives.

The rebellion began with a sudden ferocity, as if a lit fuse had reached a powder keg, and the forces of order were beaten back, surrounded, and slaughtered. Hordes of twisted freaks, including powerful witches and horrors, rose up to overwhelm and butcher the hive's population, carving a bloody path through the upper hives. Within weeks, a hive world of billions spun out of the Imperium's control and saw millions dead. A full scale counter-insurgency operation was launched by forces drawn from across the sector, ultimately crushing the Pale Throng's rebellion in a conflict that would become renowned for its savagery and cost in lives. The progress of the war on Tranch and the Imperium's largely pyrrhic victory is a matter of recent history, as are the ongoing policing actions trying to bring the now largely ruined hive world back fully into the fold of Imperial rule. As for the Oligarchs and their tyranny, they have been consigned to bitter history, as those that did not fall in the rebellion were purged by the Imperium for their evident dereliction of rule.

These facts of the Pale Throng's existence and the Tranch War's horrors are widely known. What has remained secret is the extent to which these shifts in the tide of violence on Tranch were the product of the great intellect, skill, and sickening use of warp power wielded by the Shroud Masters that allowed them to control their forces as if they were part of a single body, as well as divine their enemies' purposes and so bring the Imperial forces to near collapse. Were it not for the implosion of the Shroud Council and the subsequent fragmentation of the rebel forces, Tranch may well have fallen before the Imperium could respond fully.

Ultimately the loss of their overlords crippled but did not destroy the mutant forces, and the years of horror and bloodshed ground on, leaving Tranch the scarred and violated place it is to this day.



The Influence of Chaos

The possibility as to whether there was any direct involvement of the taint of Chaos or a wider occult conspiracy within the Pale Throng during the Tranch War remains a mixed and contradictory picture, open to much debate among the Holy Ordos. What seems clear is that during the initial uprisings on Tranch, several of the smaller witch-cults drawn into the Pale Throng did have daemonic taint in their ranks. In addition, at least one malefic cult concealed among the Oligarchs took the uprisings as an opportunity to work its own ills. But, the conclusion that has been drawn is that there was no systematic warp-worship or widespread use of daemonic ritual encountered in the war, simply reckless hatred, unremitting savagery, and the horrors of the mutant and the witch unleashed.

Table 2-5: Shrouded Mutations

Roll 1d100	Result
1–20	**Witch Lord:** The Shroud Master is a psyker of terrifying power and embodies the sum of all the Ordo Hereticus's fears concerning the witch. The Shroud Master's Psy-Rating is increased to 6, he has access to all Minor Psychic Powers and all powers from a single chosen Discipline (Biomancy, Divination, Pyromancy, Telekinesis or Telepathy) listed in **Dark Heresy** in addition to any others listed for his Discipline in the Psykana Obscurus section on page 26 of this book. Also note that the Shroud Master has Discipline Mastery (see page 164 of **Dark Heresy**) of the Discipline he chooses.
21–40	**Unholy Terror:** The Shroud Master has within his soul a screaming storm of psychic energy that pulls at the reality of his surroundings and cracks the minds of those who approach him. The Shroud Master gains the Fear 4 (Horrifying) trait and the effects of Daemonic Presence, manifesting a single Daemonic Phenomena (use Stage Four: Daemonic Presence and **Table 12-8: Daemonic Phenomena** from the Daemonhost generator on page 357 of **Dark Heresy**). The Shroud Master can activate or deactivate the effects of these Traits as a Half Action if he succeeds at a **Hard (-20) Willpower Test**.
41–60	**Protean:** The Shroud Master's body can shift between various manifest mutations at will. The Shroud Master can appear completely normal or gain a Minor Mutation of his choice as a Half Action or gain a Major Mutation as a Full Action (see **Table 12-3: Minor Mutations** and **Table 12-4: Major Mutations** on pages 334 and 335 of **Dark Heresy**). The Shroud Master may choose to have any two Mutations (Minor or Major) in place at any time.
61–80	**Dark Conduit:** The Shroud Master is untouched by physical mutation of any kind, is invisible to psychic senses, and is immune to the powers of the warp. The Shroud Master is completely immune to the effects of Psychic Powers directed at his mind or manipulating his body (although telekinetically hurled objects and energy, etc. will work normally). Additionally, he cannot be detected by use of the Psyniscience skill or similar abilities (although the manifestation of his powers may be detected). Shroud Masters with this mutation cannot use any psychic abilities and have a Psy Rating of 0.
81–00	**Mergeant:** The Shroud Master is saturated in the energy of the warp and is not wholly a thing of the physical realm. The Shroud Master gains the From Beyond and Phase traits and the Psychic Vampire talent. While in an incorporeal state, he also has the Possession and Warp Weapon (natural attacks only) traits.

Operation Bellerophon: The Destruction of the Shroud Council

Operation Bellerophon was an ultra-secret operation mounted by elements of the Ordo Calixis at the outset of the Tranch War. The aim of the operation was, by means both subtle and violent, to decapitate the uprising and break the unity of the Pale Throng. After the first disastrous phase of fighting, it became clear that the rebels were led by a group of shadowy overlords called the Shroud Council. There were also indications that several, possibly all, of the Shroud Council were rogue psykers of considerable power. The elimination of the Shroud Council was deemed a high priority, and agents chosen by a number of Inquisitors were deployed to locate, infiltrate, and destroy the Shroud Council in order to decisively weaken the rebels' unity.

Just how this objective was accomplished remains a secret and the cause of some murmurs of discontent and controversy within the Holy Ordos. Rumours persist of radical doctrines of engagement and the use of proscribed weapons, unstable psykers, and even mutant "cat's-paws" by the Inquisitors involved. Regardless of the truth of such scurrilous tales, Operation Bellerophon was a guarded success, the Shroud Council disintegrated with several of its members assassinated, while the rest ripped the council apart in a paranoid rage of recrimination and savage attempts to seize control. Thus the Shroud Masters crippled the very rebellion that they had started. It was reported at the time that all the Shroud Masters had died in the culmination of Operation Bellerophon; however, subsequent events have shown this report to be inaccurate. After the war, Shroud Masters (or at least would-be successors to that title) have been reported working their malice still in the depths of Tranch's Soot Warrens or masterminding revolts on other worlds, although never in such numbers or concentrated power.

More details on the course of the Tranch conflict and the bloody ongoing situation there can be found in **The Inquisitor's Handbook**.



A Thousand Rebellions

The Pale Throng has been linked to scores of mutant rebellions across the Calixis Sector and beyond. Some are simply the razing of an industrial outpost for the loss of a few hundred souls, while others have claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands. In the aftermath of the Tranch War, petty revolts and unrest sprang up on scores of worlds in the Adrantian and Malfian sub-sectors, occasioning massive crackdowns and a great loss of life. But these troubles have not been an end to the matter, as the Pale Throng and its imitators have risen repeatedly on other worlds to trouble the authorities.

On Sepheris Secundus, the name of the Dionides Mine was expunged from records following a rising of the Pale Throng so powerful that, despite the damage it would do to the planet's production, the mine was collapsed by atomic charges. In the purge that followed, any amongst the planet's serfdom who had a connection with the area, however tenuous, was executed.

Rogue psykers, intent on ramming Fenksworld's orbital docks, commandeered the heavy ore barge *Borombarst*, causing it to be destroyed by orbital defences. The subsequent investigation blamed the crime on the Pale Throng's infiltration of the population of abhuman "subs" used to work the system's asteroid mines.

On Baraspine, a Pale Throng style revolt by the mutant castes used to tend the wind-blasted Impellor Towers that dot that world's barrens threatened to plunge the hives into darkness. The Baraspine rising was later revealed to have been backed and instigated by a secret malefic sorcerer cult, the Ghol Voluptara. The cult used the anarchy and distraction caused by the insurrection as a cover for a series of dark rituals which were only prevented by the combined forces of the Adepta Sororitas and the ruling executive's household troops.

From these gross acts of terror and destruction to the whisper of a witch-kin at work in the depths of the Scintillan underhives, there are a thousand signs that the threat of the Pale Throng to the Calixis Sector is not at an end but perhaps merely beginning.

The Anatomy of a Pale Throng Revolt

At the centre of all of the most dangerous uprisings where the Pale Throng has been involved is one of the infamous Shroud Masters. These sinister overlords select mutant populations that they consider ripe for rebellion and instigate an infiltration of that population, be they labouring in mines or chemworks or festering in the wastelands and rad-pits of the underhive. With the Shroud Master often comes a following of other witches and mutants, such as Tranch-bred witch-kin, veteran killers, and covens of wyrd diviners. Once in place, the Shroud Master and his minions begin to spread the name and creed of the Pale Throng amongst the local mutants and dregs. At this point, any resistance or rival mutant leader is crushed or assimilated into the Pale Throng. However, the Shroud Master is not above dealing with underhive criminal elements and other cult groups in order to trade for arms or extend his reach where his twisted followers cannot go.

The Shroud Master and his retinue bring with them

Mutant Rebellions and Witch Cults in the Imperium

The existence of "accepted" mutant populations (where the direct touch of the warp is not evident) has always been a two-edged sword for the Imperium's authorities. Such unfortunates are often vital to economic operations, but they represent both a problem for civil order and a ready source of rebellions, riots, and cult activity. The history of many a world is rife with such uprisings, and such conflicts are always bitter and merciless affairs.

While Imperial Law and the Ministorum Creed protects the Imperial citizen from the worst privations of oppression on most worlds, those not classed as fully human enjoy no such defence from brutality and exploitation by those in power. The situation is worsened because most "normal" Imperial citizens fear the mutant as an unclean, unnatural, and inherently tainted thing, and many mutants return this hatred with interest.

Mutants are often exiled to hellish conditions such as those found in the deep rad mines of Sepheris Secundus or the choking fumes of Solomon's chemworks. Vilified, exploited, and outcast from the comforts of society, abhuman and mutant populations can prove a fertile breeding ground for all manner of heretical beliefs. Anything that offers some sliver of solace, acceptance, or the chance to strike back at their oppressors will find ready converts.

The most dangerous of such outlawed and secretive sects have wyrdlings and witches at their head. Mutants, particularly on worlds where there is a lingering warp taint, can have a much higher inherent incidence of psyker potential than the general human population of their given world. This problem is further exacerbated because given the mass of physical and mental distortion among their fellows, and the general antipathy among the abhuman castes toward the authorities, it can be much easier to hide a psyker's gifts. Also, most who do not willingly succumb to the harvest of the Black Ships are forced to flee into the industrial wastes or the shadows of the underhive. Given such a dangerous and fearful life, it is common for their powers to grow should they survive, hunted and harried, their hatred for the Imperium inflamed by their ordeals.

While some rogues and witches revert to a solitary, almost bestial state, many mutant witch-kin gather followers about them, founding cults in their own name. On isolated feral or feudal worlds, such witch cults are a source of dread, shrouded by superstition and false belief. In the burgeoning clamour of the Imperium's heartlands, these witch–kin commonly sink to the depths, cowing dregs, abominations, and outcasts into submission with the brutal display of their powers.

In rarer cases (and if the psyker is subtle and powerful enough), the most dangerous will infiltrate the hive above. Although often small in number and limited in scope, witch cults can prove extraordinarily dangerous if left to fester unchecked, adding power to a mutant uprising or becoming doorways to horrors from beyond.

tactics and methodologies developed and honed in the nightmare conflict on Tranch. Chief amongst their tactics is the "sudden onslaught" where they simply unleash all of their fury at once, including psychic atrocities, rampaging hulks, waves of abominations, suicide attacks, bombings, and unrestrained bloodletting. Such attacks often serve to conceal and divert forces away from the Shroud Master's true targets. The destruction generated by these tactics can be immense, especially if the Pale Throng is swollen by large numbers of high-grade rogue psykers. If this initial phase is successful, the Pale Throng rapidly attempts to consolidate its gains by fortifying and defending the areas it has seized, using them as the basis to fight a wider guerrilla war.

If large swathes of territory fall to the Throng's hands, an orgy of looting and reprisals will often follow, with unfocused acts of barbarism and the enslavement of such unfortunates who do not carry the mutant's mark often being the norm. However, the Pale Throng has a very poor track record in holding ground, due in the main to its own lack of cohesion. The clashing egos of its commanders and the fact that most of the Throng's rank and file are little more than ill-conditioned, ignorant rabble serves to tear apart what victories that it may gain.

When faced with superior Imperial forces, the Pale Throng's defeat in any particular theatre of conflict is largely inevitable, particularly if its leaders and rogue psykers can be neutralised. However, this can present its own dangers. If defeated but not annihilated, the Pale Throng will often fragment into small packs of rebels and marauders fighting their own petty wars. Thus the rebellion can prove hard to finally put down, short of exterminating every twist, sub, and dreg in evidence—a solution favoured by many Inquisitors and Adeptus Arbites marshals of a Puritan bent.

INQUISITORIAL THREAT BRIEFING

The Pale Throng is a known threat currently subject to the full attentions of the Holy Ordos and the Adeptus Arbites, subject to a general and ongoing purge. Following its first and greatest act of insurrection, the Shroud Council was shattered and the loose alliance of witches and mutants that followed it reduced to a fragmented shadow of itself. This, however, has not meant the end of the Pale Throng (nor indeed the troubles on Tranch), and there have been full-blown Pale Throng inspired uprisings on worlds spread across the Calixis Sector and even beyond.

The various uprisings' only connection to each other (that the Inquisition is aware of) is the sometime presence of a Shroud Master and the name of the Pale Throng. As far as the Inquisition is aware, there is no real coordination between the Shroud Masters, and many within the Ordos believe that most hold their fellows in the greatest enmity, a fact which has served to make the disparate cult harder, rather than easier, to purge. While the Inquisition knows much about the methods, ideology, and past activities of the Pale Throng, it remains ignorant as to the number and identities of the surviving Shroud Masters, a situation which has undoubtedly helped the Pale Throng survive as a threat to the stability of Imperial governance. But the Holy Ordos are determined that in time they will hunt down every traitor, witch, and malcontent. Even the name of the Pale Throng shall be slain, burnt from the pages of history just as surely as its members will burn in the witch hunter's pyres..



WITCHES, REBELS, AND THE DAMNED: THE FORCES OF THE PALE THRONG

The original Pale Throng was a loosely grouped mass of mutants, abhumans, and rogue psykers, brought together by the will of the mysterious Shroud Masters. Numbered within the rebellious movements that the Throng has fostered are all manner of mutants, abhumans, and malcontents, ranging from the deformed twists and subs that labour in the dark recesses of the Imperium's industries to utter abominations and insane rogue psykers of shattering power.

In terms of representing the Pale Throng rebels, the Mutant and Mutant Abomination in the **Dark Heresy** Core Rulebook are obvious choices, while the Witch can be used for the lower grade rogue psykers that frequently form the core of the Pale Throng's leadership. As for the other attendant dispossessed outcasts and malcontents, they can ideally be represented by the Furnace Worker (on Tranch), the Scum, and the Dreg. For the more terrible and unique aberrations of the rebellious cult, entries are presented here, together with some additional Psychic Powers with which to outfit both the rogue psykers of the Pale Throng and (as a new rare option) Imperial Psyker Characters.

Shroud Master

The Shroud Masters are the hidden masters of the Pale Throng who stand behind its activities, fomenting rebellion and gathering twists and witches to their cause. Once joined in common purpose, their brief moment of unity was enough to nearly destroy a world. Though many were killed when their council tore itself apart, many also escaped to pursue their interpretation of the Pale Throng's dogma. It has also been theorised that new Shroud Masters have risen to take up the dogma of the dead and bring it to the mutant throng. All Shroud Masters are mutants and psykers of the utmost potency, guided by a complete hatred of the Imperium and a belief that mankind must evolve in order to survive.

Shroud Master Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
27	27	30	30	30	45	33	52	37

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 14
Skills: Awareness (Per), Charm (Fel) +10, Command (Fel) +20, Common Lore (Adeptus Arbites, Administratum, Imperial Creed, Imperial Guard, Imperium, Underworld) (Int) +10, Deceive (Fel) +10, Disguise (Fel), Forbidden Lore (Cults, Heresy) (Int), Forbidden Lore (Mutants, Psykers, Warp) (Int) +20, Interrogation (WP), Intimidate (Str), Invocation (WP) +20, Literacy (Int) +10, Logic (Int) +10, Psyniscience (Per) +20, Scrutiny (Per), Speak Language (Low Gothic, Mutant Dialect) (Int).
Talents: Air of Authority, Fearless, Master Orator, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Pistol Training (SP + any one), Psy Rating 4, Resistance (Psychic Powers), Strong Minded.
Psychic Powers: Any 9 Minor Psychic Powers and 5 Discipline Powers (any Discipline) may be chosen.
Traits: Minor Mutation (50% chance to have 1 Minor Mutation, see page 334 of **Dark Heresy**, re-roll the Wyrdling result), 1 Shrouded Mutation (see **Table 2-5: Shrouded Mutations** on page 56).
Weapons: Force staff (1d10+3†+Psy Rating I; Pen 2+ Psy Rating; Balanced—for other rules see page 187 in the **Inquisitor's Handbook**), stub automatic (30m; S/3/–; 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip 9; Rld Full).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Shroud-like robes, Psy-focus (included in force staff).
Threat Rating: Hereticus Extremis.

Witch-kin Infiltrator

The Witch-kin are a horrific, grey-fleshed mutant breed, originally from the depths of the Tranch Soot Warrens who possess subtle psychic abilities and a taste for human flesh. Bred in the utter dark of the deep warrens, a Witch-kin is a hairless, spindle-limbed, emaciated thing, with unblinking black eyes and an impossibly wide mouth concealing row after row of needle teeth. Sly, murderous, and above all hungry, the Witch-kin were objects of terror for the troops deployed on Tranch during the rebellion of the Pale Throng. Using suggestive Psychic Powers and a strange ability to seem almost normal until they are within touching distance, they infiltrated camps in order to pluck away guardsmen—their victims later found dismembered and stripped to the bone by gnawing teeth. As the Shroud Council shattered, many of its members took coteries of Witch-kin with them to be used in uprisings and horror campaigns across the sector.

Witch-kin Infiltrator Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
32	22	38	28	32	28	42	25	11

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 12
Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Climb (S), Concealment (Ag), Psyniscience (Per), Silent Move (Ag) +10, Speak Language (Low Gothic, Muto dialect) (Int), Survival (Int) +10.
Talents: Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Psy Rating 1.
Psychic Powers: Distort Vision, Sense Presence.
Traits: Dark Sight, Fear 1 (Disturbing)—when their true nature is revealed.
False Aura: The Witch-kin exude a strange psychic aura that conceals the true horror of their nature until they are standing right in front of you. Any character looking at a Witch-kin must make a **Difficult (–10) Willpower Test** or simply see a person of a non-descript type, commonly a refugee or similar. This effect is classed as a Psychic Effect and GMs may wish to roll secretly for their players to maintain the suspense. This

effect is lost once the Witch-kin comes within 2 metres of the viewer or it springs to the attack. Characters with the Psyniscience skill may make a separate Test to detect the effects of a perception-altering aura when looking at Witch-kin.
Nightsider: The Witch-kin has the Dark Sight trait but suffers a –10 to all Tests in bright light conditions and despises fire.
Weapons: Needle Teeth (1d10+2 R†, Tearing, Primitive).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Tattered clothing, often including a hood, heavy scarf or cowl.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Minoris.

Twist Hulk

Twist hulks are a catch-all term for the largest and most brutally powerful mutants among a sub or abhuman labour caste. Often bulking near an ogryn's build, their ferocity is usually such that often even their fellow mutants will keep them chained and bound between their labours, or shun them and drive them into the wastes if they prove too dangerous. Many are subject to the most abominable mutations with natures closer to that of feral beasts than men. Throughout the Tranch War, twist hulks (also known as brutes and rippers), were used as the shock forces of the Pale Throng. Gathered from the depths and slaved to the Shroud Masters' will, they were unleashed in the close confines of the Soot Warrens where their incredible strength and fury would leave scores of troops as nothing more than bloody pulp. Twist hulks, the largest of the mutant kin, are found in every dark and polluted hole of the Imperium. Ever since the Tranch War, they have formed part of most Pale Throng uprisings, often driven to frenzy and madness by their masters and unleashed to wreak destruction in the initial phase of a revolt.

Twist Hulk Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
38	10	(8) 41	56	20	12	22	25	05

Movement: 2/4/6/12 **Wounds:** 22
Skills: Climb (S), Survival (Int) +10.
Talents: Berserk Charge, Fearless, Swift Attack.
Traits: 2 Minor Mutations (see page 334 of **Dark Heresy**), Natural Weapons (sledgehammer fists etc), Size (Hulking), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (×2).
Armour: Filthy leathers and crude metal plates (All 6, Primitive).
Weapons: Sledgehammer fists (1d10+8 R or I†; Primitive).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: None.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Minoris.

Psychic Abomination

Psychic abominations are the nightmare potential of psychic power given form. Unsanctioned, often mutated, their psychic powers are raw and terrifying and wielded with insane malice. During the Tranch War the Shroud Council unleashed psychic abominations to destroy entire formations of troops deployed into the Soot Warrens, burning flesh and making men turn their weapons on one another. Even after its disastrous fragmentation, the Pale Throng has continued to draw these walking apocalypses into its ranks and use them as weapons in the opening stages of a rebellion.

Psychic Abomination Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
25	25	30	30	30	42	33	65	39

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 17
Skills: Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (any one) (Int) +10, Invocation (WP) +20, Psyniscience (Per) +20, Secret Signs (Occult), Secret Tongue (any one) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (any one) (Int).
Talents: Corpus Conversion, Discipline Focus (choose one), Power Well (×3), Psychic Spite, Psychic Supremacy (choose one), Psy Rating 5, Resistance (Psychics).
Psychic Powers: Psychic abominations have the Endure Flames, Flash Bang, Float, Inflict Pain, Projection, Psychic Shriek, Sense Presence, Telepathy, Telekinesis, Telekinetic Shield, and Weapon Jinx powers. Also choose one of the following sets:

Puppet Master: Compel, Dominate, See me Not, Seed Mind, Zone of Compulsion, and Soul Killer.

Burning Apocalypse: Fire Bolt, Fire Storm, Holocaust, Incinerate, Molten Man, and Wall of Fire.

Flesh Mocker: Agony, Bio-Lightning, Blood Boil, Flesh Like Iron, Open Wounds, Shape Flesh, and Regenerate.

Telekinetic Destroyer: Catch Projectiles, Force Barrage, Precision Telekinetics, Psychic Blade, Psychic Crush, and Psychokinetic Storm.

Note: With the effects of their Talents and their Willpower Bonus being taken into account, a Psychic Abomination adds +9 to the dice rolls to manifest their Psychic Powers. This bonus increases to +11 for powers relating to their Discipline Focus talent. This can be increased further by the use of the Corpus Conversion talent and Invocation skill.
Traits: Mutation (75% of one random Minor Mutation and 25% chance of one Major Mutation).
Armour: None or as looted from victims.
Weapons: None save their mind.
Gear: Robes and tatters.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Extremis.

The Night Cult

"We shall rise with the Emperor on the Last Day."

—Credo Mortifex

One description given by some philosophers when asked to describe the true nature of the Imperium is that, beyond its teeming countless masses, numberless worlds, and incalculable might, it is best described in terms of a vast web of secrets. Secrets, and by greater extension ignorance of the truth of things, are paramount to the Imperium's very existence. Knowledge is a calcified and restricted thing. One simple reason for this restriction is that it is better the people have faith than facts, for the facts allow little room for hope and the realisation of the true horrors that confront humanity would lead only to destruction and utter despair.

Some organisations within the Imperium can afford no such shield of ignorance if they are to defend mankind, and chief among these is the Inquisition itself. There are however some truths too dangerous and some lores too valuable to be widely known even among the members of the Holy Ordos.

Knowledge surrounding a group known as the Night Cult is one such secret. To most, it is no more that an old dark tale, a ghost story told on a dozen worlds to deter those who would disturb the dead. But behind the stories lies a dark and hidden truth at the centre of a shrouding mass of ancient myth, fragmented records, half-truths, misapprehensions, and outright lies. The story goes back, according to some apocryphal sources, to the founding of the Calixis Sector, at a time when the Angevin Crusade was faltering and a man became a saint. It concerns a heretical faction of the Imperial Creed long forbidden, the darkest of proscribed technologies, an apocalyptic prophesy of the End of Days, and the power to make the dead walk.

The Worship of the Emperor Revenant

One of the great themes and focuses of the Imperial Creed is the Emperor's bodily sacrifice, the great martyrdom by which he has preserved humanity and attained immortality. The sects and factions of the clergy that centre their dogma on this aspect of sacrifice and ongoing life-in-death are known to the wider Ministorum as the Cult of the Emperor Revenant. Although such beliefs are accepted as cannon by the Ecclesiarchy, its extremist proponents have been sources of schism, deviancy, and heretical practice, counting among their ranks numerous death cults, suicidal zealots, and darkly mystical interpretations of the Imperial Creed. They vary widely in type and values from ashen–faced flagellants who vow to put aside any worldly concerns and live as "the blessed dead" to sacrificial cults and radical resurrectionist sects who strive to work towards the Emperor's eventual bodily return to lead mankind to a new golden age.

The worst of such resurrectionist cults are outlawed Imperial fanatics who operate in secret to pursue dark science and sometimes warpcraft to break the shackles of death, often with terrifying results. Pursued with the utmost vigour by both Ordo Hereticus and the Cult Mechanicus for their blasphemy, most remain true zealots who see themselves as ranking among the righteous, believing that the Imperium has lost the "true way" and only they hold the key to the God-Emperor's will and humanity's salvation.

The Thanatology of the Calixis Sector

Within the Calixis Sector, the worship of the Emperor Revenant has always had a solid following in doctrine and practice. Many of the Calixis Sector's major local cultures have strong aspects of funerary worship, mystical theurgy, and the reverence and remembrance of the dead, which may vary widely in practice even on the same world. On the sector capital Scintilla, the Tarsines are obsessed with ossuaries and all manner of blessed bone trinkets and supposed saint's relics, and the Sibellans go to great lengths to enshrine and preserve their ancestor's remains and honour their memories (sometimes simply to bask in their reflected glory). Meanwhile, the people of Ambulon practise excarnation, to the horror of their fellow Scintillans.

The Transfiguration of Saint Drusus—the legendary moment during the Angevin Crusade on Maccabeus Quintus



where he was struck down but restored to life by the Emperor's grace—is a cornerstone of the cult of his sainthood and further acts to cement the belief in rebirth among the faithful. The sector also features several funerary worlds such as Granithor and Pilgrim's Pause, which some traditions believe to be particularly auspicious and sacred burial sites for the dead and are given over almost wholly to act as vast cemeteries. On these worlds, the influence of the Cult of the Emperor Revenant is at its strongest. With so many morbid and macabre practices and strange superstitions the norm, it is easy for death cults, mystical sects, and other such heresies to breed unnoticed and slowly gain grip.

THE LEGEND OF THE NIGHT CULT

There exists on many worlds in the Calixis Sector legends surrounding hauntings, the spirits of the dead walking, vengeance from beyond the grave, wraiths preying on those who disturbed the dead, or spectres who exact a terrible revenge on the living who have wronged them. Such superstitions are only natural, and they may be no more than an attempt to explain the unknown. However, in a universe where the things of the warp prowl and hunger beyond the veil of physical reality, the truth behind such tales may indeed have a cause rooted in otherworldly evil.

One of the oldest of these tales found throughout the Calixis Sector is that of the Night Cult. It is said to be a spectral congregation, the damned souls of false priests, traitors, and sinners doomed to make repentance to the Golden Throne in death. These lost souls, the myth claims, stand guard over the graves of the just who have fallen in the God-Emperor's service, protect the pure of heart, and wreak dreadful vengeance against those who would prey on the faithful or disturb the rest of forgotten martyrs. The legend is not one approved of by the Ministorum, as it reeks of the worship of unclean spirits and warpcraft, but it has persisted with some local variation for as long as records go back. From Scintilla to Dusk, from Solomon to Reshia, the stories can be found, but the oldest and perhaps most dangerous spring from the shrine world of Maccabeus Quintus.

On Maccabeus the story is considered blasphemous enough to merit the pyre for professing, and here the Night Cult also carries another, older name—the Temple of the True Resurrection. Here it is linked to the time that Drusus, before his sainthood, was struck down by the enemy and rose again by the God-Emperor's grace. In this tale, a cleric swathed in midnight black robes and bearing a fire-blacked staff appeared in the councils of Drusus's stricken army, shaming them for their cowardice and scorning them for their lack of faith. The legend states that it was through this dark stranger's intercession that Drusus was restored. In return, the general who would one day be venerated as an Imperial Saint bid the stranger build a new temple to the true resurrection—a cult to guard the souls of men from the great enemy, enslave the false, and punish the corrupt until the last days, when the dead would rise once more with the Emperor for the final battle.

The Anima Chorus

Within the annals of the Calixis Sector, there is established provenance for the perpetuation of such tech-heresies as the Anima Mori, particularly among the works and disciples of the infamous Arch-Heretek Umbra Malygris. It was he who was reputed to have rediscovered the blasphemous technology known to the Adeptus Mechanicus as the Sarcosan Wave Generator. The generator releases a strange bio-aetheric radiation waveform that reacts with dead flesh, saturating it and filling it with unnatural life.

The energy alone is enough to bring corpses back to spasmodic and uncontrolled life. However, if the energy wave's effect is amplified via a special implant unit (which may be attached to almost any reasonably intact corpse), its power increases tenfold, animating, sustaining, and controlling the cadaver. The wave energy is invisible to normal sight, but its source may be perceived by human ears as an eerie discordant moan, which gives the generator unit its other name—the Anima Chorus.

Since then the Temple and its "cult of night" have entered the folklore of Maccabeus and beyond. To this day (although they risk their lives by doing so) many Maccabeans light black candles to the Temple to watch over the spirits of their ancestors during the winter solstice when the planet's moons enter eclipse, and hold the belief that votive offerings left at lonely crossroads can bring about terrible vengeance by the cold hands of the Night Cult's dread congregation.

Anima Mori

It is not only heresies of false belief, the potential for malefic forces, and macabre practices concerning the dead that are of concern to the Holy Ordos, but also the price that humanity's drive and desire to overcome death can entail. In many cases this desire is manifested as attempts to extend life. Indeed, for the rich and the powerful, juvinat treatments can extend the natural human life span by centuries, while the arts of the Adeptus Mechanicus can preserve the body (or at least its consciousness) for far longer than that. Of course, for many the form this will take and the humanity lost is too high a price to pay. For some, willing to risk damnation and corruption, the malefic arts offer an answer, while others seek out proscribed xenos-lore and artefacts to accomplish their ends, often with results as hellish as any daemon's bargain.

For others, the answer lies not in extending life, but in overcoming death and restoring the dead to life. Such dark arts and sciences by which such a perversion of the natural order can be accomplished have been forbidden, it is believed, since long before the Great Crusade. In the cannon of the Priesthood of Mars, the Anima Mori (as such forbidden technologies are known) is feared and reviled as one of the oldest and most dangerous of tech-heresies.

Most commonly the Anima Mori manifests itself in the creation of reanimate creatures fabricated from the dead and brought forth to unnatural life as a creature known as a corpse-

thrall or carrionate. The distinction between a servitor and a corpse-thrall can be a fine one, and easily lost to the layman. Servitors, which use recycled living tissue or even vat grown synthesised tissue, are a cornerstone of Imperial technology, and it is also the case that preserved organic components, such as bone, are used in servitor construction (as with the ubiquitous servo-skull).

Anima Mori, however, goes a considerable step further. It seeks to actively reanimate dead and even necrotic tissue to create an unliving servitor beyond the frailty of flesh and, in theory, create an effectively immortal living machine. Numerous forms of Anima Mori are known, some engineered from exotic viruses such as the Lazarus Triox-Cell which has plagued the Segmentum Solar for millennia, others utilizing ancient human technology such as the infamous and utterly forbidden archeaotech of the Sarcos-waveform energy field. Other fouler forms work in conjunction with the dark agencies of the warp or forbidden xenos technology. All are forbidden, as the carrionate is looked on as blasphemous by both the Ecclesiarchy, who see it as a perversion of the human form and a crime against the soul, and the Cult Mechanicus, whose ancient ban on the technology is brutally enforced for mysterious reasons of its own. The use of Anima Mori is known to have many dangers of its own, and its true nature and implications are little understood even by those insane visionaries that pursue it.

The Dance of the Dead

Reports reached Inquisitor Calith Nonoro of the Ordo Hereticus of a series of strange incidents and rumours circulating in the area known as the Periphery, a sparsely inhabited but long settled volume of space that forms much of the border between the Calixis and Scarus Sectors. The reports, which concerned a number of unexplained murders and disappearances along with garbled stories of the walking dead and restless spirits, reached Nonoro through his extensive network of contacts while he was rooting out a witch cult in the rust wastes of Cyclopia. He dispatched several teams of his most able Acolytes to Sisk, Sinophia, Kalf, and other outposts to investigate the matter.

Nonoro was disturbed by the similarity of the stories and feared that a widespread cult had infiltrated these worlds. As reports from his servants arrived, he received them with growing alarm. The Sinophian connection proved to be a false lead, but on Sisk an abbey had been burned to the ground and black–robed figures seemingly impervious to gunfire had crushed all opposition. Nonoro's Acolytes found that the natives called forth the old legend of the Night Cult to explain these events and claimed that the abbot and his priests had been punished for their sins by the Emperor as they had grown greedy and corrupt.

It was just as events on Cyclopia reached their most critical juncture that Nonoro received an emergency astropathic communiqué from Valadimar Haek, one of his senior agents and a former Adeptus Arbites marshal—the dead were walking on Kalf.

Arriving at a time of general unrest and sporadic conflict among Kalf's Sand-Barons, the Inquisitorial team had been drawn to the poor, lawless city of Vanitas. With the help of local mercenaries, the Acolytes attacked a secret hold of a cult of heretical faith calling itself the Children of the True Resurrection. Despite heavy casualties, they captured a most unusual prisoner—a man who was dead and yet alive. Their subject was confirmed in local records as an honourably discharged Guard veteran named Ezekiel Mather, who had been recorded as dying of blacklung three months previously. Mather's heart did not beat nor did his lungs breathe, but he walked and talked readily, communicating his faith in the "way of the Emperor's gift of true resurrection" with zealous fervour. The team's sanctioned psyker attested that Mather's mind was a dead void and his soul a "cold fathomless darkness," but unlike some warp-animated carrionate or rotting plague husk, it was "still possessed of faculty, intelligence, and purpose." The communiqué ended abruptly with an emergency addendum that the dead were walking in Vanitas and that the Acolytes were besieged in the city's generator station, with no help at hand.

The Fate of Dread Sarcos

"The night is dark and full of terrors, but none so terrible as the wrath of the Risen God of Mankind. For the empty liars of the warp will be silenced and the false iron idols of the grave shall perish in turn. Death itself shall die, as a worm crushed under his heel."

—Credo Mortifex

During the dark times that followed the Age of Apostasy, an Imperial death cult calling itself the Brethren of the Risen came to power on the western fringes of the Segmentum Pacificus in the Sarcosan subsector. Located on the western fringe in a swathe of Imperial space that had become isolated during the civil wars that had wracked the Imperium, the Brethren stood firm against the enemies of the undying God-Emperor of Mankind. The price the cult had borne and the heresies it embraced, however, proved too much for the Imperium to countenance when several centuries later a Crusade fleet sent to retake the worlds of the western fringe encountered it. The war that followed is still a subject of great secrecy to this day, entering into the dim mythic histories of the Holy Ordos, Cult Mechanicus, and several Astartes Chapters who fought in this dark and bitter struggle.

Since that time, dark legends have cropped up in scores of sectors across the western Segmentum that speak of the children of dread Sarcos who fled into the shadows and their dark and terrible arts. To this day, this ancient heresy is said to inspire Imperial cults obsessed with the resurrection of the dead and to be the source of strange rites conducted in ancient cemeteries that echo some dark shadow of the Ministorum.

It is said the Credo Mortifex, dread Sarcos's heretical interpretation of the Imperial Creed, and the lost arts of the cult's forbidden technology are rare and terrible prizes for which the darkest sects will pay any price. They are, however, perilous to possess—for stories say the curse of Sarcos comes for any "heathen" that would obtain them.

Nonoro, unable to immediately depart, sent out a general emergency call to the Holy Ordos and other neighbouring authorities placed to respond more rapidly. It was not long before a Naval destroyer carrying Witch Hunter Sennacherib and his retinue and the Rogue Trader vessel *Rake's Progress*, operating under bond to the Acolytes of Inquisitor Marr, had arrived at the planet. What occurred next is a matter of some controversy and wild speculation among the Ordos.

The official report, submitted by Sennacherib, states that he and his forces purged Vanitas. He said he found nothing more than a single witch who possessed powers to animate shambling corpses for a limited time—a very rare but hardly unknown "gift" possessed by some rogue psykers—who was being used by a local criminal gang to terrify their rivals. The witch hunter left much of the city a smoking ruin and its people scattered. However, what the natives had taken to calling the "dance of the dead" became rooted firmly in to the local psyche. Sennacherib's report goes on to vilify the "panicked exaggeration" of Nonoro's Acolyte Haek (who was reported dead at the time of the Witch Hunter's arrival), the "superstitious hysteria of the Kalf natives," and the "interference" of Marr's Acolytes, although this last criticism was written in more guarded terms than his other accusations. Since this time, stories have begun to circulate that the *Rake's Progress* broke orbit from Kalf suddenly and was fired upon by Sennacherib's destroyer. The vessel escaped unscathed, and in the aftermath, an official protest was lodged by Nonoro with the Conclave against Sennacherib's handling of the matter.

The Last Testament of Vladimar Haek

Without evidence for any challenge to its validity, Sennacherib's judgement and report has stood uncontested, and the Ordo Hereticus considers the matter closed. Subsequently, Nonoro removed himself from the public eye, reportedly having survived an attempt on his life on Sisk, and his location and activities are now unknown even by his fellow Inquisitors.

Rumour at the highest level of the Ordo Hereticus has it that one of Nonoro's agents has since recovered a recording made by Vladimar Haek in his final hours, which he is preparing to use to accuse Sennacherib of presenting false evidence to the Conclave and to expose a wider conspiracy of heresy and forbidden lore. Regardless of the truth of this claim, it seems definite that the events on Kalf have now become the centre of a schism within the Ordo Hereticus and that Nonoro is now engaged in some covert investigation or perhaps even a private war. Indeed, there are some with the Ordo who are using words such as "Radical" and "rogue" when speaking of him.

Inquisitorial Threat Briefing

There is no attested evidence in the Calixian Conclave Archives referencing an organisation, cult, or doctrine of the name "The Children of the True Resurrection," while the phrase "The Night Cult" references certain unfounded myths and superstitions not considered threatening to the acceptance of the True Faith.

Using the Night Cult

The mystery of the Night Cult has been created for use as an example of a heretical myth and potential dark conspiracy within the Inquisition itself, for use in your games. Just who or what is behind the Night Cult, how far the corruption and conspiracy goes, or what group or power is now using the old dark legends to further its aims is up to you, the GM, to determine.

The True Nature of the Night Cult

Below are three possible interpretations of the Night Cult. The truth, of course, may lie with all or none of these. Indeed players might well get tangled up investigating one myth or report at the bequest of one faction or another, only to find themselves knee deep in trouble of an entirely unexpected kind!

The Darkest Arts: A Quest for Life Everlasting

One possible truth lies in a heretical sect concealing the quest for true immortality behind the façade of the ancient legend of the Night Cult. The architects of this quest could be hereteks, exploiting and developing ancient and forbidden tech-lore for the raising of the dead, malefic sorcerers, or psyker-mystics wishing to extend their lives and gain dominion over life and death. Behind such a cult could be a highly–placed network of the powerful and wealthy, or even a renegade faction of the Inquisition itself who would ultimately reap the benefits of the cult's work. Meanwhile, the cult's cover as a ghostly myth could serve as an excellent shield to keep away prying eyes. The availability of places of the dead and the infiltration of funerary customs and sects provide excellent sources of test subjects. Such arts, either technological or mystic (or the combination of the two), are difficult to control and have many pitfalls and dangers, not least of which when success is achieved.

Details of a xeno-artefact within the Calixis Sector said to grant long life, the Halo Devices, can be found on page 97.

A Grave Cold Faith: The Sarcosan Heresy

Another option is for the Night Cult to be a "true" heresy, that is to say a deviant faith of the Imperial Creed and one that takes the tenets and concerns usually espoused by the doctrines of the Emperor Revenant to a terrifying extreme. Such a cult would be a frightening and unusual opponent, because though undoubtedly heretical and possessed of many forbidden and dread powers, its members would nevertheless be fanatics to the Imperial cause in their own way. They would believe unshakeably that theirs was the true path and that they were acting in true accordance with the God-Emperor's word to guard the faithful, punish the false, and conceal themselves while preparing for a coming "final battle" when they will raise the dead to fight at their master's side.

Meeting in secret in the dark of night in ruined temples and

Creature Modifier: The Risen

To create an animated corpse of this powerful type, apply the following to a formerly living creature:

Characteristics: Add +10 to Strength, Toughness, and Willpower; reduce Agility and Perception by –10, halve the existing Fellowship score (to a minimum of 05). Double the number of Wounds from when it was alive.

Skills and Talents: Where appropriate, any Skills and Talents from life are retained; also the Resistance (Psychic) talent is added.

Traits: Gain Unnatural Toughness (×2), From Beyond, Fear 1 (Disturbing)—this may vary depending on the state of decomposition, (alternately increase an already existing Fear trait by one level to a maximum of 3), Dark Sight, Walking Dead, and any other traits appropriate to the creature's re-animation.

Note: If a more shambling and mindless species of walking dead is required, the profile for a Plague Zombie (also called a Carrionate) is provided on page 146 in **Chapter IV: Malleus**.

places of the dead, they would carry out sinister ceremonies that echoed the daylight rituals of the Ministorum, attended by a bleak congregation indeed. With the patience and subtlety of those dealing not in a short, frenetic span of years but a perceived near-eternity, this incarnation of the Night Cult would act with a slow but implacable purpose, having begun to infiltrate the faithful and suborn agents throughout the sector long ago. Such a group might well number allies and even true believers among Neothorians and secret Recongregator ultra-radicals in the Inquisition's ranks. The Night Cult might also make for a very strange and powerful ally for Acolyte PCs faced with seemingly insurmountable foes. In such cases, players may well reason that so radical a solution as enlisting the help of the Night Cult would be preferable to seeing a world die to the like of the Pilgrims of Hayte or the Vile Savants. It is up to them to decide and to survive the consequences.

Treaders in the Dust: The Hungry Ghosts of the Warp

A third option is that the Night Cult is the worst of lies, using the superstitious fear and forlorn hopes of the people as a mask, behind which monstrous terrors crawl. This version of the Night Cult is nothing more than an artifice that allows some xenos-race or cabal to pursue its goals. The architects of this deception might be a race of vampiric entities from the warp, a murderous and unknown xeno-breed, a kindred of daemonic spirits able only to possess the dead, or perhaps a particularly warped coterie of death-obsessed witches or sorcerers who must feed on the living (or the dead) to maintain their power and extend their unnatural existences.

The Night Cult could also be a congregation made up of damned souls condemned to serve in death or perhaps trapped in an appalling half-life as accursed shades never to find release. The hatred and bitterness of such a Night Cult would be a boundless and cold thing, a true fury from beyond the grave.

The Risen Dead

The following profile represents a human body brought back to unhallowed life through powerful forbidden science or sorcerous rituals. Although powerful, such revenants are dangerous even to their creators, as they possess the spark of self-will and a soulless malice. In appearance, their pale flesh may show marks of the coroner's needle or crude repair work, and they often shun the light. The example Risen Dead is based on an individual who was a Heavy (see page 341 of **Dark Heresy**) in life.

The Risen Dead Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
28	28	55	50 (10)	20	20	15	35	10

Movement: 2/4/6/8 **Wounds:** 20

Skills: Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Intimidate (S), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int).

Talents: Basic Weapon Training (SP), Resistance (Psychic), Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Primitive), Pistol Training (Las, SP).

Traits: From Beyond, Fear 1 (Disturbing), Dark Sight, Natural Weapons (Dead hands) inflicting 1d10+SB I Damage, Unnatural Toughness (×2), Walking Dead[1]. Also, either Sarcos Wave[2] or Unhallowed[3] as appropriate to their method of creation.

[1]**Walking Dead:** These creatures do not tire, do not need to breathe, and are immune to poisons, diseases, and many environmental hazards. They do not suffer the effects of being Stunned nor the penalties for being injured. Only Critical Wounds suffered to the Head or Body can destroy them—any suffered to an Arm or Leg simply renders that limb useless.

[2]**The Sarcosan Wave (Creation Option 1):** Risen created with a Sarcosan implant gain the Regeneration trait when they are within the effect radius of an Anima Chorus. The effect radius of an Anima Chorus ranges from a hundred metres (for a portable unit) to several kilometres (for a large reactor-powered installation). Such Risen also possess a receptor implant—a large spider-like device clamped to their backs or chests. Destroying or ripping out this device with a Called Shot immediately destroys the Risen creature. The implant has a defensive value of 5 Armour Points and can sustain 2 points of Damage before failing.

[3]**Unhallowed (Creation Option 2):** The Risen created by warp-sorcery are vulnerable to Blessed and Holy weapons, which inflict double Damage. Such Risen must be controlled by their creator in the manner of a daemon (see **Chapter IV: Malleus** for details) and often possess an unquenchable hunger for murder.

Armour: Light flak vest (Body 2).

Weapons: Dead hands (1d10+5 I†; Primitive), either a great weapon (2d10+5 R†; Pen 2; Primitive, Unwieldy) or pump shotgun (30m; S/–/–; 1d10+4 I; Pen 0; Clip 8; Rld 2Full; Scatter).

†Includes Strength Bonus.

Gear: Heavy black hooded robes or swathes of concealing clothing, either a death mask and great weapon or pump shotgun and two spare clips.

Threat Rating: Hereticus Minoris.



++ Ignorance is a blessing not to be disdained by the wise ++

+++Astropathic Intercept+++
+++Commence+++
Restricted Access: Special Briefing Limited to the Atropos Group
Originating: Inquisitor Calith Nonoro: Ordo Hereticus
Destination: Inquisitor Silas Marr: Ordo +CENSORED FORBIDDEN+
Encryption: Vermilion—Invert Noctis
Date: +++ERROR+++

+++ERROR+++!WER%##^&*()_P}{:"_)(*&^%$%^9#&(TJ{|}+++ERROR+++{:<>?><)#(*&^%$#pattern of evidence now forming I feel almost beggars belief, just how long has this heresy been allowed to fester in our midst? From the tales of the White Maiden Death Cult on Fervious, to rumours of fell cargo from the Halo Zone, to stories of ravening Pit Things on Fenksworld, to the recent reports of dead Guardsman stalking the soot warrens of Tranch, these facts have been evident for years. Now these fell congregations springing up somewhere in the bowels of Hive Tarsus and reports of insane hereteks raising the dead from the Infernis. The strangest, and the one I fear confirms my suspicions as to the long damned author of these crimes, is the Carver's Gate incident. It seems these resurrectionists went so far as to openly attack the Pilgrims of Hayte cabal concealed within the Old City. The dead fighting the damned, it can scarcely be believed!

The breadth of it is staggering, the patience! Yet the Inquisition has not reacted, has not disseminated the information, why? Only one answer holds weight, a conspiracy of silence within my own Ordos and by more than that blundering bombast Sennacherib—he's no more than an ill-trained dog on some master's leash. There's a black web of secrets out there, I am certain. I've come across evidence destroyed, records purged, and witnesses gone. In truth, I have nothing solid to work with save the dying words of a man I trusted, a few scattered reports of damned legacies and shadow forces moving in secret, and dark legends from a war four thousand years dead! I have allies of my own within the Ordo, men and women whom I trust, and more that would act if the evidence were greater I am sure. So, I have entrusted this all to you Marr, though I know some say you are more dangerous than a thousand conspiracies combined, for I know you have no fear of the Conclave and resources I could not dream to match. I only hO/
+++ERROR+++!4##{}|}":L:?><24@#X/%^&*()|}{:":<>?>)(*&^%X//
+++Signal Interrupted: Aetheric Stream Lost+++
+++Copy; Re—Encrypt; Redirect; Heterodyne; Redirect; Haddrack+++
+++Omnissiah Vult+++



Xenos

- The Cold Trade
- The Amaranthine Syndicate
- The Beast House
- The Halo Devices
- The Cryptos
- The Curse of Solomon

The wind blew long and cold across the empty landing platform, bringing with it the caustic chemical smell that corrupted the air in the Interior zones. Even a kilometre up atop the old blast-mill complex, they weren't clear of it.

"Guildmaster, we shouldn't be here," Lorric whispered urgently beside him.

Ignoring his companion, Guildmaster Tallow put his vapour mask to his face and took a few lungfuls of clean air to clear his head while scanning the area for his contact. The platform was deserted as far as he could see, hundreds of metres of cracked and pitted old rockcrete. It was just them, alone with the cold wind and the sounds of distant storm rolling in over the flare towers and spires of the hive citadels that crowned the horizon. Far-off lightning pulsed an eerie green against the boiling, polluted skies. The sight pulled at his heart, no matter how dark and bleak. This was Solomon, it was home, and soon he would lose everything.

"Guildmaster...uncle! They are not here, it is not safe, we should never have come," Lorric fretted.

Angered, Tallow pulled away from the tugging at his sleeve and looked down scornfully at the thin, gaunt young man huddled in a storm coat too large for him, eyes darting skittishly about. His sister's boy, the weakling, was one of the few that had not yet deserted him. He probably had no one else to run to. Still the Tallow blood ran thin in him, very thin.

"Be silent, Lorric! What choice do we have?"

"But to come to a place such as this, with no guards, and unarmed, it's suicide! What of the dreg clans, the blackbloods? The beast that stalks the wastes! In the God-Emperor's name please let us go!"

Tallow's wrath flared. "Be still, Lorric, or as old and fat as I am I will hurl you from this platform! Where's your spine? Your pride? We are the House of Tallow, guildmasters and contract holders for seventeen generations. Dregs, you say, the beast, hah? Better the beast's belly than the ignominy of an Arbites cell, the shame of disincorporation. Or even worse, the Inquisition's tender mercies. Trust me, a dreg's rusted blade in your guts is better than that!"

"It is good to see that you hold no illusions about your current plight, Guildmaster Tallow..." It was a woman's voice, echoing and strangely distant.

The voice startled them, and both intently searched the empty platform in shock. But there was nothing to see.

"Where are you?" Tallow demanded. "Is this a broadcast?"

"No, Guildmaster, we are here, we have been here a long time. We simply wished to see if you would comply with our instructions. It was an act of trust our Principals required."

Tallow composed himself and put some steel into his voice. "Trust? Desperation, perhaps, but I have not come to beg, understand?"

The air in front of them rippled like water disturbed by a stone, and a woman appeared as if from nowhere. She was dressed in elegant but reserved business attire, but wore no insignia or marker. She seemed more suited to a courtroom or guild chamber than an encounter in the interior industrial zones. Her face was pale and unreadable but her eyes were as hard as any Tallow had ever seen.

"I represent the Amaranthine Syndicate. Our offer to House Tallow stands only on your acceptance of our terms," she said, her voice now clear. "Our money, our assistance against your rival guildmasters, and most importantly our erasure of any links you have to the ongoing Tulvash scandal. There will be no evidence, no witnesses to your involvement."

"And your terms?"

"Our terms are simple: your friendship, your loyalty, and your aiding us in return, in whatsoever small matters might crop up from time to time. A small price to pay for keeping your station, your fortune, and your house's name unsullied, is it not?"

"Then I accept: do these things for me and you will have my aid and my loyalty, and the warp take the rest." Tallow shrugged. "What choice do I really have?"

"Then our alliance is sealed," she said with the faintest of smiles. "Your word is enough...but before we begin there are a few small matters to attend to."

".What do you mean?" Tallow said slowly.

"Oh, just a small gesture of your good faith." The woman smiled, but there was no humour there. "Think of it as... an up front payment. Your nephew should do nicely."

Beside Tallow, Lorric began to back away. "What are you talking about? What's going on? Uncle!"

Tallow stood, frozen. Part of him screamed to do something, but another, horrible part considered the woman's demand dispassionately. All I desire is mine, in exchange for this weakling?

He opened his mouth to speak, but by then it was already too late.

A great, dark shape winked into existence behind the cowering Lorric and hauled him screaming off his feet. Tallow watched in horror as writhing cords of darkness crushed his nephew's arms to bloody pulp. There was an awful smell of decay and burning meat as his nephew's limp body was hoisted up to meet a dark cowled head as the huge figure of his attacker resolved. The cowl descended to cover Lorric's face, a loud wet crack followed from within, and his nephew's legs began to spasm and jerk.

Tallow staggered away from the hunched figure and its awful feast, mumbling incoherently as more hulking dark shapes materialised around the woman, each clad in shrouding, twitching robes of impenetrable blackness.

"All that remains now is for you to be formally introduced to our Principals," the woman said, her voice no more than a harsh whisper, her eyes empty.

A hand seemingly made of huge glossy grey maggots tightened around the woman's neck from behind and her eyes rolled back into their sockets. The voice that rose up from her then was not her own, but some deep tortured rattle dredged up from a dark beyond.

"Greetings...Guildmaster Tallow...our...new...friend."

The cowled head behind her rose and Tallow looked on the face of his new-found allies, his mouth working soundlessly as he stumbled to his knees.

Chapter III: Xenos

"The void is an unutterably vast and inhuman place, a place of ancient dangers and unknown perils. In this cold darkness have bred things as obscene, terrible, and dangerous as any daemon of the warp… In the face of such dire knowledge, you must hold onto this single truth: it is mankind's destiny to rule the stars and rule them alone."

—Lord Inquisitor Knael,
A Discursive Primer for Initiates of the Ordo Xenos, Vol. I

The primary remit of the Ordo Xenos is to defend the Imperium against the threat of the alien, a duty that goes far beyond merely confronting non-human creatures in open conflict alongside the Imperial Guard or Astartes. In order to oppose the xenos threat, the Ordo Xenos must undertake the dangerous task of investigating and studying alien races with a mind to destroying any that is deemed to be a threat to humanity. It must learn the nature of its inhuman foes, seek out their weaknesses and learn how to counter their strengths. More than this, it must be ever watchful, not only against what lies in the void beyond, but against other, often more subtle and insidious threats that arise much closer to home. Such threats are often posed by renegade humans, some corrupt, others merely opportunistic. Such individuals are known to trade in alien technology, or seek to hide alien species within the Imperium's midst—often for the purposes of experimentation, profit, or bloody entertainment.

The Acute Threat of the Alien

Many of the Ordo Xenos's operations are not focused outward, but inward on the Imperium itself, and with good cause. The Ordo's records are littered with bloody atrocities and vast losses of life that have resulted where the alien has taken hold of an Imperial world via stealth, infiltration, or slow taint, as well as countless incidents where the influence of alien technology, misunderstood artefacts, and xeno-lore have resulted in unintended disaster and tragic consequence.

Within the Calixis Sector, the job of the Ordo Xenos is a particularly complex and difficult one. This challenge is in no small part because the sector itself lies on the very edge of the Imperium. It is a borderland flanked for much of its perimeter by the uncharted void of space beyond the Emperor's light. No complete or even meaningful control can be kept over this vast, open border, and human and alien vessels can pass largely unobserved and unchallenged despite the best efforts of Battlefleet Calixis and the Imperial listening stations.

This dark horizon is crossed regularly by Rogue Traders, the explorator fleets of the Adeptus Mechanicus, and even by smaller independent merchant and prospecting vessels quite legitimately. Where such legal traffic ends and outlaw traffic (such as smugglers, renegades, non-compliants, and pirates) begins is often a blurred line. Each one of these is a vector, a means by which the alien and alien influences can flow like poison into the Imperium's veins, and the eyes of the Ordo Xenos cannot be everywhere at once.



The Hazeroth Abyss

The Hazeroth Abyss is a vast barren volume of space that forms a natural border to the Calixis Sector on its Trailing/Coreward edge. Lightless and cold, the Abyss is well named, for it is a stellar graveyard filled with expanses of utter void and scattered with the debris of dead star systems and long frozen worlds. Such stars that do remain are old, bloated, and dim, and the region is by far the most scarcely populated one of any that support life in the sector. As a result, what few heavily-populated worlds exist occur on the Abyss's inner margins, such as the agri-world of Regulus and the minor and ramshackle hive world of Clove. Beyond these, human civilization exists largely in isolation, with frontier worlds, small-scale mining colonies, and a few worlds that have descended into feral and feudal status being the norm.

Warp navigation is likewise deceptively difficult across the Abyss. There are few guidance markers, the light of the Astronomicon grows pale, and there are few established warp-routes. The region is also infamous for sudden aetheric squalls that can throw a ship far off course and numerous unpredictable warp-shoals where a vessel can become becalmed and trapped adrift in warp space. As might be expected in any region where the line between the Imperium and the savage void beyond blurs, stories abound of pirate raiders and nightmarish xenoforms from the deeps roaming the Abyss, as well as accursed hulks, haunted ships, and ancient terrors waiting in the dust of dead worlds such as the infamous Mara or the mythical Hell Stars of Hazeroth.

The great Chartist vessels ply no routes in the Abyss, the great trading powers maintain a distance, and the hand of direct Imperial rule is largely absent. Quite aside from the relative freedom the disinterest in the region by the Calixian authorities grants those that choose to operate there, there is another lure for those willing to take the risk—greed. Those human worlds that do survive here are desperate for trade, and hive manufactured items will sell for hugely inflated prices paid in ores, foodstuffs, and precious metals. For those skilled and brave enough to prospect the ancient and dead systems in the deep Abyss, the shattered remains of these long destroyed suns contain rare and valuable chemical elements and esoteric substances forged in the violent death of stars worth vast sums to the Imperium's industry. Both the Adeptus Mechanicus and some Rogue Traders sponsor infrequent expeditions to the heart of the Hazeroth Abyss for this purpose and such missions are always heavily armed.

THE MANIFOLD DANGERS OF THE ALIEN

Although the potential threats posed to humanity and the Imperium by alien influences are many and varied, the doctrine of the Ordo Xenos defines five broad avenues by which the xeno can afflict mankind: discord, temptation, corruption, dominion, and destruction.

The Threat of Discord

Perhaps the most insidious threat the alien can pose to the Imperium is through the deviancy of its ways and ideas, exposure to which might inspire envy, apostasy, or even adoration, leading humanity away from the Imperial fold and into heresy and rebellion. The Imperial Creed is the greatest weapon against such wrong-thinking. But the further from the centres of civilization one goes, the more the risk of mental and moral contamination increases.

The Threat of Temptation

The alien is a thing of lies and false promises, offering gifts and trinkets, powerful technology, or alliances—all of which are ready lures for the weak-minded, avaricious, or infirm of faith. There is a shameful roll call of traitors and deviants who have succumbed to such temptations in the past. The dubious treasures and lost secrets of xeno-civilizations long extinct can hold equal threat for those who disturb their resting places.

The Threat of Corruption

The alien can pose a threat of bodily taint and corruption just as easily as the powers of the warp. This taint may take the form of parasitism for the purpose of vile promulgation of its own species or to appease its hunger, such as with the Lacyramole. Alternately there is the crime of transgenic blasphemy; the deliberate combination of human and non-human DNA or tissue falls into this category.

The Threat of Dominion

Some xeno-forms have dark powers to dominate and control humanity by psychic or other means, perhaps even forcing others to worship them as false gods. Abhorred creatures such as the Nostrafex, the Simulacra, and the Cryptos pose insidious and subtle dangers, turning humans against their own and treating them as little more than cattle or playthings.

The Threat of Destruction

Some aliens seek to invade, conquer, and destroy by overt means, from the murderous swathes cut by great Ork Waaaghs to the invasions of the enigmatic Thyrrus. Likewise, some non-sentient species, be they dangerous predators like the feared Void-Cacaradon or ecology destroying vermin such as the Xothic Blood Locust, are simply too hazardous to be allowed to live whenever encountered.

The Cold Trade

"Of all the vices you Imp'ral possess, I find the one you call 'greed' most fascinating. That you would sell your secrets, betray your kin'blood, and even enslave your own race to us, and for what? Mere trinkets and toys—for the least of our crafts. Most amusing…"

—Master Vray, Fra'al Satrap

Contact with xenos races is strictly forbidden to the Imperial citizen, and the alien is abhorred and condemned from the Imperial pulpit with the same vociferous hatred as the witch, mutant, or daemon. For the Imperium, the alien exists only to be destroyed for the fundamental crime of contesting mankind's dominance of the cosmos. After millennia of constant warfare and xenocides, most of the alien races that have survived contact with humanity have come to hate and fear the Imperium in turn or, like the Ork, have come to delight in the endless conflict. This is a somewhat simplistic picture, however. For within these broad generalizations hide numerous localised exceptions, dark dealings, and subtler realities, particularly in those regions at the very edge of the Imperium's control—such as the Calixis Sector.

There are always those who through opportunism, avarice, or simple desperation will deal with the alien either for profit or survival's sake. There is also a market for xenos artefacts, curiosities, lore, science, and even for dangerous xeno-creatures amongst the Imperium's powerful elite. The "Cold Trade," as it is known in the Calixis Sector, deals with items and commodities such as these, and is mired in a grey area of Imperial law. Although there are numerous objects and artefacts that are outright illegal, there are a great many that are not, in part because the breadth and scale of the galaxy makes it simply impossible to categorise and ban every item, device, or object that may or may not have been made by nonhuman hands.

The waters of legality and control are further muddied by the fact that certain individuals and agencies have had their right to exploit xenos races, conduct commerce outside Imperial space, or profit from alien plunder enshrined in law since the Imperium's founding. Foremost among these are the Rogue Traders, be they of great and ancient dynasties or the holders of lesser charters. In some cases, they have spent millennia questing beyond the borders of the Imperium. But they are not alone. The explorators of the Adeptus Mechanicus, the Imperial Crusades, and innumerable lesser merchants, renegades, and frontier worlds all have had the potential for contact with the alien and are avenues by which alien plunder and alien devices can make their way onto the worlds and markets of the Imperium's heartland.

The problem of unregulated trade in xeno-artefacts is particularly prevalent in the Calixis Sector, standing as it does on the edge of Imperial space. Before the sector's founding, many of its inhabited worlds were once were home to alien occupation—a legacy which has left many secrets buried. Local laws vary widely on just what is and is not illegal to transport, import, and own, and a number of independent commercial vessels that ply the sector dabble in the Cold Trade to some degree, usually as an adjunct to their more regular activities.

The Cold Trade is further catered to by numerous merchants on wealthy worlds such as Scintilla and Malfi, serving the tastes of collectors among the nobility and mercantile elite. All of these traders claim legal provenance for their goods (the risk of doing otherwise is just too great, no matter how influential their clientele might be). In practice, it is only the extremely rich and powerful who can afford to own such items, and because of their status they are able to avoid being denounced as "xenophiles" and subjected to the suspicion and wrath of the masses indoctrinated to hate and fear the alien. Of course, it is in part the thrill of the forbidden and the excitement of risk that make such collections appealing to jaded guilders and dissolute nobles in the first place. This, however, is a dangerous game, and quite apart from the potential risk to body and soul inherent in the things they crave, even the most highborn noble walks a tightrope collecting xeno-artefacts. The closer to the forbidden their tastes err, the more they risk censure, criminal investigation, or, worse still, the attention of the Holy Ordos or even the Redemptionists' flames should their activities draw notice.

Using this Chapter

This chapter focuses on the xenos threat within the Calixis Sector. These are not vast marauding alien fleets or world-burning xenos armies, instead you will find a sampling of more subtle, but no less dangerous, threats. You will find aliens hiding among the Imperium's masses, and you will find conspiracy and covert invasion. You will find the terrible lure of forbidden science whose price is the humanity of those that seek out its poisoned promises, terror turned into superstitious worship, and perhaps worst of all, you will find the alien bringing human greed, bloodlust, and evil to a dark apotheosis. You will also find monsters aplenty of both the human and the alien kind. This chapter only scratches the surface of the potential xenos threats to the Calixis Sector, for the night between the stars is vast and holds many horrors indeed. Hopefully, what you read here will also serve as a springboard for creating xenos threats of your own.

Sample Xeno-Artefacts in the Calixis Sector

Within the Calixis Sector, reaction to xeno-artefacts will vary from location to location. An old piece of unearthed statuary that might go unremarked upon and used as a doorstop on a frontier world like Ganf Magna would be enough to have the possessor dragged to the pyre as a xenophile deviant on Maccabeus Quintus. As a result, those who trade in such items and those who wish to purchase them must be both circumspect and cautious. Quite apart from this grey market

there exists a true black market in items classified as completely forbidden by Imperial law. Such illegal items often command vast sums, but the danger involved is equally high, carrying the death penalty for all involved and attracting the wrath of Imperial authorities.

The following is a sampling of such xeno-artefacts that form part of the Cold Trade, ranging from the merely exotic to the outright banned.

Xeno Art and Other Curiosities

Works of art and antiquities--statuary, trinkets, mosaic shards, graven tablets, broken devices, strange jewellery, and the like purporting to be of nonhuman origin--are perhaps the most common (and easily faked) staple of the Cold Trade. Most are simply sold under the banner of "made by unknown hands," which is vague enough to pique interest but non-specific enough to not require proof. Others come with convoluted stories or dubious provenances to increase their potential value. However, the "real thing"—fragments of Eldar wraithbone, Moliochin Fire Hearts, or the disturbing chthonic idols unearthed from dead worlds in the Hazeroth Abyss—can fetch enormously high prices and carry dangers of their own.

Crimson Bestiaries

Xenos bestiaries, books purporting to detail and catalogue a variety of alien creatures, are commonplace in the libraries of the wealthy. Most contain little more than lurid illustrations and superficial descriptions of the more notable enemies of mankind and whatever local fauna is deemed appropriate. They range from the opinionated and often widely inaccurate works illuminated by Ecclesiarchy scribes to rarer works more grounded in reality and culled from scholastic learning, perhaps even from first-hand accounts. Of this latter kind, the Crimson Bestiaries (so called for their distinctive serpent skin bindings) produced by the Great Library of Fenksworld are highly regarded. The volumes skirt dangerously close to the edge of knowledge that Ordo Xenos will allow in the public domain.

A Crimson Bestiary requires a successful **Challenging (+0) Literacy Test** to successfully reference (See **Table 7-4: Investigation Benchmarks** on page 186 of **Dark Heresy**). If this test is passed, a character using the tome to learn something relating to the Calixis Sector and the surrounding stars gains a +5 bonus to his next **Forbidden Lore (Xenos) Test.**

Table 3-2: Xeno-Artefacts and Weapons

Name	Availability	Cost
Xeno Art		
Dubious Object	Scarce	100+
Provenanced Curio	Rare	1,000+
Unique Antiquity	Very Rare	5,000+
Crimson Bestiary	Rare	275
Deluvial Tincture (dose)	Rare	300
Nightweave Silk		
Gown	Rare	1,000+
Merchant's Bolt	Very Rare	5,000
Zamarkand Rose	Very Rare	15,000+
Distilled Petals (dose)	Very Rare	500
Shuriken Pistol	Very Rare	4,500
Shuriken Catapult	Very Rare	6,000
Hrud Fusil	Very Rare	12,000
Fra'al Glass Knife	Rare	450

Deluvial Tincture (Drug)

One of a number of supposedly alien elixirs promising everything from practical immortality to superhuman virility and sold by unscrupulous traders and hereteks, the so-called delulvial tincture is more dangerous than most. It contains proscribed ingredients including xenos retroviral suspensions believed by some Magos Biologis to be distilled from Eldar blood. The source of the drug is thought to lie somewhere in the Hazeroth Abyss, and it is rapidly gaining ground among those that can afford its dubious benefits.

Once imbibed, the tincture immediately produces a feeling of euphoria and impairs the user's judgement, while improving his focus and reaction time. Users gain a bonus of +10 to their Agility and Perception, although they suffer a –5 to their Willpower and Intelligence for the duration of the drug's effects, which last for 1d5 Hours. Once the drug wears off, the user gains a level of Fatigue until rested. The substance is dangerous in large doses—if taken more than once in a 24 hour period, he must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or suffer 1d10 permanent Agility and 1d5 permanent Intelligence Damage.

Table 3-1: Xeno Weaponry

Exotic Weapon	Class	Range	RoF	Dam	Pen	Clip	Rld	Special	Wt
Shuriken Pistol	Pistol	20m	S/3/5	1d10+2 R	4	40	2Full	Reliable	1.2kg
Shuriken Catapult	Basic	60m	S/3/10	1d10+4 R	6	100	2Full	Reliable	2.5kg
Hrud Fusil	Basic	100m	S/–/–	2d10 E	5	3	3Full	Inaccurate, Overheats, Warp Weapon	4kg
Glass Knife	Melee	—	—	1d5+2 R	4	—	—	Toxic (1d10)	1.5kg

Nightweave Silk

This silk is an opulent fabric woven from a crystalline material that shimmers with a spectrum of soft inner light when worn in twilight or darkness, producing almost hypnotic fascination in onlookers. Nightweave silk is valued for its effect, great beauty, and rarity by the high lords and ladies of the sector, and is sold only by traders who operate on the Halo Stars' margins (who remain tight-lipped about its origins). Despite its favour in numerous courts, it is considered ill-omened by many void born, and some psykers claim to detect the faintest echo of suffering and something inhuman in the silk, likewise shunning it.

The Zamarkand Rose

Named after the legendary Rogue Trader bloodline of Zamarkand who brought this poisonous gift back to the Calixis Sector centuries ago, the rose is a fast growing tree that forms huge and intricate skeletal shapes as it matures. An exquisitely beautiful yet sinister thing, the Zamarkand rose blooms a deep crimson and midnight hue, and produces a gorgeous melancholic scent. Its biology is as much animal as vegetable, and it grows strongest when its roots are fed with blood and decay. Indeed, the merest scratch of its poisonous thorns is enough to kill an adult human. The rose is a forbidden xeno-species by direct order of the Lord Sector's decree and has been so for 300 years, and with good reason; the crushed petals of the rose form a powerful hallucinogen capable of wreaking dreadful genetic damage to its imbiber. The Zamarkand rose remains a forbidden thing of dark legend to the Calixis elite, and upon occasion a particularly sadistic weapon of courtly intrigue.

Zamarkand rose petals are highly addictive, plunging those that drink them into a soporific fever dream of extraordinary and twisted visions that will last for hours. Each time the substance is taken, the victim gains 1d5 Insanity Points and 1d5 permanent Toughness Damage. Resisting the addiction is a **Hard (–20) Willpower Test** that must be passed once every 12 hours for 1d5 days in order to break the addiction fully. Should the addict be reduced to "0" Toughness, instead of dying there is a 50% chance he will be horrifically changed. If this occurs, he regains his Toughness score, is rendered irrevocably and homicidally insane, and gains the From Beyond trait. His eyes become bloody orbs, and his blood vessels pulse visibly through his now almost transparent skin, granting him the Fear (1) Disturbing trait.

Xeno Weapons

Of all the artefacts of alien origin, few are more sought after than xeno-weaponry, and in nearly all cases their possession is highly illegal. Some such weapons are highly desired for their unique destructive qualities, but often people want them simply for the pleasure of the forbidden. Some more radical of the Ordo Xenos agents also favour such strange and lethal devices to aid their work (turning the weapons of the alien against them), while on the dark frontier of the sector's edge some desperate or corrupt humans will happily trade with xenos renegades for their potent weaponry regardless of its often heavy and macabre price.

Eldar Shuriken Weapons

Members of the ancient Eldar race have little to do with the Calixis Sector as they are believed to consider it accursed, and save for the occasional privations of corsairs and a handful of wandering outcasts, they and their potent technology remain little more than a myth for most. Eldar artefacts as a consequence are rare and hugely valuable when traded on the sector's black market. Eldar weapons are particularly prized, fetching huge sums from private collectors. Shuriken weaponry is one such type—these guns are graceful dealers of death that use sophisticated gravity accelerators to hurl volleys of miniature razor disks to literally slice their victims apart in seconds.

Shuriken weapons use solid core ammunition which Imperial technology cannot replicate. As a result their ammunition is classed as Very Rare with a base price of 500 Thrones per clip.

Hrud Fusil

Little is known of the reclusive and dangerous race known as the Hrud other than that they dwell only in darkness and possess strange, warp-based technology which, it is said, allows them to walk between worlds and even corrupt the flow of time with their baleful presence. The fusil is one of a scant few Hrud artefacts that occasionally come up for sale and is always in high demand. It is a form of "plasma musket" that uses an unfathomable mechanism to phase a plasma bolt between realspace and the warp, bypassing its target's defences. Though somewhat unpredictable, the weapon's unique qualities make it useful for assassins and Inquisitorial agents alike.

Fusils traded on the black market have been crudely modified to accept Imperial plasma cells. However, if a fusil's mechanism becomes badly damaged it cannot be repaired by human hands.

Fra'al Glass Knife

The glass knife is a vicious hand weapon of xenos origin that has long been a staple of black market trade on the Halo Stars frontier. Glass knifes are jagged, dagger-like blades, seemingly crafted from a single piece of smoky crystal. Renowned for their strength, they are sharp enough to split ceremite. Glass knives maintain their sharpness by continually fracturing tiny shards from their cutting edges, and these splinters are infamous for working their way into wounds, causing agonising injuries.

Smugglers' lore among those that operate on the border of the Halo Stars attribute the blades to the legendary Fra'al, although many insist this is merely speculation. Accurate knowledge of the nomadic Fra'al is strictly prohibited by the Ordo Xenos, and aside from a few scattered stories, mankind remains blissfully ignorant of this merciless, highly psychic race.

The Amaranthine Syndicate

"You entered into the agreement freely and benefited greatly from doing so. I strongly advise you not to renege on it now, no matter if you think you no longer need us, no matter how powerful you think you have become. The consequences of disappointing our Principal in this matter would be…appallingly unfortunate… Please believe me. I know."

—Captain Alicia D'antess, Amaranthine Agent

The Amaranthine Syndicate is a new threat rising on the Trailing/Coreward Border region of the Calixis Sector and one whose influence is quickly spreading from the troubled worlds of Hazeroth to the Josian Reach. It has even begun to brush at the edge of the hive worlds at the sector's core. The trade cartel known as the Amaranthine Syndicate outwardly appears to be a loose confederation of trader-captains, void clans, and outpost colony merchants, but has roused the suspicions of some with evidence of involvement in unlawful trades, smuggling, and backing trade wars. In recent years, individuals linked to the group have been the subject of capture and destruction by the Arbites and Navy, and several Syndicate vessels have been found in possession of forbidden xenos artefacts. Some have even been implicated in pirate attacks, horrific massacres on isolated outposts, slaver raids, and other atrocities. In each case, the Syndicate has disowned those involved and covered its tracks well, but the suspicions of some within the Ordo Xenos have been roused.

Inquisitorial involvement with the Amaranthine Syndicate is a new one and so far only superficial investigations have been carried out. However, suspicion is growing that the Syndicate may have been infiltrated or is being secretly controlled by a xenos force or agency from beyond the sector's borders.



What the Ordo Xenos does not know is that the Amaranthine Syndicate is merely the tip of a deadly iceberg that could spell doom for the entire Calixis Sector. The Syndicate represents a concerted conspiracy to infiltrate and corrupt the Imperium by a terrifying xenos species known as the Slaugth. These baleful creatures epitomise everything that mankind has come to hate and fear about the alien; they are horrific, implacable beings with frightening powers and nightmare science. To them, mankind's only use is as cattle to be farmed and slaughtered to feed their depraved hunger.

Using the Amaranthine Syndicate and Slaugth in Dark Heresy

The Amaranthine Syndicate represents an alien invasion by conspiracy and slow infiltration. As such, it is the perfect foe for an ongoing campaign where the Acolytes must not only uncover how the conspiracy operates and how far it has spread, but also confront the horror that is behind it. Such Acolytes may even struggle to be believed, having a hard time convincing their own masters of the subtle danger on their doorstep.

Such a campaign might be tightly focused on the covert infiltration of a single civilized world, featuring suspicion, paranoia, and cold war style intrigue where the Acolytes don't know who to trust or where to turn. It could also take place on a frontier world that has already become infiltrated and now is falling to the Slaugth desire to feed, as such it could emphasise action and horror elements as the Acolytes are forced to rally a resistance and face the Slaugth in the flesh. Alternately, such a campaign might move from world to world as different elements of the Amaranthine conspiracy (or its goals) come to light, involving interaction with the void born clans, star travel, boarding actions, isolated outpost stations and even a Rogue Trader or two.

GMs may, of course, divorce the Syndicate from the Slaugth (or vice versa) as the Syndicate makes for an excellent organised crime outfit, illicit trade network, or front for void pirates; while the Slaugth make for some very nasty "straight" monsters when unleashed directly at the Acolytes. Be careful with this latter option, though, as these aliens are unashamedly brutal opponents, particularly for those unprepared for just how hard they are to put down—an Acolyte massacre for the unwary is possible!

THE SYNDICATE BY REPUTATION

The Amaranthine Syndicate appears, to outside observation, to be nothing more than an up-and-coming cartel of interstellar traders, minor merchant houses, and void born families who have successfully banded together over the last few years to improve their lot in a region notoriously difficult and dangerous to operate in. The Syndicate's reputation has yet to spread much beyond the Hazeroth Abyss and its nearby stars. However, its rise has been noted by the economic powers of the sector who, though long established, always keep an eye on potential rivals and commercial shifts. As far as most of the emissaries and notaries of the great trade houses, Chartist captains, and sector grandees are concerned, the Syndicate offers little threat or challenge economically as it is simply too small a group and founded on too precarious a footing to be worthy of being considered a potential rival.

Those that have encountered the Syndicate in action, however, might offer a different opinion. It has proven itself efficient, well-resourced, and ruthless in its operations, as many who have crossed it have found out to their regret. Many independent interests, criminal groups, and even local governments where the Syndicate has taken hold are starting to view it with growing disquiet and some suspicion, as are some within the Adeptus Arbites and Battlefleet Calixis, although the voices of concern in those last two organisations are still relatively few so far.

The suspicions that surround the Syndicate are linked primarily with travel to prohibited areas outside of the Imperium, the trade in illegal xenos artefacts, and piracy. While none of these conjectures is without merit (or entirely uncommon or unexpected for that matter), many who have had dealings with the Syndicate believe something even darker lurks behind its façade. Whatever that darkness may be, it is something most cannot identify but fills even the usually hardened voider families, commonplace smugglers, and dockside gangs with deep unease.

Apart from its more sinister dealings, the Amaranthine Syndicate operates exactly as one might expect of any successful trade cartel. It is made up of a diverse group of private commercial interests that trade between the worlds on the Calixis Sector's Trailing border and has recently made inroads into the more established areas of the Josian Reach, as well as the northern edge of the Ixaniad Sector. The Syndicate's membership includes independent free-trader captains and local void born clans, as well as planet-based merchant houses, trade guilds, prospectors, petty nobles, and the like. While these members continue to operate largely independently, the Syndicate acts on their behalf to cement trade agreements, negotiate settlements, and quell discord between its members.

It also works to control markets and prices, massing its power against competition, rivals, or outside threat.

Stardock Tales

The following rumours are examples of what may be picked up from the void born families, dock-siders, merchants, and smugglers that have had dealings with the Syndicate by way of gossip and bribed intelligence. Getting hold of this information will require investigation or suitable social interaction, modified as normal for circumstance.

Table 3-3: Amaranthine Syndicate Rumours

Degrees of Success	Details Revealed
Standard Success	"Amaranthine Syndicate, I've heard of them. Far traders out from the Abyss, solid dealers and well set up. Not a guild as such, more an alliance I suppose. Don't know much of them, truth told."
One	"There's a few round here that trade with them. I might be able to name a few captains and merchants for you. From what I've heard though, you'll need serious business to get their attention, as they don't mess with the small fry."
Two	"Well, if it's a little something special you're after, for the right money they can get it you…exotic goods, anything you need. Those ships of theirs travel far, you understand me? Now for a little remuneration I can introduce you…"
Three	"They've a dark reputation as a power not to cross; the Cold Guild won't touch them, and their rivals have a way of going missing no matter how high and mighty. I don't know who the bosses are, but it's not those primped up agents or their swaggering captains. They call them the 'Principals' but who or what they are I don't know. Still, they pay well."
Four or more	"They can get you what you want, anything you want—that's what I've heard, well, overheard at any rate. But that's not all; they're hooked up to something bad behind them and that's certain. Something to make the guilders sweat and the free captains vanish when their agents are about. Most fear its pirates or rogues from out in the deep black and that's bad enough, but I'm not sure it isn't something worse."

The Syndicate's ruling body, known within the organisation as the "Principals," also provides resources, financing, and armed force and punitive measures at its members' request. These Principals demand that members give them a (surprisingly moderate) cut of their profits, that potentially useful information be reported back to them, and that when they do make a direct request of their members, it is carried out promptly, expediently, and without question.

In terms of structure, the Syndicate follows a simple pyramid layout. The largest, lowest tier of the pyramid is the Syndicate's production base and markets—local planet-bound individuals, such as nobles, guild bosses, traders, prospectors, specialist artisans, and the like. These individuals might be quite powerful locally and control large bodies of men and material; indeed, their own organisations might know nothing of the master's affiliation to the Syndicate. The middle tier is composed of the Syndicate's agents and a number of groups with direct Syndicate affiliation. This tier is primarily made up of starship trader captains, their crews, and associated void born clans. However, it also includes a number of mercenary groups and a small dedicated body of scribes, emissaries, and logisters who negotiate for the Syndicate in more formal settings as a legitimate trade body. This tier of operation also incorporates a less legitimate "shadow" made up of smugglers, outlaws, hereteks, and assassins who also serve the Syndicate.

The upper tier controls the Syndicate. It is composed of the Principals—a rarely encountered group who deliberately hide behind layers of secrecy. Outsiders and many within the organisation believe that the Principals are simply taking prudent means to protect themselves. Some believe they may be powers already present within the sector (such as a great house who wishes to keep its involvement under cover) or one or more Rogue Traders seeking to expand their power within the Imperium's bounds. Others believe the Principals are renegades from outside the Imperium—pirates, non-compliants, and outlaws—and that the Syndicate is backed by blood money taken in raids and destroyed shipping. This would be bad enough, but the truth is far worse.

A BLACK MARKET INDEED

The illegal operations of the Amaranthine Syndicate operate in tandem with its more legitimate trading interests and are centred on intersystem smuggling operations. They deal primarily in illicit drugs, stolen items, controlled technologies, arms, and other black market goods, and in the worlds bordering the Hazeroth abyss, the Syndicate has quickly come to displace other organised smuggler gangs, being the first to challenge the domination of the Cold Guild in generations. It has been utterly merciless in crushing any organised opposition against it and the Syndicate will readily utilise targeted assassination and mercenary kill teams in order to employ a strategy of divide and conquer—backing one local criminal or mercantile faction against another.

The Syndicate is also careful to leave petty gangs and local independents largely untouched, using their activities to mask the Syndicate's own and providing convenient scapegoats for the authorities. For those with the wealth or connections, the Syndicate has other goods and services to offer. Its agents deal in forbidden xenotech, artefacts, and other trinkets from beyond the Imperium's border. The Syndicate can also do more, much more, for the right buyer; it can arrange to have enemies permanently "vanished," provide clients with vast sums of financial backing, and arrange for shipping (or even whole outposts) to disappear without trace. However, the price for such services is total loyalty to the Syndicate and its often strange requests.

THE DEVIL'S BARGAIN

The Amaranthine Syndicate first appears as a friend to those in need, offering a lifeline to those so desperate that they do not care who saves them and for those for whom the need outweighs good sense or caution. Once a suitable target has been identified, a Syndicate emissary will make the approach, and the deal offered will always seem more than generous, designed to alleviate the subject's immediate problems.

However, as time progresses the Syndicate will secretly contrive to increase its target's dependency on it by setting the target's enemies against him, blocking other forms of help, and creating "accidents" or adverse turns of events. This forces its targets to repeatedly take the easy way out and ask for the Syndicate's help until the target is so heavily embroiled there is no way out. It is at this final stage that the subject (if he is particularly unfortunate) will be introduced personally to one of the Principals, leaving him in no doubt as to just what kind of bargain he has entered into and the consequences of betraying his new-found allies.

The Principals' demands may at first seem trivial or bizarre; that a commodity price is raised fractionally, seemingly random personnel reassigned, a report mis-filed, or a book in a private library burned for example. Over time, these demands change, becoming truly dreadful—relief shipments to outlying worlds redirected away from planets in need, medical supplies tainted at the source, a blind eye turned to pending disaster, or even hundreds of colonists betrayed in order to stock the Slaugth larder.

THE DARK DESIGN

The ultimate power behind the works of the Amaranthine Syndicate is a covenant of xenos known as the Slaugth. The Slaugth are an ageless and patient race, and their plans and schemes are tangled and largely incomprehensible to the human mind. However, they share one motivation that humans can understand, that of an addictive hunger. To feed this hunger, the Slaugth have undertaken to destabilise the Calixis Sector in order to see it unravel in civil war, anarchy, and terror so that they might feed on the fractious masses of mankind with little or no opposition.

To this end they infiltrated the Amaranthine Syndicate when it was a fledging trade cartel, overcoming all opposition until they controlled it completely. The Syndicate is their pawn in a wider game that may take generations of human lives to see fruition. Their plan is elegant in its simplicity. The Slaugth understand mankind very well. Their weapons are human greed and desire, and their plan is to effectively

Nightmare Science

The Slaugth possesses a frighteningly advanced mastery of biomechanical technology and elemental physics that far exceeds human and perhaps even Eldar capabilities, and most mysteriously seem to be able to traverse interstellar distances without recourse to the warp. They grow and augment pseudo-living devices as needed, seamlessly blending flesh and metal to achieve their often horrific ends.

Shroud Cloak: To allow the Slaugth to pass unseen and conceal their terrifying nature, these multi-layered robes and mantles absorb and refract light, and seem to move and twitch of their own accord. They provide 3 Armour Points to all Locations, provide a penalty of -30 to detect the wearers with the use of scanners, and grant wearers a +20 bonus to Concealment Tests. The cloaks also allow Slaugth to attempt to hide in plain sight if they remain stationary in an area of gloom or low light conditions. By constraining their bodies and commanding the shrouds to conceal them, the Slaugth can pass for a misshapen human at a distance if they wish.

Necrotic Sceptre: This device, resembling a corroded copper sceptre, pulses with sickly light and unleashes arcs of eerie, moaning energy when fired. It may also be wielded in close combat like a mace with deadly effect.

Table 3-4: Necrotic Sceptre

Exotic Weapon	Class	Range	RoF	Dam	Pen	Clip	Rld	Special	Wt
Necrotic Sceptre	Basic	100m	S/-/-	2d10+8 E	6	—	N/A	Disintegrate†, Recharge	5 kg
Melee		—	—	1d10+15 E	4	—	—	Disintegrate†	

†**Disintegrate (New Special Quality):** Any victim suffering Critical Damage from this weapon is blasted into a cloud of ash and vapour and is completely destroyed.

destroy humanity by giving it what it wants—wealth, power, weapons, drugs, and forbidden trinkets—and watch as humanity tears itself apart as a consequence. At the same time, they are using their "gifts" to further infiltrate not only the criminal underworlds and economic structures of the sector, but also its nobility and government. Certainly the Ecclesiarchy, Munitorum, and Administratum are likely targets. If their plan sees its apotheosis, then when the time is right, the Slaugth will turn the key on their operations—eaten away from within, utterly compromised and eroded, the Calixis Sector will collapse in on itself in fire and chaos. In the ruins of once mighty Calixis, the Slaugth will have their way, and the survivors will doubtless envy the dead.

THE HORRORS OF THE SLAUGTH

"The worm that walks has come for us all…"

—Found carved into a bulkhead, Watchpost Hazeroth/ Sentry-17. All Hands Lost: attacker unknown, 123.M40

The Slaugth are terrible and monstrous beings whose minds and bodies are utterly alien and who are rightly feared and reviled by mankind. The Slaugth (known in some cases as the "maggot men," the "dream eaters," or the "carrion lords") are regarded by most that have heard of them as little more than a nightmarish myth—void born tales or the dark fancy of some mad Rogue Trader. The Inquisition, for its part, knows the race to be all too real, but have suppressed all knowledge under a blanket of secrecy for millennia.

The Inquisition also knows what terrible desire motivates the Slaugth's contact with humanity—the desire to feed. They are carrion eaters and crave the flesh of dead intelligent beings above all others, savouring in particular the cranial matter from which they seem to derive an almost narcotic and addictive pleasure in consuming. Some tales even go so far as to say that the maggot men somehow consume the memories and knowledge of their victims this way.

The history of mankind's involvement with them is uncertain, but if some sources are to be believed, the species may have been encountered at the edges of Imperial space as far back as the Age of Strife. Most encounters follow a similar pattern: black, tenebrous vessels slipping into Imperial space to wreak havoc, isolated outposts or shipping attacked without warning by a vastly superior and horrific foe, bodies left mutilated or missing all together, and vile technologies and blasphemous creations traded to depraved human renegades in return for slaves and captives.

Aside from what little can be gleaned from the historical record, the true nature and dangers the Slaugth represent are largely unknown to the Imperium, as are their origin and numbers. Some xeno-savants and Rogue Traders believe that their home system (and perhaps even a great hellish Slaugth empire), lies far out into the Trailing Halo Stars beyond the Imperium's borders. Sealed inquisitorial archives speculate that several frontier worlds in the Segmentum Obscurus have, over the millennia, been purposefully destabilised and tipped into civil war by the Slaugth in order to give them free reign in which to feed. However, these have been rare occurrences and in any such encounter the number of Slaugth involved has been mercifully few, for the creatures themselves are savagely powerful combatants and nearly impossible to slay.

The Holy Ordos remains unaware of the Slaugth's involvement with the Amaranthine Syndicate and the threat it represents, although encounters with the Slaugth in the

Calixis Sector have been spiking dramatically in the last several years. There are several reasons for this, not least of all the Slaugth's own abilities as infiltrators and puppeteers, and the degree to which they have already spread their network of agents in the Sector. At present, the Inquisition has no expectation of the Slaugth being behind such a subtle and widespread conspiracy; they know them only as raiders and abductors—extremely dangerous, but few in number and limited in scope. The Holy Ordos, the Calixis Sector, and indeed the Imperium have been blindsided by this strange and subtle invasion. If its true nature is not soon uncovered, then billions of lives stand in dire peril.

INQUISITORIAL THREAT BRIEFING

As far as the Ordo Xenos is concerned, the Amaranthine Syndicate, or possibly a faction within it, is under suspicion of the organised trafficking in proscribed xenos artefacts and perhaps more seriously of extensive links with renegades and pirates operating in the Hazeroth Abyss region. As a result, several Inquisitors (with the support and notice of Battlefleet Calixis's Hazeroth patrol squadrons) have begun to undertake the tracking and investigation of suspect individuals and craft connected to the Syndicate. To date, the results remain inconclusive, although several smuggling rings and individual xeno-heretics have been successfully prosecuted as a result of the Ordo Xenos's investigations. The matter is ongoing, and the Amaranthine Syndicate remains under covert surveillance and Inquisitorial suspicion. However, preliminary reports indicate that no wider conspiracy or xenos-taint exists beyond such localized corruption.

MEMBERS OF THE AMARANTHINE CONSPIRACY

The Amaranthine Syndicate's membership covers a range of different individuals and operations, from the trader crews and captains of the Syndicate's ships to its planet bound merchant and smuggling contacts. The legal side of its operations involves everything from employed casual labour to scribes and interface pilots, while its criminal operations include mercenaries, hired guns, hereteks, and street scum who deal their illicit cargo. Most of these individuals will have no dealings whatsoever with the Syndicate's Principals save for the most trusted and the most compromised.

In terms of archetypal members of the Amaranthine Syndicate, use the Heretek†, Heavy, Recidivist†, Merchant Magnate and Scum stats from **Chapter XII: Aliens, Heretics & Antagonists** in **Dark Heresy**. To create smugglers, use the Rating NPC and add the extra Skills and Talents Barter (Fel), Concealment (Ag), Deceive (Fel), Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Paranoia, and Pistol Training (Las, SP).

†These will most often act as fronts and fences for the Syndicate's wealth of illegal goods. Any of the drugs from **Dark Heresy**, as well as any of the proscribed xenos items from the beginning of this chapter, is appropriate for their stock in trade, often at bargain prices to attract unwary victims.

Amaranthine Agent

The Syndicate conducts its more important deals through skilled agents, usually groomed for the task and selected from the staff of minor merchant houses and sometimes even the Administratum. Such agents represent a charming (if often somewhat melancholic) human face for their faceless masters. Most having been ensnared by their own ambition and vanity, they are quite capable of leading others similarly astray and are utterly loyal to the Syndicate, if less than happy with their lot. They know full well who they work for and the price of failure.

Amaranthine Agent Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
28	28	30	30	30	37	40	35	40

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 11
Skills: Awareness (Per), Barter (Fel) +10, Blather (Fel), Charm (Fel), Chem-Use (Fel), Common Lore (Imperium, Mercantile) (Int) +10, Deceive (Fel) +10, Intimidate (S), Literacy (Int) +10, Security (Ag), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic, Trade Cant) (Int), Trade (Negotiator) (Int) +10.
Talents: Pistol Training (SP), Jaded, Resistance (Interrogation).
Armour: Concealed mesh vest (Body 3).
Weapons: Compact autopistol with man-stopper rounds (15m; S/–/6; 1d10+2 I; Pen 3; Clip 9; Rld Full).
Gear: Formal clothing, 2 man-stopper clips, 1d10 Thrones, personal vox, data-slate.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Minima.



Amaranthine Captain

While the Syndicate's agents direct their negotiations and business affairs, it is the captains of its free trader vessels that are relied on to deal with more direct matters when needed. Most were dangerous, disreputable men and women long before their greed or piratical activities led them to the Syndicate's attention, and what little morality or compunctions they may once have had they can literally no longer afford if they want to live. There is nothing they will not do to maintain what freedom and power is allowed them—and to avoid the Slaugth's personal attentions, of course.

Amaranthine Captain Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
38	42	35	35	35	38	35	42	36

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 17
Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Barter (Fel) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Ciphers (Free Trader) (Int), Carouse (T) +10, Common Lore (Mercantile, Hazeroth Abyss, Imperium, Tech) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (Xenos) (Int), Gamble (Int), Interrogation (WP), Inquiry (Int), Literacy (Int), Navigation (Stellar) (Int), Pilot (Ag) (Civil Craft, Spacecraft) +10, Speak Language (Low Gothic, Trade Cant, Ship Cant) (Int), Tech-Use (Int), Trade (Merchant Captain) (Int), Survival (Int).
Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Bolt, Las, SP), Disarm, Jaded, Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Power, Primitive), Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, Plasma, SP), Nerves of Steel.
Armour: Light carapace breastplate and mesh (Arms 3, Body 5, Legs 3).
Weapons: Bolt pistol (30m; S/2/–; 1d10+5 X; Pen 4; Clip 12; Rld Full), compact laspistol (15; S/–/–; 1d10+1 E; Shots 15; Rld Full; Reliable), chainsword (1d10+5† R; Pen 2; Balanced, Tearing).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Respirator, personal encrypted vox bead, 2 bolt clips, 1 las clip, lucky charm. They may also have extensive cybernetic rebuild (see **Chapter V: Armoury** of **Dark Heresy**) as well as a ship and crew to call on.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Minoris.

The Slaugth

In appearance, the Slaugth are truly horrific to look upon, taking the form of a vague humanoid shape composed of seemingly hundreds of writhing, half-melded maggot-like worms covered in viscous, necrotic mucus. Capable of stretching and reforming their body-mass at will, they move with an obscene, boneless fluidity and are capable of regenerating injury with startling speed. They are impervious to age, poison, diseases, and all but the most extreme injury. Their minds are as alien as any encountered by mankind—coldly savage, psychic voids filled with a monstrous hunger for the dead.

Slaugth science and technology is likewise nightmarish and powerful, seamlessly melding the organic and inorganic to achieve its ends in a blasphemous symbiosis of form and function. The Slaugth seem capable of manufacturing strange techno-organic construct creatures of a bewildering variety, carrying out their master's wishes as need be. Slaugth weapons and artefacts are indeed so advanced and strange as to appear to be the products of warp craft to the uninitiated—a fact that, coupled with their hideous appearance, has mislead some into believing them daemonic in nature.

Slaugth Overseer

The Slaugth "Principals" behind the Amaranthine Syndicate are, if anything, more dangerous and powerful than those encountered as infiltrators (see the Game Master's Kit). Whether they constitute some leadership caste or particular cabal remains unknown.

Slaugth Overseer Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
40	45	(8) 47	(10) 58	53	(12) 65	48	72	30

Movement: 5/10/15/30 **Wounds:** 30
Skills: Barter (Fel), Chem-Use (Int) +10, Climb (Ag), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Concealment (Ag) Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Evaluate (Int), Forbidden Lore (Xenos) (Int) +10, Intimidation (S) +20, Logic (Int), Medicae (Int), Security (Ag), Shadowing (Ag) Silent Move (Ag), Tech-Use (Int) +10, and any others appropriate.
Talents: Ambidextrous, Leap Up, Rapid Reaction, Swift Attack, Weapon Training (Exotic).
Traits: Dark Sight, Fear Rating 3 (Horrifying), From Beyond, Strange Physiology, Regeneration (recovering 2d5 Wounds), Unnatural Intelligence (×2), Unnatural Strength (×2), Unnatural Toughness (×2).
Elasticity: The Slaugth can flatten their bodies down or stretch them out to over three times their normal length, increasing their reach and providing a +20 bonus on Grapple and Climb Tests).
Undying: Slaugth cannot be harmed by diseases, poisons, or toxic effects. They have no need to breathe and may survive unaided in vacuum.
Untouchable: See page 28.
Necrotic: At will, Slaugth are able to exude a necrotic fluid from their body tissues. This bile is filled with flesh-eating bacteria and molecular acids that liquefy flesh and even burn through metal. Anyone inflicting a Critical Hit on a Slaugth in close combat has a 25% chance of being splashed with the creature's necrotic fluids, inflicting 1d10 R Toxic Damage. This splash may be Dodged but not Parried.
Consume Memories: By devouring the cranial matter of an intelligent creature, the Slaugth can absorb the victim's memories, knowledge, and experiences. Such memories are often a jumbled morass, and the Slaugth must make a successful Intelligence Test at an appropriate level of Difficulty to select

particular information. The fresher the brain, the better for this purpose. Slaugth prefer to devour rotting brain matter as this has an effect comparable to narcotics on a human, but they will forgo this pleasure and consume living brain matter if expedient. Memories gained from this process fade with time if not reinforced, disappearing within a few weeks unless externally recorded or repeatedly in use.

Armour: Shroud cloak (All 3).

Weapons: Necrotic grasp (1d10+9† R; Tearing, Toxic), necrotic sceptre (see sidebar).

†Includes Strength Bonus.

Gear: Slaugth Overseers often carry many examples of their powerful and frightening technology, see Nightmare Science sidebar for a few examples.

Threat Rating: Xenos Extremis.

Slaugth Vassal Construct

The vassal is a common biomechanical construct creature, animated by the Slaugth to tend devices and serve as menial labourers, guards, spies, or observers. Like most examples of Slaugth technology, its appearance inspires immediate revulsion in humanity. Though widely differing in appearance, most appear as hovering asymmetrical columns of mottled, fungal looking flesh, shot through with pulsing veins and lattices of metal threadwork and crystalline studs. Their heads are no more than clusters of waving frond-like sensory growths, and skeletal pincer-limbs erupt from their body mass as needed.

Slaugth Vassal Construct Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
18	30	36	46	30	18	35	40	10

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 20

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Concealment (Ag), Silent Move (Ag) +10, any others as needed for its assigned task.

Talents: Weapon Training (Exotic), any others will be implanted as needed.

Traits: Fear 1 (Disturbing), Flyer 5, From Beyond, Natural Armour 4 (All), Natural Attack (Pincers), Sonar Sense, Strange Physiology (they can survive unaided in vacuum and other hostile environments), Undying (see Slaugth description).

Discorperation: If destroyed, these constructs melt away to bubbling necrotic ooze and stinking gas within a few seconds, leaving nothing else behind.

Armour: None (All 4).

Weapons: Pincers (1d5+3† R), may carry and utilise other weapons as needed. Commonly this will include weapons functionally identical to a Bolt Gun, Electro-Flail, Imperial Needle pistol, or Web Gun.

†Includes Strength Bonus.

Gear/Other Traits: As its master desires, taking the shape either of carried devices or biomechanical implants; one designed for heavy labour might have Unnatural Strength (×2) while another designed as an observer might be equipped with a shroud cloak and enhanced senses, etc.

Threat Rating: Xenos Majoris.



The Beast House

"There is no need to dissemble here, I know why you have come. You have come for something real, something unique, something to drown your boredom in spilled blood and deafen you with the wild beating of your own living heart. You have come to find the Beast House. Now tell me, what's your pleasure?"

—Ryrin Night Eye, Mistress of Beasts

Humanity hates and fears the alien. For millennia this attitude has been taught and ingrained in each successive generation. Indeed, the very word "xenos" conjures up deep-seated feelings of horror and revulsion within the heart of the average Imperial citizen. However, there is a flip side to this ingrained loathing, a terrified fascination with the alien, and in the dark sub-levels of blood sport arenas and fighting pits, this dreadful attraction is played out for those that can afford the spectacle.

In its most common form, such bloody entertainment and the arenas that provide it are quite legal. Bull thornox battle to the death in Iocanthos barter-kraals, and carnosaurs rampage against teams of human gladiators upon Scintilla's many Red Circuses nightly. Yet, removed from the garish lights of such public entertainment, the rich and the jaded, not to mention the lowest of the low, crave more desperate, darker, and forbidden pleasures. Their preferred games feature unwilling fighters, innocents stalked for sport, and creatures so vile and dangerous that the Imperial authority forbids their use on pain of death. Within the Calixis Sector, the most widespread and powerful network of such illicit arenas have but a single, whispered name—the Beast House.

As long as there has been a Calixis Sector, it seems as if there has been a Beast House. It is not in any true sense a cult, rather it is closer to a criminal network. However, behind this façade worse things lurk than can be found at the heart of any narco-gang or underhive clan. So insidious has the Beast House become that the name and the role of this secretive organisation has become ingrained upon the psyche of Calixian civilisation—the Beast House and the horrors it secretly contains go unobserved and unlooked for, hiding almost in plain sight. While local enforcers may raid an unlicensed arena linked to the group here or the Adeptus Arbites may break up a xenos-creature smuggling ring there, the Beast House goes on undiminished. Indeed, it is actually strengthened by the removal of those in its employ "weak enough" to fall foul of the authorities.

Today there are Beast Houses on many worlds, but few realise just how far the Beast House has spread through the criminal underbelly of the Golgenna Reach and how far its tendrils stretch into the dim stars beyond the sector. The Beast House is more than a set of physical locations, a trade, or even a loose guild of hunters and dealers in proscribed creatures.



Rumours Surrounding the Beast House

The following rumours are examples of what may be picked up from the void born families, dock-siders, merchants, and smugglers that have had dealings with the Beast House by way of gossip and bribed intelligence, although little is known of them, even then. They don't know the whole story, but what they suspect is bad enough. Getting hold of this information will require investigation or suitable social interaction, modified as normal for circumstance.

Table 3-5: Beast House Tales

Degrees of Success	Rumours Revealed
Standard Success	"There's a group of beast slavers and hunters who deal in captured xeno creatures. They've been called the 'Beast House' as long as anybody can remember."
One	"Its not just a name, there's a real organisation with contacts off-world to get them whatever they need, and they trade with anyone who can afford them."
Two	"If you've got the money or the contacts the Beast House can get anything you want by way of xenos-creatures, regardless of what the law or the licence says. Just don't cross them or you'll end up in some horror's stomach. They use a lot of local muscle and hired help, but the real thing is all off-worlders—ferals, blood hunters, and smugglers—stone killers the lot of 'em."
Three	"If the stories are true, they run their own private arenas, invitation only, if you know what I mean. There you can see things worse than you could ever imagine. The rich and the powerful come out to play, they do. The story goes that they hold these shows far beyond prying eyes and, if the rumours are true, for good reason too. Just pray you never turn up as part of the show-bill, you understand me?"
Four or more	"Don't trust them and don't go near them unless you have to, that's what I've heard. Evil pure and simple. Alien tainted and worse than any of the monsters they trade in. How many people do you think go to them and their 'shows' and never come back? How many dregs and hivers taken in the night for their sport and Emperor know what else? If half of what I've heard whispered is true, I don't want to know the answers."

The hidden truth is that the Beast House is a criminal empire that spans worlds and is founded on blood and pandering to the very worst aspects of human nature. Centuries old, it maintains its shroud of secrecy by working through layers of intermediaries and local agents, and it is growing stronger year by year. It hides many dark secrets the Inquisition is only just beginning to suspect, and for some in the Ordo Xenos, the realisation is dawning that they may have let a serpent of alien-tainted corruption coil around the very heart of the Calixis Sector.

THE BEAST HOUSE BY REPUTE

In the shadowy entertainment zones on the edge of underhives from Sibellus to Solomon and beyond, the name "Beast House" is synonymous with extreme blood sports, arena combats, and the xenos-creature trade. Likewise, many jaded sons and daughters of the wealthy great houses also know the term through wicked and scandalous tales of hunts and monstrous things forbidden by the restrictions of Imperial law—all provided for discerning clients at enormous expense. Stories and rumours about the Beast House have been doing the rounds, high and low, for so long most believe that the name itself is little more than a traditional effectation for those who deal in the blood sport trade. The popular belief held by most is that if an original Beast House once existed, it is now is long gone and that others have long since sought to cash in on the legend to further their own reputations. This is a view shared by many local enforcer groups, most criminal groups, and until relatively recently by the Adeptus Arbites and the Ordo Xenos. However, recently several incidents have come to light casting a far darker pall over the Beast House and its secrets.

What the Ordo Xenos Knows

The Ordo and the Sector Arbites are slowly recognising that there is a dark thread connecting those who run the blood arenas and those who deal in xenos beasts. In the last few decades, encounters and reports of dangerous and proscribed xenos-predators appearing in illegal arenas or the hands of depraved recidivists have steadily increased in the sector's core worlds and on Scintilla in particular. Subsequent investigations into these occurrences pointed time after time to the so-called Beast House. Further investigation also turned up rashes of disappearances among the poor and the

underclass in the areas where a particular Beast House was said to exist, rumoured links to smuggling rings, murder for hire, strange sightings of creatures, and other peculiarities. Yet nothing was concrete enough to show an overarching threat.

It was only when Inquisitor Layvan and his retinue disappeared while investigating the Beast House on Fenksworld that the full attention of the Ordo Xenos came to bear on the organisation, and it has not liked what it has begun to uncover. Currently, Inquisition backed elements are conducting a widespread series of covert investigations into the Beast Houses on several worlds, but they have met with little success in penetrating its higher echelons. However, alarm at their discoveries to date is spreading due to the Beast House's links to many of the wealthy houses and criminal gangs across the Golgenna Reach and Markayan Marches and the suspicion that extreme and dangerous alien corruption lies at the Beast House's heart. In direct response to ongoing events and with characteristic subtlety, the Ordo is doing its best to uncover the full extent of this xeno-crime before it takes overt and decisive action, rather than attempting a premature strike risking the Beast House's fragmenting and scattering only to resurface latter. This strategy, while sound and based on past experience, is not without the wider risk that the alien corruption may spread further before it is checked and thus is the cause of some contention within the Ordos.

Blood Sports and Fighting Arenas in the Imperium

Aside from more sedate or spiritually worthy pleasures, the common Imperial citizen, particularly if he lives in the crowded and heavily regulated societies found on most hive worlds, favours his public entertainments in the form of visceral and often violent spectacle. Fighting contests, from simple bare-knuckle brawls and displays of martial skill right up to the rare extreme of prisoners condemned to battle as augmetic gladiators, are all popular in the low hives. Meanwhile, attending duelling schools, sponsoring champions for battle, and hunting dangerous prey are all common pastimes of the elite.

Beast shows and games at the circus or carnivora are somewhat rarer than the more mundane human fighting attractions. However, they are a long-standing tradition on some worlds whose own hazardous life-forms make for suitable opponents, or whose wealth allows such beasts to be imported from afar. In the Calixis Sector, Hive Sibellus has by far the greatest number of such arenas, as the hive's position as capitol and trade nexus has long afforded it the ability to pack its circuses with a bewildering variety of beasts and creatures from across the sector. But without doubt, the pale pits of Hive Volg on Fenksworld have the undisputed crowning reputation as the most horrific, dragging up "things" from the polluted depths below to fight against human combatants.

Despite public demand for ever more exotic and ferocious battles, certain xenos creatures are forbidden or have their trafficking proscribed by Imperial law. Some are simply judged too alien or too dangerous for public exposure, while others represent a threat that goes far beyond that of a mere loosed beast should they escape. This proscription, of course, does not prevent the desire to see such terrors for those willing to flout the law, and in the underhives and black markets of many worlds, all kinds of forbidden creatures and deadly games can be enjoyed by those with the money and stomach to do so.

The Xeno Conspiracy on Fenksworld

Fenksworld has long been a breeding ground for cults and conspiracies, many of which have been known to spread out into the wider sector, and the notorious independence of its rulers has much to do with this. One collection of conspiracy tales persisted for decades about a shadowy group based in the dilapidated sections of Hive Nova Castillia's industrial underbelly, devoting themselves to obtaining illegal xenos specimens for the purposes of study and experimentation. This rogue cabal of xenophiles and heretics persisted on the edge of the Holy Ordos's attention until three years ago a junior Xenos Inquisitor called Layvan and his retinue undertook a close investigation of the circumstantial evidence.

Layvan quickly discovered the group was little more than a front for a darker conspiracy. His last communiqué alleged that the conspiracy used a hidden facility somewhere in Nova Castillia to breed and augment a variety of vile alien and mutated creatures, which were then transhipped through the busy orbital port and out across the sector to various Beast Houses on other worlds. Shortly afterward, Layvan and his entire retinue disappeared, and despite the sudden and direct action by the Holy Ordos and a full Adeptus Arbites backed operation to seek out and purge the suspected xenophile presence, no trace of Layvan or the xeno-lab was ever found.

A year later, a raid on a heretek workshop on the distant hive world of Solomon recovered a damaged data slate. Ordos officials reconstructed the dying and confused testimony of Layvan's savant Acolyte Urisa from the slate. The recordings contained on the slate show scenes of some hidden industrial centre given over to xenos flesh-craft, where Urisa alleges that hundreds had died in blasphemous experiments and that monstrous things walked. Clearly suffering from shock and blood loss, Urisa's testimony was garbled and rambling, but he clearly named the Beast House as the secret power behind the conspiracy.

"No foe can stand when confronted by the warriors of the Imperium."

Using the Beast House in Your Games

The Beast House is a horror show, a vessel built to contain monsters for Acolytes to encounter. You can use it simply in its physical sense as a very bad place where your Acolytes might encounter all manner of horrors and terrible creatures to uncover, fight, or evade. You can of course ramp-up the fear factor and sense of threat in such places by forcing Acolytes into situations where their resources are limited and they are literally alone in the dark. They may even simply stumble on the Beast House as part of an unrelated investigation and find its masters unhappy with such an intrusion!

The Beast House also makes for an excellent opponent in conspiracy and covert investigation adventures. You could have a highly varied xenos focused campaign, where the Acolytes attempt to track down and combat the Beast House on different world. Starting with investigating the Beast House's involvement in the arenas and then tracing back to the hunts on forbidden worlds where it captures livestock, the Acolytes could slowly uncover just how far its tendrils extend and what horrors lie concealed at its heart. Ultimately, a campaign's climax may even involve a confrontation with Solkarn Senk himself, although just who or what he is has been left to the GM's own dark imaginings.

Behind the Mask

The Beast House, as presented here, focuses on the xenos elements of the beasts it uses and the evil and corrupt men and women who are involved in running it. The evil of the beast slavers is best expressed as an unrestrained bloodlust and the love of the hunt gone mad, with such attendant evils as slavery and the torture of lesser creatures for sport. The danger the Inquisition and Imperial law sees in this is not simply the crimes of those involved but also the myriad possible dangers presented by the xenos creatures themselves, both known and unknown. At the secret heart of the Beast House, this menace has gone so far as to enter the realms of the truly horrific, with hideous experiments and insane games where innocents are killed for nothing more than sport. The GM may, of course, feel that this is not enough to explain it all and may wish to add a truly alien conspiracy or even daemonic sponsorship to its secrets.

STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

"I'm not interested in your money or who you are, pretty one, just how nice you can scream for me."

—Shakas Wvendal, Beast Slaver

The Beast House operates to supply, store, and in some cases, even modify or breed creatures for use in arena-circuses and blood sport operations in the criminal underworld. It has also been known to provide beasts to private owners, including cults and hereteks, for their own dark ends. There is a great deal of money to be made from this illegal trade, and in order to do so, the Beast House acts to control the supply chain, running the whole operation from initial capture of the creatures to their distribution. Furthermore, the Beast House sometimes acts as the secret owner or backer of the venues that host its creatures, often taking a hand in incidental activities such as gambling and criminality that surround these places.

The Beast House protects itself by making extensive use of local intermediaries on the worlds where it operates and maintaining progressive layers of secrecy about its true size and what it can supply. This secrecy means that many of those who work for it don't know the full truth and that parts of the group and its assets can be "cut loose" if faced with sanction by local law enforcement, or when infiltrated by outsiders, with little danger to the other parts of the organisation or its true masters, the "beast slavers." Just how many true members of the Beast House are privy to its inner workings remains unknown to the Holy Ordos, but probably there are no more than a few hundred in total scattered across the Golgenna Reach and the Markyan Marches, and perhaps that many again operating to acquire savage livestock on numerous far flung worlds and roving hunting ships.

Of these, those who lead the organisation and hold the power of life and death over their fellows and their creatures are fewer still. This last group consists of the most secretive and dangerous members of the Beast House. They are the beast slavers, hunt masters, and flesh crafters who are the true driving force behind the organisation. However, all report to a single mysterious authority who's power and mastery over the Beast House is without question, a man known as Solkarn Senk.

The Outer Circle

The outer circle of the Beast House is made up of hired muscle, local criminal groups, and contacts developed through bribery and coercion to serve the Beast House's interests, acting as a legitimate cover (such as licensed arena or trader operations), keeping it safe from the authorities, or simply buying its services. Made up of largely ignorant intermediaries or individuals bribed or scared enough to keep their suspicions to themselves, the Beast House at this level appears to be no more or less than a criminal enterprise dealing in xenos-creatures and illegal blood sports with extensive off-world contacts. Such intermediaries may work for the Beast House without ever knowing they have done so. Others looking to enhance their reputation (and wealth) may well pick up numerous, often contradictory, rumours and dark tales that they are more than happy to spread. Of these hirelings and go-betweens, only those who show the uncommon bloodlust and particular talents the organisation favours will be chosen by the Beast House to be drawn further into its ranks.

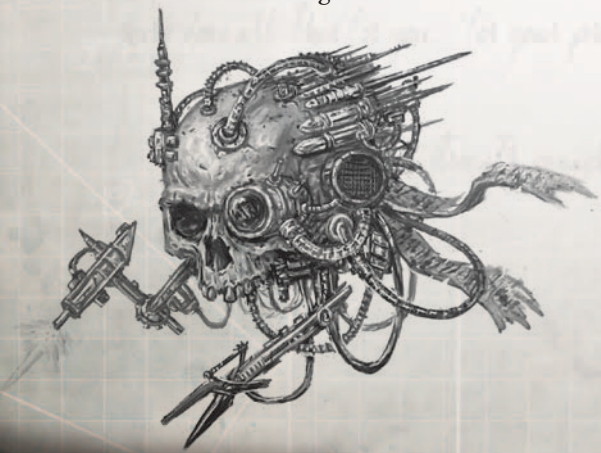
The Inner Circle

The Beast House's inner circle is made up of those who directly control outward activities, primarily the capture and trade of illegal and proscribed aliens. Secretly they also control its hidden lairs and beast-pits, and assassination, torture, narco-dealing (particularly combat drugs), mass-murder, and slavery are sidelines many also indulge in. They are uniformly psychopathic, cruel, and callous individuals, selected for their brutality and skill. Rightly feared by those they deal with, a reek of darkness and a lurking feral madness hangs about them that even hardened recidivists are wary of. Consequently, few local criminals and gang leaders will cross them. Those who have direct dealings with the Beast House's inner circle may quickly develop grave misgivings about doing so despite the rewards. Conversely, for some, the first inklings of the horrific truth of what the Beast House is are a lure rather than a warning sign, and they soon fall into the depths of what the Beast House has to offer.

The Heart of Darkness

Very few know or dare suspect what lies at the Beast House's dark heart, and the Inquisition has never been able to glean anything more than a few scattered after-action reports by shocked Adeptus Arbites strike teams. Therefore, the Holy Ordos have not yet come to realise just how dangerous or powerful the Beast House is. Behind the scenes, the Beast House is steeped in blood and unimaginable savagery. Aside from trafficking in forbidden creatures, Solkarn Senk's true disciples conduct their own awful games and bloody entertainments, as well as creating utterly illegal fleshworks to satiate their lust for violence and sport. These include capturing alien beasts so terrible their mere presence threatens thousands of lives, fabricating murder gholams from living victims, and creating "forced" mutants and other transgenic blasphemies to serve their sick needs for spectacle and the hunt.

Senk's inner circle are the true Beast House, and each one is a monster easily as terrible and deserving of death as any pure alien threat. Should this dark truth be fully uncovered, the Holy Ordos will be forced to strike immediately and resolutely to destroy the Beast House, but such is the widespread infiltration of Senk's followers into the underworlds and dark recesses of the Golgenna Reach that they are more than likely to survive to work their evils again.



Who is Solkarn Senk?

One persistent rumour that surrounds the Beast House is that it has a single master and founder, an individual spoken of in hushed tones known as Solkarn Senk. Stories attribute him with superhuman and indeed supernatural abilities as a hunter and killer. Just who (or even perhaps what) Senk is, is a matter of some confusion and contradiction, but recent painstaking Inquisitorial investigations through the sector's archives revealed that an individual with this name (or some similar derivation of it) has been associated with stories of the Beast House and mythical cults such as Dusk's "Black Hunt" and the heresy of the "Ten-Who-Were-Taken" on Iocanthos for at least five centuries (and possibly far longer).

One obscure reference even exists to a bestial human warlord known as Sol'Cur'Sak operating in the region in the annals of the Rogue Trader Sinos, a full three centuries before the Angevin Crusade. Most likely (the Ordos believes) the name has become something of a traditional title for the Beast House's current ruler and the diverse stories down the years apply to different individuals. The alternative, however, is a matter of some concern for those members of the Holy Ordos wishing to root out the corruption that lies at the heart of the Beast House.

Three Houses of Horror

"I us'd to know an old mirker sewerjack, drink in here often one time. He us'd to say some nights he'd hear things out by the junction under the old meat-mills—horrible things—roars, screams, and bellows of great things echoing up from the dark vents—'nough to freeze the blood. Sometimes he'd hear more too, he'd hear a crowd screaming and yelling and cheering all deep down in there. Funny thing—he'd said the sound of that crowd frightened him most of all…"

—Nemo Hakeswsill, Reclaimator,
Hive Gloriana, Solomon

The Beast House is a set of physical locations as much as it is an organisation. Apart from its members, creatures, and public fronts, it also is comprised of dozens of distinct operations centred on hidden facilities and lairs where it can keep and modify its creatures and conduct its own private and bloody business. Each of these locations is referred to by the organisation simply as the "Beast House," adding to the confusion of others and leading many locals to believe that the place they have heard of in dark stories is the "true" home of the organisation. The fact is that no one save Solkarn Senk, knows just how many lairs there are or just how many serve him. Each Beast House has its own unique and often macabre character and garners its own tales of terror. Three are detailed here as examples.

The Iron Pit of Scintilla

The Scintillan Beast House is perhaps the most endemic and widespread in the Calixis Sector. It has contacts with many of the licensed Red Circuses that operate openly on the fringes of the Scintillan entertainment zones and in the many underhive trade-outposts on Sibellus and Gunmetal City. They also supply exotic fodder for the arenas and services for certain noble houses and wealthy cartels who desire private entertainments.

In addition to this almost public face, darker rumours about the Beast House may be bought for a price from narco-gangers and rakehell gamblers in the obscura dens connected to the trade. The rumour goes that in the sub-levels, beneath several of the most ill-reputed Red Circuses and pit fight venues, down past the blood sluices and drain culverts, somewhere in the gore-reeking darkness, hidden Beast House arenas exist where the wealthiest and most depraved secretly travel to indulge their craving for violent spectacle. The worst of these goes by the whispered name of the "Iron Pit," which rumour places in the deepest and most lawless sector of the Sibellus underhive where even the narco-gangs will not operate. Said to occupy the great space of a long-disused reactor vessel, the Iron Pit is a huge three-dimensional maze of gantries, cages, and murderously trapped rat-runs into which innocent victims, the most savage xenos-creatures, and slave-fighters are released for the depraved sport of the onlookers. It is said only the most well-connected and powerful can get invites to these events, among them scions of the greatest noble houses, the richest cartel agents, and even officers in the Magistratum and the military. Vast sums are wagered on the results, and for those losers who cannot meet their markers, the pit itself awaits.

The Beast Hunts on Fedrid

The world of Fedrid is famous for the ferocity of its native species and its popularity with hunters and would-be beast slayers from across the sector, in particular the scions of nobility, many of whom treat the (largely) controlled dangers of a Fedrid hunt as a mark of prestige and status. Access to the world is tightly controlled, and removal of any live specimens is strictly prohibited. However, money talks, and hunting licences can change hands for many thousands of Thrones in the courts of Scintilla and the upper echelons of the great merchant houses.

The Restraint of Beasts

The Beast House trains any creature that comes into its hands, using methods of brutality and mental conditioning to increase its willingness to fight and kill on demand, often rendering the unfortunate creature insane or making an already dangerous predator a ravening and near-uncontrollable killer. However, for some beast slavers this is not enough. They resort to surgical and chemical augmentation, creating horrific cyber-creatures and fitting unruly beasts with injector rigs to increase their fighting potential whilst also easing their control outside of the arena. Additionally, many creatures, especially those sold for use in public arena fights, are also fitted with a surgically implanted cortex bomb for euthanasiation in emergencies (treat these devices just like the explosive collars found in the **Dark Heresy** armoury, with a blast radius of 1 metre). However, these implants are crude and can easily be dislodged, damaged, or fail to fire. As a result, they have a 20% chance of failure. It may even be the case that capricious beast slavers will deliberately supply creatures to others with malfunctioning cortex bombs for their own sadistic pleasure.

The Beast House, perhaps understandably, has its claws sunk deep into these quasi-legal hunts, illegally exporting creatures from Fedrid and providing guides, skilled trackers, and protection for many nobles who wish to hunt there. If rumour is to be believed, it also secretly partitions parts of the deadly forest as pre-prepared game reserves. Not all who hunt on Fedrid use or indeed tolerate the Beast House and its hunters, for they have a dark reputation with others of their profession. In particular, many of the feral natives despise and fear the Beast House, killing its agents when they can. Stories persist that deep within the darkest heart of the steaming equatorial forests of Fedrid a Beast House lair sits built in the long overgrown ruins of some ancient alien temple. It is said that terrible rites occur there and that in the catacombs beneath, it is men, not beasts, who are the prey.

The Hell House on Solomon

The hive world of Solomon is a dark place, much given to legends and myths. One such story speaks of the Hell House. It is a myth that seems intimately linked with the shadowy operations of the Beast House, which operates here almost entirely in the shadows of the underhives with no official recognition of its existence at all.

The so-called Hell House is said to be a vast decrepit spire-mansion whose wealthy owners retreated from their polluted world and sealed themselves up within, using their resources to turn their home's lower vaults into a museum for their collection of forbidden xenos beasts and mutated creatures. Legend has it that, as the years passed, the family grew ever more corrupt and insane and that they drank alien blood and conducted unspeakable experiments to keep themselves young and grant them unnatural powers. They grew increasingly obsessed with furthering their collection and obtaining the most deadly and strange xenos creatures, so that they in turn could feast on them and grow ever more powerful. It is said that in order to further their terrible ends, they gathered feral world killers and murderous beast hunters to provide them with new specimens, eventually leading them to create terrible living gholams to abduct victims to feed their awful collection.

The myth of Hell House is but one of a dozen such stories along the lines of the Sleepers, the Resurrected, the great Beast of Solomon, the night-heeled ripper and many more that intertwine and point to some dark truth beneath the world's façade of civilisation. Stories of the Hell House have been whispered for countless years and are particularly persistent in the smoke-levels of Hive Gloriana, where sudden spates of disappearances and the discovery of mutilated bodies are blamed on it. The local enforcers dismiss such assertions as foolish dreg nightmare stories and wanton scaremongering, but it is a telling fact that the stories are told and re-told in the gyn-sinks and Lyceums near where the Beast House organisation is rumoured to have links to the pit fights and gambling halls. For those investigators with an interest in hive folklore, it is noteworthy that in the oldest versions of the fable, the Hell House is sometimes called the "the House of Cages" and the name of the head of the decaying family at its heart is Sire Kor Sank, the beast father.

INQUISITORIAL THREAT BRIEFING

Although long believed to be little more than a habitual name given to illegal blood arena operations and xenos-creature smuggling, the Beast House now has been revealed at least in part to be a widespread, unified, and dangerous organisation, whose dealings with the alien warrant its destruction and the extinction of its members. Much of it remains hidden behind layers of secrecy and more mundane criminality, but what seems certain is that vile inhuman practices and abominable xenos fleshworks lie at its heart. The whole of the Beast House is believed to be under the control of a single arch-recidivist known as Solkarn Senk.

Senk is, to put it bluntly, a monster who has forfeited his life in the Inquisition's eyes, a human who has thrived and built a petty empire out of the vices and suffering of others and the hunting of alien and human prey. Senk's organisation has a front in quasi-legal fighting arenas and the criminal underworld dealing in the provision and breeding of dangerous beasts with sidelines in running hunts and blood sports for the wealthy. Its connections and clientele are extensive and powerfully situated—from doomsday cults and narco-gangs to powerful factions of the sector elite and Rogue Traders with dealings beyond the writ of Imperial law. The Beast House organisation is the current subject of widespread covert and overt Ordo Xenos investigations whose outcomes will determine a more comprehensive and final action by the Inquisition. The Beast House and its activities should be treated with the direst suspicion and the utmost caution.

INSIDE THE CAGES: BEASTS OF THE BEAST HOUSE

There are a great many possible adversaries, NPCs, and, above all, monsters and alien creatures that might be encountered in the the Beast House's blood-soaked halls. From **Chapter XII: Aliens, Heretics, & Antagonists** in **Dark Heresy**, the Bounty Hunter or Heavy can be used as hired guns to provide protection, the Dreg, Slaughterman, and Recidivist can be used as part of the outer circle of the organisation, and, while the spectators at its dubious entertainments can run the gamut, the Dissolute Noble is a particularly appropriate customer. As for "standard" attractions, the Saurian Carnosaur and Sabre Wolf are good examples, and for illegal attractions, Mutant Abominations and things like the Dusk Stalker are a good start. Of course, the Alien Generator found in the **Game Master's Kit** can provide a limitless quantity of ferocious beasts to use. However, the further one goes into the depths of the Beast House, the worse things get. The creatures encountered should become ever more horrific and forbidden, and the humans involved ever more depraved and psychotic.

The following offers some additional examples of what monsters, human and otherwise, can be found within the Beast House.



Beast Slaver

Each Beast House operation is usually controlled by one or more individuals usually referred to as beast slavers. These men and women are dangerous, often literally insane, and highly skilled in the arts of the hunt. Privy to the inner working of the Beast House and reveling in its excesses, they usually conceal their sadistic leanings and barely controlled savagery under a thin façade, posing as big game hunters, mercenaries, and more legitimate traders. Recruited into the ranks for their innate bloodlust, most are skilled hunters and born killers. For them to have survived and prospered in the Beast House, they have to be human predators as dangerous as any beast they stalk. Many were born on feral worlds or even deathworlds, although a number hail from more civilised climes, but all are true savages at heart.

The following profile represents one such beast slaver, but such individuals may vary widely in their nature and skills.

Beast Slaver Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
38	38	42	40	45	37	35	30	28

Movement: 4/8/12/24 **Wounds:** 18
Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Climb (S), Concealment (Ag) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Drive (Ground Vehicle) (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Mutants, Xenos) (Int), Interrogation (WP), Intimidate (S) +10, Medicae (Int), Navigation (Surface) (Int) +10, Scholastic Lore (Beasts) (Int) +10, Security (Ag), Shadowing (Ag) +10, Silent Move (Ag) +10, Speak Language (Feral World dialect, Low Gothic) (Int), Survival (Int) +20, Swim (S), Tracking (Int) +10, Wrangling (Int) +10.
Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Las, Primitive, SP), Blind Fighting, Crack Shot, Crippling Strike, Fearless, Iron Jaw, Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Primitive, Shock), Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, Primitive, SP), Rapid Reaction.
Armour: Light carapace breastplate and mesh reinforced leathers (5 Body, 2 Arms and Legs).
Weapons: Skinning blade (1d5+6† R; Pen 2; Balanced), shock maul (1d10+4† I; Shock), hand cannon with man-stopper rounds (35m; S/–/–; 1d10+4 I; Pen 3; Clip 5; Rld 2Full), mono-knife (3m; 1d5+4† R; Pen 2) and hunting rifle with custom explosive rounds (150m, S/–/–; 1d10+4 X; Pen 2; Clip 5; Rld Full; Accurate).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Implants: Good quality cyber eye with Dark Sight and Telescopic Sight, implanted lung filters.
Gear: 3 clips for any weapon carried, personal vox, 1d10+10 Thrones, injector with two doses of stimm, one of panimmune, and other gear as needed.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Minoris.

Ogryn Beast Keeper

Ogryns are abhumans, slow-witted, stoic, and often loyal creatures, whose gigantic frames and ultra-dense muscle tissue and bone structure make them perfectly suited for life in harsh environments on high-gravity worlds. Moreover, Ogryns are genetically stable, and there is some debate as to whether they are mutations at all, or rather the result of bioengineering in ages past. Ogryns, while far from common, are perhaps the most widely accepted and least suspect abhuman species in the Imperium. They are well-regarded for their loyalty, unbelievably vast strength, and fortitude, with many serving faithfully in the Imperial Guard.

The Ogryns who serve the Beast House, however, are brutal and merciless examples of their kind. Captured young, drug augmented, cowed by brutality and torture, and encouraged to display callous savagery, these cruel and dumbly loyal creatures are ideal for use in controlling the beast pits. Encased in thick hides, crude armour, and vulcanised gear, and caked in muck and blood, the keepers spend their lives lumbering between the cages to feed, slaughter, or subdue the specimens within.

Ogryn Beast Keeper Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
32	22	(8) 48	(10) 52	28	15	20	33	18

Movement: 2/4/6/12 **Wounds:** 30
Skills: Climb (S), Intimidate (S), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Survival (Industrial) (Int), Trade (Beast Keeper) (Int) +10.
Talents: Die Hard, Fearless, Hardy, Melee Weapons Training (Primitive, Shock), Natural Weapon (Oversized fist).
Traits: Size (Hulking), Unnatural Strength (×2), Unnatural Toughness (×2).
Armour: Heavy, muck and gore splattered vulcanised work-robes and hide-leather aprons (All 4, Primitive).
Weapons: Oversized fist (1d10+8 I†; Primitive), huge meat axe (2d10+9† R, Primitive, Unwieldy) or hook-gaff (10m; 1d10+8† R; Primitive) or oversized shock maul (2d5+8† I; Shock).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Goggles, keys, meat hooks, lengths of chain.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Minoris.

Ripsaw Scuttler

A popular creature in the arena, the Ripsaw is a man-sized arachnid creature native to the ill-famed swamps of the world of Dusk. Covered in bladelike quills, the scuttler has a vicious temper and is capable of shredding creatures far greater in size when it is threatened. The Beast House manages these creatures through the implantation of drug injector rigs to stimulate their aggression or render them unconscious when needed and usually replaces their natural chitin-blades with mono-edged implants.

Ripsaw Scuttler Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
55	—	35	35	58	14	46	38	—

Movement: 5/10/15/30 **Wounds:** 13
Skills: Awareness (Per), Climb (S) +20, Concealment (Ag) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Silent Move (Ag) +10.
Talents: Catfall, Furious Assault, Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Vision), Swift Attack.
Traits: Bestial, Dark Sight, Fear 1 (Disturbing), Natural Armour 2 (All), Quills, Sturdy.
Quills: Any creature in close combat with the Ripsaw that strikes it "bare handed" or with a small weapon such as a knife must pass a **Challenging (+0) Agility Test** each time he successfully hits the creature or suffer 1d5+1 R (Primitive) Damage to that hand or arm location.
Chem-Rig: The Ripsaw has a (remotely triggered) injector rig surgically bonded to it that, when activated, bombards the creature with a cocktail of combat drugs, increasing its strength by +10 and enabling it to ignore Stunning and any negative effects to its Characteristics from Damage or Critical Damage. It will also seek to attack any creature it can lay its bladed limbs on and, unless otherwise controlled or distracted (by being attacked, etc.), continues to savagely rend the carcass of its victim long after it is dead. The rig also contains a massive narcotic dose designed to "stop" the creature—the Ripsaw must pass a **Hard (–20) Toughness Test** or collapse into twitching unconsciousness for 1d10 hours.
Armour: None (All 2, Primitive).
Weapons: Implanted mono-blades (1d10+4† R; Pen 2).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Threat Rating: Xenos Minoris.

Beast House Murder Gholam Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
58	—	(6) 38	(8) 40	26	18	30	15	10

Movement: 2/4/6/12 **Wounds:** 9
Skills: None.
Talents: Iron Jaw, Fearless.
Traits: Fear 1 (Disturbing), From Beyond, Mutation (Roll for 1d5–2 Major Mutations from page 335 of **Dark Heresy** to represent the bizarre experiments in flesh grafting and alien implants that it has been subjected to. Alternatively, roll for Traits from the Alien Generator found in the **Game Master's Kit**), Natural Weapons (Implanted blades and distorted limbs), Unnatural Strength (×2), Unnatural Toughness (×2).
Bio-Frenzy: The Murder Gholam's surgically augmented system can be supercharged by using a simple control device to remotely trigger it into unleashing a battery of alien chemicals to flood its body. While this is in effect, the Murder Gholam gains Frenzy, Swift Attack, Unnatural Agility (×2), and Regenerates one Wound at the start of each Round. However, at the end of each Round, roll 1d10. On a roll of an "8" the creature's body ruptures explosively from the strain, killing it instantly and showering the area in gore, shards of bone, and implant fragments. Treat this as a 3 metre Blast causing 1d5+2 R Damage.
Armour: None.
Weapons: Implanted blades, distorted limbs, razor teeth, ceramic claws, hook barbs, etc. (1d10+6† R or I; Pen 2).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: None.
Threat Rating: Obscuro Minoris.

SECRET HORRORS

Behind layers of secrecy and bloodshed, the Beast House's true terrors hide—savage and sadistic alien torturers, human victims twisted into living weapons, and xenos creatures too terrible and dangerous to be allowed to exist. Here is one sampling:

The Beast House Murder Gholam

Murder Gholams are horrific biological constructs, each crafted from a unique and nightmarish mix of genetically mutilated living human victim, xeno-implants, vat grown tissue, and bio-grafted alien flesh. Products of the Beast House's secret flesh-craft, there can be few more terrible examples of forbidden bio-alchemy and the blasphemous bodily fusion of human and alien. These dreadful creatures are twisted and horrific killers driven utterly insane by the tormented agony of their own existence, with loyalty to their masters hardwired into what remains of their tortured minds.



The Cryptos

"The alien is an all consuming destroyer, a whisperer of tempting lies that wishes to dominate and subjugate mankind utterly—such dull platitudes are those of the dutiful simpleton. The truth is worse by far."

—Inquisitor Augustine Mordecai,
address to the Hilician Symposium

The strange and sinister xenos race known to the Inquisition as the Cryptos comes from the cold darkness of the interstellar void where it can scarcely be conceived that anything could live. Without solid physical form, they appear as strange gaseous clouds tinted with an eerie greenish glow and filled with maddening, half-formed shapes. They are able to pass through solid matter and even through the hulls of star vessels, and far more dangerously, they have the power to take living human bodies as hosts in order to fulfil their inscrutable aims. They are a cold and mysterious race whose desires and thoughts remain hidden from others and possess an implacable and patient intelligence.

Masked in human flesh, they walk amongst mankind and secretly infest communities, twisting them until they are completely under their dominion. They treat humans with utter disdain and a callous disregard, for these seemly immortal creatures carry themselves as fallen gods fleeing something greater and more terrible yet, and mankind is to them no more than cattle to be used and disposed of at will. The Cryptos are a rare and utterly insidious threat, and though no cities have burned in their name nor have they raised armies against the dominion of the God-Emperor, they are the manifestation of why the alien is loathed and mistrusted in all of its forms.

The Motivations and Infiltrations of the Cryptos

The Cryptos dominate and control humans, using them with a callousness that is as cold as the void from whence they came. They have no lust for dominion over the weak and fleshy realm of mankind; instead their infiltration of human communities offers them protection. None can guess at the terror from which they flee and perhaps even they can no longer recall its nature (except for a crawling dread imbedded in their racial memory), but to this end secrecy and security are their overriding goals.

Regardless of the cause of their fear, the fundamental motivation of the Cryptos has remained unknown to the Inquisition, though some subtle-minded savants serving more Radical masters have begun to conjecture along the correct lines. Once they have taken human hosts, the Cryptos need to guard against mankind itself and keep their presence utterly secret, as they know full well the lengths that the Inquisition will go to in order to root them out if discovered. Simply appearing to be the people they have taken as hosts does not suffice, and though they can mimic the knowledge, reactions and personalities of their hosts to an almost perfect degree, their need for safety drives them to build sanctuaries in isolated corners of human society for their long-term protection.

The Cryptos are not a numerous race and operate in small groups ranging from a handful to perhaps as many as 20 individuals. When taking hosts, they seek to migrate to obscure and overlooked locations where any side effects of their infiltration will be easiest to control and where they can exert influence over normal humans by taking influential

Using the Cryptos

The Cryptos represent a kind of threat that is usually the domain of psykers, daemonic powers, or Chaos cultists. This is the threat of an enemy that is imbedded and hidden amongst what seem to be normal people. As a result, the Cryptos make a good alternative to these kinds of adversaries, replacing the menace of the warp with the insidious nature of the alien. They also offer an additional twist to events, as rather than conquer or sow destruction they want to remain hidden and maintain the unassuming stability of their situation. They also appear completely human and are almost undetectable except when they communicate telepathically.

These qualities make them ideal for encounters focused on an isolated location such as a small pilgrim ship, mining colony, or remote monastery, for example. In portraying the location of a Cryptos infiltration, it should be disturbingly ordinary, with everything appearing as it should be and no signs that a terrible secret lies beneath the seemingly normal surface. The Cryptos will use their outward humanity to deflect the Acolytes in order to confuse their investigations; they do not want to be discovered and know that killing Inquisitorial Acolytes is the best way to draw attention and will avoid it (or at least make any murders seem accidental). Once the Acolytes discover the truth, the gloves come off and the Acolytes will be faced with aliens that care nothing about the survival of their hosts or the survival of those around them. Their focus will be on destroying the Acolytes using the befuddled minds of those who have lived close to them as automaton-like cannon fodder. Ultimately, if all else fails they will try to escape by jumping from body to body—possibly even the body of an Acolyte.

The Cryptos are consummate deceivers and will play their roles right through to the end, appearing reasonable and even helpful to others. Once the gloves come off, however, it's a different story. They should be portrayed as utterly callous creatures, lacking in all emotions except distain and cold mockery for the "meat" (as they refer to humans), with an arrogance born of what they feel themselves to be—higher beings treading the earth under sufferance. They will not care how many lives they expend to keep themselves in power and secret, and if all else fails, they will cut their losses and run, usually covering their escape with as much collateral damage as possible.

members of the community as hosts. Overseers, preachers, merchants and those in official positions are usually those taken by the Cryptos in the first stage of infiltration, as they are the keys to dominating the humans around them. Thus the Cryptos make their sanctuary more secure and their presence more difficult to detect. Small, self-contained communities are ideal for their purpose, particularly if physically isolated, although they have a distinct aversion to very primitive societies and dislike operating in space aboard vessels longer than they have to.

After finding and infiltrating such a location, the Cryptos may migrate from body to body several times, leaving dead or damaged hosts along the way. They may spend several human generations acting as covert rulers and conducting culls to weed out any potential dissent or threat to them, before moving on once more if endangered or due to the urgings of their own inscrutable time table.

While they are in control, the Cryptos will attempt to make the communities they hide in as stable and secure as possible so that no undue attention is directed towards them. Over time, the Cryptos are able to seed a psychic influence over those who are close to them. This influence gradually builds until the humans who have ignorantly dwelt with the Cryptos can be made to obey almost any command. This controlling effect is no literal puppetry but rather a power of suggestion that the Cryptos can wield to deadly effect in their defence or to carry out their wishes. The Cryptos also use the human predilection for hierarchy and authority to further secure their control by creating guilds and fraternities that gradually become more and more important to the community that they are part of. The control of such organisations extends and crystallises the Cryptos' dominion of their "sanctuary community" and allows them to create a network of spies and servants to enact their will.

Such secretly dominated communities can exist for generations with the Cryptos passing to suitable new hosts when the flesh of the previous ones fail. Should their carefully constructed sanctuary be threatened or draw Inquisitional attention, the Cryptos will move to eliminate the threat using all available resources and then, once the threat has been eliminated, restore their human community to its "normal" state as if the threat had never existed.

THE ORIGINS AND NATURE OF THE CRYPTOS

The Cryptos exist physically as an etheric, pseudo-plasmic, gas-like substance bound by an esoteric energy field that to the human eye appears as a hazy cloud of green tinted vapour. In their natural state, the Cryptos drift in the great dark voids of the galaxy in small groups who commune via psychic means

Knowledge of the Cryptos

The Cryptos are a highly obscure xenos race of which very little is known. What little knowledge exists is heavily proscribed and held by only a handful within the Inquisition, contained within the dry texts of xeno-savants and apocryphal Rogue Trader's tales. Presented here are guidelines for what Acolytes with the Forbidden Lore (Xenos) skill may know about the species.

Table 3-6: The Secret Lore of the Cryptos

Degrees of Success	Details Known
Standard Success	You know nothing concrete of this race, only that the name features in rare xeno-works of doubtful accuracy or provenance. It may be highly obscure, be a confusion of another xenos race or, more likely, not exist at all outside of old Rogue Trader fables.
One	The Cryptos are thought to be an incorporeal race that dwells in the deep void. Little is known about them and most think them a myth, one of a thousand dread fables of the blackness between stars.
Two	To the human eye the Cryptos appear as a green-tinted cloud of mist or luminous gas that are said to be able to pass through solid matter. They feature in several old voider legends and are said to be a serious threat.
Three	Humans can be possessed by the Cryptos in much the manner of Unclean sprits (although without the usual signs), controlling them utterly. Such possession usually leaves the host dead or with extensive damage when the alien leaves the host's body. They are thought to be at least partially psychic creatures, although they are not warp entities.
Four or more	When a Cryptos possesses a human, it has access to all of the host's memories and knowledge and is able to mimic the behaviour of the host to an extraordinary degree. By possessing humans the Cryptos infiltrate and control human communities. They are thought to possess a low grade form of mass psychic suggestion that allows them to command humans who have been exposed to their presence for a considerable length of time, making their infestations all the more dangerous. They are also a very clever and patient race that will kill without compunction or remorse.



and are (unless destroyed by violence) effectively immortal. Usually these drifting groups are small, rarely numbering more than a dozen. The utterly alien preoccupations of the Cryptos prior to their contact with mankind are not open to the human understanding. Born in the deep void between star systems, they do not possess intelligence or emotions as humans understand them. However, they know and understand the human mind with an alien objectiveness gleaned from the minds of those they have possessed over the years.

How long the Cryptos have existed is completely unknown, but what can be guessed at is when the Cryptos first began to infiltrate mankind. This moment can only have taken place during the ages in which man has moved amongst the stars, as the remote existence of the Cryptos beyond the warmth of suns would have kept them away from the planet-bound beginnings of humanity. Dwelling in the lightless margins of star systems or in the deep void, the Cryptos must have met with mankind and learned its weaknesses, its flesh-bound desires, its fears, and its ignorance. They must have seen a possibility in the fleshy race they could so easily possess, the possibility of domination and concealment, because for all their utterly alien nature the Cryptos have one thing that can at least be approximated to a human emotion—fear. The unknown object of their fear may even have driven the Cryptos into their bodiless existence, hiding in the emptiness, perhaps drifting away from some ancient enemy or star now long dead. However, it seems to them that the human Imperium represents their greatest chance of successfully hiding from whatever it is they flee.

How long ago the process of infiltration and control began and how many Cryptos there are can not be estimated with any accuracy. However, infestations have been uncovered on scattered Imperial worlds in the Segmentums Obscurus and Pacificus ever since the race was formally identified and confirmed as "Diabolous" in the 35th Millennium. It has been noted by some in the Ordo Xenos that the number of instances of Cryptos infestation may extend far further into the past, but such instances may have been mistakenly treated as instances of witchery or daemonic influence.

The Incident at Fall Narrow

The Calixis Sector has had only a single formally identified instance of a Cryptos infiltration being discovered and destroyed since its foundation, although several more are suspected. This single verified infestation occurred at the mining community of Fall Narrow on 88 Tanstar nearly two centuries ago.

Numbering under a thousand inhabitants, the settlement of Fall Narrow was relatively efficient and quite unremarkable; it met its quotas, people were born, worked, and died without unusual incident, and various officials passing through did not find any cause for concern. So things might have continued were it not for a mining accident that was witnessed by a travelling Administratum scribe detailed to carry out a local census. Dozens died during this mishap, and the scribe, to his horror, saw the settlement overseer impaled by a fallen joist. As he died, the overseer's body thrashed about and a green cloud billowed out of his eyes and mouth. The scribe recorded the unwholesome sight on his ocular augmetic before fleeing. In response, the panicking regional governor deployed enforcer units that attempted to storm the settlement and conduct an investigation.

The assault turned into a massacre as the ordinary men and women of the settlement resisted fiercely. The violence quickly and dramatically escalated with the miners attacking the enforcers with makeshift demolition charges and industrial machines and the enforcers responding with heavy assault units (the locals seemed to be under the delusion that they were being attacked by corsairs and outlaws). Captured prisoners showed signs of psychic suggestion and mental tampering, and it was clear something alien and malign was at work. This became particularly evident when the enforcers' own encoded vox-net was compromised and an entire strike-force was led into a trap and destroyed.

At some point during the assault, the central explosives store detonated, (although whether deliberately or by a stray round remains unknown). In the explosions and fires that followed, the settlement and almost all of its inhabitants and many of its besiegers were killed. When the Inquisition arrived shortly afterwards, it found that in a demonstration of either compounded incompetence or xenos conspiracy no records were kept of surviving inhabitants (if any) or the names of surviving enforcers involved in the incident. Given the ability of the Cryptos to possess victims, their evident intelligence, and their skill at evasion, the xenos threat was likely merely displaced to another quiet and unassuming backwater. Despite a full Inquisitorial investigation, no further trace of the Cryptos colony was ever found.

KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE

Little is known of the Cryptos, and what is known is often confused with information about other races. Presented here are guidelines on what different groups know about the Cryptos and their activities outside of academia and Imperial history.

The Void Born and Ship Dwellers: There are many void born myths that relate to unexplained incidents and strange phenomena that may have the Cryptos as their true source. Particular references to small ships going missing only to be later discovered lifeless, deactivated, and sometimes concealed within asteroid belts and gas giants in outlying colony systems may have something to do with the Cryptos' activities. Likewise, tales of "ghost lights" haunting ships when visiting distant and empty star systems or crewmen acting in an uncharacteristic manner may perhaps relate to the Cryptos.

The Ordo Xenos: The race has been declared Xenos Diabolus and is to be destroyed whenever found. Various factions within the Ordo Xenos have differing ideas as to the severity and danger of the threat. Some Radicals even believe that some effort should be made to capture and preserve a specimen to unlock its potentially ageless knowledge.

INQUISITORIAL THREAT BRIEFING

Within the Calixis Sector, the current threat posed by the Cryptos is unknown. There have been no recent indications of a hidden infestation and no reports that an infestation might exist. On such evidence, there can be only one conclusion by the Ordo Xenos: the threat is most severe. The few instances of Cryptos activity within the sector indicates that this region of space is not unknown to them. Silence can only mean that out amongst the scattered worlds of the sector there lurk what seem to be men and women, who work, talk, and eat, blending in with their fellows, but inside them is nothing but a cold intelligence, born of the void and driven by terror.

The Cryptos Confronted

The Cryptos are encountered in two forms. Their natural form is a strange green-tinted cloud of energised gas, and their parasitic form is an apparently ordinary human who is possessed and controlled. The rules that follow cover the Cryptos in its incorporeal form and also give an example of a possessed human.

Cryptos Natural Form Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
15	15	—	25	30	60	35	50	10

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 12

Skills: Deceive (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (Xenos) (Int) +10, Psyniscience (Per) +10, additionally all (Int) based Skills are Basic Skills for the Cryptos.

Talents: Resistance (Psychic).

Traits: Energy Sensitivity†, Flyer 6†, From Beyond, Incorporeal†, Cryptos Possession†, Pseudo-gaseous Form, Strange Physiology†, Unnatural Senses.

†These Traits only apply when a Cryptos is in its Incorporeal form and do not apply to a creature it possesses.

Psychic Powers (Psy Rating 2): Compel, Fearful Aura, Forget Me, Inspiring Aura, Sense Presence, and Telepathy.

Energy Sensitivity: Although a Cryptos in its natural form is permanently incorporeal, strong energy fields will block it, and it is vulnerable to shock weaponry (taking half Damage), psychic energy, and powerful electrical discharges.

Pseudo-gaseous Form: A Cryptos is visible to normal sight as a flickering and dense green-tinted cloud; however, this cloud is composed more of esoteric energy patterns than solid matter. In this gaseous form, a Cryptos cannot be detected by devices that register warp disturbance or biological life, but may be detected by a **Hard (–20) Awareness Test** using an auspex or energy scanner, appearing as a strange electromagnetic fluctuation.

Compel: A Cryptos can use the Compel power automatically on members of a community that it has infiltrated for more than a year. Should Compel be used against an individual who has not had prolonged exposure to the Cryptos, an Opposed Willpower Test is required.

Telepathy: A Cryptos can communicate with other Cryptos within 20 km without needing a Power roll, and can potentially reach interstellar ranges with the right conditions.

Weapons: None.

Threat Rating: Xenos Majoris.

Cryptos Possession (Trait)

The Cryptos have the ability to possess physical bodies. While this is very similar to the possessing attack of warp entities (see page 331 in **Dark Heresy**), the Cryptos ability has a number of important differences resulting from the uniqueness of their physiology and their ability to bond their beings completely with their subjects. The mechanism by which possession occurs in the game is detailed as follows:

The Possession Attack

The Cryptos must be in contact with its intended victim and use a Full Action. The creature and target make Opposed Willpower Tests each Round until either the entity or the victim achieves a total of five degrees of success over the other—this is cumulative over several Rounds. If the Cryptos wins, it successfully possesses its victim. If the victim wins, he has repelled the Cryptos, who may not attempt to possess him again for 24 hours. The repelled Cryptos is also Stunned for 1d10 Rounds.

The Effects of Possession

The Cryptos takes complete control, binding itself to its victim's mind and nervous system. It has full access to its victim's memories and is capable of commanding the body to function regardless of pain and injury. Make the following modifications to the possessed character's profile.

- Add +10 to the victim's Toughness Characteristic.
- Exchange the possessing entity's Intelligence, Perception, and Willpower scores for those of the victims.
- The Crytpos's Psy Rating and powers also replace any that the victim possesses.
- Add the Skills and Talents of the Cryptos to that of the possessed victim.
- The Cryptos also has complete access to the victim's memories and knowledge, able to flawlessly pass as the person. It gains a +20 to any Deceive Test to imitate its victim with prior acquaintances, etc. Behind this pretence lurks a cold and uncaring alien intelligence, and the "real" mind and soul within is crushed into an utterly oblivious state.

Casting Off a Body

The Cryptos is cast out of a victim as soon as it suffers Critical Damage or if the victim is subject to a powerful electrical shock. A Cryptos cast out in this manner is left with only 1 Wound remaining. The Cryptos can also leave its victim at any time and return to its incorporeal state, although leaving a body inflicts 1d5 Wounds on the Cryptos. A Cryptos cannot be driven out using methods that specifically effect daemons and other unclean spirits, as they are not warp entities.

Surviving Cryptos Possession

Should the Cryptos leave its victim, the ordeal has a 25% chance of killing the host. A victim that dies in this way appears to have suffered multiple organ failure with indeterminate cause. If the victim does not die as a result of the Cryptos' departure, he takes 1d10 points of permanent Damage to his Toughness and Willpower Characteristics. In addition, the victim gains 1d10 Insanity Points and has no memory of his time under possession whatsoever.

An Example of Cryptos Possession

The following is an example of a Ministorum Preacher (see page 342 of **Dark Heresy**) who has been possessed by a Cryptos.

Cryptos Ministorum Preacher Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
20	20	30	40	30	60	35	50	35

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 10
Skills: Awareness (Per), Charm (Fel), Common Lore (Imperial Creed) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (Int) (Xenos) +10, Literacy (Int), Psyniscience (Per) +10, Scholastic Lore (Imperial Creed) (Int) +10, Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int), other (Int) Skills as Basic Skills.
Talents: Air of Authority, Master Orator.
Traits: Cryptos Possession, From Beyond, Unnatural Senses.
Powers (Psy Rating 2): Compel, Fearful Aura, Forget Me, Inspiring Aura, Sense Presence, Telepathy.
Gear: Ecclesiastical robes, prayer book, numerous small devotional items.

Recollections of the Persecution of Lucius Carden

Honoured Whitlock,

It has been over three decades since, as the apprentice of the late Inquisitor Xerxes, I was involved in the disastrous prosecution of the heretic abomination Lucius Carden. Given that you have clearly found the details held in official record inadequate, I fear my recollections will not be as precise or as complete as you may require. Unfortunately the only other survivor was my then fellow apprentice Augustine DuNoir, and since her reputed fall from grace and disappearance in the Mandragora Sector, I fear she is now beyond us both.

To the matter, then. Lucius Carden was the master of a chartered far-trader, the now infamous Dream Walker. At the time when I and my fellow acolytes became involved in the case, it had become clear that Carden was acting as the front man for a coterie of archeaopirates who plundered unclean things from dead worlds to the northern rim of Calixis. They then sold their ill-gotten relics through his trade contacts in the sector core.

As we suspected him a simple criminal and a direct connection to what we assumed to be a wider and more dangerous organisation, we decided to effect an aggressive boarding of the Dream Walker while it was re-supplying at the Fenksworld orbital dock and seize it for our own use. We hoped to take Carden alive, or at least capture a trusted member of his crew to extract information from.

By Xerxes' order I was charged with command under Carta authority, and four squads of Battlefleet armsmen were requisitioned for support. With us were seven other acolytes of my master. All were trusted, experienced, and most capable. We thought ourselves well prepared and that we had the situation's measure. On all counts we were unreservedly and emphatically wrong.

Effecting simultaneous assault via the port's docking tunnel and an explosive breach in the ship's maintenance bay by our guncutter, we made quick progress past the gaudy areas of the ship and penetrated the outer holds and crew spaces completely unopposed. Disturbing as this was, we took advantage and pressed deeper. It was not until we entered the main cargo areas that we realised that Carden was far more than a dealer in proscribed artefacts.

The inner holds were filled with row upon row of sealed armour-glass cylinders filled with human remains. I recall there was no reek of decay, the air was chill with a trace of flower blossom as if the master of this abomination did not care for the smell of rot. We ordered the vile holds guarded for later examination—though I was sore tempted to order them put to flame without delay.

We proceeded though the rest of the Dream Walker, meeting no one but servitors that performed the functions of a crew. So it was until we reached the grand staterooms that barred the ascent to the command deck. Here we found Carden and the few living occupants of that damned vessel. Arrayed in finery, they sat around a great stately table before empty plates. Many of the diners had the manner of cattle stupid with fear, others looked at us with what I recognised as true madness.

None moved when we declared our authority and fanned out into the stateroom. At the head of the grand table Carden waited, every inch the noble captain, smiling as if we were expected guests. I was struck in that moment that we were in his trap rather than he in ours, that he had simply waited for his prey—his dinner—to come to him.

I remember what transpired then with total clarity, and I suppose I shall take those moments to my grave. Carden stood up and bade us welcome to his feast. His smile widened to an extent no human face should allow, and his disguise cracked, revealing his true face. His bones hardened and distorted, and the flesh that stretched over them took on the colour and pattern of wyrmling larvae. I shot him and continued to do so until my weapon was spent and he laughed! He came at us faster than the eye could see. Las fire, stubber shots, even bolt rounds, nothing slowed him. He even let himself be run through with blades so that he could get close enough to tear apart his attackers with his bare hands. In the pandemonium that followed, we had a dozen dead in as many seconds.

To remain would have been suicide, and I signalled an emergency retreat. Augustine, myself, and a handful of others fled the stateroom. We only had such time as it took Carden to slake his hunger on those that he had killed before he pursued us, hunting us down with inhuman speed and very human delight. Only Augustine and I made it to the boarding tunnel alive, and both of us injured.

I can still see him standing there as I looked through the blast door's viewport, the long iron-grey bulk of the Dream Walker tearing away from its moorings and its terrible master braced on the edge of its unsealed dock, laughing in the hard cold of the void. The rest is in the report. Despite heavy damage, the Dream Walker escaped, and in the decades since, it has gained a reputation as a haunted, damned ship. Of its master, I know not.

Old friend, I hope that these recollections are of use in what I can only presume is the pursuit of a similar quarry or the beast himself, and know that me and mine are at your disposal should you need us. Regardless, I would leave you with this one piece of considered council: though the ways of our most puritan brethren are not yours, if you should even suspect the presence of such an abomination, heed their methods and obliterate the location completely and totally. Leave nothing to chance.

Inquisitor Herrod
Ordo Xenos
Conclave Calixis

The Halo Devices

"Beyond those forbidden heights, gated and bound by bonds that man should never break, waits a throne that gods would fear to take."

—Note found in the personal documents of renegade Inquisitor Erya Nephthys

On some ancient and forgotten worlds, the ashes and echoes of races and civilizations long dead still linger. The galaxy is far older than human experience can comprehend, and in its dark history many races both great and insignificant have risen up and returned to nothingness, all long before mankind even evolved. Of most nothing remains but dust and silence, but for some their works endure.

Products of inhuman knowledge and unknown purpose, some are enigmatic and inscrutable whilst others are perilous indeed—seeds of corruption that can twist the soul, befoul the mind, and profane the sacred human form. One such genus of artefacts, spoken of in Inquisitorial record and Rogue Trader tales as the "Halo Devices," has long been known and forbidden to mankind, for these objects are truly dangerous. Yet there are those who would seek out and possess a Halo Device for all its dark renown and use it for the false gift it promises. The reason is simple. Mankind has always feared death, and a Halo Device offers immortality…for a price.

THE ORIGINS AND NATURE OF THE HALO DEVICES

Halo Devices are so named because they come from worlds within the volume of space known as the Halo Stars—a dangerous and ill-omened region that is bordered by several barbarous voids of space as well as a number of Imperial sectors including Scarus and Calixis. The worlds from which Halo Devices come are truly ancient and utterly lifeless, orbiting dead stars which must have burned their brightest many thousands of millennia ago. That such worlds once were part of some antediluvian and now long dead civilisation is a fact generally agreed upon by xeno-arcanists and Rogue Traders, but just what the creatures from this civilisation were or how they passed into extinction is a question that has never been answered.

All that may be surmised about these creatures comes from the one legacy they left behind—the artefacts referred to as Halo Devices. From these, it can be surmised that the makers of the Halo Devices had highly developed technology and a great understanding of physical matter and biological processes far in advance of perhaps any other known race or science. Whether the effects of these devices on human tissue is deliberate or not is unclear; if they were deliberate, it would indicate a callous genius as well as a farsighted malignancy. If the effects of the devices are accidental, it speaks of a terrifying power that could cause such a by-product unrelated to their true purpose.

Halo Devices and the Acolyte

It may of course be that a Player Character or even a Radical Inquisitor might succumb to the temptation of using a Halo Device. GMs are advised to treat this with the same caution as with Dark Pacts, as the potential exists for strong party conflict which may derail your campaign as a result. That said, the exploration of such a shadowy quest for immortality and freedom from the woes of the 41st Millennium that a Halo Device can bring is perfectly suitable for **Dark Heresy**. Sanity damage for their use has been included in their stages of transfiguration for this purpose. Note that once the tertiary phase is reached, however, the character is now wholly alien and utterly mad and should be removed from play, perhaps to return as an arch-villain!

Usually found buried in the decayed basalt biers and shattered cyclopean ruins of their maker's civilisation—long rendered into anonymity by the erosion of ages—the Halo Devices themselves are always inexplicably untouched by the effects of time. Halo Devices come in many forms, from smooth carbuncular talismans to strange miniature trilobite-like fossil curios and sinister orbs with fluid and glossy surfaces. All share a strange metallic feel, defy analysis by auspexs or scanners, and are nearly imperious to harm. Indeed any force sufficient to breach one will also destroy it, making any such act worthless. All that is known of their effects are half-truths and stories passed down across the millennia. In fact, there are as many strange and unreliable fragments of lore surrounding them as there are different forms to the devices themselves.

Given the proscribed nature of Halo Devices, it is unsurprising that rumour and supposition persist as to their powers and use. The truth, however, is that the devices will indeed grant their possessor what he seeks—youth, vigour, and undying power, but in such a manner only the most deranged would choose. Over time, the devices become part of their possessor's body and mind, changing him according to alien inclinations and subjugating him to strange thirsts. The life of a possessor of a Halo Device becomes less his own and more that of the device itself.

FORBIDDEN HISTORY: THE HALO DEVICES AND THE CALIXIS SECTOR

As far as can be ascertained, the first discovery of a Halo Device on the edges of what would one day be called the Calixis Sector was made by the Explorator Archmagos Khronus in the late years of the 36th Millennium, although apocryphal tales of dangerous and accursed xenos artefacts of a similar vein originated in the area millennia before. Despite analysis, the terrible properties of the seemingly mundane relics discovered by Khronus remained undiscovered.

For these horrors to emerge, a Halo Device would have to fall into less scrupulous hands.

It is believed that one did after Khronus's fleet returned many decades later to its base on the Forge World of Stragos where an incident occurred whose details have been long suppressed by the Mechanicus. Whatever events transpired on Stragos resulted in the devices being identified and condemned by both the Ordo Xenos and the Machine Cult, and the lives off all those involved with Halo Devices remain forfeit within the Imperium.

The threat posed by Halo Devices was known when Angevin began his crusade and members and servants of the Ordo Xenos travelled in his wake seeking signs of their corrupting presence. It is even thought that some amongst the crusade's greatest enemies used Halo Devices. That some of these enemies may yet live in secret, preserved by this blasphemous technology, is a terrible prospect that troubles the Holy Ordos to this day.

The Inquisition, for its part, has watched the sectors around the Halo Stars for signs of this trade and the artefacts' malign influence for centuries, hunting for those who traffic in the Halo Devices and mercilessly destroying those who have come into contact with them. Dedicated cells of Acolytes have spent their entire careers researching and hunting out Halo Devices. Congregations of Inquisitors have been created and have died in the war against these malign gifts from the Halo Stars' past.

The Sinophian Prosecution

Concrete evidence of the effects of the Halo Devices is frustratingly rare, but the earliest confirmed instance of conflict with the artefacts came on what was then the frontier world of Sinophia Magna, some hundred years before Angevin's crusade. During what is named in official Ordos sources as the Sinophian Prosecution, Lord Inquisitor Ozymandias Ruthven destroyed the heretic scion of a great and wealthy mercantile house of Sinophia. The heretic's name was judged to be so reviled that it has been expunged from all records. The arch-heretic, whose influence ran through the Segmentum Obscurus even to the borders of Segmentum Solar itself, was said to be possessed of unnatural powers and could not die. The Inquisition, of course, begged to differ…

The crimes and secret atrocities committed by this foe of mankind and his kin were so grievous as to merit execution not only for himself and his close associates but also for all of his house and its vassals. It became clear during this prosecution that the heretic was not, as first suspected, a daemon-worshiper, warped mutant, or witch. Rather, the heretic's body was a hideous fusion of polluted human flesh and a xenological artefact that had become so much a part of him that the heretic and artefact were indivisible. It is recorded in one apocryphal source that Ozymandias hurled his bound enemy into the heart of Sinophia's sun, destroying him utterly.

Knowledge of the Halo Devices

Halo Devices are highly obscure xenos artefacts, and knowledge of them is highly restricted. Presented here are guidelines for what Acolytes with the Forbidden Lore (Xenos) skill may know about Halo Devices. Owing to their obscurity, such Tests should have a base value of Difficult (–10) further modified by circumstance.

Table 3-7: Secrets of the Halo Devices

Degrees of Success	Details Known
Standard Success	They are xenos artefacts originating from within the Halo Stars beyond Imperial space. They have strange properties and an ill repute, and ownership of them is forbidden by the Ordo Xenos.
One	Halo Devices are diverse in form and made of a metallic material with verdigris patina. They are believed to come from ancient and dead worlds and are said to grant immortality to those who possess them. There is a secret trade in such items to corrupt members of the elite and the wealthy who dare break the Inquisitorial ban. This secret trade is the focus of aggressive countermeasures by the Inquisition.
Two	Nothing is known of the xenos race that created the Halo Devices. The devices alter the body and mind of those in prolonged contact with them, whilst granting longevity, youth, and vitality at what is rumoured to be a terrible cost.
Three	The race that made the Halo Devices is believed to have existed thousands of millennia ago and may even pre-date the Eldar. The Devices use a process completely beyond the understanding of Imperial lore to manipulate the body and mind of those they bond with, making their host extremely difficult to kill and effectively immortal. However, the price paid is madness, loss of humanity, and strange thirsts and addictions such as the need to consume blood and flesh.
Four or more	Halo Devices have a more profound effect on those they bond with as time passes. Those who have been bonded for several decades may only be slain by the complete destruction of their physical form, and numerous strange powers are said to be granted to them over time as their body grows ever more alien. The devices also alter the mind of those they bond with—fusing their intellect with one of unknown origin, destroying the host's personality and identity completely.

Illicit Trade

Since the sector's founding, no more than a few score Halo Devices are believed to have been clandestinely traded within its bounds, each changing hands for an exorbitant price. This trade is not only utterly illegal, but a heresy and crime so severe that any involvement with it will draw the harshest retribution under Imperial law. Accordingly, the illegal xeno-excavators who obtain Halo Devices, the smugglers who transport them, and the black market merchants who trade in them are amongst the most secretive and dangerous of recidivists. Such is the vast price for immortality peddled by these scum that those who are willing and able to pay it are among the most wealthy, powerful, and well connected individuals. This alone keeps the Halo Device's legend alive in circles criminal, merchant, and noble alike.

The Temptation of Immortality

Those few who covet Halo Devices have a simple but terrible motivation for their desire—the youth and eternal vigour bestowed by them. Rejuvenat treatments, sanguinary cleansing, and other techno-biological rituals can only preserve life so far. Even extreme solutions to extreme age such as full augmetic conversion and life support offer at best a poisoned chalice for those that take them up.

Rather than undergo the indignities of infirmity and the ultimate truth of their own demise, some who desire freedom from the cruel touch of time seek other, more desperate measures. For some, the Ruinous Powers await with their own lies and empty promises. However, this path is as uncertain as it is filled with caprice and danger to body and soul. Others, rich, ruthless, and sufficiently well connected, may seek other means, turning to the half-rumoured mysteries of ancient human science and the works of the alien for salvation.

Fortunately, concrete knowledge of the existence of Halo Devices is rare and the means to obtain one even rarer yet. Only the wealthiest and most powerful seekers of eternal life in the sectors that border the Halo Stars are able to pursue these forbidden devices. Once they have obtained such a thing, they soon find that they have a new purposes to occupy them—first, concealing the crime that they have committed simply by possessing one, and, over time, concealing the side effects of the device's gifts. The price they pay for their immortality is ultimately everything they have and everything they are as they spiral slowly down a path of contamination, corruption, and madness. Over time, most will be forced into the life of the recluse in order to survive, attended by a few loyal or terrified servants, and ultimately must pass the millennia hunted and shunned by their fellow man and at the mercy of alien thirsts and ancient nightmares.



Halo Devices: The Stuff That the Darkest Dreams are Made Of

Halo Devices come in many forms, but most are small and easily confused with odd jewellery, small pieces of armour, and curious miniature statuary. The form a Halo Device takes has no influence over its powers. Some commonly encountered forms are spheres (also called "halo oculus" for their resemblance to eyes), flat ovoids the width of a human palm, broad hoops varying in size, or small scarab or fossil-like objects. Once one begins to bond with a person, the form of the devices often changes as it melds with the user's flesh.

A true Halo Device might change hands in trade once in a hundred years and command prices of tens of millions of Thrones, or things of equal or more specific value such as trade route maps, noble titles, certain dark secrets, and other hugely valuable assets.

Halo Devices can only be obtained through the most unscrupulous and well connected traders who peddle in the heretical and profane. They therefore have no Availability value, as obtaining them should never be a matter of simply rolling dice.

A character with a Dark Pact, who is possessed, or who is a psyker (or the like) cannot bond with a Halo Device—the device will accept no master or influence but itself.

Though it is only necessary that someone have close contact with a Halo Device for it to cause its effect, there are numerous stories and superstitions that accompany the use of Halo Devices. Such practices include surgical implantation of the device beneath the skin, replacing an eye with the device (called a "halo oculi" in this case), swallowing the device, or even bathing in alchemical preparations of blood during the bonding.

Transfiguration

Halo Devices will begin to bond with and change any person who has prolonged contact (over several days or weeks) with them; this contact may be as simple as wearing the device as a piece of jewellery or keeping it in a pocket. However, embedding the device in an open wound may well speed up this process dramatically. Once the device bonds with the user, it begins to alter them. This process of change moves through three phases: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Once a person is into the primary phase there is no turning back, and they will eventually pass to the secondary and tertiary phases unless they are destroyed.

Halo Devices require the flesh of a host, and if kept in contact with flesh, they will bond with it and, over time, change that flesh to suit their purposes. Halo Devices do have a purpose, corrupted by eons as it might be, and it is to transform the mind and body of those they bond with towards some dark and terrible configuration.

As a person bonded to a Halo Device moves through each phase, various Traits and other effects are applied to him as detailed below.

Primary Phase (Once Bonded to the Device)

Within a short span of time, ranging from a few weeks to a matter of hours in rare instances, the device becomes fully physically bonded with the user's flesh. The user rejuvenates so that he is in the peak of youth and health. Any physical diseases, deformities, minor mutations, or other long-term medical conditions that he was suffering from are negated. Any part of the user's body that has been lost re-grows during this phase (albeit slowly and painfully), his senses become superbly attuned, he moves with an unnatural grace, and he shrugs off all but the most grievous wounds. Even as his body changes, the user's mind begins to break; he increasingly discovers that he finds no pleasure in normal sensory stimuli (food will taste ashen, etc.) and he suffers from violent mood swings. As time progresses, he learns that he no longer requires sleep—except for a few comatose hours every few days during which he suffers fierce phantasmagorical dreams of alien vistas and strange cities beneath mysterious stars.

The following modifications apply at this stage.

- Gain +10 Wounds.
- The user no longer suffers the effects of Fatigue.
- The user regains the peak of his physical prime and ceases to age.
- Gain 2d10 Insanity Points.
- Gain Heightened Senses (Sight, Sound, Smell, Taste, Touch), Unnatural Agility (×2) and Unnatural Toughness (×2).

Secondary Phase (After Several Years of Contact)

Over time, the device insinuates itself completely in the user's body and becomes partially absorbed in the cellular makeup of the body itself, with the initial contact covered over by skin and scar tissue. The area where the device bonded to the flesh begins to change, becoming mottled and tough like the exoskeleton of an insect or becoming desiccated and cold like that of an embalmed corpse. The body of the user heals almost any Damage (given time) and is inhumanly fast, strong, and resilient. He no longer sleeps, eats, or drinks normal food, but as he slips further into madness, he develops strange addictions and insatiable hungers that he must regularly indulge or grow increasingly unstable and sickly. These addictions often include spending long periods in total darkness or immersion in solar radiation, and the hungers are often for substances like human tissue—such as blood, flesh, and cranial fluid. The user also finds that he has memories of strange alien civilizations, languages, and scripts meshing with his own and may lose large chunks of his own memories.

The following modifications apply at this stage in addition to those from the primary stage.

- Gain +10 Wounds.
- Gain 3d10 Insanity Points.
- Gain Dark Sight, Regeneration, Unnatural Agility (×3), Unnatural Strength (×2), and Unnatural Toughness (×2).
- Gain Forbidden Lore (Xenos) or add +10 to the existing Skill.



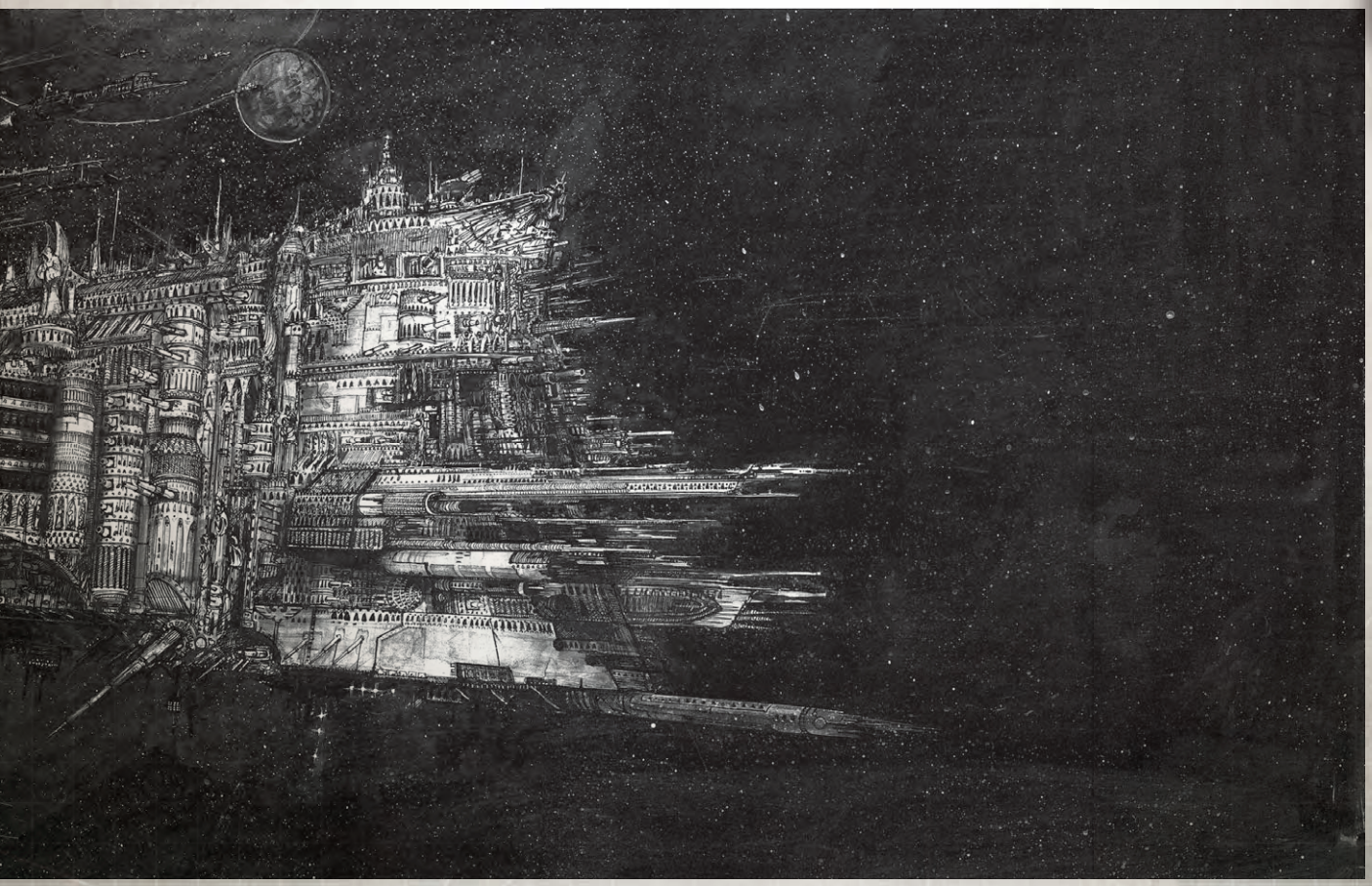
- The user loses nearly all need for physical nourishment (food, water, etc.) but gain an unnatural hunger or need as per a Severe Addiction.
- Gain Fear 1 (Disturbing), applies when the user's true nature is exposed.
- **Potential Resurrection:** If the Halo Device user is killed during this period and his body is not destroyed (burned to ash, dismembered, etc.) and if the Halo Device is not removed from his corpse, there is a percentage chance equal to one fourth of the user's Willpower score that within several days his body will repair itself and re-animate. This resurrection drives him irrevocably insane, and he immediately progresses to the tertiary phase.

Tertiary Phase (After Decades of Contact or Resurrection)

There is no longer any separation between the user and the Halo Device whatsoever; his body becomes perceptibly altered, remaining humanoid but no longer human. Instances of burning, radiant eyes, corpse-like flesh, distorted gaunt features, mottled or armoured hide-like skin, and even a fine beetle-like carapace are all recorded, and almost invariably the fingers of the hands transform into long talons of exposed bone. The thing that was once human is now so strong it can rip a man's head from his shoulders with casual ease, survive the touch of the void, and, it is said, may even return from death. The mind that once spiralled towards madness is gone and in its place is something else. It is something formed from an unholy union of intellects, something that can speak in long dead tongues and brood on all too human desires with inhuman patience.

The following special rules apply at this stage in addition to those from the primary and secondary stages.

- Gain +10 Wounds.
- Reduce Fellowship by –15 (05 minimum), increase Willpower by +10.
- The user is now driven irrevocably insane and is removed from play if a Player Character.
- Gain Fear 2 (Frightening), From Beyond, Natural Weapons (Claws;1d10 + SB I or R), Natural Armour (All 2d5), Strange Physiology, Stuff of Nightmares, Sonar Sense, and Unnatural Strength (×3) traits.
- Gain Forbidden Lore (Xenos) +20.
- **Resurrection (Trait):** A human in the tertiary phase of bonding to a Halo Device can return from death. If the user is killed but his body is not destroyed, he reanimates in a matter of days and is very, very hungry. Even if he is rendered down to mangled bones or burned to ash, should the remains be immersed in human blood and flesh and exposed to high electrical current or radiation, there is a chance he will be resurrected, his body reforming in minutes from a maelstrom of blood and unnatural energies. Note: the Inquisition has no concrete knowledge of this capability at present. Its only knowledge of this ability is from ancient tales, and many within the Ordo Xenos dismiss it as fanciful invention.



INQUISITORIAL THREAT BRIEFING

The subject of the direst sanction, Halo Devices, those who trade in them, and their users are under blanket order of destruction by the Holy Ordos. Thankfully, Halo Devices are exceedingly rare, and cases of their use are equally unusual. It is a matter of some rancour within the Inquisition that despite suppression, tales of wondrous devices or objects that, grant immortality or eternal youth continue to circulate in the decadent circles of the wealthy elite. Almost without exception these rumours have the barest relation to the truth, but they still have the power to attract the foolish to pursue such devices down paths that lead them to heresy.

Instances have been recorded in which a dissolute member of the elite has obtained a warp-tainted item passed off as a Halo Device, with predictably destructive results. Of near equal concern are the charlatans and miscreants who peddle in devices that they claim are Halo Devices but are in fact simulacra accompanied by suitably strange stipulations for use. These simulacra are the bane of the Ordos, as they create false leads and trails which the few true traders in Halo Devices can use to hide their own activities. The Inquisition shows no mercy to those who trade or are involved with the trading of false Halo Devices—to sell such a lie is to feed heresy and so is judged as damning as if the artefacts were true in the eyes of the Ordos.

How many have already fallen to the hideous mechanisms of Halo Devices cannot be known. However, in some secluded tower, or sealed estates monsters undoubtedly lurk, their once human form, twisted by baubles that promised life eternal.

TITUS NEFANDIEL: A PATH TO DAMNATION

Presented here to demonstrate the effects of a Halo Device over time are three ready to use sets of statistics. This progression is based on the Dissolute Noble NPC (see page 339 of **Dark Heresy**) that has been taken through the three stages of bonding with a Halo Device.

Primary Stage

Titus Nefandiel, the aging and morally bankrupt scion of a noble house of immense wealth, has obtained his true desire—the key to eternal youth via a Halo Device. Capricious and cruel, he has now returned to the vitality and looks of his youth. He leads a double life now, both as master of his house and as murderous rakehell, impersonating a minor relative he murdered to maintain his new identity. Devilishly fast, fit, and strong, he is able to indulge in any vice with little side effects, and a lethal knife wound taken in an underhive brawl barely makes him break stride. His mind, however, has begun to slowly crumble, and one by one his pleasures lose their lustre. Paranoia and violent mood swings set in, and he hears strange voices whisper to him in the dark. Soon his excesses force him to act only in the shadows, and he begins to keep a guard of cruel paid killers around him.

Titus Nefandiel Primary Stage Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
25	25	30	(6) 30	(6) 30	35	30	35	35

Movement: 6/12/18/36 **Wounds:** 20

Skills: Awareness (Per), Blather (Fel), Carouse (T), Charm (Fel), Command (Fel), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (Xenos) (Int), Gamble (Int), Interrogation (WP), Literacy (Int), Sleight of Hand (Ag), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (Merchant) (Fel).

Talents: Heightened Senses (Sight, Sound, Smell, Taste, Touch), Melee Weapon Training (Power, Primitive, Shock), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Quick Draw, Street Fighting.

Traits: Unnatural Agility (×2), Unnatural Toughness (×2).

Armour: Mesh combat cloak (Arms 4, Body 4).

Weapons: Bejewelled knife (3m; 1d5+2†R; Primitive), compact stub automatic (15m; S/3/–; 1d10+2 I; Pen 0; Clip 4; Rld Full), compact laspistol (15m; S/–/–; 1d10+1 E; Shots 15; Rld Full; Reliable), power sword (1d10+8† E; Pen 6; Balanced, Power Field).

†Includes Strength Bonus.

Gear: High fashion clothes, jewellery worth 1d5×10 Thrones.

Threat Rating: Obscuro Minoris.

Secondary Stage

Years pass and, as the device roots more deeply in his body, the outwardly healthy noble takes to wearing elaborate clothing to hide the creeping transformation of his flesh. His reputation blackened by dark rumours, he retreats largely from public life, kept safe only by his wealth and ruthlessly applied power. All but a few intimates are kept from getting too close, and he secretly has developed a cannibalistic addiction to human flesh that he struggles to contain. Though he has little need for weapons now, he still carries a power sword sheathed at his side that, if called on, he wields with such strength that it would barely take a single blow to split a Bull Grox. Only the most hardened killers and depraved of company can stand his presence now.

Titus Nefandiel Secondary Stage Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
25	25	(6) 30	(9) 30	(9) 30	35	30	35	35

Movement: 9/18/27/54 **Wounds:** 30

Skills: Awareness (Per), Blather (Fel), Carouse (T), Charm (Fel), Command (Fel), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (Xenos) (Int) +10, Gamble (Int), Interrogation (WP), Literacy (Int), Sleight of Hand (Ag), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (Merchant) (Fel).

Talents: Melee Weapon Training (Power, Primitive, Shock), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Quick Draw, Street Fighting,

Heightened Senses (Sight, Sound, Smell, Taste, Touch).
Traits: Dark Sight, Fear 1 (Disturbing), Regeneration, Unnatural Strength (×2), Unnatural Agility (×3), Unnatural Toughness (×3).
Armour: Mesh reinforced robes (Arms 4, Body 4, Legs 4).
Weapons: Compact laspistol (15m; S/–/–; 1d10+1 E; Shots 15; Rld Full; Reliable), power sword (1d10+11† E; Pen 6; Balanced, Power Field).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Faded and soiled robes of fine quality, jewellery worth 1d5×10 Thrones.
Threat Rating: Obscuro Majoris.

Tertiary Stage

Now decades have passed since his bonding with the device and Nefandiel hasn't been seen outside his personal estates for years. He is believed by many to be long dead. The one-time society rake sees no one and runs his teetering financial empire through intermediaries, while his nightmarish abode is attended only by a few insane sycophants, mute servitors, and dumbly loyal servants. Beneath the deeply hooded cloak, his body appears more insect than human, and none that meet his gaze doubt that the dark stars burning in place of his eyes contain anything but an ancient and alien malignancy. The appetites of the thing that was Nefandiel have grown over the years, and now the string of disappearances surrounding his estates is drawing too much suspicion for his few remaining agents to bribe their way out of or conceal. Any interlopers who discover his secret may well wish they had not, however, as the thing he has become is powerful and terrible far beyond any mortal man, and he has long eschewed the use of blades for weapons of his own flesh.

Titus Nefandiel Tertiary Stage Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
25	25	(9) 30	(9) 30	(9) 30	35	30	45	20

Movement: 9/18/27/54 **Wounds:** 40
Skills: Awareness (Per), Blather (Fel), Carouse (T), Charm (Fel), Command (Fel), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (Xenos) +20 (Int), Gamble (Int), Interrogation (WP), Literacy (Int), Sleight of Hand (Ag), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (Merchant).
Talents: Melee Weapon Training (Power, Primitive, Shock), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Quick Draw, Street Fighting, Heightened Senses (Sight, Sound, Smell, Taste, Touch).
Traits: Dark Sight, Fear 2 (Frightening), From Beyond, Natural Weapons (Clawed hands), Natural Armour (5), Regeneration, Resurrection, Sonar Sense, Strange Physiology, Stuff of Nightmares, Unnatural Agility (×3), Unnatural Strength (×3), Unnatural Toughness (×3).
Armour: None (All 5).
Weapons: Clawed hands (1d10+9† I or R).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Threat Rating: Obscuro Extremis.





The Curse of Solomon

"You do not understand! If we do not sate its hunger it will come for us and our children! There is no other way…"

—The Statement of Corrin Ur, Shift Foreman, Chemstack Nineteen Lambda

Solomon is a blighted, slowly dying, and heavily industrialised hive world where rebellion, superstition, and hate fester in the shadowed canyons of rockcrete and steel. Its hives are pollution-shrouded places plagued by suspicion, greed, and unrest. Between the towering monolithic citadels of Solomon's hive metropolises, thousands of square kilometres of rusting pipelines, thundering processing vats, and fire-belching pyro-towers cover the landscape and darken the skies with a thick haze of black smog. In the lightless spaces of these Interior Industrial Zones, or simply the "Interior" as the Solomonites call them, many terrors are said to haunt unseen. Of these tales, the dark legend of the so-called "Curse" or "Beast of Solomon" is perhaps one of the oldest, most consistent, and most widely recounted.

It is passed from generation to generation among the unfortunates forced to dwell in the work-houses and labour in the depths of Solomon's Interior. It is a myth of some monstrous alien thing that stalks the darkness seeking only to kill, a shadow within shadows, and of good men taken without warning to gristly deaths with only bloody shreds left to mark their passing.

The Beast is an envoy of merciless death made manifest and a horror never fully seen—a thing lurking at the edge of the terrified minds of the populace. Yet the Beast is no mere tale, but an ingrained fear that alone is powerful enough to move ordinary men and women to commit horrors in its name. Worse yet, the monster itself may be far more real and dangerous than the most febrile imaginings of those bound by its terrors can conceive.

THE DARKNESS'S DUE

Down in the lightless pathways beneath still-stacks of the Interior, in the pollution choked chem-spoils and rust barrens where people labour to eke out a living by the light of guttering promethium wicks, fear has an unfettered reign, and chief among these is the fear of the Beast. A mind and heart consumed by terror can contemplate any act to gain a moment's respite, and amongst these dwellers in the dark a horrific tradition has grown.

These people have been consumed by their fear of the Beast. They have no self-given name, no title, and no organisation. They are simply victims who have succumbed completely to their terror of what lies in the dark. They are united by a single factor—their wish to placate and propitiate the Beast, to preserve themselves by giving the Beast its due, even sacrificing their own in desperate, appeasing worship of this emissary of death.

> Payment in blood and bone is the only coin the beast will accept. We must offer one of our own if the rest are to survive. Now, we shall draw lots, and he with the black stone must commit his soul to the Emperor.

Using the Curse of Solomon in Your Games

There are many ways of getting Acolytes involved with the legend of the Beast, and the truth behind the myth has been deliberately left up to each GM to decide. Presented here are a number of adventure hooks involving possible truths behind the Curse:

Firstly you could focus on rumours of the Beast itself. Officials vanishing in the deep places of Solomon combined with local tales of something living in the dark will draw the Acolytes in and have them primed for an encounter with a horrific creature. With such an expectation, the Acolytes may be unprepared for the existence of a conspiracy to placate the Beast through sacrifice.

Alternatively, you can begin with clues indicating some form of cult: a barely alive witness raving about people in masks and rituals or a resolute missionary returning with reports of outbreaks of heretical belief in the Beast will have the likely effect of focusing the Acolytes' attention on the locals. Further investigation reveals crude shrines to the missing or to the Beast itself out in ruined industrial complexes, talk of sacrifices, and a populace terrorised by the dark. The truly classic hook is to begin with the disappearance of an individual who is either connected to the Acolytes, or who is officially significant. The individual's last known location will have been somewhere in the deep places of Solomon's Interior. Experienced players will be braced for the locals to be suspects and for there to be some horror lurking in the dark. In such cases, it can be worth having something up your sleeve to reverse your players' expectations, offering them a number of red herrings in order to keep them on their toes! When it comes to portraying the locals, suspicion and fear are their prime motivators—they all know each other and they know they have something to hide. They are also short-lived people used to being oppressed or ignored by those in power, and they also know exactly what fate lies in store for them should their crimes become known. Based on this, their response to the Acolytes is likely to be a mixture of guarded hostility and fearful deference. However, some may be particularly helpful or friendly; this is likely to be because they wish to guide the Acolytes to a false conclusion, or hold the secret guilty hope they bring salvation.

These people, though, are not skilled dissemblers or true cultists (using the NPC templates for Citizen, Furnace Worker, and Dreg from **Dark Heresy** are all appropriate). As a result, suspicious gaps in stories or slips of the tongue are useful tools for imparting information about what's really going on, as are personal items belonging to previous sacrifices turning up in the hands of the locals.

While the local inhabitants believe completely in the Beast, the truth is up to you. The three theories proposed by the Inquisition are all options to choose from. These options are not mutually exclusive—it is perfectly possible they are all true and that the legend of the Beast is a product of the activities of all three.

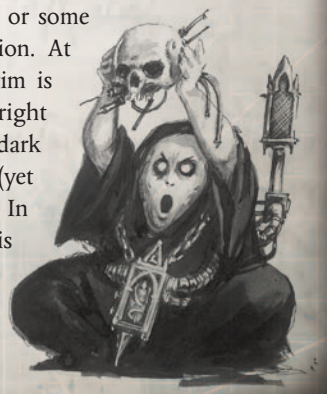
Those not living their brief years cursed with poverty, disease, and fear in Solomon's darkest places cannot understand the fear of knowing that the darkness is watching you and may take you if it pleases. Accordingly, most who make sacrifice to the Beast are ordinary industrial labourers and families who are forced to live in the areas of the Interior where tales of the Beast are strongest. These stories are often backed up with slews of disappearances, the discovery of bloody remains, and sightings of monstrous things stalking the shadows.

To understand those who sacrifice to the Beast, it is important to understand how these bitter and fearful people live. Buried far way from light and wind in the depths of Solomon's Interior, these "zoners" labour by promethium lamps, drink water thick with pollutants that seep from the still-stacks, and know that they are born and will die at the whim of greater forces—be it the slow death sentence passed by the Imperium's thirst for the product of their toil or the Beast that stalks their dark world. The poisoning of Solomon by its own industries has brought other miseries that those forced to inhabit the Interior bear the brunt of—successful births are rare, and with each successive generation, a greater percentage of those born live only a few months or are touched by mutation. Those who sacrifice to the Beast believe that their only chance to affect their fate is to appease at least one of the forces that prey on them.

THE RITUAL OF SACRIFICE

Around the areas considered to be the Beast's hunting grounds, even those who do not seek to placate the Curse with sacrifice know of the practice and keep their mouths firmly shut on the matter to outsiders. Thus they are to some degree complicit. Though some may believe firmly in the God-Emperor, they also know that they are accursed and that they must offer sacrifice to appease the Curse. Those sacrificed are often outsiders who find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time, so it is that offerings tend to be roving scum, minor officials, and those unfortunates who have been forcibly "relocated" to the Interior to keep up the work quotas.

It may even be the case, where fear of the Beast has grown so strong that an entire community has fallen into sacrifice, that the community's leaders may lure outsiders into their deadly web so that they can be offered to the "Beast in the Dark." However, given the danger this posses, the situation will be desperate indeed for this to occur. In other cases, sacrifices will be taken from amongst the local populace, the victims being selected by lottery or some other dubious means of divination. At the agreed time, the bound victim is taken by a throng bearing bright torches to keep the Beast and the dark away, their faces hidden by crude (yet sometimes elaborate) cloth masks. In a place where the tangle of pipes is thickest, the sacrifice is chained and left in complete darkness to await his fate.



INQUISITORIAL THREAT BRIEFING

The Ordo Xenos has been long aware of the myth of "the Curse" but has long relegated it to the mass of other petty myths and horror stories that abound on Solomon, as on many other worlds. The Ordo reasons such stories are a simple, natural response to the frailty of life and harsh conditions there. Received wisdom points to the myth's widespread nature as evidence that it is likely a mere convenient scapegoat, as a single Beast could not be everywhere at once and a whole genus of such creatures would have made themselves apparent some time ago. They do not, however, dismiss the possibility of one or more rogue xenos predators' actions or even a localised daemonic incursion being blamed on the Curse, or even some heretical faction using the myth for its own ends. Some factions within the Ordo Xenos are not so sure, however, believing that there is more than meets the eye in these "folk tales." Perhaps there is enough to warrant further investigation…

The Nature of the Beast

Nobody really knows what the Beast is. To the spire nobles and guildmasters, it is a childish fable. The Administratum scribes and hab residents know it as a chilling ghost story, or a parable of how terrible life is in the Interior. But to those doomed to live in the Interior Zones, it is very real, and very deadly.

Those scholars and Adepts of the Holy Ordos who have taken time to study the stories of the "Beast in the Dark" have come up with several possibilities. However, until dedicated teams of investigators can be dispatched to Solomon to uncover the truth, these will remain only theories. The truth could be any or all of these possibilities, or perhaps something else entirely.

The Beast is This Place

The most popular theory amongst the Ordo Calixis, (especially with those adepts who have never had the misfortune of visiting Solomon) is that the Beast does not exist in any literal sense. It is rather a figment of the imaginations of the ignorant and susperstitious lower classes on Solomon invented to explain the bleak hopeless nature of the lives they lead. A mythical "Beast" lets these people blame their troubles on something they can regard as concrete and tangible. More importantly, their belief in a literal Beast gives them the misplaced hope that they save themselves through the act of sacrificing.

A small subset of researchers have suggested that although the stories of the Beast may be myths, something more than the polluted enviroment and harsh conditions is responsible for hunting those who live in Solomon's Interior. They theorise that some arcane or even xenos mechanism from the ancient past may be responsible. Those theories are roundly ignored in the Ordo Calixis.

However, if either case is true, then the Beast cannot be appeased, hunted, or stopped. It would likely be a self-perpetuating fear caused by the blight and slow death of this world. Alternatively, the Beast may be some strange, unknown, external force—all around and possessing reasons and purposes either too inhuman to comprehend or too mechanistic to placate. It takes people in the dark, and as long as people are there, they will disappear. As for those sacrificed to the Beast, some may be taken but most likely starve to death or are eaten by rats. No matter how they end, their deaths are futile attempts to control something that does not understand the gifts or wishes of men.

Existential Enemies

More exotic theories as to the cause of the "Curse" include an ancient alien device buried beneath the surface that consumes life energy or an ancient system from the Dark Age of Technology that eliminates living things according to some inexplicable programmed parameter, its victims rendered down by blade-fingered servitors or swarms of brass-cased insects. It could also be some property of the materials used to build part of the foundations of that part of Solomon's industrial complex, causing people to slip out of reality and into the warp. It could even be the work of some ancient creature or xenos species that predates human involvement on Solomon, acting to preserve its secret existence.

The Beast is Man

When people fear the unknown, they may talk of Beasts that lurk in the dark and of fiends with sharp teeth that thirst for flesh. These tales, though, are the products of wishful ignorance—Man is the worst Beast that lurks in the darkness of Solomon.

Several Inquisitors whose minds tend to think in such terms privately suspect that someone is using and propagating the stories of the Beast for his own purposes. After all, the population that lives in the depths of the Solomon industrial complexes are a hidden, blighted people who will not be missed and are perfect cattle for others who need a regular supply of humans for some vile purpose. While the terrified dwellers gather around their chem-lamps and whisper about the Beast, others watch them unseen, waiting for one to stray into an isolated spot so that the others can do what they wish. To these quiet watchers, the whimpering offerings left in dark places are amusing and readily accepted gifts that do not dissuade them from their purpose.

Potentially Monstrous People

Both the Amaranthine Syndicate and the Brotherhood of the Horned Darkness represent active cults on Solomon whose activities may inspire the legends of a Beast, just as they have inspired different tales in other parts of Solomon. A murder cult amongst the elite of Solomon could also be to blame, as could the needs of a hidden xenophile or heretek cabal that requires a continuous supply of human subjects.

The Beast is Real

While not a common theory, a vocal minority of Inquistiorial scholars contends that the Beast actually exists as some sort of creature. Why, in a galaxy full of strange and terrible things, could there not be some sort of creature living in the depths of Solomon, preying on the population there?

If this is true, then the frightening legends from Solomon's

Interior describing the Beast cannot be dismissed out of hand. Those who dwell in the dark places of Solomon tell of a crawling nightmare and the silent scythe of death. Gorged on rumour, fear, and superstition, the Beast has as many forms as the people who tell of it, yet all speak of the thing in the dark that comes and snatches away the living without a sound. If the Beast is real, then it is a savage and unknown alien predator as dangerous as any anything that might be confronted in the depths of the void. One such example creature is detailed at the end of this section.

Killing the Beast

If the Beast is real, then killing it will not be easy. The stories describe it as a vicious and highly effective predator and an extraordinarily powerful creature, well-adapted to the cramped and dark conditions in Solomon's industrial complexes. It is also likely to know its environment better than any man could. It will retreat if attacked openly and then return to pick off an individual before disappearing again. Combined with the fact that it is a fearsome combatant, the only way to kill it is with extremely good fortune or an even better plan.

The Beast of Solomon

The following represents one possible example of what the Beast might be—a hideous xenos predator stalking Solomon's industrial wastes.

A huge creature, part serpentine and part insectile in outline and wholly, utterly alien, this nightmare made flesh can wait with inhuman patience amongst the bleeding fumes of the still-stacks and chem-refineries for its prey. Blind, it is able to sense the slightest vibration in the air and track the smallest trace of scent. It can stalk its prey for hours before striking, its mottled carapace shifting colour to match its environment. Targeting lone victims or small isolated groups, it kills as if its deep-bred instincts know that it must remain hidden. Once ready it uncoils, its taloned limbs propelling it swiftly forward with no more sound than the wind. Victims may catch a glimpse of its many rows of needle sharp teeth and may even manage to let out a short cry before they are cruelly silenced, to be remembered only as part of another whispered tale.

Beast of Solomon Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
60	—	(12) 60	(10) 50	50	17	40	50	—

Movement: 5/10/15/30 **Wounds:** 36

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Concealment (Ag) +20, Silent Move (Ag) +20, Climb (S) +20, Tracking (Int) +20.

Talents: Fearless, Heightened Sense (Hearing, Smell), Lightning Attack, Sprint, Swift Attack.

Traits: Bestial, Blind, Fear 3 (Horrifying), Natural Armour (Scales and bone plating), Natural Weapons (Talons and jaws), Multiple Arms, Size (Enormous), Strange Physiology, Unnatural Strength (×2), Unnatural Toughness (×2).

Vulnerable Spot: The beast is vulnerable to hits to its unarmoured "soft underbelly" between its carapace plates that is only exposed when it rears up. This area can only be noticed with a successful **Difficult (–10) Awareness Skill Test** and can only be hit by a Called Shot (–20). If the hit is successful, the Damage is applied to the body and is not reduced by the Beast's armour or Toughness Bonus.

Bodily Elasticity: Despite its great size, the Beast can force itself bonelessly through far smaller spaces than might be imagined, seeming to ooze and writhe through shattered piping, elevator shafts, and ducting at will. It may pass through apertures as if human sized, it suffers no impediment for rough terrain, and it may climb vertically and cling to any surface it can find purchase on.

Integrated Senses: In the absence of sight, all of the Beast's heightened senses work together seamlessly to give it an awareness of its environment. The Beast suffers no penalties for being blind, nor does it suffer penalties for darkness or poor visual conditions, and it can detect the presence of heat and movement within 40 metres at all times.

Armour: None (All 6).

Weapons: Talons and jaws (1d10+12† R; Tearing).
†Includes Strength Bonus.

Gear: None.

Threat Rating: Xenos Majoris.





IV

Malleus

Chaos Rituals and Sorcery

•

Unholy Artefacts

•

The Pilgrims of Hayte

•

Ateanism

•

The Brotherhood of the Horned Darkness

•

The Vile Savants

•

The Menagerie

•

The Murder Room



Eli was certain that he had drunk too much. Stumbling against a wall he looked around–he was in was a connector roadway, grey, empty, and unfamiliar. Had he strayed close to the outer edges of hive? The roadway, slick with icy vapour, slid beneath his feet and he pitched forward.

For a moment he lay on the ferrocrete, his nose and mouth filled with the reek of his own bile. Eli could only roll over fitfully and blink as warm golden light washed across him from a nearby doorway. A hand hooked under Eli's arm, helping him to his feet, but it was a few seconds before he could make out the soothing voice.

"...Just a tumble on a treacherous path, no real harm done, although perhaps you should come inside." The voice was warmly soft and reassuring.

Eli made out a short, portly man with a wide bald head and a broad sleeved yellow cassock. The man smiled, his blue eyes twinkling.

"You do look a little unwell, and what have I done with my manners? You must come inside." With that, the little man took him by the elbow and led him through a door into golden light.

To Eli the room seemed inordinately large, but his head was spinning again and the world would not settle to be seen. Closing his eyes he heard a chink of glass and a rustle.

"You have had a sufficiency of drink, yes, but I think you will find this most restorative,'" his host said, offering Eli a small fluted glass with an inch of dark liquid. Eli concentrated and brought the glass to his lips, his host smiling encouragement all the while. The drink smelled of a garden dome in bloom and slipped down his throat lightly. Eli felt a cool, freshness spread behind his eyes. The blurred befuddlement of alcohol faded and a sharp clarity replaced it.

"What is it?" he said, his voice filled with awe, looking at the thick dregs in the glass.

"Oh, it comes from under a stranger's sun and takes a careful hand to distill it," his host replied.

Eli looked around afresh. The space was filled with ornate old furniture and shelves brimming with a jumble of books, loose parchment leaves, archaic looking data-slates, and stacked packets sealed with ribbons. Many of the tottering piles of paper were weighed down in place by small brass cages of birds and fluid filled jars.

"You are an adept?" Eli asked.

"Ah. No, no. I am not," the little man chirped. "I am more of a collector, yes."

Eli's gaze flickered over some of the cages. Small, black avian eyes glittered back at him. "A collector? What do you collect?" He did not know why, but even as he said it he realized he did not want to know what the little man collected. There was something about him that made Eli's nerves twitch.

"A collector of wondrous things," the man beamed, and somehow he was already across the room and opening a door that Eli had not noticed. "Come, you must see," he said beckoning to Eli, who followed with a sudden dread curiosity.

Eli edged into a space of flickering shadows. Lamps hung from a vaulted ceiling, each made of a dark metal in the shape of grinning moons and squinting suns. The flickering lamp-light revealed niches and recesses, each gated and barred by brass rods set at strange, contorted angles.

"Come, come," the little man said, patting Eli's arm. Eli glanced into the niches as they passed and things looked back at him from the shadows. There was the impression of small dark eyes, taut skin, and pale quills. "Here are things well worth an eye!" the little man said, and there was something ominous about his welcoming smile as he gestured Eli towards the cages.

How long Eli was in the company of the little man blurred and stretched, but soon he was weeping and moaning like a helpless child. He was almost hanging from the fat little man's arm by the time they reached the last niche in the vault.

Drying spittle coated Eli's lips and he whimpered as they stopped before the opening that was veiled with a curtain woven with swirls of yellow and blue fire. The little man said nothing but smiled down at Eli, his eyes glittering, and swept his soft, podgy hand towards the curtain. There was a pause, a heartbeat in time, and the curtain lifted. Eli screamed,, his hands raked his face, blood filled his mouth and ran out onto the floor, but all the while he could not look away. Above, his face split with glee, the little man's voice rose higher and higher.

"Now you see. Now you see!"

Chapter IV: Malleus

"Know this first. The daemon is a liar."

—Daemonhunter Mazerahan

The ever-present threat of Chaos—the taint of the warp, and its corruption gnawing at the fabric of reality and luring the souls of the weak and unwary to damnation—is one of the great themes of **Dark Heresy**. The warp is quite literally everywhere. It is a parallel realm that mirrors everyday reality, permeating and echoing it, and where the veil is thin, sometimes breaking through with catastrophic results.

The warp is also necessary to humanity. Quite beyond any spiritual debate over its nature or esoteric purpose, it has very practical uses without which the Imperium would falter and die. The first and greatest of these is interstellar travel and the second, nearly as vital, is interstellar communication. There are other, less well known but still necessary technologies and arts that employ the warp to mankind's advantage, but many remain hidden from common knowledge.

The caveat to these vital benefits is the fact that the warp's dangers are appallingly great, and the slightest error in dealing with it can lead to disaster. If the warp's perils were merely a matter of treacherously unstable energies, the risks would be bad enough. However, the truth is far worse—the warp hungers, the warp watches, and the warp hates.

Some claim that the warp itself is alive, like a vast sea of insane and alien consciousness, but what is certain is that dark things move within its depths. The entities that inhabit the warp range from mindless predators and malevolent, scheming intelligences to the implacable and seemingly abstract cosmic forces that some refer to as the Gods of Chaos. All, if given reign or licence, would destroy and rupture physical reality to feed their hunger, and when the seething protean stuff of the warp bleeds through, it corrupts and destroys all that it touches.

For thousands of years, it has been the sacred duty of the Ordo Malleus, the Daemonhunters, to stand guard against the horrors from beyond, cast out the unclean spirit, battle the daemon, and maintain the mass of the Imperium's people in blessed ignorance of what constantly gnaws at the edges of their existence. This ignorance is of great importance, because the Ordo Malleus knows well that the greatest dangers grow from the involvement of mankind with the warp's malignancy. Whether through madness, evil, accident, or misguided stupidity, it is most often humanity that draws these daemon-horrors forth like sharks to bloodied water.



A Guide to This Chapter's Contents

This chapter brings the deadly interaction between humanity and the warp into focus. No mere list of daemons or petty cults, this chapter shows the many ways by which the warp's ruin can be visited on man: meddling with things best left alone, the malefic arts of sorcery and ritual, unholy artefacts, curses, and the summoning of daemons. It also details several great and insidious threats to the Calixis Sector whose origins lie in the seething depths of the warp and if not stopped might yet doom countless billions to misery, destruction, and a fate worse than death.

Hopefully it will also show you the depth and range of dangers and possibilities for games that the warp and its denizens can offer, from scheming cults to apocalyptic onslaught, private tragedy to dark temptation. The last of these, temptation, is worth noting because here you will find powers and abilities, even allies, that might tempt Acolytes to the other side. The road to hell, as it were, is paved with the Radical's best intentions.

Overall, this section is loaded with rules to expand and detail the powers of Chaos and daemons in your games. Its intent is to provide a useful template that will allow you to arm your villains with dark powers and vile weapons, as well as serve as a springboard for your own creativity. If, for example, you want a particular cult magus to have a power or incantation that rips the heart out of a victim and makes it fly to his hand but can't find it here—invent it. Or, you want a daemon with the power to animate cloth to strangle and smother its victims and you can see nothing remotely suitable—then make one up! Use the relative power and costs of things shown here as your starting point and remember the warp is fickle, perilous, corrosive, and above all inimical to life and sanity. Reflect these facts and you shouldn't go far wrong!

The Malefic Powers

Sorcery, warpcraft, magic, call it what you will, it is a real and deadly force in the 41st Millennium. Ask any Imperial Confessor, and he will tell you that Chaos waits for the unwary and the sinful, and through dark and blasphemous rites, the foes of mankind work their evils against the Emperor's chosen. The unvarnished truth of just what forces are at work in this "dark magic," is a different and far more tangled matter, and one rife with paradox and contradiction.

What the Holy Ordos accept as truth is that through the use of certain mimetic formula and esoteric equations and theorem, expressed sometimes as simple verbal and somatic patterns (outwardly at least) or, more complexly through rituals of paradox, murder, and discord, the stuff of the warp can be bled through into reality. Warpcraft can be made to alter and corrupt physical matter, imbue objects with esoteric power, mutate flesh, summon forth entities from the empyrean, and even create deliberate breaches and rifts in the fabric of the universe. To undertake such practices or even to search out knowledge of them carries an immediate death sentence in the eyes of the Ordo Malleus, for the seeker damns not only himself but imperils countless others and even reality itself in his arrogance.

The malefic arts must either be independently researched, experimented with, and honed in practice (a process fraught with peril), or be gleaned by the equally treacherous process of tutelage under a master occultist or even a daemonic entity. As such, the knowledge and abilities of sorcery are often fragmentary and paradoxical, for what one sorcerer may need vials of widow's tears and burning mercury salts for, another may accomplish with a curious gesture and a mimetic phrase.

Nor is it clear where traditionally understood psychic powers end and sorcery begins. However, what all sources will agree upon is that the malefic arts are extremely dangerous to the wielder, and to meddle with such an unintelligible and fundamental force to shape reality is to court disaster at every turn. This danger does not stop the malefic cultist or magi, however; these individuals often see sorcery, daemon lore, and pacts with the dark gods as easy paths to power and glory. It is the sacred task of the Ordo Malleus to hunt them down and destroy them before others suffer for their folly and ambition.

Chaos Rituals

"Chaos ritual" is a catch-all term that covers the diverse weird rites, occult formula, and strange ceremonies by which the warp can be called upon to alter reality or its denizens summoned forth to erupt into the physical universe. Chaos rituals can take a potentially endless variety of forms and are often inconsistent, malign, and irrational things, employing lunatic formula and centred on damaging reality in some way. Such a ritual acts like a flare unleashed into the endless dark tides of the warp beyond in order to attract the attention of daemons and ease their passage through the veil or perhaps is used to create a specifically desired buckling of physical laws and a release of occult energies that can be controlled and channelled by the ritual's conductor for his own ends. Warp rituals are woefully dangerous things whose potential scope is limited only by the depraved imagination of mankind and the ageless malevolence of the Ruinous Powers themselves.

Performing Chaos Rituals

In game terms, Chaos rituals are there to achieve specific effects. A particular ritual might exist to summon a daemon, possess an unwilling victim, contact an entity in order to forge a Dark Pact, taint an area with unholy forces, foretell the future, animate the dead, or simply rip open reality and let the daemons have their way…the list is potentially endless. As a general rule of thumb, the more complex and potent the effect to be achieved, the more difficult the ritual will be to accomplish.

Rituals require time and preparation to perform, and there are many difficulties in successfully carrying them out. These are either owing to the requirement of particular components (rare substances, sacrificial victims, and the like) or other more arcane needs such as a particular astrological alignment,



Using Rituals in Your Games

Although for the most part NPC driven rituals need little hard definition other than as a narrative in your game, it can be handy for the GM to lay them out more clearly for descriptive purposes (particularly if Acolytes are getting involved in an attempt to disrupt them, or even carry one out themselves!). For this reason, the Chaos Ritual Template has been provided.

Chaos Ritual Template

A ritual can be defined by the following criteria.

Description: This section details what the ritual is for, why it is carried out, its origin, and any other pertinent facts.

Requirements: What is needed to perform the ritual—specific components, time, place, etc., as well as any Skill Tests or level of Corruption needed to make it work correctly. How well or poorly these Tests are made and the wider makeup of the ritual may affect the quality of the results achieved. Many factors both esoteric and mundane may affect a ritual's chance of success. Particular examples for daemonic rituals can be found on **Table 4-2: Summoning Ritual Modifiers**.

Effect: The successful effect of the ritual.

Duration: How long the ritual's effects last.

Cost: The cost in physical and spiritual terms to those that carry out the ritual, including any Insanity and Corruption accrued.

The Price of Failure: All attempts to control the warp have an unpleasant cost should they fail. These are listed here, usually represented by Psychic Phenomena, immediate Perils of the Warp, or in the specific case of summoning or warp-rift opening rituals, an effect called Contempt of the Warp as detailed in **Table 4-1: The Contempt of the Warp**.

Table 4-1: The Contempt of the Warp

Roll d100	Effect
01–50	**Ignored:** Silence and stillness greet your efforts. You have failed.
51–80	**Mocked:** Howls of daemonic laughter fill the tortured air, and your worst secrets and shames are hurled at you in mockery. You gain 1d5 Insanity Points.
81–90	**Struck Down:** You are blasted with raw warp energies, you take Damage as if hit by a 1d10+3 (E) attack with the Warp Weapon quality. The foully seething energies scar your soul should you be wounded but survive, inflicting 1d10 Corruption Points.
91–00	**Assailed:** For your affront, a minor daemon is dispatched to deal with you. You must fight an Incarnate Daemon or similar (chosen by the GM) to survive your shortcomings. This daemon is not subject to Mastery.
101–120	**Possessed:** Chaos replays your arrogance by making you its plaything and you are possessed by an Unclean Spirit or worse. Alternatively, the GM may determine that the warp grants your wishes…in the worst ways imaginable.
121+	**Devoured:** Reality is sundered and you are sucked screaming into the warp or devolved into a mindless, mewling Chaos Spawn. Your character is destroyed.

the fact that a particular locale must be used, etc. Another difficulty worth mentioning is, of course, the action of hostile forces, namely the Imperial authorities and the Holy Ordos. Attracting their attention can make life very difficult for the malefic cultist indeed!

Subject to such an endless variety of uses, Chaos rituals seldom have much consistency. However, human suffering and death are an integral part of most (as the release of emotional and psychic energy is as meat and drink to the things of the warp), and what magi sometimes call the "Rule of Sympathy" often applies. That is to say, sympathetic objects and rites are used to help create the desired effect. So for example, a ritual to summon a daemon of the Lord of Decay might well involve the use of rancid offal, rusted implements, and diseased and contaminated sacrificial victims—all objects of sympathy to the nature of the creature being called on. Alternatively, the ritual might be structured to help weaken the barriers between reality and the warp. In such cases, during the rites, hallucinogenic drugs, tortuous incantations, and numbing trances might be employed to attune the minds of the celebrants to visions of the beyond that may crawl their way through the rupturing synapses of the onlookers to take physical form.

The Daemonic Mastery Test

Commanding a daemon is no minor thing, as even the lesser entities that may answer a cult magister's call are malignant raging creatures that would rather rend a human apart for sport than serve one. In order to control a summoned daemon, a battle of wills is fought psychically between the summoner and the entity summoned, represented by an Opposed Willpower Test and taking a Full Action to perform. This Test is modified by the criteria listed on

Example Chaos Ritual: Summon Incarnate Daemon (Bloodletter)

This ritual is used by malefic cultists intent on murder to summon a Bloodletter, one of the daemon servants of Khorne, to do their bidding and slaughter their enemies. Other variations on this ritual may exist, but this is a common example.

Requirements: The ritual must take place at a site of battle or murder and requires an inscribed summoning circle marked out with invocations and symbols sacred to the Blood God. Braziers of boiling blood and burning coals must be placed at the cardinal points of the circle, and an adult human who has killed another during his life or a predatory beast must be ritually killed and bled to summon the daemon, with the correct prayers to the Blood God intoned while this is performed. A **Hard (–20) Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) Test** is required to successfully conduct the ritual, modified by **Table 4-2: Summoning Ritual Modifiers**. If the daemon is successfully summoned, then a Daemonic Mastery Test must immediately be taken in order to control it.

Effect: A Bloodletter is summoned (see page 351 of **Dark Heresy**).

Duration: Once summoned, the Bloodletter remains in corporal form for 1d5+ (the number of successes in the Summoning Test) hours or until it is destroyed. This duration may be extended dramatically in areas where the barrier between the warp and reality is thin or the daemon kills a sufficient number of living creatures to empower it further.

Cost: The ritual, whether successful or not, incurs 1d5 Insanity Points and 1d5+2 Corruption Points upon those involved in the summoning.

The Price of Failure: Failure results in a Test for the Contempt of the Warp (see **Table 4-1: The Contempt of the Warp**) modified by +10 for each degree of failure.

Table 4-2: Summoning Ritual Modifiers

Modifier	Condition†
+30	The summoner knows the daemon's True Name.
+20	"The Stars are Right"—auspicious circumstances. The summoner has already sworn allegiance to the daemon's master or cause.
+10	Ritual follows the "Rule of Sympathy." The deamon has been provided with a suitable sacrifice to partake in on its arrival. The summoner has an artefact connected to the deamon.
+0	The summoner knows the daemon's allegiance and kind.
–10	The summoner knows little of what is being called up.
–30	The summoner knows nothing of what is being called up. The summoner has recently summoned or commanded daemons of an opposing allegiance.

†Combine any of the following that apply to arrive at a net modifier with a total maximum of +30 or -30.

Table 4-2: Summoning Ritual Modifiers, by Daemonic Presence, and by any other pertinent factors.

If the summoner wins the contest, he may command the daemon to do his bidding. Note it will follow the summoner's spoken (or telepathic) instructions.

If the summoner fails the Test, then the daemon is free to do as it likes, and will usually start by seeking to take out its rage upon the summoner.



Breaking Mastery

Daemons are alien-minded and untrustworthy things at the best of times, and it is always wise to simply summon them to do what they are best at—killing. If the daemon is forced to go against its fundamental nature in some way, it may attempt to break the summoner's control, forcing a second Mastery Test with a negative modifier for the controller of –30.

THE DARK ART OF SORCERY

Sorcery, viewed in an objective and abstract way, can be seen as the application of warpcraft, occult formulae, and the exercise of will in order to achieve immediate physical and mental effects much like those of psychic abilities. But unlike the usual psyker's disciplines, all that is required to perform such baleful miracles is an understanding of the secret and sanity-twisting knowledge of how to do so and the conviction and stomach to put such knowledge into practice.

This malign and erratic sphere of human knowledge is ultimately based on the power of the daemon, either through channelling the powers of warp entities directly (or accidentally) or using the warp to imbue the summoner with psychic power. Some sorcerers claim their powers are a gift of their gods, but many are apt to delude themselves that they practice what is simply a little understood art or science—perilous, yes, but unjustly maligned. Regardless, sorcery is playing with fire, as the warp is a fickle, uncertain, and utterly dangerous thing with its own inertia and its own diabolical intent.

As a result, "true sorcerers" of great power (individuals who began their quest for esoteric power with no innate psychic ability, but who owe their dark arts purely to forbidden learning and pacts with the horrors beyond), are rare indeed, even among malefic cults and the servants of the Ruinous Powers. However, such obsessed, driven, and malignantly intelligent individuals are among the most dangerous enemies the Holy Ordos can face.

Sorcery Game Mechanics

Sorcery uses the same mechanics as Psychic Powers and any of the powers listed in **Dark Heresy** or on page 26 of this book are available as Sorcery to avoid needless duplication (and at the GM's discretion visa-versa for witches and malefic psykers). All sorcery powers are treated as Psychic Effects, and where applicable, Talents, Traits, and specialised defences that protect against Psychic Powers also defend against Sorcery.

All Sorcery powers are divided between the Minor Arcana, which are equivalent to Minor Psychic Powers, and Major Arcana, which are equivalent to Discipline Powers. Arcana that duplicate existing Psychic Powers are treated as the same (having the same Effect, Duration, Overbleed, etc.) but have their Thresholds increased by 2 for a sorcerer. This represents the increased complexity and difficulty the sorcerer faces using his abilities compared to a normal Psyker. Unless expressly stated otherwise, a sorcerer must also be able to speak and gesture freely in order to use an Arcana power.



The practice of using the dark arts to channel the warp is even more difficult and dangerous than the use of a psychic character's innate powers, and if the sorcerer incurs any Psychic Phenomena, then he must add +10 to the results of any random effect for a Minor Arcana power, and +20 to any mishap while using a power of the Major Arcana.

The ability to use sorcery is dealt with for simplicity's sake by a number of special Talents, all of which are found in the following section, along with a number of specific powers available to the sorcerer. Some additional Arcana powers can also be found elsewhere in this chapter under specific cult descriptions.

Individuals with the Sorcery talent have access to the Invocation and Psyniscience skills and may have their own version of the Corpus Conversion talent.

Sorcerer (Talent)

Prerequisites: Intelligence 35, Willpower 35, Forbidden Lore (Warp or Daemonology) +10 or Scholastic Lore (Occult) +10.

You may utilise the powers of sorcery and channel the power of the warp through a combination of esoteric lore, skill, and focused will. You count as having an effective Psy Rating of 2 (roll 2d10, etc.) and may learn a number of Arcana powers equal to three times your Willpower bonus, with Major powers counting as two powers each, without the necessity of further Talents.

When choosing Arcana powers, you are not bound by a particular type of power (such as the psyker Discipline framework), as sorcery is a fragmented and contradictory business. Characters, however, can only fill these power slots by seeking and mastering the rituals independently (either by dangerous experimentation, ancient lore, or dark bargains) and cannot be develop them naturally.

If a Character who already has a Psy Rating gains this Talent, it works differently (see page 119).

Master Sorcerer (Talent)

Prerequisites: Intelligence 40, Willpower 50, Sorcerer.

Your mastery of the dark arts is great, and you have learned to avoid the pitfalls that beset lesser practitioners of the craft, channeling far more raw power than most. You count as having an effective Psy Rating of 4 (roll 4d10, etc.), a +10 bonus to Daemonic Mastery Tests, and are immune to the effects of Daemonic Presence.

Master sorcerers are extraordinarily rare, rarer perhaps even than alpha-level psykers, and with good reason, as few possess the dedication and strength of mind to enact their will on the warp in this way. Most are destroyed before they attain such skill.

If a character with a normal Psy Rating gains this Talent, it works differently (see page 119).

Minor Arcana (Talent)

Prerequisites: Sorcerer.

You have acquired an additional Minor Arcana power over the amount usually allowed. This must be learned or researched as normal.

Major Arcana (Talent)

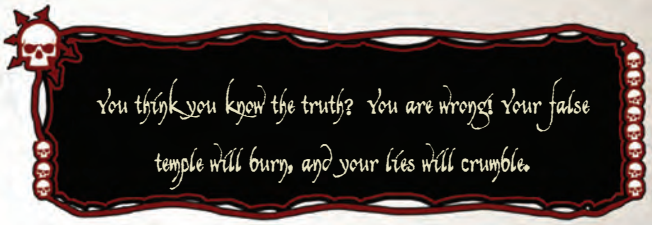
Prerequisites: Willpower 45, Sorcerer.

You have acquired an additional Major Arcana power over the amount usually allowed. This must be learned or researched as normal.

Sublime Arts (Talent)

Prerequisites: Perception 40, Intelligence 45, Sorcerer.

You may utilise your sorcery without the usual needs for obvious vocalisations, gestures, and the like, simply enacting the patterns needed mentally by sheer dint of concentration and unyielding mental strength. However, the Threshold of Arcana powers used this way is increased by an additional +2.



SORCERY POWERS

The Minor Arcana

There are limitless possibilities to which the reality-twisting powers of the warp can be put to use by sorcery's insane practitioners. Here are but a few:

Mask of Flesh

Threshold: 13
Focus Time: Full Action
Sustain: Special
Range: You

You call upon the powers of the warp to alter your flesh and change your physical identity. This is no mere illusion but an actual physical metamorphosis able to change your facial structure, eye and hair colour, voice, and skin tone, and may even alter your build, apparent age, etc. By using this power in combination with the Disguise skill, specific individuals may be imitated.

The effects of the transformation last up to the user's Willpower bonus in hours or can be dismissed at any time, at which point he reverts to his natural form. As soon as the sorcerer changes back, he must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or suffer 1d5 levels of Fatigue from the immense pain and physical strain involved.

Overbleed: For every 5 points that the power's Threshold is exceeded, greater changes can be effected (by 5 points, detailed cosmetic changes—gang tattoos, brands, etc.; by 10 points, mass may be varied by up to 50% or cosmetic mutations imitated; by 15+ points, gender and apparent humanoid species may be altered. However, these changes are merely imitations and offer no biological function, i.e. the sorcerer could appear to be an Ork but would gain no associated Orkoid Traits).

Special: If the Sorcerer suffers a Perils of the Warp event while using this power, he gains a random permanent Minor Mutation in addition any other effect (see page 334 of **Dark Heresy**).

Death's Messenger

Threshold: 15
Focus Time: Half Action
Sustain: No
Range: Self

You tangle the skeins of destiny to deadly effect, causing others to fall before your assaults as if their deaths were preordained.

The next attack by the sorcerer that successfully strikes counts as having the Tearing Quality. If it already has this Quality (owing to the weapon used), then a third dice is rolled and the highest of all three is chosen. If 10 Rounds elapse without a blow being struck, this power dissipates.

Overbleed: For every 10 points by which you beat the Threshold, an additional subsequent successful strike is affected by the power.

Whispers of the Warp

Threshold: 11
Focus Time: Half Action
Sustain: Yes
Range: Earshot

The echoing whispers of the warp amplify your persuasive abilities to preternatural levels.

Anyone who hears and understands the sorcerer must pass an opposed Willpower Test with the sorcerer (who rolls once and applies the result to all Tests) or become vulnerable to your suggestions, granting you a +10 bonus to any Charm, Intimidate, or Deceive Tests against your audience.

Note: This power is not a true form of direct mind control but can be used to overcome good sense, sow discord, alleviate just suspicion, and stoke the fires of hatred.

Overbleed: For every 10 points that the power's Threshold is exceeded, a further +10 bonus to Skill Tests is gained to a maximum of +30.

Special: This power requires no gesture or component other than that the victims must be able to hear and understand the sorcerer.

Malediction

Certain antithetical forces and energies, such as a starship's Gellar Field, a pentagramatic ward, or some sorcerous attacks can have a powerful antithetical effect on creatures wholly or in part comprised of matter drawn from the warp, unravelling and disrupting them on a fundamental level. This destructive effect is called Malediction.

An entity suffering Malediction suffers 1d10 Wounds as it occurs and each Round of exposure. Such Damage is not reduced by armour, incorporeality, or Toughness Bonus. Additionally it suffers a –10 to all Characteristic Tests and double the adverse effects of Warp Instability for 2d5 Rounds afterward. Further, having suffered Malediction, a daemon must pass a **Difficult (–10) Willpower Test** to directly attack or closely approach the source of the Malediction.

Malediction can only affect beings with either the Daemonic or Warp Instability traits.

The Major Arcana

Daemon Wrack

Threshold: 23
Focus Time: Full Action
Sustain: No
Range: 50 metres

By weaving a pattern of warp energies, the sorcerer may attempt to repel or ensnare and seize command of daemonic entities.

After successfully using this power, the sorcerer may take an Opposed Willpower Test to inflict Malediction (see sidebar) on a targeted daemonic creature. Alternatively, if the daemon has a Willpower Characteristic of 50 or less, then the sorcerer may force a Daemonic Mastery Test to control it instead.

Overbleed: For every 5 points that the power's Threshold is exceeded, add +10 to the Opposed Willpower and Daemonic Mastery Tests to a maximum of +30.

Special: This power only affects entities with both the Daemonic and Warp Instability traits.

Malefic Curse

Threshold: (16 Hex, 20 Blindness, 23 Death)
Focus Time: Full Action
Sustain: No
Range: Line of Sight

You call upon a twisted conjunction of malign energies to blight and curse your victim. Three different curses are listed here, although more are certainly possible. In all cases, the victim can attempt to resist the curse's effects by passing a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**.

Hex: The victim is bedevilled with ill-fortune, bone-gnawing chills and supernatural dread, suffering a –10 to all Characteristic and Skill Tests for the next 1d5 hours. If the Test to resist this power is failed by three or more degrees, the victim must roll on **Table 8-4: The Shock Table** as well (see page 233 of **Dark Heresy**), counting this as Warp Shock.

Blindness: The victim's eyes fill with cataracts and weep blood, and he is blinded for 1d5 hours. If the Test to resist this power is failed by three or more degrees, his eyes are destroyed in a shower of blood inflicting 1d10 R Damage to the Head Location and the blinding is permanent (he will need replacement eyes should he survive). If his eyes are destroyed, he also suffers 1d10 Insanity Points.

Death: This curse is strong enough to incapacitate and kill by stopping hearts, exploding blood vessels, rupturing organs and other unpleasant effects. The victim of the curse suffers 3d10+10 Toughness Damage (halved in the case of Unnatural Toughness (×2), etc.). If the victim is reduced to "0" Toughness, he dies. Should a victim of this curse survive, the Toughness Damage may be healed normally.

Note: If death occurs as a result of the curse, then a Fate Point may be burned by the victim to avoid his sudden demise, restoring him to 1d5 Toughness, but leaving him comatose and in need of serious help.

Overbleed: For every 5 points that the power's Threshold is exceeded, the victim's Test to resist the curse's effects in worsened by one level to a maximum of Very Hard (–30).

Special: Every time a curse is used, the sorcerer invoking it must pass a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** or suffer 1d5 Corruption Points.

Hellish Blast

Threshold: 22
Focus Time: Half Action
Sustain: No
Range: 5m × Willpower Bonus
Use this power to hurl a burst of raw destructive energy channelled from the warp at your victim, burning and blasting him apart. Test Ballistic Skill to strike the target as normal for a ranged attack. If you succeed, your attack deals 1d10 E Damage +1 additional Damage per point of your Willpower Bonus. This Damage is counted as having the Warp Weapon quality and so will bypass most armour and defences.

Overbleed: For every 10 points that the power's Threshold is exceeded, deal 1d10 additional Damage.

Malefic Witches and Warp Tainted Psykers

For psykers, the dark arts of sorcery presents a deceptively easy path to greater power but one any righteous servant of the Emperor will abhor. Most witches and rogue psykers have no such qualms, however, seeking out the study of the malefic arts and dark lore to augment their own power or achieve better control over their abilities. In many cases they only hasten their fall for a daemon's lure.

Sorcery (which can be used to represent warp taint as well as learned dark lore) may be "stacked" with Psychic Powers. Rather than having the Sorcerer and Master Sorcerer Talents' usual effects, these Talents boost the psyker's Psy Rating by (1) for the Sorcerer Talent, and by an additional (1) for the Master Sorcerer Talent. From this point onwards, the Psykers may acquire sorcery Arcana as if they were Psychic Powers (treating Major Arcana as a new Psychic Discipline).

An unfortunate side effect of this dangerous super-charging of psychic abilities, however, is the damage caused when these powers go out of control. When a psyker with the Sorcerer Talent becomes subjected to Perils of the Warp, he must add +20 to the rolled result when determining Psychic Phenomena, which increases the chance of invoking the Perils of the Warp.

UNHALLOWED RELICS, WARDS, AND WEAPONS

The creation of physical objects that sorcerers, occultists, and witches in order to bind dark energies into a permanent form (although sometimes damned craftsmen and deluded artists can achieve the same results by mere nightmarish accident). Warp-imbued objects, while very rare, can come in a staggering variety of shapes, natures, and capabilities, from negatively charged fragments that are repellent to daemonic force to hellishly possessed toys designed to bring slaughter to the unwary. They encompass all manner of trinkets, amulets, and charms, as well as the infamous daemon weapons—armaments whose lethality is vastly and treacherously increased by a ravening warp entity bound within their fabric.

Table 4-3: Unholy Artefacts

Name	Cost	Availability
Warp Amulet	7,000	Very Rare
Parasite Doll	1,000	Rare
Malefic Codex		
Lesser	5,000	Rare
Greater	10,000+	Very Rare

Unholy Artefacts

The warp can taint unliving matter just as readily as flesh, with a wide range of disturbing results. Such unholy artefacts can serve a wide variety of uses, from protection to power channelling, limited only to the dark imaginings and capabilities of their makers. The following are three such types of artefacts found in the hands of daemon worshipers and sorcerers.

Prices and Availability are listed for these items, representing their relative frequency and the costs entailed in their construction. If such forbidden items were to come up on the black market, they would doubtless fetch far greater amounts by those twisted enough to desire them.

Warp Amulet

Warp amulets can take many forms, but most often they are a peculiarly engraved stone, fetish pouch, or sigil-covered talisman or circlet. These are ritually prepared to aid in warpcraft and reek of dark energies.

Using a warp amulet takes a Half Action and requires passing a **Difficult (–10) Invocation Test**. If the Test is successful, the amulet provides a +10 bonus to daemonic summoning rituals or allows a single Power Dice to be re-rolled when using a Sorcery Power. Using these amulets is not without its dangers. If the Invocation Test is failed by three or more degrees, the user must roll for Psychic Phenomena.

Parasite Doll

Designed to channel a sorcerer or witch's dark power, these horrible dolls may be created from wax, flesh, clockwork, bio-plasm, debris, or other unsavoury materials. However, they must include within them blood, hair, or other tissue from their user and their intended victim, and may only be used to affect this specific victim.

Mind-effecting powers, rituals, and malefic curses may be cast at the doll rather than directly at the victim (who may be kilometres distant from the event), although the victim may resist the effects of any such malefic attack normally. If the user of the doll suffers Psychic Phenomena while attempting to use the doll, the doll is destroyed.

If the doll is destroyed while being used to channel a power, the user suffers a powerful psychic backlash, inflicting upon him either the effects of the power he was attempting to channel or 1d5 R Damage (ignoring armour and Toughness Bonus) as appropriate.

Malefic Codex

It is the wont of certain sorcerers, magisters, and occultists to record their practices and hard won lore in books, hidden papers, and encoded codifier-stores. Such a Malefic Codex (as the Holy Ordos defines the record) can take a wide variety of forms, from locked and bound folios scribbled with incomprehensible signs to encrypted data-slates with self-destruct mechanisms to prevent tampering. All contain the forbidden lore of the warp, and merely owning one is enough to send the possessor to the pyre should the Inquisition discover it.

The contents of a Malefic Codex can vary widely; however, they are usually enough to provide a +10 bonus to research into Forbidden Lore (Daemonology or Warp) when used, although this act will also inflict 1 Corruption Point on the user. Depending on the codex in question, it may also contain the details of particular Chaos rituals, cult histories or even rites of sorcery. Such greater works (featuring 1d5 or more Arcana or Rituals) are often dangerous in other ways as well, and may even require a Daemonic Mastery Test to use.

Pentagramatic Wards

By use of certain occult rituals, holy symbols, and even non-Euclidian mathematical formula, wards can be inscribed on physical objects or areas to bar or constrain the presence of warp entities. The secrets and knowledge needed to create such wards are considered proscribed and dangerous, and aside from cultists and magi, they are the sole purview of the Ordo Malleus. The reason for this ban is simple—such wards can be easily altered to help a sorcerer or witch control and enslave rather than simply deny the daemon. This fact has led some in the Inquisition down the path of Radicalism and destruction in the past.

The Effects of a Ward

A ward creates a barrier that a daemon or warp entity finds difficult to breach. Areas, objects, and even people may be warded by inscribing the relevant occult formulae.

Daemons and warp entities wishing to interact with a ward (crossing a warded space, picking up a warded object, attacking a warded character, etc.) must pass a Willpower Test to do so. If the daemon or entity fails this Test by three or more degrees, it suffers Malediction. If it passes this Test, then it may act freely (cross the ward, attack the character normally, etc.) If it passes this Test by more than three degrees of success, the ward is completely overcome and destroyed.

Note: Even if it passes the Test, if the ward remains intact the daemon or warp entity must take the Test again if it wishes to cross the ward subsequently (i.e. make attacks against a warded character the following Round, cross back over the warded area, etc.)

Creating a Pentagramatic Ward

Creating wards requires access to time and ritual materials (sacred inks, blood, silver dust, etc.), as well as the knowledge of how to do so—which in game terms means that a character must possess the skill Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) at +10 or better.

Creating a ward requires passing a **Hard (–20) Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) Test**. Success indicates that the character has created a ward with a modifier of +0. For each two additional levels of success gained, the ward's modifier is increased by –10. A failure by five degrees or more when trying to create a ward can have disastrous effects, requiring a roll on **Table 6-2: Psychic Phenomena** (see page 162 of **Dark Heresy**).

Temporary Wards: A temporary ward takes 1d10 minutes to create, although attempting to ward a large area (such as a house) takes considerably longer. Temporary wards last for 1d5 hours plus a number of hours equal to the number of successes achieved during creation. Temporary wards are also vulnerable to being physically damaged, which may diminish or destroy their effects.

Permanent Wards: These wards must be made a part of the very fabric of the area or object to be warded and effectively double the amount of time taken to create that object, building, etc. These wards, as their name suggests, are permanent until overcome, desecrated, or physically destroyed.

Warded Weapons: Close combat weapons (other than Power, Daemon or Force types) may also have wards inscribed onto them. Such weapons deal Holy damage, and any daemon suffering a Critical Hit also suffers Malediction (see page 118). However, temporary wards on weapons quickly become eroded in heavy combat, typically failing after a single Combat encounter (the GM has the final say-so on this).

The Left Hand Path

Pentagramatic wards have other, darker uses in the summoning and binding of Daemons. Used in this way, the conjured warp entity may be bound within the ward (protecting the sorcerer somewhat). Aside from its defensive benefits should things get out of hand, the ward itself provides the summoner with a +10 bonus to Daemonic Mastery Tests for summoned entities. A ward of this nature may even be of aid in negotiating Dark Pacts if properly used in this way.

Daemon Weapons

Perhaps the most infamous of all unholy artefacts are weapons that contain the bound essence of some malign warp entity, invigorating them with unnatural power. Daemon weapons may vary widely in abilities, design, and appearance, but all are perilous to their wielder in some way, and often the daemon within is far from happy to be confined and enslaved.

The vast majority of daemon weapons are variations of more commonplace or archaic melee arms, although guns and more esoteric weapons are not unknown but are far, far rarer. Regardless of their appearance, all daemon weapons share several basic qualities:

Lethality: In addition to any other powers and abilities they grant, daemon weapons are hungering, unnatural things that delight in taking life. They never count as having the Primitive Quality and add the bound entity's Willpower bonus to the basic Damage and Penetration for a weapon of their type.

Uncanny Resilience: Regardless of their appearance and apparent construction, daemon weapons are extremely hard to physically damage and destroy. They count as having a natural

Table 4-4: Daemon Weapons by Strength

Roll	Class of Entity	WP	Attributes
1–20	Warp Predator	15+2d10	Hungering
21–55	Daemonic Beast	20+2d10	1 Random Attribute
56–88	Bound Daemon	20+3d10	2 Random Attribute
89–99	Astral Spectre	30+2d10	Mind Leech and 1 Random Attribute
00	Greater Entity	60+3d10	Create unique abilities or Warp Touched and 3 random Attributes

armour of 20, and will not be destroyed if used to Parry, or are Parried by, weapons with Power Fields or similar effects. If a daemon weapon somehow is destroyed, roll immediately on **Table 6-3: Perils of the Warp** (see page 163 of **Dark Heresy**). On any result that indicates a daemonic manifestation, it is the daemon in the weapon that is released.

The Beast Within: All such weapons carry at their heart a bound warp entity that has been enslaved within. In the case of most daemon weapons, this is a comparably weak example of its kind, a lesser daemon, a mindless beast, a warp predator, or even an Unclean Spirit or Astral Spectre. The more powerful the entity bound, the more powerful the weapon, but also the greater the risk to the wielder.

In order to wield a daemon weapon, the user must first succeed in a Daemonic Mastery Test. This successfully cows the weapon into obedience. After this point though, should the wielder's Willpower Bonus ever fall bellow that of the bound daemon, then the daemon within will attempt to rebel once more, forcing another Mastery Test. If at any point such a Mastery Test is failed by the wielder, the daemon within the weapon may make a possession attack against its would-be master (see page 331 of **Dark Heresy**). If this succeeds, the wielder has succumbed and it is he who is the weapon's slave until he can break free.

Weapon Attributes

Daemon weapons may display an almost limitless variety of different powers and attributes, which the beast within can grant grudgingly to its wielder, or by simple side-effect of its presence. **Table 4-5: Daemon Weapon Attributes** illustrates some of the possibilities involved. In the case of duplicate effects, re-roll the result.



Table 4-5: Daemon Weapon Attributes

Roll	Attribute	Effect
1–20	Sharp as Sin	Tearing Quality.
21–30	Hungering	+5 to all Critical results.
31–40	Void Chill	Inflicts 1d10 Toughness Damage with each wounding hit.
41–50	Screaming	When wielded, the user gains the Fear 1 (Disturbing) trait, causing Warp Shock.
51–60	Null	Grants the Wielder a +20 bonus to resist Psychic Attacks.
61–65	Life Bane	Toxic (inflicting 2d5 extra Damage)
66–70	Heart Seeker	+10 to Wielder's WS while used.
71–75	Dark Fire	Damage type becomes E and the weapon sets its targets on fire (see page 210 of **Dark Heresy**).
76–80	Mind Leech	Wounded victims must Test WP or become Stunned for 1d5 Rounds.
81–85	Warp Touched	Warp Weapon Quality.
86–90	Vampiric	For each victim slain, the wielder regains 1d5 lost Wounds.
91–95	Hell Spite	The wielder gains Frenzy and Unnatural Strength (x2) while the blade is used.
96–99	Soul Thirster	Wounding hits can kill outright as per a Force Weapon (see page 187 of **The Inquisitor's Handbook**) using the Bound Daemon's WP.
00	Aetheric Render	The weapon bypasses armour, psychic defences, and fields when it strikes; all living creatures must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or die when wounded.

The Threat of Hayte

Firstly know this, when you seek to confront the blasphemies of the Pilgrims of Hayte, never will you encounter the mastery of the daemon and the power of the warp flaunted more openly or with such naked abandon as by these kin of hell unleashed.

Never underestimate the cult, for although its numbers may have been drawn from the dregs of mankind, they now truly rank among the damned. Their souls tainted and their sanity shredded, they will give up their agonies in worship and spit their last breath in order to do murder; cut them down without mercy or respite.

Fear the Daemon in their midst, for the children of Chaos follow in their wake as a man's shadow follows at high sun. Horrors of blood and plague, misery and desolation, charnel butchers and hunting monsters are all unleashed by them for no other purpose than to work their terrors at will.



Beware also the Dybuk-twisted, mutilated creatures made from the corporeal flesh of men and beasts, afflicted by the touch of Chaos and with the stuff of the warp-realm stitched into their skins. Foremost among these are the great Daemonhosts, products of the most terrible and secret blasphemous lore, bound and incarnate embodiments of the warp's ruin. To face such a creature is to face death itself.

The Pilgrims of Hayte

"Your god is dead. Faith is a lie. Hell awaits us all. Let the stars bleed!"

—found carved into the body of Cardinal Mollis, the Hematite Hill Massacre

An apocalyptic murder cult as insidious as it is cruel, the Pilgrims of Hayte have plagued the Calixis Sector for nearly three centuries. During that time, they have risen to levels of infamy unrivalled by any other. Such is their well-founded reputation for horror and atrocity with the sector's powers that be that mere rumour of the cult's presence in a particular area is enough to generate near-panic among the nobility and prompt immediate, and brutal crackdowns by local authorities.

The cult's ultimate goal is a simple one—the destruction of the Imperium. More specifically, it is the tearing down of the Imperial faith and the slaying of all those who serve the God-Emperor—one soul damned and one murder done at a time if need be. To this end, the cult seeks to twist and corrupt the minds of the unsuspecting, the downtrodden, and the weak of faith and to carry out acts of mass-murder and sow despair and terror on as a wide a scale as possible. The cult's masters, known as the False Prophets, wield the powers of the daemon and the baleful energies of the warp with fearful abandon, driving on their coteries of madmen, lost souls, and hell-spawned monsters as living weapons in their unholy crusade to destroy the rule of the Golden Throne.

Tenets, Goals, and Heretical Beliefs

At the core of the true beliefs of the Pilgrims of Hayte is nihilism of the spirit, utter hopelessness, and despair for humanity's true place in the universe as they perceive it—that of a squalling, blind creature utterly at the mercy of a deadly cosmos and a hungering warp. To them, civilisation, reason, faith, love, family, morality, hope, pleasure, and honour are all lies and stillborn dreams, strangled at birth by uncaring and implacable reality. The answer, as far as they are concerned, is total destruction—the violent self-immolation of mankind's carefully wrought web of lies and deceit. It is to embrace the madness, suffering, and despair that are humanity's only real truth. It is to hate and kill and tear down, until nothing remains.

Those brought into the cult are selected chiefly for a seed of bitterness or resentment that they carry within them, some remembered slight or injustice—incidents only too common in the oppressive crush of Imperial society. The cult works on this flaw to erode the recruit's inhibitions, morality, and conscience to the point where his hatred and sense of outrage and betrayal consumes him. As he progresses through the cult's outer layers of lies and deceit, the initiate is granted hideous revelations and subjected to horrific suffering and daemonic rituals designed to further strip away his sanity and damn him completely, leaving him most likely either dead, murderously deranged, or irrevocably tainted by the corrupting influence of the warp.

Those few cultists that survive long enough, or show particular promise, are taken under the wing of a False



Prophet and directly tutored in the arts of the sorcerer and the demagogue. It is then that their masters show them that even the worship of Chaos is a lie—a tool to be used, as the beings of the warp would use them. If these aspirants survive such dark wisdom and the dangers of their tutelage, then they may become False Prophets in turn, and carve their own bloody path across the stars.

CULT STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITY

In structure, the Pilgrims of Hayte are considered the very epitome of what some theorists in the Holy Ordos refer to as a "cancer cult," which is introduced to a population or locale much like a disease and spreads from a single point of infection. The machinations of a False Prophet work to corrupt an ever widening circle of victims and endanger the lives and souls of all those around them. The growth of the cult often follows a disease-like cycle as well—first the infection, then a period of secrecy while the cult slowly grows in number and power analogous to an incubation period. Finally there is the terminal stage, as the cult, having reached a critical mass, runs rampant in a destructive frenzy.

The cult's structure, particularly in the early stages of the "infection," is centred entirely on its charismatic leader. These False Prophets often masquerade at first as genuine pilgrims, travelling preachers, or even charitable worthies who gather the downtrodden to them. They secretly gain their first converts by appealing to those who feel betrayed or ignored by the local authorities and, in particular, the Ministorum. With their first followers in hand, they coat their spiritual poison with honeyed words and false truths, dragging their victims down in a spiral toward damnation.

Once safely and secretly established in an area, they will found a cult cell, selecting new members from the dross of humanity and those already downtrodden or embittered, fanning the flames of their victims' hatred and preying on their grief and despair. Before their followers realise it, they have lost their souls to the cult's lies and, so damned, are plunged into a world of inhumanity, madness, and the worship of Chaos.

Once the cell is fully established and has achieved its own dreadful momentum, the False Prophet withdraws, sinking

Using the Pilgrims of Hayte

The Pilgrims of Hayte represent an archetype of the apocalyptic Chaos cult, that is to say one whose primary goal is the spreading of destruction and the overthrow of the Imperium. They are the wolf at your door, the beast that is only interested in destruction, and they have no physical, political, or esoteric goals outside of this. Carnage is what they are after, pure and simple. As such, they make for somewhat unsubtle but eminently effective adversaries, particularly for action-oriented adventures where the Acolytes must stop rituals at the last minute, defeat terrorists, investigate gruesome murders, and walk into places where angels truly fear to tread.

Because the cult is widespread, diffuse, and operates using a cell structure (so one part of it will be self-sufficient and largely ignorant of other cells), it is, as an opponent, easily scaled to the relative power and strength of the PCs and whatever help they can get. Cult forces the Acolytes encounter might range from a small cell conducting a particular task or the early stages of some planned atrocity, all they way up to a full-blown cult numbering in the hundreds with numerous bound daemons at its beck and call and a powerful False Prophet at the centre.

It's also worth noting that, as villains go, the Pilgrims of Hayte are entirely, transparently, and unrepentantly evil—a gang of irredeemable, maimed, and deranged lunatics who consort with daemons and whose idea of a good time is conducting a horrific massacre just to prove that being righteous, moral, or ordinary is no defence against an uncaring universe. In short, they're an enemy any sane Acolyte or NPC should be able to get behind fighting.

The Pilgrims of Hayte and Their Works

In terms of NPCs and adversaries, the Pilgrims of Hayte are in many ways an archetypal Chaos cult. The body of the cult's rank and file is drawn from the poor, the destitute, the criminal, and the abandoned of Imperial society, while its upper echelons are filled out by the personal disciples of the cult's False Prophets, many of whom are skilled in warpcraft and sorcery. Summoned daemons, mutants, and other horrors serve as the cult's shock troops. At the cult's apex of power is the False Prophet who controls all like a puppet master. False Prophets are extraordinarily dangerous individuals with great personal power and any Acolytes who underestimate this fact will soon regret having done so.

The Cult Initiate, Heavy, Cult fanatic, and Dreg NPCs from the adversaries found in **Dark Heresy** can be used to accurately represent the body of the cult's membership, while the Cult Magus, a twisted version of the Ministorum Preacher and the Recidivist NPCs can serve as mid-ranking leaders. A new Talent called Consumed by Spite, unique to the Pilgrims of Hayte, is given here (see sidebar) to help reflect the sheer malice and insanity these cultists exhibit and should be added to any cult NPC you use. Additionally, Mutant Abominations can also be used to represent failed experiments in the arts of binding daemons to flesh and will likely be kept shackled until they are needed in one of the cult's hidden lairs.

All of the Daemons found within the Adversaries section of Dark Heresy are within the False Prophet's ability to raise and master as they see fit. However, most prefer the creation of Dybuk and daemonhosts for their durability in the physical world, meaning that the summoning of a daemon will usually be sort lived and geared to fulfilling a particular task.

behind levels of secrecy while chosen converts continue to expand the cult by drawing new followers to the cause. Protected by this outer ring, the False Prophet directs matters from behind the scenes while he begins his true work—the establishment of a temple to the warp where he can work his sorceries and summon foul entities from beyond to do his bidding.

The False Prophet orchestrates this descent into madness, thriving off this destructive spiral of Chaos worship and channelling the cult's hatred and violence at targets of his choosing. It is then that the nightmare for the wider world begins in earnest. What may have been disquieting rumours and a rash of mysterious disappearances and suspicious events erupt into a campaign of terror the likes of which few can imagine.

Wanton slaughter, foul murder, and atrocities of every type imaginable are loosed on the world. Often suicidal attacks by insane cult zealots coincide with terrorist incidents and, worse still, the unleashing of daemonic forces against faith and state. Geared to cause indiscriminate carnage as well as destabilise any counter-attack by the authorities, this storm of violence quickly becomes uncontrollable, even for the False Prophet at its centre. Like a pack of rabid beasts, the Pilgrims of Hayte savage and attack all they encounter. Now acting entirely on its own murderous drive to destroy and sow terror, the cult neither relents nor flees even if confronted with superior forces, and indeed will seemingly revel in its self-destruction, content to damage, terrify, and kill as much as it can before it is finally purged. It is at the end of this final explosion of carnage that, unless the Holy Ordos can find and kill the architect of this terror, the False Prophet will discard his insane and corrupted flock and slip away to begin the whole process again elsewhere.

The False Prophets

Though they may go by as many names, titles, and identities as suits them, "False Prophet" is indeed a most apt name for these arch-liars and bringers of strife. Each is a powerful and charismatic leader, a deceiver steeped in death and with the blood of multitudes on his hands. Each is a powerful sorcerer who has at his disposal many dangerous secrets and the forbidden knowledge gleaned both from his own depraved crusades and the bartered utterances of daemons.

These faithless killers have no room in their hearts for anything other than bitterness and hatred for the lies that others call the truth, and while they are more than willing to give the daemon its due, they scorn the true worship of any warp entity, no matter how powerful, as a god. They see the worship of such entities as only more layers of lies, albeit acknowledging that the Ruinous Powers are more generous masters than the "corpse-emperor." They instead embrace Chaos as a means to an end—that end being the power to tear down the edifice of the Imperium. Reckless in the display of their powers, it is their particular wont to use the warp to further corrupt and enslave their followers, simply for the sadistic pleasure of doing so. Woe betide any Imperial servant that falls into their malign clutches.

The False Prophets of the Pilgrims of Hayte are a terrible foe, and they have claimed the lives of several Inquisitors and thousands of Imperial servants in the past. Combating them is the sworn and absolute duty of the whole Ordos Calixis. Although thankfully very few (the Ordo Malleus is currently tracking around 30, though this number is in dispute), the False Prophets seem to be slowly but steadily growing in number. While each seems to follow his own erratic and destructive path without plan or recourse to others of his kind, some at the highest circles of the Inquisition fear that there may be some single guiding hand behind all of them, some arch-diabolist whose ultimate plan has yet to see fruition.

The Bloody Solstice on Malfi

The first major incident attributed to the cult, the events surrounding the "Bloody Solstice," set the pattern for much of the cult's later activities and can be seen as emblematic of its worst excesses and black-hearted passions. In the years immediately following the destruction of House Koba on Malfi, order had been restored to all but the most desolate areas of the upper hives, and an uneasy truce forced upon the fractious ruling houses and guilds.This fragile peace, however, was rocked by a series of dreadful murders.

Members of the Ecclesiarchy, ranging from lowly mendicant preachers serving in the poorest hab-stacks to senior cannns who tended the high altar of the Seven-Spired Basilica, were being slaughtered. Some died in what at first seemed accidents, others were attacked almost at random by screaming madmen, and more were torn apart by unknown forces behind locked and barred doors. As the death toll rose, the enforcers and arbiters could find no link or common cause between them other than their faith, and seemed powerless to stop the ever-spiralling number of killings. The targeting of the faithful in this manner caused a serious threat to the faith of the populace and resulted in copy-cat killings, the vandalism of shrines, open unbelief, and public panic reaching epidemic proportions. Eventually, the Holy Ordos were called in despite the misgiving of the Malfian elite.

With three full Inquisitors heading the task force, a brutal crackdown into suspected cult activity was carried out. It was discovered that a powerful group calling itself the Pilgrims of Hayte lay behind the attacks. The Ordo learned that from a stronghold in a deserted industrial hive sector known as the Rustblight scav-zone, they had infiltrated numerous refugee camps, low hive hab communities, and even some isolated shrines, replacing the clergy entirely.

The cult preyed on the weak, the desperate, and those that Malfi's decades of near anarchy had abused and made destitute, turning them against Imperial law and Imperial faith. What the Inquisition had not guessed at, however, were the daemonic powers the masters of the cult possessed. When a 400 strong force of Adeptus Arbites and inducted Imperial Guard closed in on the cult's stronghold on the fateful eve of the Solstice of the Winter Martyr, they were expected.

No sooner had the Inquisition penetrated the interior of the zone, attacks began from waves of crazed cult zealots more than willing to die if they could take the loyalists with them. As the task force forged slowly ahead through the maze of rusted works, it was hard pressed when horrific mutants and

terrible slavering beasts, clearly twisted and bound with the energies of the warp, entered the fray.

The inducted troopers began to fail and rout in the face of the enemy, only to be mercilessly hunted down and destroyed by the insane cultists. The hardier Imperials, such as Arbites kill teams, soon found themselves isolated, outnumbered, and overwhelmed as their ammunition ran dry and shimmering daemons rippled out from the shadows to tear them apart. The three Inquisitors, finding their fighters spread out and overcome, moved to rally and concentrate their forces. However, they underestimated the dark motivator behind the cult. He called himself Karcist, Prophet of Truth, and he presented himself to the embattled Ordo forces with no less terrible allies than a pair of bound daemonhosts at his side. A massacre followed, and although the resolute Inquisitors managed to destroy one of Karcist's daemonhosts, only Inquisitor Corina, his right arm withered to the bone by the touch of a daemonhost's scabrous claw, managed to escape.

News of the Holy Ordos's defeat, no doubt disseminated by carefully placed cultists and traitors, spread like wildfire though Malfi's upper echelons of power. The nobility isolated themselves, abandoning the people to fend for themselves. For a brief time the whole planet seemed to cower in terror, and a great world tottered on the brink of the abyss—the Bloody Solstice had begun.

Madmen and warp-tainted freaks erupted onto the streets killing and burning with wild abandon, seemingly without pattern or purpose. Temples were attacked and their congregations massacred, and within the central Adeptus Arbites Precinct Fortress, a Charnel Daemon was unleashed, killing scores of loyal arbitrators before it was finally destroyed by concentrated cannon fire. As riot and panic broke out and killed thousands more of Malfi's people, PDF detachments and local enforcers were overwhelmed, power was cut and fires raged out of control. The whole structure of Malfi's continent spanning hive network neared collapse.

Invoking his full authority, the maimed Inquisitor Corina called together a meeting of Malfi's Great Houses, presenting an impassioned demand for them to lend their weight to the fight or loose everything. He appealed to their faith and their duty first, but it is recorded that it was not until he mocked their injured pride and stupidity for allowing such heresy to fester in their midst that they sided with him. With the leadership, private armies, and even the secretive assassin cadres of the Great Houses to back them, the loyalists fought the rising tide of anarchy and the suicidal fury of the Pilgrims of Hayte head on. For week after week of gruelling and bloody fighting, they held their ground. As further aid poured in from the Holy Ordos and the Battlefleet Calixis, they gained the upper hand, order was restored, and the last remnants of the cult battered itself to extinction against the Imperial forces.

Karcist and several of his subordinate sorcerers were never found during the great Malfian purge that followed, but were sighted leading cults and atrocities in later decades all across the sector. The arch-heretic Karcist finally met his end, not at the hands of the Inquisition, but in the power-fisted grip of the Rogue Trader Harriman Vale nearly a century later.

In the final analysis, the "Bloody Solstice" of Malfi provided a deadly exclamation point at the end of seven decades of misrule, discord, unrest, and bloodshed for Malfi. It has since entered the myths and history of that world as the direst moment of a dark age.

The Doom of the Ardent Seeker

One of the most recent major incidents attributed to the cult occurred in 799.M41 in the Maccabeus system. When the venerable pilgrimage-vessel *Ardent Seeker* translated from the warp off-course into the Maccabeus system and failed to answer hails, it was quickly interdicted and boarded by the local picket ships.

What the naval armsmen found onboard was an utter horror—perhaps fully nine-tenths of its seven thousand passengers had died in the most appalling and violent fashion. The tenth that remained had been driven mad and tortured in body and soul beyond endurance. Direct orders from the Arch Hierophant of Maccabeus prevented the naval commander from carrying out a frantic order to simply blast the ship to atoms. Instead it was held and soon boarded by a strong contingent of the legendary Maccabian Black Priests and their retinues who purged the once great vessel of the damned and the hidden taint of the warp that infested the decks. Piecing together what little evidence remained, the Black Priests discovered that these unfortunates had been doomed by a single deadly influence.

A cancerous demagogue had come aboard and slowly sown first doubt, then insanity and corruption that doomed every living soul aboard the *Ardent Seeker*—a False Prophet of the Pilgrims of Hayte. Their investigation revealed that this servant of Chaos had, through his dark arts, infiltrated the first naval boarding party that had stepped foot on the ship and was now loose on the sacred soil of Maccabeus Quintus itself. In an almost unprecedented act, the Hierophant himself went before the planet with the news, and with an impassioned oratory fired the zealous hatred of his people against the hell-spawn in their midst. With a single purpose, the planet rose up and hunted down the infiltrator, along with hundreds of other suspected heretics (and not a few innocents mistakenly "captured") who were purged in a frenzy of zealotry.

Official records state that the False Prophet was destroyed, but persistent rumours within the Holy Ordos say that the Black Priests managed the seemingly impossible and captured the diabolist alive to hand him to a secret Malleus Conclave. However, the truth of this is likely to never be revealed.

Consumed by Spite (Talent)

The soul and mind of a Pilgrim of Hayte has been so damaged and consumed by bitterness and malice that there is room for little else. Physical suffering has little meaning to one, other than the pleasure of inflicting it on others.

Those with the Talent receive a +10 bonus to resist Fear and any attempt to directly control or influence their minds. In addition, they receive a +30 bonus to resist the effects of Intimidation and Interrogation. They may also ignore the effects of being Stunned with a successful **Difficult (–10) Willpower Test**.

Inquisitorial Threat Briefing

The location, pursuit, and destruction of the Pilgrims of Hayte's cells are regarded as a priority of the highest order for the Conclave Calixis, and for many Ordo Malleus Inquisitors, the "cult" is the priority target. This focus is in no small part because of the cult's proven ability to create large-scale carnage and the more subtle danger to long term spiritual and moral health of the masses it infiltrates. The cult is also considered highly dangerous to the stability of the sector as it is one of thankfully few cults and heretical organisations with a proven ability to operate sector-wide and perhaps even beyond. It is even willing to actively seek out and attack Inquisitorial forces.

The truth, the full extent of which is hidden from most, is that despite the Holy Ordos' many victories against the cult, the False Prophets that remain at large are growing demonstrably more powerful and diverse as a group. It seems evident that the sheer abandon and disregard that they hold for their own lives and followers create something of a state of rapid "natural selection" with only the strongest prospering, and doing so quickly—not by painstaking daemonic bargains, slavish secrecy, and tempered arcane lore, but by crashing and blundering at breakneck speed to power or death. For the higher circles of the Inquisition, this reckless abandon raises a very simple question: given their steady increase in power and their desire to destroy above all others, is there anything these mad-dog cult leaders would not do? Would not dare, if they possessed the power?

Holocaust of Torment (Unique Psy Power)

Threshold: 28
Focus Time: Full Action
Sustain: Yes
Range: 10 metre radius extending from the Maiden of Pain

The agony and despair felt moment-by-moment by the victim of a Maiden of Pain (see page 131) is unimaginable—held in undying torment between life and death, between the gnawing of daemons at his soul and the ravages of a bodily extinction that does not end. Echoed and amplified by the warp, he can inflict this unbearable torture on others with shattering effect, rupturing reality around them and smashing aside solid matter, flesh, and mind alike.

Anything caught in the blast suffers 2d10 R Damage that will bypass any armour other than Field effects or wards and is hurled backwards with great force (treat as the Fling Psychic Power). Anything that survives this attack must pass a **Hard (–20) Fear Test** or also suffer Warp Shock.

Overbleed: For every 10 points that the power's Threshold is exceeded, increase the effect radius by 10 metres.



Creating a Dybuk

In game terms, a Dybuk is created by modifying a base creature, human or animal, by a horrific ritual that mutilates the body and murders the living soul within, binding a lesser daemonic spirit in its place.

Characteristics: The base creature's Characteristics are changed as follows: add 1d10+10 WS, 1d10+10 S, 1d10+10 T, 1d10 Ag, 1d10 WP, and +2d5 Wounds. Reduce Int by –1d10 and halve its existing Fel.

Skills and Talents: The Dybuk creature loses all of its previous Intelligence Skills and any unsuitable Talents it may once have had before the host became possessed. The creature gains the Awareness, Climb, Dodge, and Silent Move Skills, if it did not already have them, and the Berserk Charge, Die Hard, and Furious Assault Talents.

Traits: Gains Daemonic, Dark Sight, Fear 1 (Disturbing) and From Beyond or increases an existing Fear rating by one level. Additionally any natural attacks it already possesses lose the Primitive Quality.

Note: The daemonic essence of the Dybuk is permanently bound into its mutilated body, and it is not subject to Warp Instability.

Corrupt Mutation: The Dybuk's flesh, while stabilised by the inscribed wards and bindings, is still subject to the touch of Chaos and it has a 50% chance of manifesting 1d5 Mutations (see page 334 of **Dark Heresy**, alternating between the Major and Minor Tables, re-rolling inappropriate results. Alternatively, you may also use **Table 12-7: Daemonhost Unholy Changes** on page 356 of **Dark Heresy**).

The Dybuk

The binding of Daemonhosts is an arcane and dangerous practice far beyond the reach of all but the most malign and knowledgeable sorcerers, and a single error along the way will lead to disaster. So, rather than risk an untried or unperfected ritual, many summoners attempt to master their craft by binding far lesser and more easily controlled entities first, condemning the soul and flesh of some unfortunate victim or even animal to become the corrupt vessel of the warp. This process creates a form of lesser daemonhost slaved to the summoner's will, a being known in some proscribed texts as a Dybuk—literally "a vessel of the unclean." The creation of a Dybuk is still extremely dangerous and usually a rare occurrence. However, many False Prophets and their inner circle of disciples seem to revel in making these horrific monsters, and the cult favours them as guardians and shock troops.

A Dybuk is a grotesque fusion of living flesh and daemon bound together in a bloody and depraved ritual summoning. This takes many hours of sustained observance by the sorcerer and torment inflicted on the living victim. If the ritual fails or the victim dies through simple stress, the summoning misfires and the daemon may be loosed uncontrolled or the subject's flesh devolved into a ravening and mindless Chaos Spawn. If it succeeds and the bindings carved into the flesh hold, the result is a living vessel for a daemon's malignant hungers and a portion of its unnatural power. As time passes the body will writhe and warp under the strain of the vile presence within, ultimately destroying itself.

Dybuk Killer

Most of the Dybuk created by the Pilgrims of Hayte are human, victims of the False Prophets' attempts to perfect their dark arts or to fulfil their desire for disposable and horrific shock troops. Many are cultists themselves, and some are even insane enough to have volunteered for such a dreadful union. Most do not. Indeed, the ritual is a favoured "blessing" for captured agents of the Golden Throne. This profile uses the Cult Fanatic from **Dark Heresy** as a base.

Dybuk Killer Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
43	25	48	50 (10)	35	23	33	51	12

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 15
Skills: Awareness (Per), Climb (S), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Silent Move (Ag).
Talents: Berserk Charge, Die Hard, Frenzy, Furious Assault, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive).
Traits: Daemonic (TB 10), Dark Sight, Fear 1 (Disturbing), From Beyond.
Corrupt Mutations: Bleeding Mouth and Eyes, Tough Hide.
Armour: Wards (All 1).
Weapons: Gore-stained axe (1d10+5† R; Unbalanced) or teeth and fists (1d5+4† I).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Threat Rating: Malleus Minoris.

The Rakasya

Known also as a hunting horror, warp-wyrm, or sky ripper, a Rakasya is a ravening daemonic predator whose sole aim in our reality is to tirelessly hunt and devour living flesh. It takes the form of an enormous writhing serpent-like creature shrouded with half-seen membranous wings. Its rippling, inconstant flesh is studded with burning three-lobed eyes, its head is little more than a vast slavering maw of serrated teeth, while its tail ends in a whipping cluster of barbed tentacles. The horrific sight of a Rakasya alone is enough to drive the weak-minded mad with fear, and once unleashed, it will kill and consume until it is destroyed.

Notorious among malefic sorcerers for being difficult to control and direct, a Rakasya daemon is still a favoured weapon of many False Prophets. They delight in the terror and slaughter it sows and are strong enough of will to master these daemonic beasts to set them against the required targets…most of the time.

Rakasya Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
32	—	(12) 65	(12) 62	34	12	46	48	—

Movement: 5/10/–/– **Wounds:** 50
Skills: Awareness (Per), Psyniscience (WP), Tracking (Int) +20.
Talents: Heightened Senses (Sight).
Traits: Bestial, Crawler, Daemonic (see Note), Daemonic Presence, Dark Sight, Fear 3 (Horrifying), Flyer 20, From Beyond, Natural Weapons (Maw and barbs), Size (Enormous), Unnatural Strength (×2), Unnatural Toughness (×2), Warp Instability.
Note: Thanks to its Unnatural Toughness and Daemonic traits, the Rakasya has an effective TB of 24 versus normal attacks and 12 against Holy and Force Weapons and Psychic Damage.
Enhanced Daemonic Presence: The Daemon lets out a continuous undulating howl that churns the stomach and fills the mind with a overwhelming desire to flee. The howl increases to a maddening hurricane shriek when it attacks, filling the air with the stench of stagnant blood and carrion. All creatures within 100 metres take a –10 penalty to Willpower Tests.
Ætheric Wings: Its blurring, multi-phased wings and the rancorous mists it exudes make the Daemon hard to target effectively from a distance. Ranged attacks against it gain no bonus for the creature's size and suffer a further –10 to hit.
Hard to Control: The Daemon knows only insatiable hunger and inflicts an inherent additional –10 penalty to Daemonic Mastery Tests to control it, and will always attempt to break Mastery if diverted from the opportunity to feast on its victims.
Armour: None.
Weapons: Serrated maw (2d10 +15† R), lashing barbs (1d10+6† I)—strikes once at all targets within a 10 metre radius as a Full Action. This attack is only useable while the Daemon is hovering in the air.
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: None.
Threat Rating: Malleus Majoris.

Lady Solace, A False Prophet

The False Prophet identified by the Holy Ordos as using the alias Lady Solace has been hunted by the Inquisition for more than 50 years. She was originally responsible for orchestrating the All Hallows Massacre which left over 1,000 clergymen and celebrants dead at the Presbytery of Saint La'Mass on Baraspine. Since then, she is known to have founded cult cells and worked her terrors on Merov, Reth, Dreah, and in the depths of Hive Sibellus itself.

Last encountered working to subvert the embittered Administratum serf underclass on Prol VI, her Pilgrims of Hayte clashed directly with the Ordo Malleus. Though her cult was smashed, she escaped, slaying the famed Daemonhunter Auros Varashev and an Imperial Callidus Assassin, as well as plunging an entire city into murderous anarchy in the process. Since then, the Ordo Malleus has pursued any lead on her whereabouts with furious intent, but her present location and activities remain unknown.

In her usual guise, she appears as a attractive woman of the patrician classes in her early middle years and favours sombre but elegant attire. She often poses as a scion of a noble house fallen on hard times, ministering alms and aid to the needy, although she has also disguised herself as a simple hive worker or widow-woman in the past. When such pretence is thrown off, she is no less regal but insanity shines from her shockingly ice blue eyes and she dresses herself in opulent gowns made not from silk, but the stitched and flayed faces of those she has betrayed and corseted in the bones of children.

Lady Solace is an appallingly powerful sorcerer and adversary. Her abilities are not simply limited to those presented here either, as she knows a great many Chaos rituals and has enslaved and indebted numerous daemons over the years.

Lady Solace Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
39	33	30	42	32	48	51	(12) 60	49

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 25
Skills: Awareness (Per), Charm (Fel) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Common Lore (Ecclesiarchy, Imperial Creed, Imperium, Underworld) (Int) +10, Deceive (Fel) +20, Disguise (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Cults, Daemonology, Heresy) (Int) +20, Forbidden Lore (Inquisition, Mutants, Warp) (Int) +10, Invocation (WP) +20, Medicae (Int), Psyniscience (Per) +10, Scrutiny (Per), Secret Signs (Occult) (Int) +10, Secret Tongue (Malfian Dark Tongue, Pilgrims of Hayte) +20, Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int) +10, Trade (Merchant) (Int).
Talents: Air of Authority, Corpus Conversion, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Fearless, Favoured of the Warp, Decadence, Hatred (Inquisition, Ecclesiarchy), Touched by the Fates (6 Fate Points), Resistance (Psychic), Strong-minded, Consumed by Spite, Sublime Arts, Master Sorcerer (effective Psy Rating 4), Minor Arcana (×3), Major Arcana (×5).
Traits: Immunity (Aging, Poisons, Disease), Regeneration, Unnatural Willpower (×2).
Armour: Gown of Sweet Despair (Unholy item—counts as being Hexagramatically Warded, see page 189 of **The Inquisitor's Handbook,** and confers 6 Armour Points on all Locations).
Weapons: The Maiming Gris (1d10+7† R; Daemon Weapon, see description), digital laser concealed in signet ring (10m; S/–/–; 1d10+2 E; Pen 0; Clip 20; Rld –).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Hell Heart (see Unhallowed Relics), as a False Prophet she has access to any mundane gear she requires and may

create or acquire occult and daemon-bound items as she needs.

The Maiming Gris: This is a daemon weapon (see page @@) with WP 46 that takes the shape of a fire-blackened, curved butcher blade and has the attributes Heart Seeker (+10 WS when wielded) and Warp Touched (giving it the Warp Weapon Quality). Solace has complete mastery over the weapon.

Sorcery (Minor Arcana): Death's Messenger (15), Déjà vu (10), Endure Flames (10), Fearful Aura (9), Inflict Pain (10), Mask of Flesh (13), Sense Presence (7), Suggestion (11), Time Fade (15), Touch of Madness (13), Whisper of the Warp (11), Weaken Veil (11), White Noise (10).

Sorcery (Major Arcana): Black Channelling (25), Blood Boil (21), Call Flame (10), Catch Projectiles (18), Compel (21), Daemon Wrack (23), Far Sight (21), Hellish Blast (22), Incinerate (21), Push (15), Malefic Curse [(Blindness) (20), Death (23), Hex (16)], Mind Scan (25), Projection (23), See Me Not (16), Seed Mind (28), Soul Sight (25), Storm of Malignancy (18), Telekinesis (13).

Note: When manifesting her Sorcery, Lady Solace may roll up to 4d10+12 to beat the Arcana Threshold without the use of the Invocation skill.

Threat Rating: Malleus Extremis.

Unhallowed Relics of the Pilgrims of Hayte

The False Prophets and their inner disciples make extensive use of warp-touched and unhallowed items, which they create most often from the remains of their victims, desecrated holy objects of the Imperial Faith, and other unpleasant sources.

The Books of Empty Promises

Created in mockery of the great books of the Imperial Creed, these blasphemous texts are written by the False Prophets to espouse their malign beliefs and may take many forms, from folios of flayed and inked skin to works deliberately made to be mistaken for Imperial prayer books to trap the unwary. In any form these works are dangerous.

A Book of Empty Promises is a perilous but useful tool for a Radical Inquisitor and confers a +10 bonus to research Tests involving Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) and (Cults—Pilgrims of Hayte only). It also contains many secret rituals for the summoning and binding of daemons.

Every time the book is read, however, the reader must take a **Difficult (–10) Willpower Test** or be forced to read the text to the end and have its evil infiltrate his mind. This infiltration inflicts 1d10 Insanity Points and 1d10 Corruption Points. This Damage only occurs once per character.

The Bloody Libation

This vile drug is ritually created from tainted blood and the tears of the betrayed, and a few drops it have terrifying results when dissolved into drink. The libation is created by the False Prophets for use by their more "disposable" cultists in suicide attacks and on captive victims for sport.

Imbibing the drug inflicts 1d5 Corruption Points, and the user receives a bonus of +1d10 Strength, +1d10 Agility and +1d5 Wounds for 1d5 hours and suffers from extreme bloodlust and destructive and sadistic impulses while its effects last. After the effects wear off, the user suffers –1d10 permanent Toughness Damage as the brew ravages his body, and if he survives, he has a 25% chance of developing 1d5–3 Corrupt Mutations (see Dybuk description) within a few hours.

Hell Heart

This cruel device murderously exploits the fanatical loyalty the cultists of the Pilgrims of Hayte have towards a False Prophet. These amulets can take many forms, from bloody gemstones

Dark Sorcery of the Pilgrims of Hayte

Black Channelling (Major Arcana)

Threshold: 25
Focus Time: Full Action
Sustain: Yes
Range: 20 metre radius

The sorcerer draws on the twisting power of the warp to embolden and sustain daemonic creatures in the area, cementing their grip on reality and bolstering their power. All daemons (anything with the Daemonic trait) within the power's range gain the Regeneration Trait, +1 Initiative and a +10 bonus to resist Warp Instability while this power is in effect.

Overbleed: For every 10 points that the power's Threshold is exceeded, extend the radius by 10 metres.

Special: Channelling these baleful energies has its price, and for every Round the power is sustained, the user must pass a **Difficult (–10) Toughness Test** or lose a Wound.

Storm of Malignancy (Major Arcana)

Threshold: 18
Focus Time: Full Action
Sustain: Yes
Range: 50 metre radius

Drawing on psychically echoed waves of malice, paranoia, and hatred from the warp, the sorcerer can fill the hearts and minds of the unsuspecting with sudden rage, panic, and spite with lethal consequences. This surge of emotion can turn a crowd into a violent mob, triggering mass hysteria and murderous rioting. All living creatures caught within the radius while this power is in effect must pass a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** each Round it is sustained or become dangerously and violently enraged, attempting to kill anyone they can lay their hands on or flee in terror depending on their mental state. The direct effects of succumbing to this power lasts as long as it is sustained plus 1d10 Rounds.

This power is a psychic attack and also counts as a form of Fear, so Talents and Traits that resist Fear also resist this power.

Overbleed: For every 10 points that the power's Threshold is exceeded, double the radius of the power.

to an actual withered heart. The use of the Hell Heart is automatic against any Damage that the False Prophet takes that would cause a Critical Wound on him. On a successful **Hard (–20) Willpower Test,** the effects are suffered not by him but by any single living human follower of their choice within 50 metres. The full effects of the injury spontaneously afflict the follower and leave the False Prophet miraculously unscathed. These followers must have previously sworn their lives and souls to the False Prophet for this to occur.

When the Hell Heart is used, it flares with unholy light, giving Acolytes a chance to notice its malign presence, and will remain active until it is destroyed (it can be targeted by a Called Shot and has half as many Wounds as the False Prophet it is bound to). If the Hell Heart is destroyed, the False Prophet immediately suffers 2d10 Wounds.

The warpcraft involved in creating such an item is both difficult and dangerous, and it must be bound to the wearer's soul when made. Only a False Prophet will ever possess such a baleful item, and he may never utilise more than one.

The Maiden of Pain

A terrible new development in the Pilgrims' arsenal of horrors, this blasphemous device uses the forbidden lore normally associated with the binding of Daemonhosts to turn a captured psyker or witch imprisoned within its barbed embrace into an unliving weapon in the False Prophet's hands.

The Maiden takes the shape of an upright coffin-like cage chamber of glittering metal. It is studded with blades and barbs both within and without and is etched and inked with vile runes and symbols that twist the mind and pain the eye to read. Within is the maimed and mutilated body of a captive psyker kept in a hideous and agonised half-life and bound to the False Prophet's will.

Trapped in the Maiden of Pain

In game terms, the Maiden of Pain acts not unlike an Elite Package (although not one any character would willingly take), which may be applied to any victim with a Psy Rating of 3 or higher. The Maiden effectively kills the character and robs him of free will, binding his soul and rendering what's left of his consciousness utterly insane.

Characteristics: All except Toughness, Willpower, and Wounds are halved.

Skills: Any based on Agility or Strength are lost.

Talents: Any based on Agility or Strength are lost.

Traits: Gains Daemonic, Fear 2 (Frightening), From Beyond, Natural Armour 10 (All—this counts as permanently pentagramatically warded), The Stuff of Nightmares.

Psychic Powers: Psy Rating is increased by 1. The victim retains any previous Psychic Abilities he posseses and gain the following additional abilities: Holocaust of Torment (see page 127), Telepathy, Warp Howl, and Weaken Veil. However, in order to use his abilities, the Maiden's mask-plate must be opened, meaning that Called Shots to his head from the front bypass his armour.

Caged Psyker: The victim of a Maiden of Pain is bound in agony and servitude, and unless propelled by his own Psychic Powers or shunted around by cult members, he is effectively immobile. Enslaved to follow his master's will, he cannot act against his master. Left to his own device,s however, he is a raving killer whose only brief relief from torment is to inflict it on others. Should the Maiden of Pain's bindings be undone by specifically targeted Damage (a **Hard (–20) Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) Test** would be needed to work out how) the tormented soul inside would be released (losing its armour, but gaining the Incorporeal and Warp Instability traits). The freed insane soul is uncontrollable, but will more than likely seek out its tormentor for revenge if able.





Ateanism

"What harm can there be in the delight of knowing? In the joy of witnessing beauty or appreciating genius?"

—Durlis Talin, Hive Infernis Prefect,
burned for heresy 265.M41

There are things it is better not to know, things best left uncontemplated and unconsidered, certain truths it is better never to face. Humankind, unfortunately, has ever been inquisitive, always thirsting to know what secrets lie hidden behind the curtain of ignorance. To the Ruinous Powers, such desires are an invitation to reward the seeker of truth with what he craves and in the process destroy him utterly. The folly of Ateanism is a warning that it is not only the malign cultist who can bring on the storm of Chaos but also the follies of the weak, the vain, and the arrogant.

Ateanism is a school of thought and a scholastic and artistic theory. It holds beauty and the pure achievement of the mind above all other goals and believes that at the heart of the drive to perfection and purity in any field lies a single magnificent truth. To this end, Ateanists strive to use a set of formulae and processes that grant them a glimpse of the majesty of the truth that lies beneath all of man's greatest works. Sadly for these deluded fools, the revealed truth they seek is a lie wed to the powers of depravity and hubris that echo in the warp. In applying their flawed and blasphemous patterns, Ateanists constantly court a blind dance with corruption, destruction, and damnation.

The Obsession of Julius Ateanos

Ateanism is named for Ateanos, the damned founder of this school of thought. Ateanos was an archivist and scholar whose hubris would unleash a tradition that has violated souls without control since his death over two centuries ago. Scholar, savant, archivist, and illuminator, Julius Ateanos was chief curator of the Library of Knowing on Fenksworld. The echoing vaults of the Library were Ateanos's home, and its stacks of books, parchment rolls, and data stores were his beloved charges. Yet, for all his learning and intellect, Ateanos did not understand a fundamental truth—that to be a curator of knowledge in the Imperium is to keep it contained and confined from those who should not have it. Had he treated the knowledge at his disposal with the suspicion of a gaoler, many souls might have been saved.

Ateanos's first steps to damnation were the fault of his own flawed character, his complete confidence in his own intellectual abilities, and his belief in the purity of intellectual endeavour. For decades he had pored over the works in his charge. He had read of great thinkers who had built the foundations of knowledge, been dazzled by the beauty of ancient Terran poets whose names are lost, and felt the tingle of illicit pleasure at secretly reading proscribed works in the

Using Ateanism in your games

Ateanism is a threat from the warp that is separated from the usual accompaniment of cults and plotting diabolists. Ateanism is in essence a terrible consequence of curiosity in a universe where small-mindedness is a virtue for a reason. How the *Eris Transform* changes hands is of key interest to the Ordo Malleus, and an investigation into an illegal illuminator or copyist could be sparked by a few stray pages turning up amongst other works.

A copy of the *Transform* could turn up in the hands of a priest or a scholar, prompting a hunt for those he might have passed it to. Or a jaded noble or magnate might sponsor an artist to use the *Transform* to create a thing of unparalleled beauty, and so damn himself and others.

In a similar vein, an adventure could begin with a full-blown daemonic incursion caused by the successful application of Ateanism. Following the opening blast of action, the Acolytes would have to race to discover who passed the *Transform* to the unfortunate Ateanist and whoever else it might have been passed to before another daemonic incursion occurs.

dark watches of the night.

In his quest, Ateanos crossed the boundary of necessary knowledge. and in time he became not simply content to absorb the achievements of others and dreamed of being like the ancient champions of art and truth. This dream became Ateanos's warm and comforting companion in the grey drudgery of his mundane work, and it sustained him as he obeyed the orders of what he considered to be lesser men. After long years of discontent, he decided to follow his dream to fruition, and took a step into nightmare, not beauty.

Perhaps inspired by fragments of the work of an ancient philosopher, Ateanos came to the conclusion that a complex but common property underpinned all great art, thought, and human expression. It was this unknown property expressed in the form and proportion of sculpture, the cadence of poetry, or the elegance of theory, he believed, that spoke to the depths of the soul and spurred humanity to achieve all that was great and admirable.

What was more, Ateanos was convinced that this property could be expressed and separated from those works of which it was the fundamental but hidden part. It would be perfection itself rendered to its supreme and absolute form. The means of revealing this property would be Ateanos's great gift to human knowledge. He fantasised about it as the making of his immortality and fame, and thus was the focus of a deep and secret obsession in the last decade of his life.

The Truth Revealed

Unfortunately, Ateanos had stumbled upon a truth, though not the truth that he expected. As he poured himself into his work, exploring obscure areas of knowledge and diverse disciplines, he was spurred on by glimpsed snatches of his glorious goal. Long after the departure of his underlings from the library, Ateanos laboured by failing lights, furtively musing over hidden works. He became a haggard figure, his eyes hooded by fatigue, his sight ruined by long secret hours of work. Finally, his labour was done and he basked in the warmth of a man close to having his life's work vindicated.

The product of his long labour was a strange formula written in symbols almost lost to human understanding. It was his key to the magnificence of things created by art and contemplation, for he was sure that the strange formulae would reveal the hidden property behind all truth and beauty. Perhaps, buried deep beneath his obsession, he knew what he had formulated in the symbols of dead men was something terrible, for he delayed the final proof of his work. Instead he laid out all he had done in a secret journal and he laboured over rendering the *Eris Transform*, as he dubbed it, and the theoretical method of its applications onto the finest Terran vellum. Each page was a wonder of the illuminator's craft that gleamed with golf leaf, fractal-etched adamantine, and the deep hues of rare inks. Once all embellishment was done came a moment when Ateanos could delay the proof of his work no more. He began the first application of the *Eris Transform*. What Ateanos chose to first apply the *Transform* to remains unrecorded, but whether it was a renowned sculpture or the work of a long dead poet, it had an effect more wondrous and terrible than Ateanos could have dreamed.

As the final stroke of the *Transform's* application was completed, the world changed around and within Julius Ateanos. A feeling of infinite doors of possibility opened to him, smothering his mind, and his being ran with an understanding of the untapped beauty of all things. He heard beautiful yet discordant sounds that made the soul ache and weep at their impossibility. He felt transported to a higher, more refined realm where things worked in different ways, and where experience of any kind was like gazing into a kaleidoscope in space and time from which he could not look away.

However, even as he reached this peak of rapture he felt the lie to his bliss and the cold greasy feeling of touching something monstrous and mocking. His surroundings blurred and flowed like wax, lithe faces leered from the corners of his sight, and the air became thick with the smell of sweet corruption overlaid with a thousand cloying scents. Ateanos records his final experiences in his journal in a crazed, shaking hand, writing at the last that something was coming for his soul.

The fate of this foolish genius is not known. A whispered tale exists amongst servants of the Ordos who chase the fragments of Ateanos's legacy that if one were to find the original manuscript of the *Eris Transform,* he would find in the illuminated margins a tiny robed figure, screaming.

After Ateanos vanished, the manuscript of his rendered work was first recorded in his successor's papers and then swiftly disappeared amid scandal and a spate of mysterious deaths. Meanwhile, his journal was discovered and seized by the Holy Ordos. Since then, the manuscript has spread in often-incomplete copies and fragments between the hands of warp dabblers, jaded artists, and overweening scholars. The original has long been lost, and its damning power has been

Knowledge of Ateanism

Ateanism and the application of the *Eris Transform* is a highly restricted knowledge possessed only by those well versed in forbidden matters. The following is what a character with Forbidden Lore (Cults or Daemonology) may know about Ateanism. Such Tests should have a base value of Challenging (+0) further modified by circumstance.

Table 4-6: What is Ateanism?

Degrees of Success	Details Known
Standard Success	Ateanism is a proscribed school of intellectualism that focuses on the nature of truth and beauty. It has been stamped-out by Imperial authorities and its works are proscribed.
One	The founder of Ateanism was a scholar called Ateanos who went missing several hundred years ago. Ateanism holds that there is a universal hidden quality in all things of beauty or truth.
Two	Ateanism is based on the work of Ateanos who was the chief curator of the Library of Knowing on Fenksworld. At the centre of Ateanism is the application of a strange formula called the *Eris Transform* that is said to reveal the majestic truth to the Ateanist. Copies of the *Eris Transform* are highly illegal and are generally in the form of a short book, which contains a methodology and the arcane formulae of the *Transform* itself.
Three	The *Eris Transform* is an occult formula and has effects on the mind of the user. It is said that it reveals great secrets to Ateanists and infuses them with delight, but some say it is a tainted thing of the warp.
Four or more	The *Eris Transform* is a malicious tool of a Ruinous Power who shall not be named. Its application can gift the Ateanist with insight and pleasure undreamed of but also can act as a conduit for the warp and doorway to daemons.

Table 4-7: The Effects of Applied Ateanism

Degrees of Success	Effects
Standard Success	**Rapture:** The Ateanist is gripped by feelings of soaring bliss. He feels the power of knowing great secrets and that the world around him runs with secret meanings like that of a liquid golden weave. When the rapture fades, the world seems incomplete and the Ateanist's soul hankers to touch this majesty again. The experience lasts for 6d10 minutes. During this time, he is at a –20 to all Tests and will do little on his own volition but stare into space and mutter ecstatically. He gains 1 Corruption Point and 1 Insanity Point.
One	**Mark and Remember:** The applier is suffused with an understanding of beauty and truth. This revelation passes in a flash, but he is marked by it and it guides his hand from that moment on. The Ateanist will compulsively spend his time creating works of art filled with such an unnatural quality that any who are exposed to them must pass a Willpower Test or gain 1 Insanity point. The Ateanist gains 1d5 Corruption Points and 1d5 Insanity Points.
Two	**Touch of the Dark Prince:** The air is filled with a powerful musk, and the Ateanist sees strange visions of sweeping alien beauty. However, as he strains to glimpse it more clearly, he feels the touch of something vast and vile. Roll on **Table 6-2: Psychic Phenomena** from page 162 of **Dark Heresy** and apply the result to the character, who also gains 1d10 Corruption Points.
Three	**Daemonic Incursion:** The Ateanist is frozen in place and unable to move. The world splits open around him, cracks of light burst over the object of the *Eris Transform*, and with a sound of ripping flesh, a breach to the raw warp opens. Warp Phenomena occur randomly over a kilometre radius, and any that are trapped in the area are bedevilled with shrill laughter and purring whispers in their minds and gain 1d5 Corruption Points. All those within 100 metres of the incursion suffer 1d10 Corruption points in addition to the effects of any other phenomena they encounter. Slipping out of the rip come six lesser Daemons of Depravity (use the Daemonette entry on Page 351 of **Dark Heresy** as a default) together with six Fiends of Rapture (see the entry on page 136). The number of daemons of each variety can be increased at the GM's discretion. These daemons act independently of each other and each has six hours (or until it is destroyed) to wreak its havoc as it pleases.
Four (or more)	**Darkness Wears Their Face:** Something takes the flesh of the Ateanist. He becomes an unbound Daemonhost (see the Daemonhost generator entry on page 355 of **Dark Heresy**). There is also a 60% chance of a Daemonic Incursion occurring as well.

weakened by errors and omissions in inferior successors, but to those with sufficient faculties and learning, its application represents a blissful release from drudgery and mundane toil. To a scribe who labours over the copying of a book that will never be read or to the artist who's imaginative reach goes beyond the grasp of their talent, Ateanism represents the possibility of beauty, bliss, and rapture.

Ateanists are often desperate or jaded people who seek out and apply its proscribed formulae compulsively to all manner of subjects in the hope of being granted a moment of pure perfection. Many never experience what they crave, their application or copy of the *Eris Transform* being in some way imperfect or incomplete. Some unfortunately do receive what they desire, and from that moment forward they are compelled to repeat the process by an infernal addiction more powerful than that inflicted by any chemical.

THE ERIS TRANSFORM AND ITS APPLICATION

A practitioner of Ateanism is chiefly concerned with the application of the *Eris Transform* to works of art and intellect, such as a work of literature or music. To have any use, however, the would-be Ateanist also requires the connected methodology—a cipher which is made up of a mass of strange translation tables as well as geometrical and occult diagrams of equivalence. These elements can appear together or separately and occur in many forms, from scrolls to encoded data slates. Many works also contain additional notes by previous users and commentaries on the exact method of application.

Ateanism is not a unified movement but a chain of individuals and small groups linked only by the passing of copies of the *Eris Transform*. Those copies and the lore that passes with them are of variable quality, and many do not work at all or will only work with the most imaginative handling. The quirks of practice that have crept into Ateanism over the centuries (over what it should be applied to, in what circumstances, the use of mirrors, special accompaniments, and so on) have even led to schism and murder between its followers.

Almost all Ateanists are ignorant of the daemonic influence they open themselves to by their acts, as if some external force was preventing those involved from discovering the truth (which may, in fact, be the case). Instead, most think of Ateanism as the pursuit of truth and beauty in a universe of drab repetition and crushing, philistine dogma.

Cost and Availability: Copies of the *Eris Transform* are usually exchanged between friends, fellow aesthetes, or academic contacts and are not generally traded items or sold on the open market for money. If one were to try and obtain a copy it would entail several thousand Thrones at the very least. The *Eris Transform* is a highly proscribed item, and obtaining a copy is a matter of moving within the circles through which it passes. It therefore has no Availability value, as obtaining it should never be a matter of simply rolling dice.

Application: A character wishing to apply the *Eris Transform* must have the Logic (Int) Skill and be Literate in the language of the copy methodology he is using. he must also have an object of intellect or creativity to apply it to. Attempting an application takes 1d10 hours minus the applier's Intelligence Bonus, to a minimum of one hour.

Effects: At the end of the time required for the application, the applier makes a Logic (Int) or Trade (Artist) Test. Such Tests should have a base value of Hard (–20), further modified by circumstance and the quality of the *Eris Transform* he is using. If the Test is failed, there are no effects. If the Test is passed, the effects are determined by the degree of success (see **Table 4-7: The Effects of Applied Ateanism**). A GM may, of course, decide on an effect that he feels to be appropriate rather than using the chart.

The Library of Knowing

The Library of Knowing is one of the greatest repositories of record, scholarship, and wisdom in the Calixis Sector. A vast assemblage of works acquired by Lord Militant Angevin's coterie of scholars, scribes, and advisers during the Crusade and from his private collections, the Library of Knowing is an enduring relic of the foundation of the sector. It was one of the liberator's dying indulgences that gave the Library of Knowing its unique status that has seen it remain to this day under the authority and care of House Vaahkon, the ruling house of Fenksworld.

Angevin's ink-stained minions assembled a wondrous collection of tomes, data-cores, and art from across the Imperium, including illuminated works from distant Terra, loose parchments by forgotten authors, and curled scrolls of ancient lore plundered from vaults and renegade worlds. It is this collection that forms the core of works held in the Library, though a great deal more has been added over the centuries by the Vaahkon and by numerous private donors, state seizures, and bequests. It is open to any who can bribe, intrigue, or inherit his way onto its exclusive list of readers.

The library building itself is a vast vertical drum of worn metal that juts from the spires of Nova Castillia. Its internal spaces are divided by pillars and walls of stone, and its open galleries crossed by gantries and walkways of tarnished brass. Some within the Inquisition are certain that the Library holds proscribed works in its secret stacks despite repeated searches that have turned up nothing of overly heretical note. This supposition is made all the more likely as it is the known birthplace of the tainted Ateanist philosophy. Curiously, the library has remained largely untouched in the face of Inquisitorial disapproval in spite of its dubious association with this proscribed, daemon-influenced tradition, leading many to believe the library has powerful patrons beyond just the mercurial House Vaahkon. Perhaps there is even someone within the Holy Ordos itself.



INQUISITORIAL THREAT BRIEFING

The Inquisition knows of Ateanism, it knows its threat, and it knows how it spreads. This knowledge has not stopped Ateanism being one of the most subtle and persistent problems faced by the Ordo Malleus in the Calixis Sector. There have been 87 recorded incidents relating to the use of the *Eris Transform* in the centuries since Ateanos's disappearance. Since Ateanism is not a cult in the common sense, it is even more resistant to purging and is incredibly difficult to uproot. All that is needed for Ateanism to continue to exist is for copies of the *Eris Transform* to change hands between deluded and willing fools. These copies are often made by hand and so preventing their production is almost impossible, which is not to say the Inquisition is any less resolute in trying.

Like the most endemic of weeds, Ateanism is a constant problem for the Holy Ordos that can bear the most horrific fruit, and though its adherents are often little more than pompous, deluded fools, their actions can have dire consequences. Therefore, they are shown no mercy.

THE PAWNS OF THE DARK PRINCE

Ateanists have a tendency to be a mix of bookish scholars, tortured artists, and disenchanted scribes (the Scribe, Citizen and Entertainer NPCs from **Dark Heresy** cover these with a little modification). Occasionally their ranks will be joined by art obsessed nobles and magnates as well as other deluded visionaries. Unfortunately, the troubles they can let loose run to a variety of hellish and depraved monstrosities, one particular example of which is the Fiend of Rapture.

Fiend of Rapture

Spawned of seductive nightmares and obscenities too dreadful to contemplate, Fiends of Rapture are bizarre beasts that move with a terrible speed and sickening suppleness. They are shifting, lascivious things somewhere between woman and man, equine and insect. Their long tails are tipped with a sting like a scorpion's that grants the most exquisite of deaths, while their sinuous claws gently click together in anticipation of their victim's embrace. These fiends are surrounded by a cloud of cloying musk that overwhelms the senses of those who taste it, stupefying the mind, and many who encounter these infernal beings die walking willingly to their end.

Fiend of Rapture Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
36	—	36	(8) 40	(8) 45	14	45	42	—

Movement: 8/16/24/48 **Wounds:** 18
Skills: Ambidextrous, Dodge (Ag), Psyniscience (Per).
Talents: Heightened Senses (all), Lightning Attack, Swift Attack.
Traits: Daemonic (TB 8), Daemonic Presence, Dark Sight, Fear 2 (Frightening), From Beyond, Hard Target, Multiple Arms, Natural Weapons (Pincer Claws and Stinging Tail), Soporific Musk, Toxic, Unnatural Agility (×2), Unnatural Speed (×2), Warp Instability.
Note: Multiple Limbs, Swift, and Lightning Attack grant a Fiend of Rapture four attacks when it makes a Full Attack action.
Daemonic Presence: All creatures within 20 metres take a –10 penalty to Willpower Tests and constantly hear a crooning purr and smell scents of cloying putrefaction overlaid with a deep and heady musk.
Soporific Musk: Fiends of Rapture are surrounded by a shifting, many-hued cloud of scent. The cloud imposes a –10 to ranged attacks against the fiend. Additionally, any living creatures without sealed breathing apparatus within 10 meters of the fiend must pass a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** each Round, which, if failed, limits them to only a Half Action that Round. If the roll is failed by four or more degrees, they may do nothing but stumble toward the beast, smiling inanely.

The effects of Soporific Musk are ignored by those who are immune to mind altering effects or who have no fleshy body to tempt.

Weapons: Pincers and stinging tail (1d10+4† R; Tearing, one strike per Round is also Toxic inflicting 2d5 extra Damage).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: None.
Threat Rating: Malleus Minoris.

The Brotherhood of the Horned Darkness

"Choice, such a rare commodity in our times, is it not? Rich or poor, powerful or powerless, the Imperium binds us and enslaves us, and for what? The pleasure of grovelling and dying for some distant and uncaring corpse? No, my friend, we have chosen our master; he is generous and his gifts are very real. His patronage carries a price, of course, but what thing of value does not? It is a rational choice, a wise choice, and yours to make freely…"

—Aku Syn, Servant of the Horned Darkness

The Brotherhood of the Horned Darkness is a dangerous and highly organised malefic cult whose origins and activities go back according to some sources to the founding of the Calixis Sector and quite possibly beyond. This cult has been repeatedly smashed time and again over the centuries only to appear again some years or decades later. Membership, size, form, and power may vary, but it is always recognisable in its core beliefs and the object of its worship—the Daemon Balphomael, the Horned Darkness. The brotherhood, known to some as the "Pact of Balphomael" or the "Black Society," is recognised by the Ordo Malleus as a near archetypical daemon worshipping cult, although often better resourced and more dangerous than most.

Appealing to the nobility and the ruling elite who tend toward ambition and megalomania rather than jaded excess or forbidden pleasure, Balphomael's supplicants are often austere, driven, and dangerous individuals who obey their master's teachings and feed his hungry demand for sacrifice and suffering. In the past, multiple groups worshipping the daemon have been in existence at the same time, either kept in ignorance of each other or set up as rivals to prove their worth, depending on their daemonic master's whim.

Historically, cults worshipping the Horned Darkness have been discovered as far afield as Landunder, Malfi, and Sepheris Secundus. However, the cult's greatest stronghold in the past, and the place where it has reared its head time and again is mighty Scintilla itself. Here at the heart of Calixis, the heresy once became so powerful and widespread as to threaten to corrupt the seat of sector government. Some scholars of the forbidden believe that the daemon has some particular connection to this world, which, if it could be somehow broken, may cast it out more permanently and end its malign influence on the sector once and for all. Unfortunately, the past has proven that the threat of the Horned Darkness is not so easily destroyed.



The Daemon Balphomael



Balphomael, the Horned Darkness, is a daemonic power that has seemed to lurk in the shadows of the Calixis Sector since it was founded, and is doubtless far older than this. Over the years the Inquisition has acquired considerable lore and anecdotal evidence about this being whose power is at least that of a daemon prince, if not considerably greater. Seemingly owing no direct fealty or allegiance to any other of its kind, it has the characteristics and nature of a power broker. It is a being who demands worship and obeisance and sacrifice, who in return grants patronage and power.

Legends and scraps of lore describe Balphomael as a towering figure of unholy fire and billowing darkness, a horned shadow that can be summoned from a bonfire piled high with burning hearts given in offering. The testimony of cult members brought to question by the Holy Ordos claims that the daemon may also take the shape of a saturnine man or striking woman of imperious manner—a dealmaker whose honeyed tongue might corrupt a saint, but whose eyes burn like embers and whose shadow is cast in the terrible flickering shape of its true nature. The daemon is a powerful and dangerous entity, and one that cannot be commanded or controlled, by even the most powerful sorcerer. Some scholars within the Ordo Malleus speculate that its "appearances" in corporeal reality (including on one occasion when a powerful avatar of the beast was battled by the Holy Ordos and the Grey Knights) are actually little more than warp-projections, the meanest portion of a far greater whole that coils in the empyrean beyond.

THE NATURE OF THE CULT

"By this sacrifice, darkness, tell us."

—The Rites of Balphomael

The Brotherhood takes the form of a secret conspiracy, a mystery cult that takes great pains to keep its existence hidden from the outside world. It makes extensive use of go-betweens, ignorant hirelings, secret tongues, ciphers, and a rigidly enforced code of silence to maintain its cover. Behind this curtain, the cult's structure is strongly delineated, with its masters holding complete authority of life and death over its lesser members.

Commonly these masters form a ruling cabal that numbers a ritually significant eight members. These are the "servants," and each has a direct pact with his daemonic master. They often grant themselves grand titles such as high magister, ipsisama, or mokartus, but ultimately the cult's true master remains Balphomael itself—none dare disobey its dark pronouncements. In past incarnations of the cult, the secrecy and paranoia of its members have meant that none other than the high magister knew the identities of all the cabal members, while to others they are only known as masked figures wielding absolute power.

Below this cabal are an indeterminate number of worshipers, would-be masters, aspirants, and favoured agents, each hoping that they too will be deemed worthy of receiving the arch-daemon's notice. Openings in the ranks only occur should one of the members show failure or weakness, succumb to madness, or suffer death. Assassination, as long as it does not expose the Brotherhood or undermine its goals, is viewed as a perfectly acceptable avenue of advancement within the cult. As such, the cult's membership is made up of ambitious and driven men and women, seekers of power and wealth, and various power-hungry nobles, criminal overlords, scheming adepts, and avaricious guilders. Corrupt priests and enforcers are rarer among the Brotherhood, but highly favoured as avenues for the cult's wider power and influence.

Serving as the Brotherhood's foot soldiers are hired muscle (often of some quality, given their master's resources), and those deemed useful to the cult who have been deluded, duped, blackmailed, bribed, or simply cowed into service. Although the majority of these lesser agents are not true members of the Brotherhood, they are left by their masters with no illusions about the price of failure or betrayal. Those showing suitable ruthlessness and ambition may be elevated to the Brotherhood proper after proving themselves.

The cult's principal goal is to further the power, wealth, and influence of its ruling cabal, and of course to appease its hidden patron. To this end, the gestalt capability of all those within the Brotherhood and those they can control or influence are brought into play. Plots are hatched, rivals destroyed, secret agreements reached, webs of deceit maintained, and power wielded in the shadows, and the cult slowly spreads and grows. Backing all of these more mundane power games is the baleful influence of the daemon and the dark rites carried out in its name, all of which must be paid for in blood and souls.

If the cult has a particular weakness, it is the daemon at its heart. Sometimes the daemon's demands outpace its cult's ability to covertly fulfil, and the paranoia and intrigues it can engender, even among its own, can be counterproductive. Ultimately, Balphomael has a tendency to break its "toys."

TENETS, GOALS, AND MALEFIC BELIEFS

If one motivation lies behind everything that the cult does, it is overriding ambition. The cult's mortal masters, known as the "Servants" (a reference to their direct relation to the Brotherhood's daemonic patron), are characterised by their lust for power and dominance over their fellows, principally manifested through quite mundane means—wealth, influence, authority, status, and fear. They desire not to bring down the Imperium, but to rule it and wield ultimate power from behind the scenes—to become in effect, the secret masters of all.

The Brotherhood's membership (which covers both sexes despite its name) is drawn almost exclusively from the rich, the powerful, and the ambitious, who, despite their wealth and station, desire even more. To them, the Brotherhood's purpose is to help them dominate others and obtain more privilege and power. The daemon at the cult's heart also demands worship, which takes the form of obeisance, devotion, and propitiation for the main part, rather than fanatical faith or belief in its divinity.

Balphomael's creed, such as it is, breeds disdain, selfishness, and arrogance, and the Brotherhood quantifies the masses of humanity (and the whole Imperium for that matter) as so much chattel to be used and disposed of at whim. The Brotherhood is wary of rivals and threats to its secret dominion, particularly so in the case of rival cults and other influences who would undermine it or usurp its goals. Thus the cult is not above employing subtle means to destroy the competition (such as leading on the wrath of the Imperial authorities against a troublesome rival, etc.). The Holy Ordos, in particular, are seen as a threat and one which it should be vigilant against. However, direct conflict with the Ordos should be avoided.

The Rule of the Brotherhood

To many who are attracted to the cult, involvement can seem a rational and even sensible choice, an alliance with a powerful force that can grant them their desires, protect them from their enemies, and see them triumph over their rivals. They may rationalise it as a simple act of commerce and fealty, no different in essence than swearing loyalty to a guild or siding with a great house. For many, the fact that recognisable strictures such as binding contracts, strict hierarchy, and demanded obedience are all cornerstones of the Brotherhood's structure make the cult merely a continuation of what their lives already demand.

The cult fosters this lie by taking on the trappings of a secret society dedicated to furthering its members' interests. Often it only reveals its true nature to aspirants once they have been fully tested, compromised, and tempted by the power and influence the cult offers. Such sane and civilised

Table 4-8: Information on the Brotherhood

Degrees of Success	Details Revealed
Standard Success	The Brotherhood of the Horned Darkness was the name given to a major daemon cult on Scintilla some years ago. It was said to have involved some very powerful people and to have caused great scandal and bloodshed when it was uncovered.
One	Those at the heart of the cult were said to have sold their souls for power and wealth many years or even decades prior to the cult's discovery. The dark suspicion was that some great families had built their prominence on such tainted bargains in the first place.
Two	The cult wasn't just limited to Scintilla; it, or something very like it, has come to light on many worlds. Some believe it is a widespread and very old malefic conspiracy, far older than Calixis itself, and still lives on somewhere in the shadows.
Three	At the heart of the cult was a daemon known as Balphomael. This entity was the true "Horned Darkness" of the cult, and it was to this being that souls were sold for power and in whose name human sacrifices were performed in secret unholy temples.
Four (or more)	The cult was, and probably still is, more widespread than the Holy Ordos will reveal, even to the authorities. Several centuries ago, the Ordo Malleus carried out a great purge of the cult in secret lest panic and fear destabilise the whole sector—so widespread had its corruption become. The suspicion remains that some of the Brotherhood escaped to plot again in secret, and the Inquisition makes a constant search for them to this day.

trappings are, of course, ultimately a deceit, and one willingly embraced by the cult's members to conceal the dark and festering truth at the cult's heart, the daemon Balphomael. The Horned Darkness is a powerful entity able to grant great boons to those that swear it service. However, its price is likewise heavy, its only coins of exchange are sacrifice and death, and it is a jealous and unforgiving master.

The Brotherhood also sees the value in blackmail, brutality, and the exploitation of the vices of others as effective tools to bring the weak to heel and ensure their obedience. It prefers to suborn, intimidate, and corrupt as an exercise of power. When the time for killing comes, however, the Brotherhood either employs calculated and overwhelming force so as to make a terrifying example to others, or masks its crimes as accidents or random acts of violence, whichever best suits its needs. It is this high degree of self-control that has made the cult so dangerous in the past. Its ability to operate clandestinely and sparingly, where other less organised or more psychotic cults often expose themselves by succumbing to their own excesses or deluded beliefs, makes it an unusually subtle enemy for the Ordos.

The Myth of Khorazin

On a more than a dozen occasions through the years, the cult has been discovered spreading corruption at the heart of several commercial empires and noble houses on Scintilla. It has also spread its tendrils into the apparatus of state, the Administratum, and even the Ecclesiarchy. Only through the eternal vigilance of the Inquisition, and with much destruction and bloodletting has the Brotherhood been excised. In the most perilous of these cases, the Brotherhood, through the front of the Tellurian Combine, almost managed to co-opt and corrupt the Lord Sector's government before it was found out and destroyed.

This has led some within the Ordo Malleus to search for some focus for the daemon on this world over and above its worth as the sector capital. Some believe there is some hidden warp-rift, tainted relic, or phenomenon on Sibellus, which if it could be uncovered and destroyed, might provide a more permanent solution to the problem. The Daemonhunter Orpheus uncovered a potential name for this focus in the secret ciphers of the cult, that of "Khorazin." Just what this Khorazin is—a place, artefact, allegory, or individual—remains unproven, but evidence suggests that it is somewhere in Scintilla's barren wastelands.

The Daemon's Domains

Behind the veneer of the cult's power mongering and the secretive machinations of its controlling cabals, Balphomael demands its due. As a result, the cult maintains a string of hidden shrines to its daemonic patron. These are temples of forbidden worship where ritual murder is carried out in Balphomael's name, and where the cabal members can commune with their dark master, call down malefic curses on their enemies, and summon daemons to do their bidding.

Such shrines and temples are constructed in secret and hidden within noble estates or concealed in disused industrial facilities and other forlorn and abandoned locales where the cult's business can be conducted far from prying eyes. No matter how well hidden, these structures (thanks to their ritual significance and Balphomael's own requirements) remain a vulnerability to the cult, as they must be left in place once constructed and consecrated and cannot be abandoned or easily moved. Indeed the authorities' stumbling on such a temple to the Horned Darkness has precipitated the cult's discovery and destruction in the past.

The Pact of the Horned Darkness

The daemon lord of the Brotherhood is a fell being that demands service and sacrifice, and who enters into Dark Pacts with those mortals with sufficient ambition, ruthlessness, and lack of conscience to attract its interest. Indeed, the upper echelons of the Brotherhood are exclusively made up of such darkly favoured individuals.

More information on the game effects of Dark Pacts can be found on page 241 of **Dark Heresy**, and of the pacts illustrated there, both the pacts of Dominion and Survival are particularly appropriate to Balphomael's infernal bargains. Additionally, some further boons that might be granted by the daemon are listed here.

The Boons Of Balphomael

Infernal Lure: By passing a Scrutiny Skill Test Opposed by his subject's Willpower, a character with this boon may automatically know the heart's darkest desire or secret vice of a single individual by looking in his eyes (whether he knows it himself or not). This information is conveyed only in generalisations rather than in specific names or details, but it is still sufficient to provide a +20 bonus to Charm or Intimidate him where relevant. Particularly single-minded, dull, or virtuous individuals may be immune to this, having no such dark recesses to exploit.

Blood of Shadows: This boon replaces the subject's blood with a blackish ichor that quickly dissolves into smoke if spilt. Other than a greyish caste to the skin (which can be covered with cosmetics), there is no outward sign of the malefic transformation within. The subject gains the Daemonic and Dark Sight Traits and adds +10 to his Strength and Agility.

Daemonic Familiar: The subject is granted the boon of a daemonic familiar or similar dark entity bound in service to them (see page 144 for an example of such a creature).

Dark Rites: Another common boon granted to the servants of the cabal is knowledge of certain dark rituals including the summoning and binding of non-aligned lesser daemons, and rites to foretell the future, cause disaster, manipulate fate, and discover secrets. However, the sacrifices and cost involved in such rituals as the Horned Darkness instructs are often shockingly high, and so they are used relatively sparingly by the Brotherhood.

The Daemon's Due

Balphomael's demands on his servants are unremitting and steep. He demands complete and unswerving allegiance to him above all other creeds and gods, and the pledge of his followers' immortal souls. He also demands far more tangible sacrifices in the form of the ritual murder of the Brotherhood's enemies in his name and the burnt offerings of the betrayed and the weak to appease his hunger and fuel his darkly given rituals of power.

For those with whom he enters into a Dark Pact, his boon comes with this price and more: he demands true sacrifice, the destruction of something of great personal value to the petitioner in Balphomael's name. Just what this sacrifice entails will vary, but commonly involves the betrayal and death of a close friend, loved one, or cherished dream. For some cold-hearted petitioners with no such humane foible, the daemon has been known to take a hand, an eye, or a handsome visage whose loss the petitioner must suffer in payment.

The Enmity of the Malleus

Although many members of the Inquisition consider the Brotherhood of the Horned Darkness a threat more historically dangerous than at present, there are some within the Ordo Malleus for whom the Brotherhood borders on an obsession. For these Daemonhunters they are "the one that got away," a cult and a daemonic threat that the Holy Ordos has never been able to fully destroy, much to their shame and vexation. There are several Daemonhunters for whom hunting down any rumour of the Brotherhood is their greatest cause and a prize for which they would neglect other duties and even tempt Radical measures. Somewhat ungenerously, some of their fellows believe this is perhaps because were any one of them to finally and utterly purge the cult, that Inquisitor's elevation and status within the Ordos would be assured.

TALES TOLD IN DARKNESS

"Canon Alberic? Ah yes, one of my…more colourful predecessors as chaplain to the House. I wouldn't believe all you hear, foolish tales of dark altars, pacts with daemons, and such. Superstitious nonsense fit only to be repeated by the serviles! Why I use the very same library and apartments as he, and if there's anything dark lurking, why I'm sure I'd have found it myself…"

—Brother Wraxall, Chaplain to Skane Keep, Sepheris Secundus

Although the population is quite ignorant of the existence of the Brotherhood, it has troubled the sector enough times in the past to have merited a place in the varied occult lore and secret histories of Calixis. Accordingly, information on the cult is held not only by the Holy Ordos, but some references also occur in many old and proscribed texts, court records, and the private journals of many noble houses and the Adepta. The table on page 140 offers the kind of information that can be gleaned from the use of a **Challenging (+0) Forbidden Lore (Cults) Test**.

Secret History of the Fall of the Tellurian Combine

The cult has threatened scores of worlds at various points in the sector's history, and individual Brotherhoods have ranged greatly in power and dominion, from a dozen individuals in a single guild to grand malefic conspiracies encompassing a chain of worlds with thousands of cultists bound to Balphomael's service. Without doubt though, the most potent danger the cult ever posed was to the very heart of the sector itself some 440 years ago.

Using the Brotherhood in Your Games

In many ways, the Brotherhood offers GMs a fairly traditional interpretation of a secret society or cult conspiracy for use with your games, albeit one with a foul entity from the warp at its heart. As such, wider literature and media is replete with elements and plots that can be easily reworked to incorporate into adventures using the Brotherhood, from classic horror conspiracies to "cold war" style paranoia and spy thrillers with an occult twist.

The motivations of the cult's principal members (greed, ambition, and the lust for power) are, while morally reprehensible, at least understandable and relatively sane compared to, say, those of the Pilgrims of Hayte. The cult is capable of fully rounded and quite devious plots and of using more subtle tactics than most (not to mention raising a few daemons to wreak its vengeance when crossed). The Brotherhood makes for a good long-term enemy for a campaign centred on uncovering and destroying its secret empire. It can also act as a foil and hidden enemy for other cults and dangerous groups in your games, manipulating the Imperial authorities into doing its dirty work for it and wiping out its rivals.

Alternatively, the Brotherhood is just as good as the villain of shorter adventures involving the consequences of daemonic bargains or the uncovering of corrupt aristocrats or guildmasters presiding over dark rituals and the like. One particularly fun aspect (in gaming terms at any rate!) of the Brotherhood is it prefers to corrupt rather than destroy, and it is fully capable of offering an Acolyte a deal to look the other way (or do some dirty work for it). These deals are an excellent way of introducing Dark Pacts and simmering corruption, and working for the "other side" into your games.

During those days, the Brotherhood had become imbedded in the sector's infrastructure and even within the Lucid Court. Meanwhile, its figurehead organisation, the Tellurian Combine, rose to become the dominant economic force in the sector. Faced with the dire truth when uncovered, the Holy Ordos had a difficult choice to make. To denounce and attack the Combine directly would have tempted anarchy in the highest echelons of government and perhaps even risk open civil war within the sector.

Instead, the entire resources and wiles of the Ordos Calixis—Malleus, Hereticus, Xenos, and others—were brought to bear in a true shadow war. Within a decade, the whole edifice of the Combine was mercilessly brought down, its cabals isolated and destroyed by covert raids, exorcist-death squads, and contract assassinations. At the same time, the cult's workings and secret pawns were forced into the light and slaughtered in what is believed to have been the largest deployment of Officio Assassinorum agents in the history of the Calixis Sector.

Much of what the Inquisition knows of the Brotherhood and its dark patron harkens back to this great and secret purge. It was the famed Daemonhunter Orpheus himself, at the head of an intercession force of Grey Knight Terminators, that finally vanquished the avatar of the Horned Darkness in a hidden temple in catacombs deep under the Tellurian Chancellery in Hive Sibellus.

Although the power of the cult was broken and thousands of unclean heretics and their duped lackeys were slain, the Brotherhood did not die. Time and again, signs of the Brotherhood stirring has come to light, although it has never managed to attain even a fraction of its former power and glory—or so the Inquisition believes. Others, however, believe this relative silence simply means that it has become even more subtle and adept at hiding its tracks. They fear that unless the true root of the daemon-incursion is found, it is only a matter of time before the Brotherhood rises once again to corrupt the Calixis Sector from within.

Flavian Invicta: The Traitor Cardinal

Perhaps the greatest shock in the aftermath of the whole Tellurian affair was the revelation of the identity of the Brotherhood's greatest diabolist, Flavian Invicta, cardinal palatine of the Holy Ecclesiarchy. Invicta was a highly ranked but otherwise undistinguished clergyman attached as part of the Ministorum's delegation to the Lucid Court. He appeared in public to be an affable, pious old man from an old and respected family in the twilight of his Ecclesiastical career but was, in fact, a ruthless power-broker and diabolist who harboured ambitions to be the true power behind the throne of the whole sector.

Invicta was thought to have sold his soul to Balphomael while still a young man, and close inspection of his personal history uncovered countless strange occurrences and the mysterious deaths of many rivals and competitors. The official record states that Invicta died suddenly of natural causes, but rumours within the Ordo Malleus persist that he remains alive still, cursed by the boon of longevity that his master granted, screaming endlessly in a pain amplifier buried deep beneath the Bastion Serpentis.

INQUISITORIAL THREAT BRIEFING

The Ordo Malleus regards the Brotherhood of the Horned Darkness as a clear and present danger to the Imperium of Man, and one that all members of the Holy Ordos within the Calixis Sector are aware of to some degree (although many believe it to be but a shadow of its former self). The threat the cult posses is considered to be twofold. The first is the political and spiritual corruption created by its conspiracies and infiltrations—a danger made worse as the largely elitist makeup of the Brotherhood allows it resources, finances, capabilities, and scope that many cult groups and daemon worshipers could not hope to match.

The second is the daemon Balphomael, its works, and its warp-spawned minions—a threat rightly classified as Malleus Abominatus Extremis by the Holy Ordos. The daemon is a powerful entity capable of generating high-magnitude warp phenomena, casting malefic curses, and investing into those mortal servants who enter into pacts with it a fragment of its

unclean might. Its powers are not, however, limitless, and their use seems to be inextricable linked to ritual murder and willing sacrifice by those in its service. The proven strategy for combating the Brotherhood then is threefold: gather intelligence to uncover the degree of corruption, destroy its foul places of worship to limit its power, and identify those who have sold their souls to the daemon and bring them the judgement of the Emperor's wrath.

A Dark Brotherhood

The Brotherhood of the Horned Darkness is a conspiracy of the powerful and the wealthy backed by their hirelings, lackeys, would-be aspirants, and, where needed, daemons summoned to enact their wrath. Presented here are specific profiles for one of the cult's high cabal members and a daemonic familiar of the type bound in service to them. Other than this, the cult's rank and file can be represented by the Cult Initiate, Dissolute Noble, and Merchant Magnate from the Dramatis Personae section in **Dark Heresy**. Also present, though in fewer numbers, are skilled and highly ranked specialists drawn into the cult's service (Cult Magus, Recidivist, Scribe, etc.), while the kind of highly equipped foot soldiers the cult can employ can be represented by the Kill Squad Trooper. Daemons, when summoned, will be at the behest of the Brotherhood's cabal and are never employed lightly. Likewise, the base criminal scum, mutants, and underhive dregs utilised by some cults are almost entirely absent in the Brotherhood which finds them to be crude, weak, and inferior agents.

Master Zentos Cyran, Servant of the Horned Darkness

To all that know him, Zentos Cyran is a wealthy and successful guild advocate who operates on behalf of numerous independent commodity traders and gelt-speculators in the commercia markets of Scintilla. A lean and austere figure in his middle years with a shaven head and piercing grey eyes, he is well respected and considered to be highly connected and skilled at his trade. He makes his home in the most exclusive mercantile district of Ambulon, where he conducts most of his business. Unbeknownst to the wider world, however, Cyran is a Servant of the Horned Darkness, and part of a ruling cabal that seeks to rebuild the cult on Scintilla to its former glory.

With a mind as cold and vicious as a steel-sprung trap, Cyran's particular gift is for intelligence gathering, bribery, and blackmail. Additionally, he sidelines as both a connection with Ambulon's criminal underworld and as a trouble shooter for the cult, although he rarely dirties his own hands with murder. He is ably assisted (and watched) by a daemonic familiar he knows as Malessence, granted to him by Balphomael when he sold his soul.

Master Zentos Cyran Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
25	30	30	30	36	46	43	52	49

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

Skills: Awareness (Per), Barter (Fel) +10, Charm (Fel) +10, Ciphers (Occult) (Int), Ciphers (Horned Darkness) (Int) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Common Lore (Administratum, Imperium, Local—Ambulon, Scintilla, and Markyan Marches, Mercantile) (Int) +10, Deceive (Fel) +10, Evaluate (Int), Forbidden Lore (Cults, Daemonology) (Int) +10, Inquiry (Fel) +20, Scholastic Lore (Bureaucracy, Imperial Law, Occult, Philosophy) (Int), Scrutiny (Per) +10, Secret Tongue (Horned Darkness) (Int) +10, Speak Language (Low Gothic, High Gothic) (Int) +10, Trade (Commercia, Gelt-Broker, Scribe) (Int) +10.

Talents: Foresight, Jaded, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Peer (Academic, Administratum, Commercia, Government, Noble, Underworld), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Resistance (Psychic), Strong Minded, Total Recall, Touched by the Fates (2 Fate points).

Dark Pact: Cyran has entered into a Dark Pact with the Daemon Balphomael and in return has been granted long life, a daemonic familiar to aid him, and power over others. He is subject to the following boons: he ages at a dramatically reduced rate and counts as having Unnatural Toughness (×2) versus all forms of poisons and diseases. He also has the boon of the Infernal Lure (see page 141), is subject to the strictures and benefits of a Dark Pact as listed in **Dark Heresy**, and has been granted knowledge of several Chaos Rituals.

Armour: None.

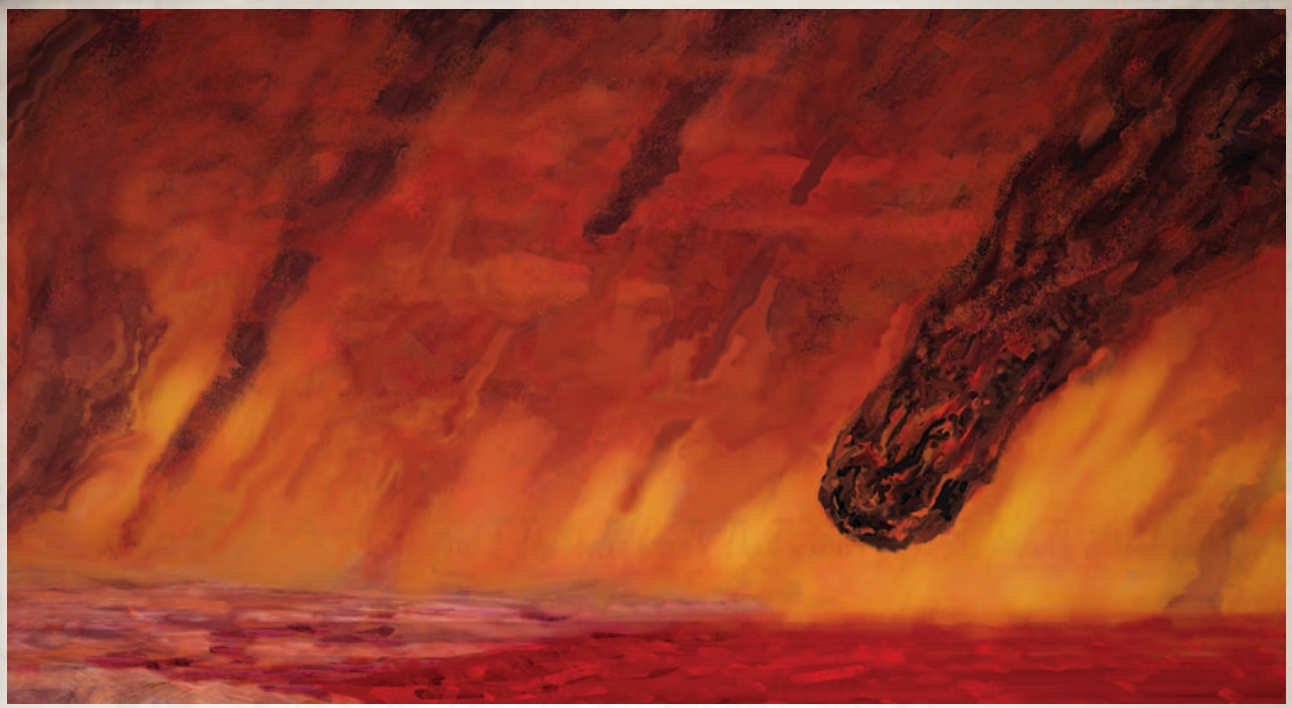
Weapons: None or sacrificial mono blade (1d5+4† R; Pen 2).

†Includes Strength Bonus.

Gear: Very high quality but austere clothing, personally encrypted vox, ocular catechiser, ledger data-slate, various pass keys and ward accessors. Or, if encountered at worship, elaborate black ritual robes and sacrificial blade. Given his wealth, contacts, and resources, he may, of course, arm and equip himself further as required.

Threat Rating: Hereticus Majoris.

"In the shedding of blood do we find our salvation. The crimson river points the way. Savor each red ribbon, for it is that essence that sustains us."



Malessence, Dark Familiar

The powerful daemon familiar Malessence is a servitor creature of Balphomael, conjured from the body of a young woman who loved Cyran and who was sacrificed by him to his dark lord. The daemon is bound to Cyran's soul and serves him as a bodyguard, spy, occasional assassin, and constant reminder of his obligations. A shape shifter, she can take several forms, but her preferred one is that of a pallid young woman. In this human guise, she masquerades publicly as Cyran's aide. The resemblance of this last form to Cryran's secret imaginings of a daughter he and his murdered lover might have had together is a deliberate and subtle barb on the daemon's part.

Malessence Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
37	37	40	(8) 40	40	37	51	68	37

Movement: 4/8/12/24 **Wounds:** 25

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Concealment (Ag) +10, Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +10, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology, Warp) (Int) +10, Psyniscience (WP) +10, Secret Tongue (Horned Darkness) (Int) +10, Scrutiny (per) +10, Silent Move (Ag) +10, Speak Language (all) (Int), Trade (Valet, Scribe) (Int).

Talents: Hard Target, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Swift Attack.

Traits: Changeling, Daemonic (TB 8), Dark Sight, From Beyond, Innate Psyker, Soul Joined, Warp Shadow.

Changeling: A shape-shifter, the daemon may take the form of a black felid, a small onyx statue of a weeping maiden, a fire blackened servo-skull, or a slight, pale young woman with darkly shadowed eyes and a subtly mocking, sardonic manner. Regardless of her shape, all of her forms smell faintly of cinders and ash. She may change shapes at will as a Full Action. In these alternate forms, she gains Talents, physical Traits, and Characteristics as appropriate, but her Wounds and her other abilities and Traits are not effected (she retains the Daemonic Trait, her Intelligence Characteristic, Psychic Powers, and so forth.)

True Form: If violence threatens, she may shift to her "true" form, a charred, rune-branded, half-human carcass with smoky insubstantial wings and bloody, empty eye sockets. In this form, her Characteristics remain unchanged and she gains Fear 2 (Frightening), Daemonic Presence, Flyer 16, Regeneration, and Natural Weapons in the form of long-nailed, blackened claws that inflict 1d5+5† R Damage and have the Warp Weapon Quality. In this form, she also is immune to the effects of fire and flame weapons.

†Includes Strength Bonus.

Innate Psyker: Malessence has an effective Psy Rating of 3 and the powers Call Flame (8), Far Sight (17), Fire Bolt (11), See Me Not (14), Sense Presence (7), Suggestion (7), Telepathy (11), Weaken Veil (9) and Whispers of the Warp (13). She is never subject to Psychic Phenomena while using these powers.

Soul Joined: By concentrating and passing a **Routine (+10) Willpower Test**, Cyran mentally communicates with Malessence and may see and hear what she sees and hears with an unlimited range. Likewise, if her master is harmed in any way, Malessence will immediately know, and she may unerringly locate him at will.

Warp Shadow: She is partially concealed from the prying arts of the psyker or by technological means of scanning and all attempts to locate her or discover her true nature (by Sense Presence, Psyniscience, auspex, etc.) suffer a –30 penalty.

Weapons and Gear: Well-tailored scribes' attire of fine quality, personal vox, encrypted data-slate, writing kit.

Threat Rating: Malleus Majoris.

The Vile Savants

"To our eyes, human existence is filled with hopes, desires, nobility and weakness. To see mankind through their eyes is to see the corn waiting for the reaper's scythe."

—Inquisitor Herrod, A Discourse on the Enemy Beyond.

The Vile Savants are a warp-spawned disease made flesh, sent to wrack worlds with suffering and drag them into festering ruin. There are no followers to their cause, no fanatics, and no deluded fools worshipping a false god, only the restless dead claimed by their plagues marching to the will of the daemon.

Legend among the worshipers of the Ruinous Powers has it that they were born of an unholy union of contagions unleashed centuries ago in a forgotten war. It said that in the distant past a great hospital ship was sent to tend the outbreaks of sickness and plague occurring as a result of the constant wars around the Eye of Terror. However, as well as alms and healers, it secretly carried another deadly cargo, an arsenal of dreadful weapons—biological agents, necrotic poisons, and alien fevers collected from a hundred worlds.

Legend has it that this great ark of salvation, whose name has been lost to myth, suffered a breach in its Geller Field while traversing the warp close to the Eye. In the moments that followed, the powers of the warp shattered the protective stasis of the deathly vault and sank into the viral samples aboard, filling them with unholy life and consciousness. The horrors that were unleashed quickly overwhelmed most onboard and sent a thousand screaming souls into oblivion. The medicae personnel trapped aboard faced a far darker fate indeed, as a daemon virus possessed them and made them its own flesh. With this, the Vile Savants were born, embodiments of unfeeling, indiscriminate death unleashed by the warp to wage a silent, implacable war against all life.

The Savants themselves are hideous to behold, reeking and defiled bio-containment suits filled with bubbling rot that stumble on, boneless and implacable, silent as death itself. These foul entities are possessed of the skills and knowledge of their long dead occupants coupled with a malign warp-intelligence and the occult might of the daemons of rot and pestilence. They are consumed by hatred for all that live and breathe and have the most horrific means of enacting their war of annihilation. The contagion that animates them is their dark harbinger, spilling out through the warp and infecting a single individual whose despair and morbidity attracts it from worlds away. From there, it spreads as plague, the infection runnning rampant and preparing the way for the Vile Savants to emerge, wreaking their vengeance and showering mankind with the gifts bestowed on them by the Lord of Decay.



Daemon Plague

The Vile Savants are daemonic entities who require no scheming mortal agents. They do not plot or foster nests of cultists, nor do they answer a sorcerer's summons when called (unless it suits their purpose). While other cults may spread like a disease, the Vile Savants are literally a warp spawned contagion. They spread and multiply through the flesh of reality just as mortal viruses spread from organ to organ, choking its host with sickness until it fails and collapses. The Vile Savants have a single and consuming desire: spread their contagion and kill until nothing is left alive. These horrors cannot be bargained with, reasoned with, placated, or diverted from this task.

The Ordo Malleus believes that this most unholy contagion is the design and will of the Ruinous Power called the Lord of Decay, known to some as Nurgle, Father of Plagues and Bringer of Despair. As warp entities, they serve to embody several types of daemonic contagions that are categorised by the Ordo Malleus as the Fydae Strain (named after the area of the Calixis Sector where they were first encountered). The Savants themselves are little more than murderous vessels, avatars of these hell-sent plagues. Each stage of a Fydae outbreak cycle escalates the amount of death and horror until it has reached such a weight of destruction that the barriers between real space and the warp can be breached, the dead walk, and the Vile Savants come to claim their master's prize.

When the Dead Do Not Rest

Outbreaks of various strains of zombie plague or incidents where the dead have been known to rise as a result of a warp-spawned rift, fell-technology, or necromantic witchery have been known to the Imperium for millennia but are thankfully comparably rare. In recent decades, however, the sectors and worlds of the Segmentum Obscurus have seen a marked upturn in such incidents linked to disease cults and the ancient enemy.

The involvement of the entities known as Vile Savants in the outbreak of these awful plagues is likewise a new development and a dangerous one. They bring a malign intelligence to these events, making them far harder to combat or contain. The Holy Ordos Segmentum Tabernacle believes that the Vile Savants are responsible for various outbreaks of plague and the massacre of settlements, ships, and cities across the Segmentum Obscurus occurring in the Calixis, Mandragora, Medusan, and Ixaniad Sectors. Of particular concern to the Conclave Calixis is that in the last 50 years there have been five confirmed contacts with what has been named the Fydae Strain (after the Sutter's Rock outbreak) in the Calixis Sector.

Carrionates and Warp Zombies

Although far from the most common of the Holy Ordos's foes, the walking dead have long been known as a blasphemous foe of the Inquisition. Animated at the behest of fell sorcery or creations of the darkest of the psyker's arts, such creatures can make for powerful and loyal servants. Forbidden science can also bring a twitching carcass to a semblance of hungry life. To represent such unnatural abominations, use the Plague Zombie shown here, but remove the references to the Fydae Strain infection and modify them to suit your needs. For example, ravenous daemon-bound corpses with a taste for human flesh might have the Berserk Charge talent and +10 Strength and Agility but will be subject to Warp Instability. Alternatively, shambling creatures created from a baleful chemical spill or forbidden bio-weapon might have the Toxic quality to their attacks and lack the Unhallowed special rule, but have a fear of bright light or fire and continue to rot until they finally collapse.

The Fydae Strain Zombie Plague

Exposure and Chance of Infection:

- Skin or tissue contact with the body of the infected: 5%.
- Skin or tissue contact with infected blood or internal body tissue from the infected: 30%.
- Bite or wound from infected individual (any Damage): 50%.
- Ingestion of heavily contaminated material (i.e., water where plague dead have lain): 50%.
- Deep wounding by an infected individual (i.e., a Critical Wound from a bite or mauling): 75%.

Incubation Time: Varies between 10 minutes and five days (the GM decides).

Base Toughness Test Modifier to Resist: Hard (–10).

Effects: If the victim succumbs to any degree of failure, he is racked by an intense fever and green marks blossom on his flesh, which quickly withers and sloughs away. The victim also begins to vomit foul blood. These symptoms last for approximately an hour during which the victim suffers a –30 penalty to all Tests. After an hour, the victim is gripped by violent spasms and dies in agony, but may later return as a Plague Zombie.

During this time, medicine cannot save the victim but exorcism might (see the Purge the Unclean Talent, in **The Inquisitor's Handbook**), though this will likely leave the victim in a precarious state suffering –1d10 permanent Strength and Toughness Damage.

Immunities: Owing to its daemonic nature as a thing of despair and occult corruption, individuals with the Pure Faith or Rite of Pure Thought Talents, the From Beyond, Machine (3+) (unless they contain considerable living matter), or Daemonic Traits, or those with a Dark Pact cannot be infected by the Fydae Strain. Likewise, the Unshakable Faith Talent provides a +20 bonus to resist infection.

Subject Zero: The first person infected by Fydae Strain only suffers intense fever for approximately an hour. After this time, they are a contagious carrier of the disease but will suffer no other effects from it. They are also immune to the effects of all other diseases and toxins.

Using the Vile Savants in Your Games

The Vile Savants are a brutal and immediate threat and are ideally suited to high action scenarios focusing on character survival and the defence of innocent bystanders. The Savants and their rotting minions are violent and horrific antagonists, and there is unlikely to be much political subtlety in a scenario involving them! A good way to approach a classic outbreak scenario is to follow the progression of the zombie plague outbreak and then the arrival of the Vile Savants. Such scenarios could start from the beginning of an outbreak of an unknown disease. The Acolytes are then rushed in to determine the nature of the hazard, only to find themselves trapped and having to fend off tides of plague zombies.

Alternatively, an outbreak and subsequent arrival of the Vile Savants is a great, unexpected diversion that can interrupt an investigation in an unconnected matter. This last type of scenario is a classic case of the Acolytes just being in the wrong place at the wrong time. A third option is to break things down and perhaps use the plague zombies without the Savants themselves—perhaps on a hulk or ship in transit, or perhaps a single Vile Savant is behind a diseased mutant cult that hunts down medicae personnel in order to sacrifice them to its hidden master. It is, however, advisable to treat infecting Acolytes with care, as the diseases involved in such scenarios are utterly lethal. It makes for a rather dull roleplay session to have the PCs drop dead as soon as they enter an area of infection! Plan your adventures accordingly.

The Vile Savants are creations of the Chaos powers of disease and pestilence, and, as such, daemonic creatures of the Lord of Decay heed their call and follow in their wake. Such daemonic incursions appearing in the final stages of the outbreak could include the Plague Bearer (see page 354 of **Dark Heresy**), the Plague Swarm detailed here, or any suitable rot-glutted daemon of your own design.

THE PATHOLOGY OF CORRUPTION

Like any disease, the contagion of the Vile Savants follows a particular pathology and path of inflection as illustrated in the following section.

The First Stage: The Occult Infection of Subject Zero

The cascade of events that culminate in the arrival of the Vile Savants begins with the infection of a single person. How this first infection occurs is not known for certain, as the ways of the Chaos Gods are fickle, but the Ordo Malleus believes it may be some deep and dark lesion within a person's spirit calls out to the contagion and it responds to that call. If true, it would be a dark and macabre despair of such singular depth and malice that it resonates in the warp and calls the disease like a moth to a flame. While the exact means of infection are confined to theory, the Inquisition has had several confirmed cases from which to establish how the contagion progresses once it has infected its first victim.

At first, the only sign is a period of intense fever and terrible nightmarish visions that passes in a matter of hours and leaves the host apparently in perfect health. As healthy as the person seems, his soul is now lost and he has become a fever that walks and a vessel for unholy disaster in the shape of the Fydae Strain. Utterly infectious and yet outwardly healthy, he ignorantly goes about his life, not knowing that the contagion inside him is tainting all he comes in contact with.

Thus, the carrier spreads the contagion with a thoroughness that could never be achieved by obviously sick individuals. It is with this subtlety that the Grandfather of Fever shows his genius and his beneficence. This first subject will never be touched by any disease or sickness ever again, but will infect and doom all he meets and so is destined to stand at the centre of a storm of pestilence and see all he cares for dissolve and decay. In the terminology of the Ordo Malleus and the Ordo Sepulturum, this blighted individual and most damned of souls is named "Subject Zero."

The Second Stage: The Colonisation and Spread of Contagion

Once Subject Zero has unwittingly begun to spread the contagion, as time progresses, so will the spread of the plague at an ever-accelerating rate. Unlike mundane diseases, the contagion spread by Subject Zero can take weeks or hours to claim its first lives, dependant on its fickle daemonic nature. It is as if the disease itself is patient and willing to wait to spread to as much of the populace of a locale as possible before it begins the next fatal stage of its cycle. However, if tempted by a particularly choice group of victims (such as medicae personnel) or the threat of discovery, it will suddenly erupt with full force. Its hunger to kill may drive it to full outbreak sooner rather than later as the daemon will not be denied its feast.

Once the disease begins to manifest fully, it presents as a wild and vicious mixture of symptoms ranging from bloody flux, vomiting, and murderous fever, blooming strange green marks on the skin and the rapid necrotizing of flesh, all finally resulting in a spasm-wracked death usually within hours of the disease's first symptoms manifesting. Once the first lives have been claimed, matters accelerate and worsen rapidly. Hundreds, even thousands may die within hours causing mass panic and civil disorder and straining any authority's ability to cope to the breaking point.

THE SUTTER'S ROCK OUTBREAK

SUTTERS ROCK: Asteroid mining outpost, Fydae Great Cloud.

POPULATION PRIOR TO INCIDENT: 120,000 (approx.)

Infection of Subject Zero estimated to have occurred on 363.724.M41. Subject Zero remains unidentified.

12 HOURS SINCE INFECTION OF SUBJECT ZERO: Unknown to the citizenry or authorities of Sutter's Rock, around 13,000 are thought to already be infected by the contamination. Very rapid spread of infection is aided by the outpost's confined nature and recycled air.

14 HOURS SINCE INFECTION OF SUBJECT ZERO: The first symptoms begin to show amongst the population. In ignorance the people continue with their normal routines, increasing the spread of the disease. The infected population likely already exceeds 20,000.

15 HOURS SINCE INFECTION OF SUBJECT ZERO: The first deaths occur. Outpost authorities begin to be flooded with reports of deaths and people showing symptoms of the disease. Inexperienced in such matters, no effective quarantine procedures are immediately enforced, allowing the contagion to spread further. Casualties estimated as 4,000 primarily amongst the young or old and infirm.

17 HOURS SINCE INFECTION OF SUBJECT ZERO: As casualties mount, the medical facilities are put under martial law and armed guards posted. Panic grips much of the population who begin to surge towards the now guarded medicae facilities or seek escape on fleeing ships, only to be repelled from the docking bays with lethal force. In such close packed groups, the contagion continues to spread unchecked. Casualties estimated at 10,000, and infection rates as high as 50%.

ADDENDUM: At this point two interstellar cargo vessels fled the station: one, the Axmundi Conveyer, was never accounted for and the second, Krin-77/3, was later destroyed as a precautionary measure before it could dock at Lind Orbital.

18 HOURS SINCE INFECTION OF SUBJECT ZERO: The outpost's authorities begins to realise the scope and nature of the problem that they are facing and respond. Water supplies and ventilation links are shut down, all areas that can be sealed are, and all those showing symptoms in the outpost's upper echelon are segregated. Infrastructural and government complexes isolate themselves and switch to contained air and water processing units. Civil disorder begins in earnest. Casualties estimated at 23,000, some 20% of which are likely due to containment measures and rioting.

22 HOURS SINCE INFECTION OF SUBJECT ZERO: The dead become animate and attack the living. Enforcer units deployed throughout the colony are quickly overwhelmed. The authorities decide to send a message requesting help and detailing their situation. The colony's only astropath, Ciridinal Zay, sends the signal as the first symptoms begin to manifest in people within quarantined "safe" areas. Casualties estimated at 42,000, rising rapidly.

24 HOURS SINCE INFECTION OF SUBJECT ZERO: Anarchy breaks out within the quarantined enclaves held by the authorities, while outside the dead reign. With no central authority, those still alive begin to break up into small groups fighting for their own survival. The dead throng the streets. Warp creatures are encountered. Astropath Zay commits suicide after sending last messages, commending his soul to the Emperor. Casualties estimated to be at least 60,000.

26 HOURS SINCE INFECTION OF SUBJECT ZERO: The animate dead far outnumber the living. Creatures identified as Vile Savants encountered marshalling the dead and warp creatures to overwhelm the surviving pockets of the uninfected. Power failures, localised decompressions, and sporadic fires result in the end of viable data recordings. Casualties estimated-Effective Total (117,000+).

2028 HOURS SINCE INFECTION OF SUBJECT ZERO: Dauntless class cruiser The Fifth Hammer of Drusus dispatches boarding parties of armsmen in sealed combat armour accompanied by agents of the Inquisition to Sutter's Rock. Atmosphere in Sutter's Rock is found to be highly contaminated. Enforcer security and station control logs recovered. Vast quantities of decomposed human remains are found; however, no survivors, warp entities, or walking dead are encountered. AEtheric scans indicate severe and dangerous weakening of warp/real space boundaries in the area. Recovered data indicates one salvation pod launch at Z+1,007 hours, occupants or cause unknown. Destination of salvation pod is unknown.

2037-50 HOURS SINCE INFECTION OF SUBJECT ZERO: Boarding parties are withdrawn, station reactors set to overload, and subsequent bombardment is commenced by The Fifth Hammer of Drusus to complete the destruction of Sutter's Rock.

The Third Stage: The Walking Dead

In this stage, the disease does not simply attack the bodies of the infected but moves to overwhelm the few threads that keep humanity together in the plague's aftermath or may contest its decaying dominion. Rising from their graves, the plague dead walk in search of the living, the daemonic plague driving their corpses like the many cells of a single vile organism.

The walking dead fall on the living, hunting them down implacably, and each person they kill rises to join them in turn. As the walking dead multiply, wild terror and anarchy is the natural consequence unless the Inquisition, the Imperial military, or some other powerful force can step in. Short of total cleansing with fire and faith, there is now little that can be done to avert the next stage of the cycle, save contain it with brute force and merciless purpose.

The Fourth Stage: Cometh the Vile Savants

Once the dead have risen in great numbers, the hour of their masters' arrival has come. At the centre of the outbreak, in a silent, dark place bathed in death and despair, reality falls apart to the buzzing of flies. The Vile Savants step through into reality, and in their wake come the daemons of the Lord of Decay.

The number of Vile Savants that appear is dependant on the extent of the contagion's spread. If a great city is consumed by the contagion and the walking dead numbers are legion, dozens of Vile Savants may come, while the death throes of a small settlement may bring a single savant to perform its final rites. As manifestations of the contagion itself, the Vile Savants can command the throng of walking dead, wield diseased powers of the warp, and consume life like a hungry cloud of locusts. With a deliberate will at the centre, the walking dead begin to destroy any remaining resistance and a disaster becomes a war.

The Fifth Stage: Disintegration and Proliferation

The final stage of the contagion's cycle occurs only if the Vile Savants are victorious and have brought their targets to ruin. With death and decay holding limitless dominion, the walking dead begin to collapse, their flesh putrefies, and the air is filled by the buzzing of bloated corpse flies. In this perfect garden of decay, the Vile Savants move about, harvesting the outpouring of death and decay and sampling the changing contagions born by the outbreak. Not all are killed, however, as a few people are allowed to survive and the Vile Savants do not seek them out—for the Lord of Decay needs life and flesh upon which to work his wondrous diseases and requires witnesses to bear testament to his all-consuming power. Finally, the Vile Savants step back through the hell that made them and wait until the next outbreak, wherever and whenever it may be.

Inquisitorial Threat Briefing

The Vile Savants and the Fydae Strain contagion are a threat not simply because of the destruction that they cause, but because the Inquisition fears it is geared to some greater dark design. It is the considered opinion of the Conclave Calixis that is it only the gift of the Emperor's providence and thanks to the valiant actions of his servants that there has not already been far greater loss of life at their hands in the sector. All of the Holy Ordos must be ever watchful for the re-appearance of this threat and take whatever action is needed to confound and destroy them wherever and whenever they are encountered. It is also the duty, particularly of the Ordo Malleus, to further pursue these terrible creatures and learn of their nature and limitations so that they may be more effectively countered in the future, as the threat posed by the Vile Savants is not only severe but perhaps eternal. They are truly the disease that walks, always searching for a time and place to surface and whose only goal is suffering and death.

The Children of Decay: The Vile Savants

Fydae Strain Plague Zombies

Fydae Strain Zombies first appear to be no more than gaunt, dead-eyed plague victims in soiled and blood spattered clothing, but this does little to dim the horror for friends and loved ones wracked with grief. As the outbreaks worsen and the Vile Savants themselves make an appearance, the Fydae Zombies decay at an unnaturally accelerated rate. They turn into horrific rotting husks of putrescent flesh, but no less active or deadly for it.

Fydae Strain Plague Zombie Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
20	—	40	(6) 30	10	10	15	20	01

Movement: 1/2/3/— **Wounds:** 10
Skills: None.
Talents: None.
Traits: Dark Sight, Diseased (Fydae Strain), Fear 1 (Disturbing) (but may increase to 2 for particularly horrifically decomposed examples), From Beyond, Natural Weapons (Dead Hands and Teeth), Unhallowed, Unnatural Toughness (×2), Walking Dead.
Walking Dead: An animate corpse propelled into life by dark forces is, as might be imagined, quite difficult to "kill." These creatures do not need to breathe, they do not tire, and they are immune to poisons and diseases, as well as many environmental hazards. They do not suffer the effects of being Stunned or the penalties for being injured. In addition, only Critical Wounds suffered to the head or body can destroy them, any suffered to an arm or leg simply renders that

limb useless.
Unhallowed: Blessed and Holy weapons inflict double Damage to Plague Zombies.
Weapons: Dead hands and teeth (1d5+4† R; Primitive, plus infection).
† Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: None (Zombies are able to use basic tools and weapons if directed to so by a Vile Savant, although firearms and other complex devices are largely beyond them).
Threat Rating: Malleus Minima.

The Vile Savants



The Vile Savants are horrific manifestations of the daemonic diseases that claimed the mortal lives of the putrescent remains of the flesh they wear, and are avatars of plague and destruction. They appear as figures wearing sealed containment suits that are slick with filth and beaded with moisture like sweat on fevered skin. Inside, there is nothing but putrefied liquid flesh and writhing vermin, held together by the sagging structure of the suit. The daemonic forces that motivate them drive their stumbling, boneless limbs on with macabre and implacable purpose. A palpable aura of utter horror and rotting miasma surrounds them, and to simply be unfortunate enough to witness these awful things is terrifying. Worse still is to hear their buzzing voices inside one's head or become the subjects of their experimentations in the death of flesh.

Vile Savant Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
28	28	35	(6) 35	30	40	35	38	30

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 15
Skills: Awareness (Per), Chem-Use (Int), Climb (S), Common Lore (Tech) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Evaluate (Int), Forbidden Lore (Warp) (Int) +20, Medicae (Int) +20, Psyniscience (Per), Speak Language (any needed) (Int), Tech-Use (Int) +10.
Talents: Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Primitive).
Traits: Daemonic (TB 6), Dark Sight, Diseased††, Fear 3 (Horrifying), From Beyond, Strange Physiology, The Horror Within, The Stuff of Nightmares.
Daemonic Presence: All those within 20 meters hear snatches of technical medicae chatter, weeping noises, and pleading screams, all overlaid with the buzzing of insects, while colours appear to fade, paint to blister, and metal to rust. All creatures within this area take a –10 penalty to Willpower Tests.
The Horror Within: A Vile Savant may peel away its containment suit to release the daemonic essence within. This takes a Full Action, and once complete, the Vile Savant is replaced by a Plague Swarm. If the Vile Savant is destroyed by mundane weaponry, this also has a 50% of occurring, rather than the daemon being slain outright.
††**Diseased:** Vile Savants carry the Fydae Strain and are infectious at will (as per a Plague Zombie), additionally all their attacks carry the Toxic quality, as Wounds caused by them instantly become infected and rot.
Telepathy: The Vile Savants have no mouths to speak but can use the Telepathy Psychic Power automatically and with no possibility of Psychic Phenomena or Perils of the Warp. When heard inside a person's head, a Vile Savant's voice sounds like a buzzing swarm of insects crawling in one's mind. Hearing this voice automatically inflicts 1d5 Insanity Points unless a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** can be made to resist the horror. This power is treated as a Psychic Power in all other respects.
Zombie Mastery: Fydae Strain Plague Zombies are an extension of the disease contained within the Vile Savants. This connection allows them to have complete control of all Fydae Strain Plague Zombies within 300 meters, and they are able to perceive and act through them. Controlling the zombies within this area is a Free Action. This power works automatically but is treated as a Psychic Power in all other respects.
Armour: Soiled containment suits (All 2).
Weapons: Filthy surgical blade (3m; 1d5+3† R; Pen 3; Toxic), bone severer (1d10+4† R; Pen 2; Toxic, Unwieldy, Tearing) or contaminated corrosive spray from its suit (10m; S/–/–; 1d10+2 E; Pen 6; Toxic, Infectious, Flame).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: None other than rusted and contaminated medical equipment.
Threat Rating: Malleus Majoris.

Plague Swarm

A plague swarm is a daemonic force of mindless destruction that materialises in the corporeal universe as a rippling mass of locusts, beetles, flies, or other such creatures twisted into utterly horrific form and redolent with rot and decay. These hellish swarms move as one implacable and unholy mass, stripping flesh from victims as they pass, tainting and destroying everything they touch.

The following profile indicates a swarm with the approximate mass of an adult human being. Smaller and much larger swarms are possible.

Plague Swarm Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
35	—	05	(4) 25	40	10	35	20	—

Movement: 4/8/12/24 **Wounds:** 25
Skills: Awareness +20 (Per), Dodge (Ag), Psyniscience (Per).
Talents: None.
Traits: Bestial, Daemonic, Daemonic Presence, Dark Sight, Fear 2 (Frightening), 50% chance of Flyer (roll 2d10 to determine Speed), From Beyond, Natural Weapons (A Thousand Gnawing Maws), Swarm Creature, Warp Instability.
Daemonic Presence: All creatures within 20 metres feel the scuttling of numberless things under their skin and hear a sound like the buzzing of flies from all around. All creatures within this area take a –10 penalty to Willpower Tests.
Swarm Creature: Any attack from a weapon that does not either have the Blast, Flame, Scatter, or Holy qualities only inflicts half Damage. In most circumstances, a swarm creature cannot be Grappled, Knocked Down, or Pinned, and the swarm may "pour" through suitable small openings such as ducts, vents, and the like, but they may not Jump. The swarm is counted as being destroyed once all its Wounds are lost. The swarm's attacks have a variable Penetration value (roll each time an attack lands), representing its ability to engulf their victims and attack vulnerable areas. Because of its diffuse nature, plague swarms suffer double Damage from Blessed attacks and the effects of warp instability.
Weapons: A thousand gnawing maws (1d10 R†; Pen 1d5; Tearing).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Threat Rating: Malleus Minoris.

> They come, in the depths of the starless dark. They come, with pestilence and plague. They come, faceless and shambling and hungry. They come, bidden by the Grandfather. They come, to share their gifts with all they meet.



The Menagerie

"Come and see, you must come and see."

—Last broadcast of Eldred Krane, Acolyte
Aventine District, Malfi

Of all the threats facing the Ordo Malleus in the Calixis Sector, few are more dangerous, stranger, or as little understood as that posed by the cult known as the Menagerie. There are even those within the Inquisition that insist the cult is a phantom—a paper threat, a thing without substance, a conjecture woven from half truths and overactive fear. This, in turn, has led to fears by some that even the Holy Ordos has not been beyond the cult's corrupting reach, and a few Daemonhunters have engaged in unsanctioned operations in order to destroy it.

The horrific truth is far worse. The Menagerie is very real, and its threat goes far beyond that of a few hundred lost lives, or a thousand or a billion. It seeks to undermine the very nature of reality itself with its revelations and to pitch the Calixis Sector into an abyss of Chaos from which none shall escape. The Menagerie has such sights to show, and all are invited to come and see.

The Path of the Revelator

The name of the Menagerie is one whispered fearfully by warp-dabblers and those that traffic in forbidden lore; its name is a thing of terror, a dark legend and an enemy to be more feared than even the Holy Inquisition. It is a cult of secret and matchless power that deals in physical corruption and madness, whose touch blights the flesh with the twisting mutation of the warp and whose sorceries can sunder reality and remake it.

The Menagerie, as its name suggests, is a collection of secrets, tangled intrigues, and horrors undreamed off. It is all these things, but it is also a display, a hellish show that reveals to its audience what it claims to be a glorious vision of the true nature of the universe, an unveiling of glories and terrors. Such revelations come with a terrible price to sanity, body, and soul, and few survive their message. Those who do are forever changed.

The cult's plans and workings remain obscure even to those aware of its existence. However, the dreadful suspicion by some within the Ordo Malleus is that the Menagerie's seemingly random plots and corruptions are all working to a vast and singular plan, a plan to undermine reality itself by undermining the sanity and altering the perceptions of humanity to better encompass the "reality" of the warp and bring the barriers between the real and the unreal crashing down. Few that have survived exposure to the Menagerie doubt that the true nature of its plan, as it unfolds, is likely to be something so terrible that no sane mind could grasp it.



SUNDERED FLESH AND TWISTED REALITIES

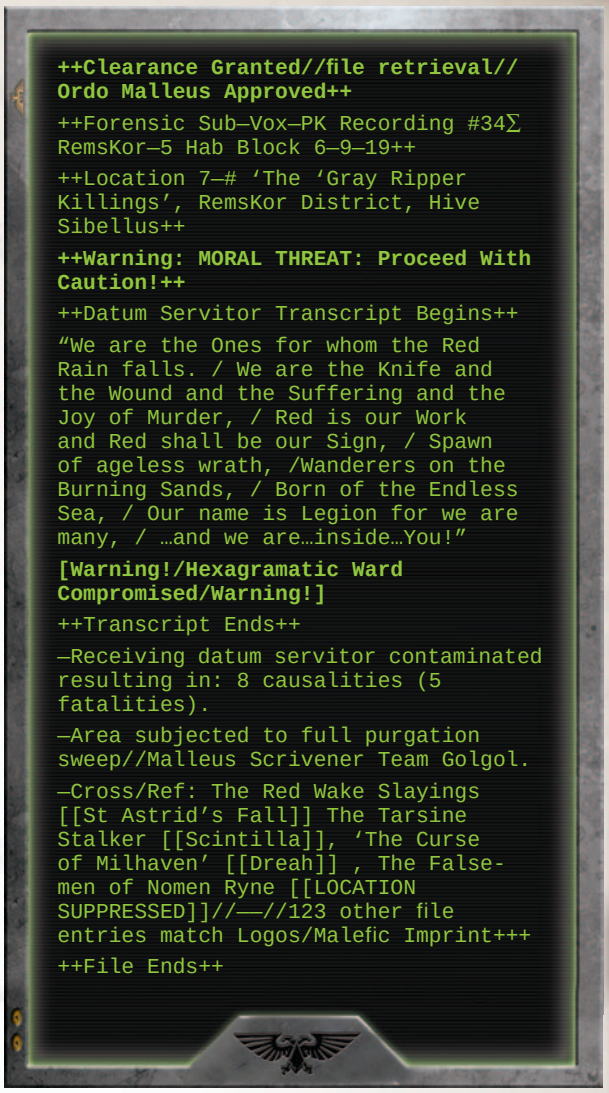
"…he wears no mask…he wears no mask…he wears—"
—Suspect apprehended after the murder of Prefect Strabo, Gunmetal City, later declared insane and terminated

The cult of the Menagerie is a cavalcade of madmen, sorcerers, insane schemers, deranged murderers, and the sculptors of flesh known as the Revelators, who are its masterminds. They are all without doubt true believers in their cause, fanatical adherents to a creed almost incomprehensible to outsiders. Their beliefs are focused around the mystery of the revelations that they have been exposed to and the wonders and beauty of unrestrained physical and mental change. They plot endlessly to bring about a "great revelation" so all of humanity can receive the blessings of the sights they have seen. They commit seemingly random acts of violence and destruction, forcing events into one pattern or another, and spark outbreaks of madness and misery by their actions. With the fervour of true converts, they take great delight in sharing their gifts with others, often spawning a genuine menagerie of warped creatures and pets, many formerly human, in the process.

The cult possesses an insane certainty in the rightness of its cause and is more than willing to make sacrifices in the pursuit of its goals. The cult members are able to maintain a veil of secrecy through their power to change flesh, tamper with minds, and even warp space to their desire. By these means, the cult hides itself from outside eyes and avoids direct confrontation with the Imperial authorities (unless it should wish it). In the past, the cult has been encountered lurking behind fronts such as theatres, hostelries, and venues in run down areas or at the edges of the underhive. The cult has even been found behind sanatoria, alms houses that cater to the dregs of humanity, side shows, and (savouring the irony) even menageries and exhibits of more commonplace beasts and alien creatures.

These false fronts serve to conceal the most foully changed of the cult's numbers and allows it to select its victims from those unfortunate enough to stumble across one of its lesser "performances." Operating in accordance with an unfathomable plan and timetable of its own twisted devising, the cult reaches out and draws particular victims to it, manipulating minds and perhaps even the flow of fate itself to draw them in. These chosen victims, the "favoured" as the cult names them, have been selected to carry out some part of the Menagerie's great and secret purposes, and seldom realise just what has befallen them. Most will go about their business, seemingly normal but horrifically changed within. However, they are unwitting pawns of the cult's conspiracies and living weapons in the service of the Revelator who has remade them.

Such is the duplicity and labyrinthine skill of the Menagerie that often no one connects the diverse victims to having attended a given performance of a play or having visited a carnival where they became separated from friends for a time. Even someone collapsing drunk or drugged in a certain location, waking days later with no recall of what befell them in between, is ignored. Each act of inflicted madness is but one part of a grander design reaching out across time and space to an unknown but doubtless malign conclusion. However, whether they work to achieve some dark end or prevent one, none save perhaps the Revelators know.



The Last Masque of House Orsini

It cannot be said with certainty when or how the Menagerie first came into being, but its earliest recorded activities hail from within the dark recesses and opulent courts of the world of Malfi. The first mentions occur in the years of relative peace that followed the disastrous Reign of Terror and the destruction created by the birth of another deadly cult, the Pilgrims of Hayte.

Forced out on the margins of power was House Orsini, a once great and powerful family who had had a stranglehold on the senate and whose influence ranged wide across the sector, The civil anarchy caused by the Pilgrims of Hayte's Red Solstice had seen them vacillate and their rule found wanting. Unable to sustain such a loss of face, their powerbase crumbled and they barely survived the intervening decades. With the house a crippled and failing shadow of its former glory, the Orsini would have done anything to regain their prestige and power. So it was that when an enigmatic stranger came to them, offering glories

The Court of the Radiant King

Any attempt to discern or understand the cosmology of the Menagerie's beliefs is doomed to failure, as to comprehend its truth is to become part of it, and to become part of it is to be destroyed by it. This aside, fragments of its lore and nature have filtered out into the hands of occultists and the Inquisition via the garbled rantings of lunatics, dark allegory, ancient legend, and the aftermath of its terrors. One such fragment concerns the Court of the Radiant King, known elsewhere as the King in Rags and Tatters, or the Empty Lord's Revels. This macabre and frightening legend is found in myths on Malfi stretching back far beyond the birth of the sector into that world's dim and ancient history, but now is inextricably linked with the cult.



Abiding in an ancient city, under strange suns that cannot be named, the court is a mythic place, a realm of wondrous possibility and revelation, visions of which are at the same time a foreshadowing of disaster, entropy, and destruction. Likewise a paradoxical figure, the Radiant King is at the same time a thing of awe and terror, illumination and death. He is described as a patient and implacable force whose footstep brings chaos and madness everlasting for those who look upon his countenance. It is said by some occult sources and in the whispers of daemons that the Menagerie serves this strange figure and that they are its harbingers and messengers. Others state that the King is only a mask, a shell for some shapeless force of boundless insanity and change from the depths of the warp beyond, pointing to the entity referred to in forbidden texts as Tchar or Tzeentch, the Changer of Ways and the Render of Veils.

and truths undreamed of, they proved easy prey.

The stranger called himself the Revelator, and as he insinuated himself into the house, he poisoned the sanity and corrupted the bodies of the family and its servants. To the rest of the world, the doom that had come to the Orsini remained unknown. Then one day invitations began to arrive asking the great and powerful of Malfi to attend a masquerade at the Orsini's remaining palace, where "singular and wondrous entertainments and revelations" would be provided by "The Menagerie of Fate." Such events and diversions among the intrigue-ridden and jaded nobility of Malfi were commonplace, but given the Orsini's fallen status few deigned to attend. Most that did only did so for the chance of scandalous pleasure and mockery of what they assumed would be the dying gasp of the once great house.

What actually occurred at the last masque of House Orsini is sealed under the highest security protocols of the Holy Ordos and the secret records of the great houses involved. However, a casual study of the official record states that scores of the nobility's lesser scions are recorded as having died unexpectedly that year via accident or illness. Others simply disappear from all records as if they never were. Rumours still abound to this day, centuries later, of the great and the beautiful driven to utter madness or warped into mutating tides of screaming flesh. Stories are told of locked chambers in the cellars and towers of noble estates where abominable things were shut away to live out their lives, clawing desperately at walls, or were put down like rabid dogs by their own kin. In the planetary archive, all mention of the Orsini ceases, and merely to mention their name in some circles is to court bloodshed and vendetta. The burned-out and empty remains of the palace of Orsini and the district surrounding it stands still as an abandoned and shunned part of the Malfian hive, a testament that some wishes come with too high a price.

This event was the first great show attributed to the revelations of the Menagerie in the Inquisitorial annals, but sadly it is far from the last.

Hidden Power

One of the most contentious claims made about the cult of the Menagerie (and perhaps the one many members of the Holy Ordos find most troubling) is that it actively seeks out, consumes, or simply destroys other malefic cults. This phenomenon is not unprecedented, as the disciples of dark gods rarely have anything but contempt for one another unless forced together by a stronger power. In fact, many dark factions are in a perpetual war amongst themselves. What is remarkable is the seeming ease with which other petty cults are defeated, swallowed almost in a moment, or snuffed-out in a sudden onslaught of occult power.

Likewise, local criminal gangs, hereteks, and recidivists may all find themselves dancing to the cult's tune, at least until madness and torment overtake them. Some Inquisitors, seeking to build up a pattern to the cult's operation, believe the Menagerie, or perhaps just the fear of it, is what has long kept the criminal organisation known as the Beast House from operations in the Malfian Sub. The Menagerie has also been known to violently clash with not only the Inquisition but also more powerful cults, such as cells of the Pilgrims of Hayte (who are not easily defeated) and numerous other petty groups in the past. Notably this conflict is seldom of the Menagerie's initiation, but rather spurred on by the fear or hatred it engenders in other malefic groups. Just why this should be the case remains unknown.

The Pandaemonium Carnival

One emblematic example of an existing cult that was seemingly absorbed or suborned by the Menagerie is the Pandaemonium Carnival. The Carnival was a secretive, wandering cult that hid among the travelling clans and guilds of itinerant entertainers common in the Markayn Marches. For several years, a group of this name served as a haven for several petty rogue psykers and renegade mutants fleeing Imperial justice. However, all traces of the cult disappeared mid-persecution by the Ordo Hereticus, only to reappear a decade later in a far more sinister form.

Using the Menagerie in Your Games

The Menagerie is intended to be a dark conspiracy, a thing of madness and broken reality. It represents the power of the warp in its most literal sense, in its shocking ability to inflict nightmarish changes on body and mind. Unlike the Pilgrims of Hayte who wish only to destroy or the Horned Darkness who wish to tempt the just, the Menagerie has other, darker plans in mind. It wishes to change you, to shatter your mind and make you one of its number—the damned. It is the insane thing lurking at the end of the forgotten alleyway, the chattering monster in the darkened library, and the secret behind the midnight show. It is the hidden truth that destroys your mind just by tasting its sickly knowledge. It is a carnival of horrors, and it would like you to join the show.

For GMs who wish to focus on the influence of Chaos as a corrupting madness and something that poisons reality by its very presence, the Menagerie makes a first rate antagonist. It is also intended to work well as the power behind grand and far reaching conspiracies—a long term antagonist that can be portrayed somewhat differently each time as another layer of mystery is exposed and another baleful change takes place. An investigation into strange goings on, reported psychic phenomena, unexplained madness, or even reports of an escaped beast could quite soon lead to a Menagerie front or plot which, once uncovered, might mean that only the Acolytes have a chance of stopping it before the cult drowns the world around it in the madness of the warp. The cult is so powerful and unrelenting that the Menagerie can be the perfect foil to throw up against other cults and conspiracies or rival Inquisitorial investigations—with your Acolytes caught in the middle. What does the Inquisition's deliberate blindness to the cult's true threat mean? Perhaps it is up to your Acolytes to find out.

The Carnival, currently the subject of an open hunting warrant by the Ordo Malleus edict, now operates within the various carnivora, circus camps, entertainment zones, and festivals on several worlds and has been sighted across the Malfian sub and as far afield as Iocanthos and allegedly in Hive Tarsus on Scintilla. Offering "wonders, revelations, and horrors abounding" for those that dare to enter within, the Carnival seemingly appears from nowhere to stage its "shadow shows," only to vanish, leaving madness and many missing in its wake.

The Art of the Twisting Path

Revelation of Truth (Minor Arcana)

Threshold: 13
Focus Time: Half Action
Sustain: Yes
Range: 20 metre radius
The sorcerer bends reality around himself, warping time and filling the air with a tumult of daemonic whispers and phantasmal images. Those nearby must contend with a barrage of insults and promises, terrible secrets, and mind-bending vistas. It is quite literally enough to drive a man insane.

Characters caught in this area must pass a **Hard (–10) Willpower Test** or suffer Warp Shock as per failing a Fear Test imposed by a daemonic creature. Characters with the Fearless Talent or the From Beyond Trait are immune to this power's effects.
Overbleed: For every 5 points by which the Threshold is beaten, the radius of the power extends by 5 metres.

Time Distortion (Major Arcana)

Threshold: 20
Focus Time: Full Action
Sustain: Yes
Range: Self
The sorcerer sets himself fractionally out of phase with the flow of reality and time around him, appearing to blur and shift with shadowy double images of his possible past and future actions flowing around him like ghosts.
It is extremely difficult to strike the sorcerer while this power is in effect. Attackers suffer a –20 to hit him, and any successful hit will be negated entirely if the sorcerer can roll an "odd" result on 1d10 (i.e., a 1, 3, 5, 7, or 9), unless the attack uses psychic energy, is from a Blessed or Holy weapon, or has the Warp Weapon Quality.
Overbleed: For each 5 points by which the Threshold is beaten, the power's effect lasts for an additional Round after the sorcerer fails to sustain it.
Special: If the sorcerer suffers a Perils of the Warp effect, the temporal backlash tears into him instead, inflicting 3d10 E Damage.

Inquisitorial Threat Briefing

The Ordo Malleus, while acknowledging the existence and threat of the Menagerie, does not (officially at any rate) accept it as the vastly powerful and potentially reality-endangering conspiracy that some contend it to be. As a result, while standing orders are in place to investigate and purge the Menagerie where discovered or suspected (as with any malefic cult), there is no greater motion to confront the wider dangers posed by the cult. The Ordo Malleus has left such prosecutions entirely up to the independent remit of individual Inquisitors, many of whom have taken to pursuing the threat of the cult as a personal crusade. Some within the Ordos are vocal in their contention that current "official" thinking smacks (at best) of a dangerous lack of vision, while other more guarded and subtle observers suspect the involvement of some shadowy actor, such as the Tyrantine Cabal, in the decision. They believe, instead, the overt policy toward the Menagerie and its works hides some other hidden agenda or covert action nestled within the dark heart of the Conclave Calixis.

The Heralds of the Radiant Court

As well as the Revelators who direct the cult's esoteric plans, (one example of which is listed here), the cult of the Menagerie is a diverse group of true believers and may feature the Cult Initiate, Cult Magus, Entertainer, Recidivist, and conceivably any other character type from **Dark Heresy**. Behind the scenes of one of the cult's many fronts, mutants of every type labour and lurk, many hiding twisted and partly avian features beneath concealing robes and costumes. The cult's masters know many rituals for warping reality, and the cult's lair might have seemingly twisted dimensions, warped spaces, and mirrors that can be stepped through at a whim. The cult is also skilled in the summoning and mastery of daemons and warp predators, but often prefers to use its "pets" to dispose of intruders and challengers to its plans. After all, it is such jolly sport.

The Favoured of the Menagerie

When the masters of the Menagerie scheme and plot, it sometimes suits their plans to take a specific victim and hollow out his soul. Such victims may be taken from those drawn to a particular carnival exhibit or entertainment zone where the cult lurks, others seem simply to be taken at random, snatched from their daily lives and twisted to the cult's purpose. Other than feelings of vague distress, the "favoured" remember nothing of what has happened to them at the Menagerie's less than tender mercies, until some pre-set time, condition, or triggering signal occurs.

When this happens, the now dead-eyed victim carries out whatever task the Menagerie has in mind for him, be it strange, trivial, or murderous. After his task is complete, he is often discarded, collapsing to a gibbering, mindless shell or even returned to "normal" again with no memory of what

he has done. Of course, even in such a rare occurrence, this individual eventually falls to madness as the echoes of his unremembered deeds haunt his thoughts and dreams.

The Favoured

Any character from the Dramatis Personae in **Dark Heresy** could conceivably be one of the favoured.

Characteristics, Skills and Talents: These remain unchanged.

Traits: Once they are triggered, those "favoured" gain the From Beyond Trait and cannot be Stunned (they will carry on, ignoring injury until they are killed).

Fleshly Curse: Such victims, if altered specifically to do so, may spontaneously mutate when they are triggered or if seriously harmed or psychically attacked, (consider this occurring at the GM's pleasure), immediately gaining 1d5 Major Mutations and being driven irrevocably insane. Witnessing the sudden horrific transformation is enough to inflict a **Challenging (+0) Fear Test** on bystanders causing Warp Shock.

The Revelators, the Masters and Mistresses of the Menagerie

The masters and mistresses of the Menagerie are a strange and disparate group, referred to by the cult's adherents as the Revelators. No two of them are alike, save for their fervent beliefs in the cause of Chaos and the delight they take in revealing their warped truths to the fragile human mind. One might appear as a jovial old scholar with glittering eyes, another a pale and beautiful dancing girl, while a third might act the great and flamboyant showman. In truth, they may be all of these things and truly none, for the flesh is but another mask to wear.

Revelator Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
32	36	36	54	48	47	53	52	43

Movement: 4/8/12/24 **Wounds:** 19

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Awareness (Per) +10, Blather (Fel) +10, Carouse (T), Charm (Fel) +10, Ciphers (Astromantic, Menagerie, Occult) (Int) +10, Command (Fel), Common Lore (Imperium, Underworld) (Int), Dodge (Ag) +20, Disguise (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology, Mutants, Psykers, and Warp) (Int) +20, Gamble (Per) +10, Invocation (WP) +20, Literacy (Int), Performer (Fel) +10, Psyniscience (Per) +10, Scholastic Lore (Art, Astromancy, Occult) (Int) +10, Sleight of Hand (Ag), Speak Language (Circus Cant, High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (Impresario or other) (Int) +10.

Talents: Favoured of the Warp, Foresight, Lightning Reflexes, Major Arcana, Master Sorcerer (Psy 4), Minor Arcana (×3), Sorcerer, Sublime Arts, Touched By the Fates (2 Fate Points).

Traits: From Beyond.

Beyond Flesh: By passing a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**, a Master of the Menagerie may use either the Mask of Flesh Arcana or duplicate (at will) the effects of any single physical mutation from the Minor or Major Mutations listed in **Dark Heresy**. This ability takes a Full Action to employ and entails no Power Roll or risk of failure. This effect will last until the Master chooses to dismiss it or take another form.

Warping Touch: The Master's touch is imbued with the twisting power of the warp, able to sculpt flesh as if it were wet clay and rip through the strongest metal like brushing away a cobweb. The crudest use of this power can make him a terrifyingly effective combatant, his bare hands digging though his enemies' bodies like wet sand.

Mastery of the Fates: Favoured by the twisting skeins of destiny, a Master perceives the tangled webs of possibilities and the surface of what humans call reality for the frail and mutable thing it truly is. A Master of the Menagerie may re-roll a single failed Test or Damage roll per Round and may use the equivalent of the Psychic Power Soul Sight at will as an innate ability.

Armour: None.

Weapons: Warping touch (2d10+3† R; Warp Weapon), †Includes Strength Bonus.

Gear: Any as appropriate to role.

Sorcery (Minor Arcana): Revelation of Truth (13), Sense Presence (7), Space Slip (13), Time fade (15), Touch of Madness (13), Whisper of the Warp (13), Weaken Veil (11), White Noise (10).

Sorcery (Major Arcana): Compel (21), Flesh Like Iron (20), Hellish Blast (22), Mind Scan (25), Personal Augury (16), Time Distortion (20).

Threat Rating: Malleus Extremis.

Warp Spectre

Daemonic forces of raw Chaos unleashed, these strange entities are endlessly whirling, shifting shapes of blinding light, alive with surging energy, beyond the human eye to fathom, as they roll, scream, and whine in a thousand dissonant voices maddening to the senses. The "Colours," as the cult knows them, are terrifying things; reality is twisted and broken as they pass, and the mere sight of them is enough shatter the sanity of onlookers. Difficult to summon, these daemonic forces are unleashed only against rival cults and other powerful foes that must be destroyed to further a Revelator's twisted schemes.

Warp Spectre Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
26	40	—	(6) 35	30	13	35	60	—

Movement: 3/6/9/– **Wounds:** 13

Skills: Awareness (Per), Psyniscience (WP) +10.

Talents: None.

Traits: Daemonic (TB 6), Fear 3 (Horrifying), Flyer 15, From Beyond, Incorporeal†, Psychic Storm, Warp Instability.

Daemonic Presence: All creatures within 20 metres of the blinding unwholesome light and hideous psychic

screaming produced by the entity take a –10 penalty to Willpower Tests.

†**Incorporeal:** Strong consecrated barriers and energy fields designed to hold back the warp (such as a starship's Geller Field) block the passage of a Warp Spectre, and they are vulnerable to psychically charged or Holy attacks and powers. While incorporeal, the entity may still attack through the use of its lightning and engulfing abilities.

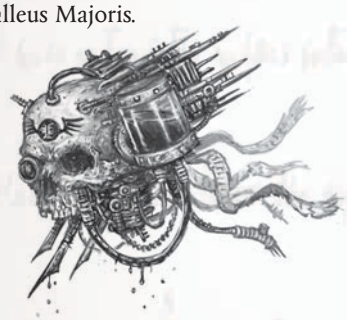
Psychic Storm: Reality flexes and buckles at the entity's passage, the air is whipped up into vortex winds, time shudders, cogitators spit gibberish, and power fluctuates, while psychic energy itself coils and rebels. Within 20 metres of the entity, all rolled Psychic Phenomena are increased by +10 to the rolled result.

Engulf: Rather than strike in a normal manner, the Warp Spectre may try to physically engulf a victim in its coruscating mass, counting as a Grapple attack (see page 197 of **Dark Heresy**). However, instead of causing the usual effects of a Grapple, the Warp Spectre may leach the life force from its victim, leaving him a brittle husk (see Weapons below).

Weapons: Ætheric lightning (30m; –/2/–; 2d10 E; Pen 6; Unlimited), engulf (inflicts 1d10+5 permanent Toughness Damage per round while the Grapple is maintained).

Gear: None.

Threat Rating: Malleus Majoris.



Spawn of Chaos

Although the cult sees mutation as a blessing, a wondrous joy with which flesh and soul can be rendered divine with madness, some unfortunates are singled out for special attention. These damned creatures become the Spawn of Chaos, blistering, writhing hulks of pulsating flesh upon which the worst enormities of mutation have been visited. Beyond pain and the tawdry limitations of nature, such creatures are utterly terrifying to behold and near impossible to harm.

Spawn of Chaos Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
35	—	(12) 61	(12) 63	22	13	22	25	—

Movement: 2/4/6/12 **Wounds:** 30

Skills: Awareness (Per), Climb (S).

Talents: Furious Assault, Iron Jaw.

Traits: Bestial, Fear 2 (Frightening), From Beyond, Natural Weapons (Various), Size (Hulking), Unnatural Strength (×2), Unnatural Toughness (×2).

Unrestrained Mutation: Roll 1d5 Mutations choosing from either of the lists in **Dark Heresy**, re-rolling where needed as appropriate. The Spawn also has one additional mutation from Table 4-9: Revelation Made Flesh.

Weapons: Various claws, pincers, beaks, gaping maws, etc. (1d10+12† R; Primitive, Tearing).

†Includes Strength Bonus

Gear: None.

Threat Rating: Malleus Majoris.

Table 4-9: Revelation Made Flesh

Roll	Result
01-20	**Beast with a Thousand Eyes:** The Spawn gains the ability to see in all directions at once. It also gains +10 Perception, +2 to its Initiative rolls, and Dark Sight.
21-32	**Psychic Scream:** The spawn gains Daemonic Presence with a radius of 20 Metres.
33-48	**Repulsion:** The earth itself protests against the touch of the creature: it gains the Flyer 8 Trait, seeming to pour fluidly through the air.
49-60	**Relentless Change:** Roll a Major Mutation at the start of each Round and apply it for the duration of that Round only. If the mutation serves no combative purpose, then the changes were merely cosmetic that Round.
61-79	**Hydra:** The Spawn's flesh is constantly irrupting in fresh mutations with which to attack, sprouting writhing limbs and features that collapse back into its bulk moments later. It may strike 1d5 times per Round with a Full Attack Action.
80-93	**Fire Born:** The Spawn is alight with rippling eldritch fire; it gains a Field Armour effect that reduces all incoming Damage by 1d10 unless Blessed, Holy, or imbued with Psychic Energy. The Spawn's own attack Damage loses the Primitive Quality and changes to type E. The Spawn's constant fiery aura sets alight flammable objects as it passes.
94-99	**Warp Ghost:** The beast gains the Incorporeal Trait (as per the Warp Spectre on page 158) but must become solid to strike. Its attacks lose the Primitive Quality and gain the Warp Weapon Quality.
00	**Mutating Touch:** Any victim injured by the Spawn must pass a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** or suffer an immediate random Minor Mutation and 1d10 Corruption Points. This Willpower Test is modified by the victim's Corruption Point total just as for a Malignancy Test (see page 238 of **Dark Heresy**).

The Murder Room

"THE RED GOD WAKES."

—Found writ in blood at the home of sub-prefect Boaz Chaim, who remains missing along with the severed heads of his family members

The story of the Murder Room is a myth whispered by murderers and madmen to each other in the long emptiness of the night. Certainly few outside of the most forlorn halls of the sanatoria or the blackest depths of the Arbites' death cells have even heard of it. The Inquisition, however, has come to the dread suspicion that the story is no mere dusk dream or feverish imaginings of the damned. It believes that at the core of this story—repeated with alarming consistency on worlds whole sub-sectors apart—lies the dark truth that the Murder Room is quite real, and its bloody legacy a thing spawned in the foulest depths of the warp.

The Red Tale

The stories speak of a terrifying and secret place, a room drenched in the blood of countless victims, a place where a thousand screams linger and the air is heavy with the scent of acrid copper and as sharp as a razor's kiss. It is said that every room there has ever been where blood has drenched the walls, every home whose safety was shattered by terror in the night, or defiled by murder from within—all are caught forever, remembered in this one red room, the Murder Room. It is a place built from betrayal and malice, fed by blood and death, furnished by unreasoning slaughter, and echoing with the unheeded pleas of the lost. More terrible yet, this Murder Room lives, it thirsts, and it waits.

Open a door, any door, and you might find yourself in the Murder Room. The tale says it does not matter where. Open any door and you might set your foot in a room that should not be there, a room with red-soaked walls and the reek of the charnel house. No sooner will you have stepped within, the door will close behind you with the finality of a tomb-lid slamming shut.

The lowly grey scribe who meekly attends his workstation each day but whose home is filled with the bloody trophies



he has taken from his secret victims, the loving family man that returns home to his hab as he has a thousand times before, only to slaughter those that wait for him with open arms, the killers the enforcers can't catch, that seem to simply vanish into thin air, perhaps one day they opened a familiar door and found themselves lost. When something walked out again from that very same door, it may have looked the same, but beneath the skin was unholy murder, dying of a bloody thirst it could never quench—or so the storytellers claim.

The Evidence

It is the business of whole divisions of Ordos savants and adepts to collect and shift data. They consider and collate reports on everything from the political manoeuvrings of the great houses on Malfi and the price of the season's grain from Regulus, to scattered reports of strange phenomena, bizarre murders, lost or overdue vessels in the warp, and countless other factors. It is from the study and assessment of such data that many Inquisitorial investigations first originate, looking into either specific incidents which display signs of special note or evidence of some troubling pattern that deserves more direct attention.

Approximately 11 years ago, a pattern began to emerge concerning numbers of previously unconnected and often seemingly motiveless serial murders, spree killings, and massacres on dozens of worlds. Commonalities of victim, the details of the suspected perpetrator, the method of murder, and often the simple savagery of the killings themselves were striking. In many cases, the murders sowed fear and terror in areas usually all but untouched by such horrors, and the killers (or suspected killers) had often led blameless, uneventful pasts before their murders began. Most telling was that on investigation, the killers often evidenced a period of disappearance or "dead time" in the record of their whereabouts before the killings started. Rarely were the killers in these cases apprehended and never were they caught alive. Most, after a protracted bout of killing, would simply seem to disappear without a trace, leaving authorities baffled and a bloody legend in their wake.

Some within the Inquisition saw the pattern as too defuse, too spurious. They suspected it to be a "false-positive," a phantom thrown up by the idiosyncrasies of the lexmechanics' cogitator engines. Inquisitor Hydris Bloch, however, was of a different mind. Not aligned to any single Ordo, Bloch was a wanderer who operated largely outside of the Conclave's control, and was considered something of a Radical by some.

He and his network of Acolytes made the killings their primary investigation and for several years journeyed to worlds prominently featured in the pattern data, building a huge catalogue of fragmentary and circumstantial evidence. For the first time, they linked the "Murder Room" myth to the matter. Frustrated by the lack of hard fact, when a report reached Bloch of a spate of murders in progress that fit the Murder Room pattern perfectly, he dropped his painstaking investigations and made all speed to the impoverished and ill-famed world of Sinophia. In the city of Harrow Ridge, he made a decision that would later prove to cost him dearly.

Using the Murder Room

The Murder Room offers GMs the opportunity to run adventures based on the murder mystery theme with a decidedly unpleasant supernatural twist. Supernatural serial killers, lone madmen, daemon possessed murderers, and even blood cults, psychopathic ghosts, and death-trap hauntings can all be comfortably incorporated as possible plots and hidden causes lurking behind the legend. Such games with a narrow and clearly defined goal (i.e., find and stop a killer) and a focused investigation built on suspense can make for an excellent and memorable one-off adventure or an unusual and diverting side-track in a larger, more epic-minded campaign, as well as a chance for Arbitrator and Scum Career characters to shine. Inspiration for these adventures can be easily drawn from numerous stories of haunted houses, as well as horror-thrillers and hard-bitten detective fiction.

In such an adventure, the Inquisition might be called in to help solve a rash of killings that the enforcers can't seem to stop or where malefic powers are suspected to be involved. Depending on where and how this occurs, they might be greeted as potential saviours or as an unwelcome interference. In a place where the killings are confined to the poor and the powerless, the authorities might be inclined to ignore the problem and prove civil but uncooperative, while in a city gripped by fear, the Acolytes might be best advised to operate covertly or risk causing further panic.

In this kind of plot, the Acolytes must piece together mundane and esoteric evidence, visit crime scenes, interview witnesses, and ultimately stop the killer. During the investigation, tension should mount as they become aware that there is more to the killer than meets the eye, and matters should culminate in a climactic battle with the murderer and whatever dark forces have propelled the killer (or killers) to their gristly crimes.

The Harrow Ridge Massacre

The city of Harrow Ridge was, in truth, little more than a large, ramshackle settlement housing no more than a few thousand inhabitants. It had grown up over the decades from a cluster of mining camps in one of the more desolate corners of Sinophia—a world long renowned for its moral and physical decay. A rough and lawless place, Harrow Ridge had long been accustomed to casual violence and the rule of the gun, but was now gripped by a far worse terror.

A murderer was stalking its alleyways, shanties, and tenements, and whole families were being butchered in their homes behind locked doors. Savagely mutilated corpses were turning up on a near daily basis and no one was safe. Crackdowns by the local regulators, lynchings, mob justice, mass-shriving—nothing had stopped the killings, and the uncaring and distant planetary authorities blithely ignored requests for aid.

When Bloch and his Acolytes arrived, they found a virtual ghost town paralysed by fear, hundreds having fled or

barricaded themselves in their homes. As his Acolytes fanned out through the city, they quickly found evidence of warp-tainted radiations and an unholy hand behind the murders. They returned to collate the findings only to be shocked by the discovery of their master savagely murdered in his own lodging chambers.

Bloch's Acolytes did not succumb to despair, however, but kept their master's demise secret lest panic should spread. One, the adept Septimus Golgol, took charge. Sifting through the evidence, he traced the epicentre of the killings and the warp disturbances to the house of a man named Edmund Flinders. An undistinguished mineral assayer, Flinders was a quiet family man whose absence had gone unnoticed in the chaos. However, he had gone missing for several days in the weeks prior to the slaughter. The record of what was found when they confronted Flinders was sealed by order of Inquisitor Harkness of the Ordo Malleus, but it is known that Golgol alone survived the experience and no further murders took place in Harrow Ridge.

Golgol's Obsession

During the six years since the Harrow Ridge incident, former Acolyte Golgol was elevated to the rank of Inquisitor within the Ordo Malleus by the enigmatic and infamous Inquisitor Harkness to lead the tattered remnants of Bloch's former network. This move has not proved popular with the wider Ordos, and the obsessed Golgol has few friends or supporters. He continues to slavishly pursue his late master's work under Harkness's direction, reporting his findings regularly to the Conclave.

He believes he has identified over 150 incidents stretching back more than 30 years that he blames on the "Murder Room." Some cast doubt on his findings and indeed his sanity. Others whisper behind closed doors that Harkness is merely using Golgol as a disposable tool to root out the truth, claiming that Golgol has neither the experience nor the stability to wield the Inquisitor's Rosette.

Inquisitorial Threat Briefing

Although the Bloch-Golgol theories of the Murder Room are widely known within the Ordo Malleus, they are greeted with widely differing levels of credence, ranging from cautious consideration to outright disdain by some. The theories are not widely circulated outside the Ordo, save for those with a penchant for occult murder plots and intra-Inquisition scandal. As a result, the Inquisition has no avowed position on this threat or even its definite existence. Most wait to be convinced.

The True Nature of the Murder Room

Just what dark truth lies behind the Murder Room and killings that surround it is up to the GM, but the following section posits three different takes on just what the monstrous secret could be. Of course some combination of all three (or more) is entirely possible.

With a Bloody Right Hand: Cults of Murder

Though the Ruinous Power known as Khorne, the Blood God, is primarily considered to be a deity of battle and rage, some also see the Skull Lord as a patron and embodiment of violent death and murder in all of its forms—from the spilling of blood to the screams of the dying. Cults devoted to such a vile being are rare but not unknown. They tend to be composed of isolated groups of deranged killers, lone butchers, and, more rarely, organised societies devolved from Imperial death cults or assassin brotherhoods.

Such groups might have begun killing for profit or cause but have succumbed over time to madness, sadistic brutality, and the addiction of dealing death for its own sake. The Murder Room could be a front for such a cult, or perhaps a true phenomenon summoned by them by the very act of ritual murder itself. It could be an altar of blood, half within reality and half within the warp, a borderland for fitting sacrifices to the Throne of Skulls, its victims chosen at random or by some esoteric selection process impenetrable to a sane mind.

Echoes of Agony: Tormented Space

There are places where the barrier between corporeal reality and the warp wear thin. Some of these weakened veils exist for no known reason save perhaps for ancient accident or mischance of location, whilst others are places where sorcerous rituals have been worked or terrible atrocities committed. The aftershocks of such incidents echo in the warp, and if, by a quirk of cosmology or chance they become trapped in the weave of things, their violence and anger can be reflected and amplified back on themselves endlessly to create a Murder Room.

Like a supernatural trap waiting in the skein of reality for the unwary to trigger it, there need not be any malign intelligence to such a "fold" of tormented space for it to be fatal to the sanity of those that encounter it. Such a frozen moment of horror, caught forever in time, would be a dangerous labyrinth to become trapped within—its reality shaped only by suffering, grief, and pain. Such a dangerous wound in the universe would be difficult, but not impossible, for a servant of the Inquisition to battle and unmake.

The Wake of the Red God: Daemons of Blood

There could of course be far darker things at work than mere human evil or twisted ruptures in the fabric of reality. There may be a daemonic intelligence, thirsting for blood, at the centre of the Murder Room. If this is the case, then stepping across the threshold to the Murder Room is crossing into hell in a literal sense—it is travelling into a sinkhole of murder immemorial and becoming the plaything of the bloody denizens that dwell in this red abyss. What returns from such a fate will no longer be human. It will either be corrupted beyond reason, fused with utter wickedness, or no less than a daemon wearing the mask of earthly flesh. The servants of the Red God will walk the world with the sole purpose to do murder, but particular piquancy will be had by the Red God from the deaths of the innocent and the betrayed, as it revels in the terror left in their wake.

What actually causes the murderous rampage of those caught in the Murder Room's clutches could be one of many things and has been left entirely for the GM to decide. The Daemonic Blood Wraith presented here is one such option.

The Blood Wraith

A Blood Wraith is a murderous parasitic entity formed from the fusion of a daemonic manifestation and a human victim, driven by malignant intelligence and an unquenchable thirst for slaughter. The daemon fuses with a living host, snuffing out the soul within and riding the body as its vessel of murder until released by the body's death. Although consumed by bloodlust and hunger, the Blood Wraith is no mere berserker or mindless beast, but patient, calculating, and cruel. It delights in the terror that its actions sow. However, sooner or later it will succumb to its infernal need to rip open the weak flesh of men and bathe in the red rain.

The following profile details a Blood Wraith when it has possessed a living host, using the Imperial Citizen from **Dark Heresy** as an example of a possessed hab worker. The second profile illustrates the daemonic essence when it has been released from its earthly vessel.

Blood Wraith Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
53	20	36	(8) 43	(6) 33	44	50	58	15

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 25
Skills: Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Concealment (Ag) +20, Deceive (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Silent Move (Ag) +20, Speak Language (Any) (Int), Trade (Manufactory Worker) (Int).
Talents: Hard Target, Lightning Reflexes, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Resistance (Psychic), Swift Attack.
Traits: Dark Sight, Fear 2 (Frightening), From Beyond, The Stuff of Nightmares, Unnatural Agility (×2), Unnatural Strength (×2), Unnatural Toughness (×2).
Blood Walker: As a Full Action, the Blood Wraith can slip in and out of the warp using any sufficiently large pool or stain of freshly spilled blood (including a blood-daubed symbol of its daemonic master as a gateway to the beyond). Each time it does so, however, it loses 1d5 Wounds (with no deduction for Toughness Bonus or armour) as it damages what mortal flesh remains in its bodily form.
Daemonic Presence: Everyone within 25 metres of the Blood Wraith is filled with cold dread and the feeling that at any moment a sharp blade will be drawn across their yielding skin. All characters take a –10 penalty to Willpower Tests while in the area.
Fuelled by Slaughter: When the Blood Wraith kills an intelligent living creature by spilling its blood, it heals 1d5 Wounds.
Mask of Lies: The Blood Wraith may sustain a human-seeming form, suppressing its Daemonic Presence and Fear Rating. However, when it attacks its eyes become swollen, bloody orbs and its flesh pales as the horror of what lurks within its skin radiates forth.
Murderous: All Critical Wounds inflicted by a Blood Wraith in combat are increased by +3, and its attacks may inflict Righteous Fury.
Unhallowed: The Blood Wraith suffers double Damage from Holy and Blessed weapons and effects.
Weapons: Mono bladed butcher knife (1d5+7† R; Pen 2).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Drab citizen's garb stained with blood.

From Blood Born

If reduced to zero Wounds, the Blood Wraith's body collapses and its true form manifests, rising from the blood and ripped meat of its host's broken body.

Blood Wraith (True Form) Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
30	—	20	(10) 50	20	44	50	58	—

Movement: 2/4/6/12 **Wounds:** 16
Skills: Awareness (Per).
Talents: Resistance (Psychic).
Traits: Amorphous, Daemonic (TB 10), Fear 3 (Horrifying), From Beyond, Possession, Strange Physiology, Unnatural Senses, Warp Instability.
Daemonic Presence: As "human" form, described above.
Possession Attack: In order to possess a victim, the Blood Wraith's essence must first make a physical attack to attempt to engulf its victim before possession can take place, flooding in via its victim's eyes, nose, and mouth. A victim possessed by a Blood Wraith is killed during the process, which takes 1d5 Rounds until it is fully fused with its new body. Other details are identical to those presented in **Dark Heresy**.
Threat Rating: Malleus Majoris.





V

The Enemy Within

The Discord Within the Powers Temporal and Spiritual

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Faction and Strife: Discord and Conflict Within the Inquisition

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Calixian Factions

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Inquisitor Glavius Wroth

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Inquisitor Antonia Mesmeron



Chapter V: The Enemy Within

Whilst the threats faced by mankind are manifold, perhaps the greatest danger of all is that the various organs of the Imperial Adepta will rip each other and themselves apart. Even within the most ancient and mighty pillars of the Imperium, the potential for strife is always present, and across a million stars, differences of opinion can lead to spilt blood or threaten the stability of governance across the Emperor's realm. Factionalism, rivalry, and millennia old feuds constantly eat at the fabric of the Imperium, weakening it to the attacks of the heretic, the predations of the alien, and the lure of the warp.

Possibly the worst aspects of this cancer gnawing at the heart of the Imperium are territorialism and self-interest. The great and powerful scheme to increase their power and forward their agendas, while those charged with governance become divided by interpretation and corrupted by fractured dogma. The truth is that the real enemy within is mankind's disposition for discord—for if the Imperium cannot be at peace with itself, how can it survive in an age where there is only war and the laughter of dark gods?

This chapter provides an overview of the causes of conflict, dispute, and factionalism within the authorities and powers that govern the Imperium. It gives an overview of the most common and lamentable failings of the Adepta and the Ministorum and the troubles that can be caused by local corruption and misrule. In particular, the final section of this chapter details factionalism and conflict within the Holy Ordos of the Inquisition itself, both in terms of Radical and Puritan philosophies, and also secret societies and conspiracies at work within.

In discussing the inner divisions of the Inquisition, two example Inquisitors from opposite poles of the Radical-Puritan divide are provided, complete with Characteristics and equipment. These are intended to act as examples to guide GMs in creating their own Inquisitors and to add a context to the powers and abilities of the Acolytes who might serve at these opposite ends of this spectrum.

"Falter not in the face of your enemy. With faith as your shield and holy hatred your sword, know that the Emperor stands at your shoulder and you shall not fail."

Discord within the Powers Temporal and Spiritual

"Look not for pity in the houses of the Adepta, for pity is a luxury they can ill-afford. For each must go about their work with the death cries of billions in their ears and the blood of multitudes on their hands. Look not for pity but pity them instead. Weep for they who may shed no tear for the suffering of mankind."

—The apocrypha of Saint Cullgard



Those who rule in the Emperor's Name are known as the Adeptus Terra, a huge and multi-faceted organisation. It is divided and subdivided into countless subordinate organisations with awesome powers over the common man. Its powers extend to every human world, and no man, woman, or child is free from its influence or from the strictures of its rule.

Each labyrinthine branch of the Adeptus Terra wields tremendous power, and their individual agendas often come into conflict with other major factions of the Imperium, including the Inquisition.

Secular, spiritual, or economic, these massive forces are ponderous and slow to react, but are also eminent throughout the Calixis Sector and essential to its survival.

BLIND LEVIATHAN: THE ADMINISTRATUM

The Administratum is the vast galaxy-spanning bureaucracy by which the Imperium is administered and governed. It is responsible for the levying and measure of the Imperial Tithe, the distribution of the Imperium's resources, and a myriad of other administrative functions. From the Departmento Munitorium, whose iron rule raises and maintains the Imperium's armed forces, to countless cells of scribes devoted to recording the day-to-day vagaries of a hive's recycling systems, it is an organisation that exists to deal with issues of supply and demand on a truly inconceivable scale, and one to whom the fate of the individual weighs little if at all. By virtue of wider necessity, even at the sector scale the Administratum enacts collective decisions that will affect millions, even billions every day.

Such actions are arrived at by a simple and utterly impersonal process of procedure, precedent, tradition, and cold calculation based on long-established criteria—heedless of the level of suffering or upheaval that they will cause at a local level. Likewise, the absolute importance it places on the minutiae of its nightmarishly complex bureaucratic system and the strict adherence to regulations, forms, protocols, and due process, can itself be the source of great friction and dissatisfaction at all levels of Imperial society.

Worse still can occur when error creeps into the system, such as when the consequences of inaccuracy, lost data, or simple incompetence manifest themselves. Though exceedingly rare, it is quite possible for the Administratum to simply "lose a world" thanks to administrational error, condemning it to isolation and privation, or wrongly apply a tithe and thus render a world an asset-stripped wasteland. It might even misfile a request for emergency aid, which consequently arrives years, even centuries, too late. The trouble that such errors can inflict on a personal level are not hard to imagine; indeed, many individuals have had their records mangled, lost, or misregistered. For such unfortunates, unless very powerful, the consequences can be as shattering as they are impossible to rectify.

Of course, the lack of personal enmity involved in the Administratum's actions means little to those who may find their lives turned upside down, their families suddenly displaced or shunted wholesale to a strange world, their protections removed, their property seized, or themselves simply left to starve. As a result, the Administratum is both hated and feared by all strata of Imperial society. Many, even in the other Adepta, find them hidebound, petty, and obstructive. It is quite possible that through its work, the Administratum will breed bitterness and discontent that can explode into outright rebellion or provide an opening for darker forces to gain purchase.

The Administratum is also a shockingly parochial organisation, its adepts blindly ignorant of the nature of the world around them and naive of its many pitfalls and dangers. This naiveness in itself can leave the Administratum's myriad local offices and workers vulnerable to individual canker, deception, and infiltration, and in any organisation where greed, ambition, vanity, and hubris may be found, worse still can bloom. Ironically, the organisation's greatest defence against corruption is its own vast complexity and inertia. This makes it woefully difficult to derail or subvert in any

widespread or meaningful way. If a thousand adepts have to be purged simply to ensure the accuracy of a particular tithe-repository's records, so be it. For the Administratum, nothing, not even the lives of its servants, is personal.

Factionalism and Internal Strife in the Administratum

Any complex system that relives heavily on dogma and protocol is subject to interpretation, and differences in such interpretation can lead to schism and discord. The Administratum is no exception to this. Petty bickering, internal politics, and departmental rivalries can all cause problems within the Administratum, both on the larger and local scales, although the organisation is often at pains to never let such disputes show to outsiders. While these minor disputes rarely amount to much in the grand scheme of things, their after effects can have wider ramifications, like the ripples spreading from a stone dropped into a still pool.

Within the Calixis Sector, tensions exist between the Administratum data-recitation cells on the capital world of Scintilla and those who administer the bureaucracy of the Malfian Sub. This is a reflection of wider political rivalries within the sector. Meanwhile on Scintilla itself, the adepts of the ruling Hive Sibellus and the commercial powerhouse of Tarsus vie for prestige and primacy. At the same time, both look down on the "upstarts" of Gunmetal City and the "eccentrics" of Ambulon as "junior branches of the service" that should pay them due deference. Other than the occasional long, drawn-out delays in compliance, the observance of frosty formalities, and some pedantic bickering, these inter-departmental rivalries have little grander import, except of course when speed is vital. In such matters, it is often the Inquisition that must force the matter and provoke the Administratum's ire.

The Law in Dispute: The Adeptus Arbites



The Adeptus Arbites are the chief enforcers of the Emperor's law. On the countless worlds of the Imperium, it is the steel gauntlet of the Arbites that ensures the inviolable law of the Emperor is followed. It is the Arbitrators who stand ready to enforce the law of the Imperium over the regulations and concerns of planetary rulers, and it is the Arbitrators who are the first line of defence against rebellion and anarchy. They are the rigid, unbreakable order of the Imperium personified.

Yet just as rust can creep into the cracks of the toughest armour, so discord can fester in these protectors of Imperial rule. The written law of the great Book of Judgement, or the Dictates Imperialis as it is more properly known, is unforgiving, but neither is it simple nor brief. The law of the Imperium is vast and considered divine, yet it is not so great in size that it covers every eventuality. In such cases where the law fails to give clear guidance, a case must be judged in line with any precedence set by previous judgements. Between the vagaries of interpretation and the weight of precedence fall many disputes and contradictions, some of which even an Arbites Judge cannot reconcile. Thus, an unbending approach to the Emperor's law can lend authority to the indiscriminate killer as easy as it can the guardian of order, and a judgement once made can create licence for all manner of actions normally beyond consideration until a greater judgement contradicts it.

The War of Words

Situated in the Markayn Marches, the planetary system of Prol, known colloquially as the "Scrivener's Star," is the site of perhaps the most widely known strife within the Administratum of the Calixis Sector. Based around ten minor planetoids, barely habitable and of no economic worth, the system was ceded to the Administratum in the sector's early days as a vast depository and data store. Now, at last, it is running out of space for its countless volumes of information (much of it long since utterly useless, hopelessly out of date, or never once used or referred to).

For decades trouble has been brewing among Prol's hereditary adept class, the Decatalogues, as to the resolution of their chronic storage problems as the currently inhabited and active world Prol IX reaches capacity. Now the Decatalogues, split between the Centurists who wish to relocate to the forbidden world of Prol X and the Pyratics who wish to start anew on the immolated remains of Prol I, have come to the precipice of genuine civil war.

While the disagreement began as little more than a war of words, tedious treatise, and lengthy written arguments, now sporadic killings, sabotage, and even deliberately withheld food and resource shipments have become commonplace on Prol IX. Additionally, this preoccupation and strife has meant that the servile classes, condemned to labour under the Decatalogues, are becoming increasingly restless and unruly.

The spectre of a worker's revolt is only made worse by certain factions seeking to arm their menials for use against their enemies. Several cult groups have already sprung up in recent years, intent on exploiting the misrule and uncertainty on Prol IX. Many in the Inquisition consider the entire system now nothing more than a tinderbox awaiting the right spark to ignite a fatal conflagration that will doom the 60 million souls that inhabit the worlds of the Scrivener's Star.

The Chancellery Court on Solomon

Solomon is a poisoned and decrepit hive world, given over almost exclusively to meeting the demands of the Departmento Munitorium by millennia-old accord. The callous and unflinching needs of the Munitorium has rendered the planet barren and despairing. Solomon was long ago chosen to house the labyrinthine edifice of the Halls of the Chancellery Court, resulting in the planet's becoming the Munitorium's seat of power in the Calixis Sector. The Chancellery Court is a conglomeration of legal apparatus, chambers, and archives that deals in the nightmarishly tangled business of Administratum, Munitorium, and High Terran Civil Law.

The court is outside of the remit and control of the Lord Sector or any other petty authority. Its halls, heavy in solemnity and ritual, process an endless stream of claim and counter-claim, suites, actions, inquests, infractions, disputes of rights, and privileges. It disposes of great estates and rules on petty misdemeanours with equal gravitas and grinding implacability. It is a place where the flick of an auto-quill can raise up a pauper to governorship or condemn a world to starvation.

Such is the size and complexity of the Chancellery Court's workings that a large district of Hive Gloriana on Solomon is given over to housing it and the infrastructure required to keep it working. Thousands of advocates, quastors, and prefects stalk its halls, whilst beneath them tens of thousands of scribes, notaries, clerks, runners, and menials endlessly toil.

In theory, with the direct authority of the High Lords of Terra behind it, there is no greater temporal authority in the Calixis Sector. Even the office of the Lord Sector must obey the rulings of its highest court, the Consistorial Chamber, without question. In practice, however, the effect is somewhat different, as the whole system is soul-crushingly slow, pedantic, and obtuse to the point of insanity, with cases dragged out for years, decades, or even centuries. As a rule, the more important the case, the longer will be spent on hearings, reflective recesses, counter-cases, and endless deliberation and ritual. Some petitioners simply die waiting for a judgement, their whole lives simply suspended in limbo while a court decides their fate. In some infamous cases, the proceedings have passed down through the generations.

As might be imagined, such dreadful inertia often leads those who have the means to seek to accelerate the legal process or circumvent it entirely by unsavoury means. Certainly deception, bribery, coercion, assassination and mass murder are all tools to be used when trying to expedite a Chancellery case. Indeed, a twilight community of reclaimators, moneylenders, and information brokers has grown up in the Court's long shadow.

The Court's judgments, though slow to conclude, can cause far greater strife than any single dispute or its consequences, as the ruling's power is absolute and enforceable by the harshest measures. Many such rulings are enacted without exception, even though the cause or need of them might have long ceased to be relevant. Fortunes are wiped out, populations uprooted, and innocents condemned for the crimes of their forbearers—their fate decided at the blow of a High Jurist's gavel.

The Quality of Judgement

The Judges of the Adeptus Arbites are mighty lords, clad in the raiment and traditions of a long past age. They wield the absolute and unforgiving law of the Imperium with brutal and unyielding exaction, for it is given to them to stand guard against the treachery of those beneath them and the excesses and ambitions of those in power. Not least of all this includes the Lords Commander and their agents who directly govern the Imperium's many worlds. Each judge may command his own armed forces of Arbitrators and may call upon the resources of the Imperium if he requires it. Trusting no one and nothing but the letter of the law, they are able to hold almost all within the Imperium to account. The power of the senior Judges and High Marshals of the Adeptus Arbites is almost equal to that of the Inquisition—except they are bound entirely by the hierarchy of the Imperium and cannot step beyond the measure of the Dictates Imperialis.

Given such power and responsibility, it is possible for the judgement of these men and women to stray and for them to find themselves following a path of conflict with other agencies of the Imperium. So it is that instances of heresy and strife relating to the Adeptus Arbites most often have their root in the Judges. While they may be inflexible in the execution of their duties, and unflinching in their authority, there are some threats against which neither the word of the law nor strength of arms offer any defence.

The Crime of Abstraction

Although extremely rare, abstractionism is considered by some to be the oldest sin those empowered to enforce Imperial law may commit. For all of the wisdom accumulated by venerable Judges, the shadow of abstraction clings to their office like a leech.

Abstractionism is a term applied to a condition of criminal deviancy in Arbitrators who come to see the letter of the law inadequate to the task of executing their duties in an expedient manner. Instead, they come to rely on summary judgement over evidence and due process. The worst stray into vigilantism, meeting out punishment and death for perceived or even potential crimes rather than real ones. This creed is considered a vile heresy, a breaking of the Arbites oath, and a crime punishable by death if discovered.

Of course, those who do fall into this heresy, feel they are on the side of the righteous and that their own sense of the law and moral imperative are a guide to truth and judgement in an uncaring universe. In the worst of cases, such as the long-suppressed Cerpicia Precinct incident on Hredrin, unauthorised and unmarked kill teams were sent to execute criminals at the behest of an illegal "star chamber" of judgement. Venerable Marshals used their subordinates to assassinate members of other Imperial agencies who they felt "must" be heretics. In such rare and dangerous cases, the slide from persecuting the enemies of the Imperium to becoming one can be a swift journey indeed.

The Corpus Presidium Calixis

While the mighty Dictates Imperialis contains the writ of the Emperor's holy word, the rulings of the High Lords of Terra, and the enumerable precedents and judgements of the great and the just among the Adeptus Arbites themselves, it is not the whole of the law. Indeed, it is far from it. The Corpus Presidium Calixis is the name given to the collected laws, enshrined rights, and traditions of the Calixis Sector itself. It holds sway over the lives of billions, forming the bedrock of the Lord Sector's rule. Much of it is a reiteration (or interpretation) of the tenets of the holy Dictates Imperialis and other strictures laid down in the ordinances of the Segmentum Obscurus of which Calixis is part. However, a great part of the Dictates is individual and unique to the Calixis Sector.

Of this latter portion, much was writ during the Angevin Crusade and its aftermath, either by Angevin himself, his advisors, and most importantly, by the hand of Saint Drusus. These documents do much to enshrine the rule of law in the sector and establish the power and strength of the nobility, the rights of the great houses and the laws of dynastic succession, and to lay down the strictures in which the Combine Commercia operate. These ancient laws, given under a warmaster's authority and ratified by an Imperial Saint, have a provenance and weight that is difficult to overturn or ignore. Even the Adepta and the Ordos Calixis must consider their import carefully before acting against them.

Tragically it is often the most intelligent, faithful, and dedicated among the Judges and Marshals that fall to the sin of abstractionism in their desire to do the Emperor's work. They doom themselves to a traitor's death if they are discovered by their fellow Arbitrators, and worse should the Ordo Hereticus claim them.

Disputes of Jurisdiction

Conflict between the Adeptus Arbites and other Imperial agencies most commonly occurs because of disputes over which of them has authority to enforce Imperial law, and which law applies in a given case. Many Judges see the letter of Imperial law not only as absolutely unbending, but also without boundary or limitation. It has been known for zealous Arbitrators to seize and execute agents of the Ministorum because they have executed heretics without recourse to the law, or bullishly intervene on the discovery of some cult or secret agency only to later discover that they have jeopardised a covert Inquisitorial investigation. To some foolish or fanatic Judges, such distinctions as the sanctity of a Navigator's ancient privileges or a noble's rights and title are subservient to the requirements of the law. To them, the greater weight of the law outweighs other considerations in any and all cases.

Most often such activities are reined in by the Arbitrator's high command before conflict can turn to violence or even open warfare. On rare occasions, a senior Marshal or Judge (knowing full well the risks of doing so), might start a secret investigation against an agency whose immunity from the law he cannot accept. Whether he is right or wrong in his suspicions, bloodshed is the often inevitable result.

Enforcer Cadres

Many worlds have their own cadres of enforcers, local agencies provided by the Imperial Commander to enforce their will and the common law of their world. Unlike the mighty Arbitrators, most enforcers hold little loyalty to the law itself or to the tradition of service (although there are notable exceptions to this). Instead they function as the iron hand of the Lord Governor's rule at best, and are at worst little more than hired thugs with some degree of official sanction—loyal only to their paymaster and eminently venial and corruptible.

Within the Calixis Sector, the role and nature of enforcer cadres vary widely. Perhaps the most well organised and numerous force is the Magistratum of Scintilla—a paramilitary force that serves as the direct agency of the office of the Lord Governor. The Magistratum numbers tens of thousands of armed men and women, nearly as well resourced as the Adeptus Arbites. At the other end of the scale, worlds such as Luggnum, whose communities are scattered across numerous mining camps and shanty towns, make do with Regulators and Rail Agents to maintain order and dispense rough justice. Many of these are little better than bandits and extortionists themselves.

Some worlds, either through culture or simple lack of technology, do without enforcer cadres at all, the ruling classes and their private armies being in sole charge. Although this arrangement is most common on feudal and feral worlds, it is not exclusive to them, and indeed Malfi, a sub-sector capital and a hive world second only to Scintilla, is largely governed and civil order maintained by the armsmen of its Great Houses. Its small enforcer cadres are little more than over-armed door wardens and palace guards.

In most cases, the Adeptus Arbites and the Inquisition view enforcer cadres with some suspicion, if not outright distrust, often with good reason.



CONFLICTS OF FAITH: THE MINISTORUM

The Adeptus Ministorum, or Ecclesiarchy, is the priesthood of the cult of the God-Emperor. It is a massive organisation that guides the worship of billions on numberless worlds and across great divides of distance, language, and culture. The core of the Ecclesiarchy's spiritual and temporal power is known as the Cult Imperialis, also known variously as the Imperial Creed or Imperial Cult. The basis of the Cult Imperialis is the belief in and worship of the Emperor as a divine being, the power of the Emperor to intercede in matters spiritual and temporal, the power of prayer, and the right of mankind to rule the stars.

Though any cult or sect must adhere to the Imperial Creed, the possibility for conflicting interpretation means that in practice the Cult Imperialis is an agglomeration of many differing schools of thought. Whilst agreeing in essence, cults and sects often differ in particular tenets of belief or modes of worship. To many the Emperor is a god of war, to others a saviour and bringer of light, and to some a stern judge of the dead. Inevitably, simple differences of emphasis of faith can become points of hostility and even the cause of bloodshed. Many merciless and savage wars have resulted time and again over such fine points of doctrine.

The Prerogative of the Faithful

The Imperium is pervaded and dominated by faith. It is unsurprising that the Ecclesiarchy often bristles at the presumption of other Imperial organisations, taking easy offence to slights to its position and pride. As many in the Adeptus Ministorum see themselves the keepers of the faith that unites humanity, they often stray into the presumption of a divine right of authority that extends further than that of other Imperial organisations. Chief amongst those who come into open and occasionally bloody conflict with the Ministorum's more excessive members are the Tech Priests of Mars, and more rarely the Space Marines of the Adeptus Astartes.

The openly deviant faith of both these organisations has nagged at the suspicions of the pious for millennia. Some in their pride and zeal feel that it is their right and duty to see the faith of these bodies brought into line and bound to the authority of the Ministorum. Often the result is disastrous, as both the Astartes and the Mechanicus are fiercely independent and wield great powers of their own. More subtly, the Ministorum constantly flexes its secular influence over other branches of the Adeptus Terra to varying degrees. Certainly in the past, certain cardinals and prelates have gone so far as to use blackmail, assassination, and even full-blown conflict to enact what they consider the Emperor's holy design. However, any who would see the return to domination of an all-powerful cult must also fear the Ordo Hereticus and its answer to such hubris and presumption.



The Daughter of Malfi

Some four centuries ago, during a troubled time for the Calixis Sector when central authority was weak and the Holy Ordos distracted, the powerful hive world of Malfi suffered under the most tyrannical and bloody-handed regime it has ever seen—the dominion of House Koba. Known as the Reign of Terror, during this time Koba rose to ultimate power under its favoured son Syvas Koba.

Syvas was a man of merciless intellect and labyrinthine mind, who in a few short years wiped out or overpowered the many factions that had previously held sway on Malfi. Holding both the office of Planetary Governor and Lord Sub-Sector, Syvas' authority was uncontested and absolute, and he succeeded in completely subjugating the local Administratum officials and even Malfi's High Marshal. He savagely destroyed any that could oppose him, be they Malfi's citigenry, political rivals, troublesome cardinals, or members of his own family.

Though he had his own legitimate children murdered, he was known to favour more than a score of his bastard progeny at court. He raised them to plot and scheme against each other in order to gain his favour, often "dealing" with them when they became troublesome. One was particularly malign, treacherous, and cruel, a young woman named Hyathe. On her seventeenth birthday Syvas took Haythe out on a star vessel deep into space. What happened there remains unknown, but she returned to court...changed. Although she remained beautiful and regal, dire madness burned in her eyes and her heart was filled with the conviction that everyone and everything was fit only to be destroyed. Her power soon increased and she created a shadowy court of brutes, sadists and killers, becoming even more feared than her father. She worked intrigues of staggering guile and ruthlessness, destroying anyone at a whim, and the fearful and weakened noble houses took to calling her "Hayte" behind her back.

As the aging Syvas Koba finally began to lose his grip on sanity and power, "Hayte" and her supporters took over complete control of Malfi in a brief and bloody storm of excess and destruction. The noble houses rose against her, and in the blood-drenched war that followed, House Koba was utterly destroyed. Civil strife across the planet left over a billion dead and destabilised the sub-sector. It is said that it was Aligbet Belasco, a former ally of House Koba, who finally succeeded in slaying Hayte, and in so doing, elevated her house to the high rank it now holds on Malfi. However, legend persists that many from Hayte's inner circle of protégées survived the savagery. What fate awaited these vicious exiles remains unknown, but her name certainly has continued, attached to one of the most infamous cults in the sector.

Schismatic Faith and Heresy

Heresy is not simply a matter of mutation, witchery, and trafficking with warp powers. More subtly, it can be a matter of the specifics of faith and worship. The Cult Imperialis is broad in its accommodation of differing tones of faith. However, on the fringe lurk numerous sects and groups who flirt with heresy and deviate from the Imperial Creed to such a degree that their faith is no longer sanctified. The worst cases are declared as abomination by the Ministorum's authorities. The boundary between sanctified faith and heresy is thin, and many sects cross it simply because the ruling centre of the Ecclesiarchy shifts and leaves them suddenly no longer accommodated within the Cult Imperialis. Countless times over the past ten millennia the Ministorum has gone to war with a part of itself over a point of dogma.

Within the Calixis Sector, the Scintillan Cult is considered to hold the greatest sway over the hearts and minds of the people. This is not only because of its vast wealth and close access to the governance of the sector, but also because its many Chantries train and produce an army of confessors and preachers, all faithful to its doctrines, who travel throughout the sector to tend and shepherd the faithful. Historically these men and women have been considerably active in admonishing and sometimes crushing any opposition to their interpretation of the Imperial Creed.

The Scintillan Cult is not without competition, however. The firebrand oratory and crusading zeal of the Redemptionist movement grows apace on several worlds, not least of all on Scintilla itself. Meanwhile on many other worlds, local myths and interpretations of the faith still hold sway. This holdover of local beliefs is most particularly evident on the influential shrine world of Maccabeus Quintus where the controlling ascetic sect's beliefs differ markedly in practice from their Scintillan brethren. Thanks in part to distance and to the Maccabeans' disinterest in "worldly" affairs beyond their immediate borders (plus some powerful connections, including in the Ordo Malleus), relations between Maccabeus and the Scintillan Cult remain cool but civil, and no overt conflict of faith has broken out…yet.

Such a war of faith, should it come, would prove disastrous for the Calixis Sector, forcing all, from the lowest manufactory worker to the scions of the noble houses and even members of the Inquisition, to choose sides. This potential cataclysm is much desired by some dark cults and agencies. They see it not only as an achievable method of bringing Calixis to its knees, but savour the irony of turning the faithful against each other.

More information on the dangers and nature of heresy and some of the particular heretical groups that endanger the Calixis Sector can be found in **Chapter II: Hereticus**.



The Great Game: Ties of Blood and Commerce

Although not part of the Adepta proper, the intrigues and manoeuvrings of the great houses of the nobility; the machinations of various factions, guilds, and economic powers that make up the Combine Commercia, and the rule of the Imperial Commanders all have a direct bearing on the Adepta. This influence can promote strife and discord among their ranks just as easily as any infiltrating cult or factional infighting. By virtue of ancient rights and raw economic clout, these groups have the freedom and power to put into practice all manner of plots and schemes, sometimes concealing the most corrupt practices and beliefs beneath the armour of wealth and position.

Ambition, greed, and the lust for power are the hallmarks of such groups, their members usually either devoted to increasing what they have or preventing others from obtaining it. In such constant rivalries, intrigues, and vendettas, the constraints of law and even sense often fall by the wayside. Those wishing to consolidate their power often seek to develop their own leverage and agents within the wider Adepta through coercion and bribery. These are used to stir up trouble or acquire secrets for their own, often petty, ends.

Powerful aristocracies exist on many worlds in the Calixis Sector. Most are linked by blood and a tangled web of alliances and long-burning enmities, often bound up within the feudal order through which the Calixis Sector is maintained. Many such great houses have direct links to one of the powers of the Combine Commercia and the guilds that dominate and administer industry on many worlds. Others have long ties to the military, the Navy, or even to the rare and dangerous Rogue Trader clans, by which their fortune and position in society is maintained.

Within the culture of the Imperium, commerce, power, and faith are all entangled—what affects one will soon have an influence on others. The possession of Departmento Munitorium arms contracts, for example, can make or break the fortunes of a great house. Where such a great house or commercial cartel falls or is dragged into war with others over some point of doctrine or judgement of law, the economic needs of a region are usually not met. Thus, the seeds of rebellion and heresy take root in the power vacuum created.

Misrule, Civil Rebellion, Succession, and other Local Difficulties

The constant conflict and interplay involved in the intrigues and machinations of the powerful are one thing, but open warfare and rebellion because of them is quite another. In these cases, the reaction must be brutal and swift, but taking such action is not without difficulties and consequences. Wise indeed is the mind that can perceive all of the outcomes from such an event. Even the Inquisition is leery of acting in haste against such powerful forces where the fates of whole worlds may be at stake. An overt and armed solution might provoke a string of other conflicts, perhaps even set off a full-scale war.

After all, a surgery that kills the patient is no cure at all…

Because of the greater risks involved, many Inquisitors prefer a subtle (but no less deadly) approach to the solution of ambitious Imperial Commanders who overstep their bounds, noble houses who fall into depravity and heresy, and corrupt guilds who place the pursuit of power and profit over the needs of the Imperium. In such cases, the Holy Ordos prefer to wield their power carefully, favouring the assassin and the sudden, decapitation raid targeting those at the centre of the trouble.

However, sometimes a mass purge is the only recourse. In these cases, the act of massive attack is applied without relent and with unremitting fury. It is these actions, which in truth represent only a fraction of the Inquisition's activities, that strike the most dread and live longest in the minds of citizen and noble alike. As a result, stories of hive spires smashed from orbit, thousands taken in the night and summarily executed, and wars of chastisement launched like thunderbolts from a clear sky are all are the stuff of legend on many worlds.

Drusianism

Besides the Emperor, the figure most revered by the faithful of Calixis is Saint Drusus—the warrior turned saint who fought for the birth of the sector. So-called "Drusianism" pervades much of the Cult Imperialis in the Calixian worlds, particularly those that are distant from Scintilla.

Drusianism is a hard and uncompromising reading of the Imperial Creed, emphasising the purifying quality of suffering, the power of holy relics, and the endurance of hardship. An ascetic and largely mystical tradition for the main part, it is somewhat at odds with the cult authorities on Scintilla, who hold to more traditionalist modes of worship but also claim the sector's saint as their own.

Importantly, Drusianism also has a strong "Calendite" influence and so holds the Emperor to be a complete and eternally divine being who predates even the birth of man. At a deep level, the uncompromising scholars and priests of the sect (in particular those trained for office on the bleak shrine world of Maccabeus Quintus) maintain that the Emperor's order is the natural order of all things without exception. To them, spiritual truth is the only truth, as it supersedes mundane physical reality and locally imposed temporal laws—although they do hold that the basis of the Dictates Imperialis as "his word" is indeed divine. This belief often leads the sect's adherents into conflict with the forces of authority, such as the nobility and the Combine Commercia, whose power lies outside of the cult or the core of the Adepta.

Many hard-line Drusians consider the noble and mercantile classes to be fundamentally venial and corrupt by nature, and hold little regard for any power or supposed rights such individuals possess.

THE KEYS TO THE STARS: THE NAVIS NOBILITE

The members of the great houses of the Navis Nobilite, the Navigators, are the only members of humanity who can capably chart a course across great distances through the warp, allowing ships to journey the vast spans of the void. Without the Navigators, no ships could hope to safely pass through the warp, and the great Imperium of mankind would wither and die.

Drawn from ancient families which trace their origins to the very dawn of the Imperium, Navigators are a stable genus of human mutation (some say the result of ancient gene-sculpting). They form tightly knit clans linked together by webs of intermarriage, hereditary alliance, and patronage, using their wealth and power to remain in privileged isolation from the bulk of humanity. All true Navigators have a third "warp" eye that allows them to perceive the flow of the warp. Whilst their origins and the true nature of their gifts are shrouded in myth, their singular nature and priceless importance has ensured them a place of immense privilege and power—no trade can be conducted, no great wars waged, and no exploration mounted without the Navigators' aid.

Navigators are organised into families (sometimes known as "clans"), through which both the warp eye mutation and their esoteric knowledge of warp navigation has been passed down through the generations. Because of their monopolies, ancient lineages, and accorded rights, Navigator families are usually both immensely wealthy and influential, their power extending to all corners of the Imperium. In particular, their influence of matters in interstellar trade is beyond that of any other group.

Perhaps most importantly, they have an Emperor-given right to conduct their own affairs as they see fit and thus are effectively outside of the laws and authority of the Imperium. This freedom is only void in particular circumstances of overt rebellion or treachery, and even then great care is taken by the Adepta in confronting and punishing such crimes. A clan's private retainers and bodyguards can number in the thousands. Largely, the clans police their own, binding themselves together in a shared culture and through lines of alliance, fealty, and marriage. However, wary of the balance of power, the high master of the Navis Nobilite, the Paternova, and his agents are often merciless when one clan or family should, by its treachery or excess, endanger the others.

An Unpleasant Necessity

One of the fundamental tensions that exists between the Navis Nobilite and the rest of the Imperium is the fact that Navigators are patently mutants in a culture that does not often suffer the mutant to live save as a brutally oppressed underclass. Many dark legends and fables of excess, witchery, and murderous power have grown up about them, and not all without cause. As a result, Navigators are often shunned and feared, and the popular dread at meeting the gaze of their three-fold eyes means that many prefer to have dealings with them only when they absolutely must.

The maintenance of the valuable Navigator gene has

also meant that over thousands of years most Navigator families have acquired malformations, strange afflictions, or mental abnormalities. In some Navigator families, the genetic corruption of the line has become so severe that only a few members of the clan can move amongst the rest of the Imperium. The remainder remain confined to the family's great estates or in sealed tabernacles aboard ship, their deformities hidden from sight.

These differences have often led to conflict in the past, and localised factions of the Ecclesiarchy have, on a number of occasions, burned Navigator holdings and executed Navigators as heretics. Such incidents are often brought violently to heel by the Ecclesiarchy itself, before the wrath of the High Lords of Terra is visited upon the culprits and any above them in rank that allowed such action to come to pass. After all, no one can afford to offend those who hold the key to voyaging between the stars. The Inquisition is one of the few bodies that can truly move beyond the immunity of the Navigators' charter, and its eye is ever kept on the Navigator clans. Even the Inquisition must be circumspect and certain in this task. However, in rare extreme cases, the Holy Ordos has destroyed entire clans and carried their patriarchs and matriarchs off in the Black Ships for final sanction.

Navis Nobilite Trade Wars

The most common conflict involving the Navis Nobilite are the conflicts between the various Navigator houses. Each Navigator family's power and wealth is based on the trade it can control, its contracts and pledges to various mercantile organisations, and the courses that its Navigators can plot. All these matters are areas of fierce competition between the different Navigator houses and often the focus of campaigns of espionage, violence, and assassination. Such conflicts can cause huge amounts of damage to the infrastructure of the Imperium, often occurring without the direct knowledge of the nobility or the Imperial authorities until it is too late.

Traditionally, this damage has been controlled by the formal declaration of a "trade war" under the terms of the ancient Navigator Convention. A trade war, once declared, allows all Navigator houses involved to act against their rivals using military and covert means. According to the terms of a trade war, those outside of the Navigator houses involved should not be affected or harmed by its progress. However, in reality, subsidiaries, allies, and associates of the Navigator houses immersed in a trade war are usually dragged into the conflict whether they want to be or not. While a trade war is meant to control and contain competition between Navigator houses, many houses act outside of the constraints of a declared trade war. Such illegal actions usually involve intermediaries, assassination guilds, or armies for hire.

The Great Navigator Houses of Calixis

Within the Calixis Sector, the dominant Navigator houses are those who came with the conquering and colonising forces of Angevin's Crusade. The most powerful form the triumvirate of House Modar, House Yeshar, and House Rey'a'Nor. Between them, these families hold the rights, bonds, and contracts for the supply of Navigators for Battlefleet Calixis, as well as for the vessels belonging to other branches of the Calixian Adepta and the sector's commercial powers.

However, over the centuries, the sector's needs have outstripped the manpower that these great houses can provide. A dozen lesser houses and a few outcast bloodlines from distant sectors have subsequently established themselves in the area. These lesser houses range in importance from House Xan'Tai who exclusively serve the powerful Machenko Dynasty, and the "pauper house" of Cedd whose Navigators are known to barter their services to the highest bidder with few questions asked, to the legendary, insane bloodline of Nostromo who served the Rogue Trader clan of Haarlock. The three great houses constantly vie with one another for dominance, but wary of entering into protracted conflict (lest it weaken them and give an advantage to a lesser house), they usually prefer to use intermediaries to fight their petty wars by proxy.



Discord and Conflict within the Inquisition

"The Inquisition is a hundred different schools of thought, divided by a single goal."

—Lord Inquisitor Nihilus



Like the hydra of ancient legend, the Inquisition is a beast with many heads, each with its own thoughts, goals, and preferred methods of rooting out heresy and sedition. Beyond the tenets of his Ordo or the strictures of his Conclave, it is up to each Inquisitor to decide how he must best enact the will of the Emperor and fulfil his sacred duty to the Imperium. Most turn to the teachings of one of the many factions within the Inquisition, embracing a school of thought to help guide his actions and justify his deeds. A faction forms the foundation of how an Inquisitor (and by extension his acolytes) function, colouring his choices and determining just how he takes the fight to the enemies of mankind.

This section covers six of the most powerful factions, as well as several of those unique to the Calixis Sector. Making use of the myriad factions within the Inquisition is a great way to add depth and colour to your games, and ultimately conflict and division. After all, there are few foes more interesting than an enemy Inquisitor and his acolytes…

Acolytes and Factions

Factions are more philosophies than clearly defined divisions of the Inquisition; as such, they can often play a larger role in the life of an Acolyte than Ordo, Conclave, or Cabal. It is natural for Inquisitors to seek out Acolytes whom they think share their fundamental beliefs. However, it is almost inevitable that at some point while in an Inquisitor's service, Acolytes find themselves confronted with a specific doctrine of their master's faction that conflicts with their own personal morality. It remains up to each Acolyte how to deal with such incongruity, though only the foolish would dare to challenge his Inquisitor openly.

Ordos, Conclaves, Cabals, and Factions

The Inquisition and, by extension its Inquisitors, is organised into a number of broad groupings. The first and foremost is that of the Ordos: the Ordo Hereticus, the Ordo Xenos and the Ordo Malleus, each opposed to one of the Imperium's three principal foes—the heretic, the alien, and the daemon, respectively. There are of course other Ordos, dedicated to other domains of Imperial interest, but none is quite as large or powerful as these three. Most Inquisitors (though not all) single out one of these threats for their special attentions and declare their allegiance to the respective Ordo or are inducted into one because of their efforts in the field. It is important to note, though, while the three main Ordos attract individuals interested in combating certain foes, they do not predispose their Inquisitors to any kind of unity. For example, one Ordo Xenos Inquisitor's philosophy on fighting aliens can vary hugely from another.

The second grouping is that of the Conclaves, which are Inquisitorial gatherings focused on sectors and segmentum. As the three principal Ordos direct the resources and efforts of the Inquisition against a certain foe, the Conclaves help to organise and support all Inquisitorial activities within an area. Conclaves, like Ordos, can contain a diverse range of Inquisitors, as almost all areas of the Imperium contain a variety of the Emperor's adversaries. Similarly, there is no formal requirement to belong to a Conclave, though it is considered good manners for an Inquisitor to announce his or her presence upon entering a Conclave's environ (though few actually do so). Conclaves are also particularly useful in keeping local Imperial authorities in line, acting as a constant presence in the sector and a watchful set of eyes.

Much like a Conclave, a Cabal is a gathering of Inquisitors within an area with a single purpose. Cabals, however, are formed not to oversee or organise. Rather, their purpose is to complete a particular mission, and they usually last only as long as their task remains undone. More so than Conclaves, Cabals are comprised of Inquisitors and individuals of often widely ranging outlooks and ideals (often to make them more effective and adaptive in their duties). The most well known Cabal within the Calixis Sector (at least in Inquisitorial circles) is the Tyrantine Cabal, formed to combat the ever-growing threat of the prophesied Tyrant Star.

The foundation of nearly all groupings, however, is the faction. Factions are specific schools of thought, some almost as old as the Inquisition itself, that teach the true purpose of the Inquisition and the ultimate intent of the Emperor's will. They are gatherings of like-minded individuals who share a common view of the universe and often see a specific purpose through their unity. Some factions are almost the same in their tenets, varying only slightly on the interpretation of minor issues. Others are almost diametrically opposed and advocate actions that can bring the Inquisition into conflict with itself, pitting Inquisitor against Inquisitor—or more often, acolyte against acolyte.

At its heart, a faction reflects an Inquisitor's intrinsic philosophical outlook and is usually based on two common factors in his belief: what is the greatest enemy of the Imperium and how is the best way to fight it.

More information on Ordos, Conclaves, and Cabals can be found in **Chapter X: The Inquisition** in **Dark Heresy**.

Puritan and Radical Factions

Most factions can be defined in terms of Puritans or Radicals. Puritan factions extol the virtues of the Emperor's light, using practices and policies favoured by the Ministorum, while Radical factions often engage in dangerous, semi-heretical philosophies and undertakings. However, the terms "Puritan" and "Radical" can be misleading when used to describe a faction, and many factions contain Inquisitors who would be considered either Radical or Puritan working side by side (or at least to similar ends). A good example of this is provided by the Thorians, whose beliefs are considered puritanical by most but radical by some elements of the Ecclesiarchy. As a result, the faction contains mostly Puritans but also a small number of Radicals, striving to seek out the Emperor's avatar in their own way.

Thorians

Born of the fire and ruin of the Age of Apostasy, the Thorians are a Puritan faction who believe that the will of the Emperor can manifest in the hearts of pure men and in times of great need his avatar will appear to vanquish the foes of humanity. They take their name from the great prophet and leader Sebastian Thor who, during that dark time, led the movement against the corruption within the Imperial Cult and was ultimately responsible for its cleansing and the restoration of the Imperium that followed.

It was this single and miraculous act that led his followers (who would later become the first Thorians) to believe that they had witnessed the divine will of the Emperor in Sebastian Thor. There remains, of course, much opposition to this theory, especially among the Ministorum. However, over the centuries, it has gained a strong and loyal following throughout the Imperium. The Calixis Sector is no exception, and some of the most senior Inquisitors within the Calixian Conclave are staunch Thorians.

Thorian Domains

The Thorians' reach extends across most of the Calixis Sector, shadowing the influence of the Conclave and following in the footsteps of many Cabals. First and foremost, the Thorian's gaze settles on places where the will of man is being tested, such as frontier worlds or those in states of strife. Here, they believe, they will find evidence of the Emperor's presence in the hearts of men and perhaps even clues as to where his avatar may rise again. For many years, the world of Tranch has been of distinct interest to Thorian Inquisitors who have made it their special duty to champion any Inquisitorial business there. Whether or not this level of interest in Tranch is merited, the Thorians intend to be ready to act should the Emperor's design manifest itself.

Thorian Operations

It is the Thorians' goal to seek out places and individuals that they believe are being "moved" or influenced by the hand of the Emperor, aiming to discover, aid, and understand them. This task is not as easy as it may seem, as sorting the merely miraculous from the divine takes considerable insight and skill. It is also a domain that the Ministorum claims to have a monopoly on, and thus they take a very dim view of others who would contradict them as to the will of the God-Emperor. Therefore, during their Inquisitorial duties, Thorians spend a great deal of time exploring records, following rumours, and trying to validate the deeds of Imperial heroes (often many centuries dead).

One such example of this type of ongoing investigation is the general debate currently among Thorians about the noted Admiral Forritar. Forritar was killed some 247 years past during the Battle of the Glittering Hallows in a sizable fleet engagement against Ork raiders deep in the Markayn Marches. Some Thorians believe that Forritar's obsession to cleanse the Marches of the Ork menace (which ultimately led to his demise), is an indication of the will of the divine and should the admiral's complete plans for the sector ever be recovered, a precious piece of the Emperor's design will be revealed. Of course, there are also many who view Forritar as an old fool who didn't have the good sense to prosecute a sound battle line.

Thorian Inquisitors

The Calixian Conclave contains numerous advocates of the Thorians' faction. Perhaps the most influential of these is Inquisitor Orannon Helgaer, who often speaks for the Calixian members of Ordo Malleus and is said to have the ear of the Lord Inquisitor as well. Orannon is an old man who has given long service to the Imperium and, in the eyes of many, has earned his place within the upper echelons of the Conclave. He uses this power shamelessly to further the Thorians' cause. Though he seldom leaves his estates on Quaddis, there is little that the Inquisition does within the sector that escapes his notice, especially if Thorians are involved—and all Thorians know (or soon learn) that the favour of Orannon is a very valuable thing.

Also counted among the Thorians of the Calixis Sector is the newly risen Inquisitor Maganon. Recently of the Ministorum, Maganon is an example of how far reaching and

persuasive the teachings of the faction can be. Turning from the strictures of the Imperial Cult after becoming disillusioned with its prodigious bureaucracy and hypocritical practices, he was taken by the Thorians' purity of purpose and their belief of the divinity within mankind. Having gathered a cadre of like-minded acolytes, he is currently striving tirelessly to make a name for himself within the faction, often coming to the aid of other Inquisitors in the hopes of passing on the Thorians' message. Maganon is an intensely driven man, which can often be off-putting to those that first meet him. However, beneath the fervour and rhetoric lies an honest soul and a true servant of the Emperor. Given time, Maganon's star may well rise very high.

Thorian Secrets

While rumours persist of the Thorians locating individuals touched by the Emperor and even influencing the fate of worlds in the quest to awaken the divinity of mankind, there is very little hard evidence to suggest that any person or place that the Thorians have been associated with was in fact "touched" by the Emperor. As a result, many of those in high places pay little attention to the rambling of the faction or the actions of its Inquisitors—as long as they fulfil the will of the Emperor and fight His foes, their loyalty need not be questioned.

However, unknown to all but a select few within the faction, its various actions over the past few years have been a cover to hide the Thorians' actual purpose in the Calixis Sector. There is evidence, some whisper, taken directly from the writing of Sebastian Thor himself that soon a great darkness will arise within the Calixis Sector—a darkness so powerful that it will threaten the very fabric of the Imperium with its existence. Many Thorians believe that the Tyrant Star is the herald of this darkness. It is also said that when this darkness arises, so too will an avatar of the Emperor. Born from the same womb, it is written, these two will tear the sector asunder in war. The Thorians believe this time is at hand and for the sake of the sector, they must find this avatar and protect "him" until he is ready to make his war.

Amalathians

The Amalathians believe that the Emperor's will is unfolding constantly across the Imperium and that He has a plan known only to Him. A strict Puritan faction, they believe in maintaining the laws and governance of the Imperium above all considerations, convinced that in keeping the status quo they are in fact fulfilling the Emperor's great vision for His domain. They are also counted among the oldest of the factions, their tenets first being laid down millennia ago on the sacred slopes of Mount Amalath—from which they take their name. The Amalathians enjoy close ties with many Imperial organisations, providing assistance, overt and otherwise, in order to maintain their control. Thus they ensure a balance within the power of the Adeptus and in the operational fabric of the Imperium. In the Calixis Sector, the Amalathians enjoy a special relationship with the Adeptus Arbites, routinely supporting them in investigations and operations, whilst also providing access to "hard to reach" information and informants.

Amalathian Domains

All of the major worlds within the Calixis Sector lie beneath the influence of the Amalathians. From the hives of Scintilla to the mines of Sepheris Secundus and beyond, their watchful eyes monitor the actions of the Emperor's countless organisations. Only as the light of the Emperor become faint and the grasp of the Imperium weakens does their power fade. Towards the rim, among the Halo Stars, and deep within the empty reaches of the sector, there is little evidence of the Amalathians and their work. After all, it is the Imperium and its workings that are their chief concern—"better to have power over the people than the stars," as some would say.

Amalathian Operations

Amalathians have a direct hand in the daily operation of several of the Calixis Sector's key Imperial organisations. Certainly, many of the most powerful military leaders have their operations in part directed by the faction. Whether they know it or not, both the Imperial Navy and the Imperial Guard have (numerous times) been redirected to further the ends of the Amalathians. Such shifts in manpower and vessels are sometimes so subtle as to have gone unnoticed, and certainly being told what to do is pretty much the norm for those within the military.

Within the Adeptus Arbites, however, members of the faction take a far more direct and visible hand. Acting as advisors, they work to ensure the Emperor's laws are being enforced and guide the Imperium's lawmen towards areas most in need of their firm hand. This work is very important to the Amalathians, as many of the faction's Inquisitors have an almost pathological belief in the rule of law. This conviction could be attributed to the fact that many of them believe that Imperial law is synonymous with the word of the Emperor Himself.

Amalathian Inquisitors

Thor-Malken is an old and grizzled Amalathian with an unhealthy obsession with the law and its enforcement. Once a High Marshal, he traded his Arbites' badge for a rosette. However, he still sees himself as a lawman—only now he has the power to truly pass judgement as he sees fit. Thor-Malken is also well known within the Conclave for his unflinching adherence to doctrine and protocol, once executing his own cadre of acolytes for following an illegal order and officially reprimanding himself for issuing it. He has a distaste for interrogation, which he views as wasteful and time consuming. He prefers to make snap judgements about people and then treat them accordingly. Unsurprisingly, many other Inquisitors find his company uncomfortable, and those that have had to work with him seldom do so again.

Worlds apart from Thor-Malken is Lady Purusha. While still a devoted and loyal member of the faction, she works to maintain the stability of the Imperium through the use of subtle influence, pulling strings covertly in order to enact her will. Still young enough to feel a connection to the mass of humanity she is sworn to protect, she often poses as a skilful and intelligent adept or advisor. She prefers to work her way into the courts of planetary governors and the noble elite or act as an adjutant to military commanders. Once Purusha is



well ensconced in such a place, she then works to set up a firm network of informers and confidants, ensuring that when she moves on she leaves a legacy of control in her wake. Over time, she hopes to create a web of suggestion and influence that she can use like the reins on a beast of burden to move government policy where she pleases.

Amalathian Secrets

Like the Thorians, the Amalathians are one of the more visible and well known factions. Certainly, within the Conclave their actions and agents are easily recognised, and their ends are apparent and accepted. This transparency of intent, however, hides a significant secret. The Amalathians, being privy to vast amounts of information gathered by the Imperium's military and law enforcement, have discerned a dark, deadly secret about the Hereticus Tenebrae and what perhaps is its ultimate meaning. This information, if it became known among the Conclave, would most probably force radical changes among the Inquisitorial operations in the sector and, worse yet, alter the Imperium's very presence there. Thus, a small Cabal within the faction has chosen to suppress the information and its existence. To date, only a handful of Amalathians know these facts, and even they are each entrusted with only a part of the truth, perhaps not even guessing at the enormity of the danger.

Xanthites

The Xanthites are a powerful Radical faction who take their name from the great Inquisitor Zaranchek Xanthus, reputed to have had a dangerous and unhealthy amount of knowledge of the warp and its uses. The Xanthites believe that Chaos is but a reflection of mankind, mirroring its whims, desires, and emotions. Therefore, with the right knowledge, mankind may use its power. In the simplest terms, they believe that only the power of Chaos can fight Chaos and that humans must embrace this power or perish by it. Within the Calixis Sector, Xanthites are more spoken of than seen, though rumours continually persist of powerful Inquisitors and Imperial officials who follow their ideals.

Xanthite Domains

The areas controlled by the Xanthites are less apparent than those of many of the other factions. By their nature, Xanthite Inquisitors have learnt to tread lightly among the ranks of the Conclave and seldom mix with others of Ordo or Cabal. More a loose confederation of individuals, the faction structures itself around the master-student model, with Xanthites usually only operating in pairs or alone. On the fringe and where the gaze of Imperial authorities grows dim, members of the faction are most commonly found, seeking out those that hide from the Emperor's light in such shadows. Of course, it is believed that many Xanthites also operate quietly deep within the heart of the sector, in the depths of hives, and in the grand edifices of the Ministorum where corruption is wont to fester.

Xanthite Operations

Xanthites are primarily concerned with the garnering of forbidden lore and schooling themselves in its use. They are also, despite the views of most Inquisitors, some of the most zealous opponents to the Ruinous Powers. Of particular interest to the Xanthites are fallen Inquisitors and corrupted acolytes, who they seek out not for retribution and punishment but to better learn how to tread the path of Chaos untouched. However, by its very essence, Chaos is an unpredictable and dangerous power to harness, and many who seek out such fallen agents of the Throne end up joining their ranks.

This, of course, does not stop the Xanthites from their pursuit of proscribed texts and forbidden lore, which they consider paramount to their cause. In recent times, the Xanthites have been gathering lore on the nature of the Tyrant Star and how its terrible power might be harnessed for the Imperium. Whenever Xanthites meet, they exchange small pieces of such information, slowly building up an extensive amount of data on the so-called "threat" rivalled only by the Amalathians in its breadth and accuracy. In fact, it is probably only a matter of time before they learn of the Amalathians' secret, and when they do, they will doubtless be far less conservative with such knowledge.



Xanthite Inquisitors

Records of Xanthite Inquisitors are sketchy at best, many being surrounded in myth and rumour as much as actual fact. Ordo Malleus Inquisitor Felroth Gelt is a good example of this. A bold Monodominant and a Puritan, it is said that he was once ranked high in the Conclave and the favoured of Lord Inquisitor Caidin. However, sometime during his third century of life, after years of struggle and bloody conflict with the Emperor's foes, he became disillusioned. The strict tenets of his faction and the hollow victories over his enemies began to lose all of their meaning.

During his time suppressing the Rebellion of the False on Kasha he first met Inquisitor Draven and witnessed the true power of Chaos turned upon the Emperor's foes. Over the next few decades Gelt and Draven travelled together, until Felroth's eyes were finally opened to the teaching of the Xanthites. Now Gelt travels the sector and beyond, seeking out the tools with which to fight the Imperium's foes, his aging frame invigorated by the power of the warp. Of course, whether or not Felroth Gelt truly exists is unclear, and only the oldest and highest ranking members of the Conclave would know for sure. His story could equally be a cautionary tale about the perils of Chaos or a message to potential Xanthites about the true path to man's salvation. In either case, from time to time rumours surface of Gelt's activities, causing a stir among both the Xanthites and their enemies.

Xanthite Secrets

The Xanthites have many secrets. Each member of the faction is a repository of lore unto himself, and they are known to venture further into the dark nature of Chaos than any other arm of the Inquisition. Within the Calixis Sector, this delving translates into an unparalleled knowledge of warp cults, witches, and daemonic incursions. More than once has a member of the faction flawlessly infiltrated a cult, draining its knowledge and power before smashing it beneath the hammer of the Inquisition.

Perhaps most interesting of the faction's secrets, however, is the Aleph-hosts. It is rumoured among the Xanthites that some of their number have found a way to bind several powerful daemonic intelligencies into multiple hosts, each of equal power and bound so that all must be killed for the Aleph-host to to be destroyed. This hellish act requires a long and complex ritual, the formulae of which has been the object of many quests by Xanthite Inquisitors. Dark rumours hint that the ritual can also be configured so that a greater being of both materium and immaterium may be created in a single physical host. True or not, it is a rumour that persists and which many Xanthites are eager to pursue, if for no other reason than to keep the knowledge from the hands of their foes or those within the Imperium who would destroy it.

Recongregators

Another Radical faction, the Recongregators believe that only through change can the Imperium hope to prosper, believing that the greatest threat that humanity faces is its lack of progress and terminal stagnation. Working quietly behind the scenes, the Recongregators seek to influence or engineer events that will lead to change and progress. It is a subtle game, and of all the major factions, they are counted amongst the least visible, keeping to the shadows whilst others charge into the fray.

Of particular interest to the Recongregators are the Amalathians, whom they perceive as their primary opponents. In many parts of the Imperium, vast silent struggles are carried out between the factions as they both strive to change local events and bring about either a dramatic alteration or a return to the way things were. In recent times a number of Recongregators have been drawn to the Calixis Sector, their interest aroused by the notion of the Hereticus Tenebrae and the change that it may herald.

Recongregator Domains

Just as the Amalathians have agents spread throughout the Administratum, military, and planetary governments of the sector, so do the Recongregators. Of special interest to them, however, are the worlds of Scintilla and Sepheris Secundus. It is believed that only in the sector's seat of power can the true seeds of change be planted, and, as a result, Recongregator Inquisitors pay special attention to the hives of Scintilla. Equally, the mining powerhouse that is Sepheris Secundus has been identified as having a unique significance within the sector, and the faction suspects that there is something hidden on or about this world of great importance to the progression and reform of the Imperium.

Recongregator Operations

Much of the faction's time and resources are spent in opposing the Amalathians; where they try to halt a cascade of events that would bring about change, the Recongregators manoeuvre to ensure such events occur. At every turn, they seek to break the Amalathians' control, attempting to let events progress "naturally" or, when necessary, to give things a "little shove" to ensure matters come to a head. On the feudal world of Acreage, this very dance has been played out for countless years. The Amalathians try to suppress progression and reform, maintain the line of the high king, and heavily restrict off-world contact. At the same time, the Recongregators seed new ideas, hopes, and practices with the locals or smuggle in off-world technology in the hopes of altering the world's destiny. All this, of course, is conducted during the execution of their Inquisitorial duties through discreet means, and it is unlikely that any, even within the Conclave, are aware of this silent conflict.

Recongregator Inquisitors

Drawn to the ideals of the Recongregator, Lucius Fulcio is a notorious firebrand of the Ordo Hereticus and a flamboyant voice within the Conclave. His righteous zeal, however, hides a subtle and cunning mind capable of charting the course of events from a single happening and determining their ultimate outcome. This canny knack first became apparent during the fall of the Golden Despot on Sisk, where his action in saving key individuals from the fire and ruin of that time lead to the world being reborn years later into a paragon of Imperial service. Actions like this have earned him great respect and trust by other members of the faction, a respect he uses to manipulate other Inquisitors and their acolytes to unwittingly do his bidding.

Also counted among the ranks of the Recongregators is Inquisitor Llor, a minor, though long-serving, member of the Conclave and the Ordo Xenos. Llor was first drawn to the sector because of its proximity to the fringe and of the exciting possibilities such closeness could offer. Through his time in serving the Holy Ordos, he has come to realise that the Calixis Sector could well be even more important to the future of the Imperium. He believes the appearance of the Tyrant Star is a sign that events are about to unfold that will spread across the segmentum and beyond. It is therefore his intention to wait, watch and learn how these ripples can be mastered and ultimately turned to the favour of the Inquisition.

Recongregator Secrets

The greatest secret the Recongregators possess is not their own at all, but rather the secret that the Amalathians have uncovered about the Tyrant Star. Unlike the Amalathians, it is a truth that they have only glimpsed and one that they suspect would not be favourable to any of the Inquisition's factions should it become known. Thus, they are mostly concerned with further investigation across the sector, gathering what pieces of information they can. They are not merely trying to counter the Amalathians' ambitions, but are attempting to discover whether behind the secret there lurks a darker, sinister, hidden truth.

Isstvanians

Even more extreme in their views than the Recongregators is the Radical faction known as the Isstvanians. Taking their name from the infamous bombing of Isstvan III, said to have been the spark that ignited the Horus Heresy, they seek to ferment conflict and crisis wherever they tread. It is their belief that the Imperium requires constant strife to survive (a reasonable assumption given the galaxy's state of near total war), and if it were ever to find itself at total peace, it would collapse and decay. To this end, Isstvanian Inquisitors seek conflict head on, instigating discord within and without the Imperium, starting wars, leading invasions, and stirring discontent into rebellion. Where the flames of war burn, more than likely an Isstvanian can be found fanning them. Isstvanians are not uncommon within the Calixis Sector, as its proximity to both the Eye of Terror and the galactic fringe makes it a ripe location for turmoil.

Isstvanian Domains

Like much of the Imperium, the Calixis Sector is no stranger to war, and it is to these zones of conflict that the Isstvanians flock. Less interested in local, isolated struggles, such as the constant fighting on Iocanthos or the civil war on Acreage, Isstvanians seek out places where the fighting may spill out across star systems, setting countless worlds ablaze with carnage and strife. Such Inquisitors commonly travel the fringe where the rule of the Imperium is most in dispute, and xenos forces, renegade worlds, and the slow seep of Chaos are strongest. The Halo Stars, in particular, are a breeding ground for conflict, one which the Isstvanians have been known to nurture when it suits their purposes.

Isstvanian Operations

Across the sector, Isstvanians and their agents seek to stir up conflict and tear down weak leaders and regimes. In the process, they have been known to invite invasions and cover up small, benign problems until they mutate into large, malignant ones. Isstvanians also work covertly within the networks of the Recongregators, ostensibly appearing to aid them in their efforts, only to send carefully engineered events spinning out of control at the eleventh hour. This has earned them a dire reputation among both the Recongregators and the Amalathians, who both have, intentionally and unintentionally, ended up working on the same side against the "unpredictable" Isstvanians.

Isstvanian Inquisitors

The Isstvanian faction attracts a certain kind of Inquisitor, such as the merciless and cruel Amaros. Having made a name for herself in the Ordo Xenos purging indigenous life forms in the Josian Reach, Inquisitor Amaros was repeatedly appalled by the lack of action that local sector authorities were taking to combat what she saw as the spread of potentially dangerous xeno-forms. To remedy this problem, she manipulated a cabal of smugglers and bio-pirates into modifying and distributing gene-engineered aliens as pets and guard-forms. The result was the Trygor Xeno Plague, which led to the deaths of countless citizens and the Euthanous Edict which in turn led to the purging on a dozen worlds of all non-human life. Amaros's whereabouts are currently unknown.

Isstvanian Secrets

The Isstvanians prefer not to waste excessive efforts on concealment or moving behind the scenes in the same way the Recongregators or Amalathians are known to do. Rather, they act swiftly and decisively, bringing with them fire and ruin. In years past, Ork invasions have cut through the Calixis Sector, spreading destruction in their wake and rallying the sector's forces against them. Some Isstvanians believe that the time is almost ripe for another such invasion. Through rumour and divination, they have begun to get an idea of where and when a strike might occur. Rather than try to avert the disaster, they are, of course, creating havoc in its path. They are destabilising worlds that they perceive as weak and diverting questionable military commanders to the area. Thus, when the hammer blow of the Ork attack is felt, it will ring-out loudly across the entire sector.

Monodominants

Next to the Thorians, the Monodominants are counted among the most powerful of the Inquisitorial factions. Certainly this Puritan faction is believed to be the oldest, tracing its origins back to a time shortly after the creation of the Inquisition itself sometime in the 33rd Millennium. Monodominants are the most hard-line of all the Puritans, believing in the complete destruction of all non-humans (including mutants and psykers) and those not willing to swear eternal allegiance to the Emperor. Of course, they understand that this lofty goal will take time and, in the interim, though they might despise them, the Imperium must make use of mutants and psykers for its survival. Monodominants are also well known for their excessive use of force when purging corrupted worlds, even resorting to exterminatus rather than risk leaving even the barest hint of heresy behind. In the Calixis Sector, Monodominants can be found throughout the Conclave at all levels of power, though especially among the older Inquisitors.

Monodominant Domains

Wherever the shadow of the Inquisition falls, Monodominants can be found. More than any of the other major factions, they have a presence and a power that spans both the Conclave and the Holy Ordos. In many ways, they are the heart of the Inquisition's beliefs and core structure and, as a result, can be found throughout the Calixis Sector where the Imperium's presence is strong. Scintilla is often a meeting place for the faction simply because it is the sector's seat of power. Monodominants also have a special interest in the *Misericord*, which they use as a convenient platform to monitor the core worlds of the sector. However, Monodominants can equally be found at the forefront of the Imperium's struggle against its enemies, fighting aliens on the fringe or purging heresy from within.

Monodominant Operations

Monodominants are constantly engaged in purges of aliens, heretics, and mutants. In places where their power is without question, such as the world of Dreah, they openly exterminate local mutant populations. Few miss these mutants and fewer still would question the Inquisition's right to eliminate them. In other places, such as the world of Sepheris Secundus, the mutant workforce forms a vital part of that world's economy and therefore its ability to meet Imperial tithes, and is not so easily targeted. Of course, this does not stop the faction from working to slowly erode the mutants' place within that society and sway the queen to do away with them once and for all.

Monodominant Inquisitors

It has been argued that eventually all Inquisitors are drawn to the beliefs of the Monodominant. Often the older an Inquisitor gets and the more he has seen, the more he comes to despise everything that is not human and, as a result, becomes more heavy handed in his dealings with his enemies. Mordant Crimson is such an Inquisitor, a harsh and remorseless member of the Ordo Hereticus. His actions on the world of Veran, where he became known as the Bloody Brand, certainly added to his infamy. It was on this world that after crushing a rebellion, he had the survivors of both sides branded so that they would not forget the treachery they had committed or had allowed to occur. Crimson, like most Monodominants, makes use of only those acolytes he deems pure enough for the Emperor's service, scorning those who employ psykers or mutants.

It is also rumoured that Lord Inquisitor Caidin himself is a Monodominant, though he appears diplomatic enough not to let his suspected loyalty to this faction conflict with his loyalty to the Conclave.

Monodominant Secrets

Monodominants do not often keep secrets, using information as they find it and punishing guilt as soon as it is uncovered. That being said, Monodominants are said to keep extensive records on all of the important personages within the sector, above and beyond what the Inquisition would normally be concerned with. This truly impressive archive charts each person's worth in the eyes of the Emperor, or more accurately the eyes of the Monodominants. This information is continually updated and assessed by an army of Administratum adepts in the faction's employ who are constantly searching for even the merest hint of corruption or treachery. It is whispered among the Conclave that the Monodominants also keep a hidden archive especially for members of the Inquisition.

CALIXIAN FACTIONS

"You do not need to look to the stars to find the greatest obstacle this Conclave faces, my brothers. Simply gaze around this room and you will find such a sea of discord as to make our foes cackle with glee."

—Inquisitor Eistus Gracker in address to the Calixian Conclave

In addition to the six most well known factions, scores of others are whispered to exist across the Imperium. These are rumoured to be splinter groups of the larger factions, fractured from their parents by extreme views or differing beliefs, such as the Puranthius or Antus-psykeer who seek to cleanse the Imperium by targeting specific foes or practices. Alternatively, they may be a result of local phenomena, such as the Clavianus of the Eastern Fringe, dedicated to the understanding the unique philosophies of the Tau.

In the Calixis Sector, there are several of these splinter factions. Some are mere shadows of greater schools of belief, while others are genuine organisations in their own right, with no small amount of power and influence within the boundaries of the sector.



Xeno Hybris

The Xeno Hybris is a Radical faction that has existed within the Calixis Sector for almost as long as it has been a part of the Imperium. It is speculated that the faction grew out of a gathering of Radical Ordo Xenos Inquisitors and agents drawn to the sector in search of clues to lost alien civilizations. Whatever the case, today the faction works diligently to uncover alien technology and better understand the alien mind. Inquisitors of this faction believe that there is much to learn from the aliens of the galaxy and only by cooperation with the other races can the true enemy of all sentient life be defeated. Needless to say, these beliefs often bring them into conflict with Monodominants and their followers, who view any dealing with xenos as an abomination.

Xeno Hybris Domains

Xeno Hybris Inqiusitors spend much of their time along the rim and amid the Halo Stars, seeking contact with undiscovered aliens or investigating the ruins of their civilizations. They are known to take up with Rogue Traders and even Explorator teams plunging deeper and deeper into the void in their search of the unknown. Occasionally, however, they can be encountered within the core worlds, picking over ruins long buried beneath human cities and hives. Such work is a much rarer arena of operations for them, as it can bring them into close contact with their enemies and is seldom worth the risk for the poor opportunities such places offer. There are also rumours that some members of the faction even dwell amid alien civilizations as guests and unofficial ambassadors on xenos home worlds, alien vessels, and even eldar craftworlds.

Xeno Hybris Operations

Much of the faction's operations centre on the investigation of alien civilizations so that members might better understand and emulate them. This understanding is important to the faction as adherents believe that mankind's understanding of the universe is incomplete and dangerously flawed when it comes to combating its true foes. For most faction members, this kind of scholarly endeavour represents their total involvement in the faction, with members gathering together from time to time to share and compile information and present new theories.

The second major undertaking of the faction is the recovery of xenos tech. While some artefacts are recovered as part of the faction's involvement in archaeological missions, most must be stolen, purchased, or traded for. The more adventurous faction members often take considerable risks in the pursuit of such things, especially when trying to bring xenos items back into Imperial space. They also maintain ties with "benign" alien races that have nominal contact with the Imperium and only limited hostilities to date. This contact is often performed under the cover of Rogue Trader activity.

Xeno Hybris Inquisitors

Among the alien scholars of the Xeno Hybris is Inquisitor Arcturos, an ancient and enigmatic individual of considerable intellect. Arcturos was a diligent and focused member of the Ordo Xenos for many years, initially drawn to the Calixis Sector in his study of the eldar and their influence within the Segmentum Obscurus. However, his first true step toward understanding began, when he was rescued by eldar corsairs after his ship had been crippled in a skirmish with an unidentified xenos vessel. For reasons Arcturos has never revealed, he was invited to spend time aboard a craftworld.

Exactly what transpired there and which craftworld it was is known only to Arcturos. What is known is that when Arcturos returned, he was a changed man and has since become one of the faction's most valued and active members. Arcturos is also reputed to count a number of xenos, including an eldar, among his acolytes, though this may be pure fabrication.

Xeno Hybris Secrets

For many years, Xeno Hybris has been exploring the uses of xenos tech with a view to understanding its potential for application within the Imperium. With the help of wayward elements of the Adeptus Mechanicus, it has begun a programme to create pieces of hybrid xenos-human tech. The first such device that it is rumoured to have created is known as the Immaterios Novis. Fashioned into the shape of a gigantic brass eye whose pupil continually swirls and pulses with reddish light, it is said to possess the power to allow a ship to navigate the warp over short distances without the aid of a Navigator. If this claim is even remotely true, then there will be a great many parties interested in either securing it or destroying all traces of it.

Seculos Attendous

No other organisation within the Imperium has as much freedom from the interference of the Ministorum as the Inquisition. Some within the Inquisition view this as a weakness, and there are many Inquisitors that keep close personal ties with the Cult of the Emperor and its followers. Others, such as the Seculos Attendous within the Calixis Sector, sees this separation as a progression of mankind's freedom from the Ecclesiarchy. They believe that the hulking dogma and doctrine of the Ministorum is slowly corrupting man and hampering his growth, and that the light of the Emperor does not need the hand of the cult to reach those who wish to embrace it. As yet, the faction has remained very quiet about its intentions and goals, no doubt to avoid immediate censure and the risk of excommunication.

Seculos Attendous Domains

For many years, members of the Seculos Attendous have been spreading their influence beneath the watchful eye of the Ministorum. Often posing as members of other factions or Ordos sympathetic to the cult, they have been working to place themselves into positions where they can monitor and subvert its activities. Of course, the Ecclesiarchy is a massive ponderous organisation that spans the length and breadth of the galaxy and the Seculos Attendous is but a relative handful of Inquisitors, so members cannot hope to exert any kind of real control over its actions—yet. However, what they can do is to make sure that they are in the right place at the right time in order to set larger events into motion. With this in mind, Seculos Attendous members spend a great deal of time on Shrine Worlds and other places where the cult's power is almost absolute and where the ripples of change will have the greatest effect.

Seculos Attendous Operations

The operations of the faction are twofold. First they seek to twist the Ecclesarchy's power from within, making small alterations in its operation that will ultimately help to weaken its power over the masses, while still maintaining the populace's firm faith in the Emperor and His glory. The second is managing the cult's contact with new worlds and remote frontiers, places where a freer, more natural worship of the Emperor is easier to perform. In both cases, the faction must tread very lightly, as the power of the cult is not to be casually trifled with and should even the barest hint of its subversion come to light retribution would be swift and final.

Seculos Attendous Inquisitors

Like many Radicals, Eursa Kine was once a blind and unquestioning servant of the Ministorum, content to deal out judgement on any who opposed its will. Over time, he found himself embroiled in an inner conflict over his actions—the teachings of the cult seeming to be at odds with his faith in the Emperor. Finally, during the purging of a settlement for the sacrilegious folly of its local cleric, he changed. Staring into the eyes of citizens who could not understand what they had done to deserve their beloved Emperor's wrath, he turned on his own kill-team. Since that time he has worked against both corruption within the Ecclesiarchy and the Ecclesiarchy itself, all of the time preaching the true word of the Emperor to those who will listen.

Seculos Attendous Secrets

Over its time infiltrating the cult, the faction has learnt a great many things about the Ministorum and its dealings within the Calixis Sector. Some of this information has been used to bring down powerful priests and clergymen involved in corrupt dealings and unspeakable acts. The fall of these clergymen has had the dual effect of destroying the Emperor's foes, as well as weakening the cult from within. The most damning piece of information that the faction has come across, however, pertains to Saint Drusus. The faction has uncovered ancient accounts that hint at the saint's dealings with the arch-traitor Feldrus Xorth, a nefarious individual responsible for the destruction of Heed during the Crusade's first years within the sector. If proof could be found to support these suspicions, then the Seculos Attendous would have a powerful weapon with which to propagate distrust and anger against the Ministorum.

Polypsykana

An offshoot of the Xanthites, based in the Calixis Sector, the Polypsykana is a Radical faction obsessed with the power of psykers. Members believe that the psyker is a natural evolution of man's development into a higher being. After all, the Emperor is the greatest psyker of all, who keeps the Imperium intact through His immeasurable strength of will, even guiding ships safely through the warp by igniting the blazing beacon known as the Astronomicon. The faction believes that this transformation of humanity is inevitable and ultimately humanity's only salvation. To this end, members work to protect and nurture psykers and increase the role they play within the sector. In addition, they work in secret on psy-tech, psy-breeding and other, more questionable, activities, all intended to spread what they see as the psy-gene to as much of humanity as possible.

Polypsykana Domains

Polypsykana members work within the core worlds, spending their time shepherding and protecting psykers from the teeming throng of humanity on such worlds as Scintilla, Tranch, and Malfi. This is not to say that they contravene Imperial doctrine and keep these psykers for themselves; they ensure that as many psykers as possible survive to board the Black Ships. They also work to guarantee that those who take the journey to Terra are as prepared as possible for the terrible ordeal they must face. The faction has an equal interest in feral and frontier worlds, places where the touch of the warp is little understood and almost universally feared. In these places, they work to uncover new psykers and place them in positions of safety and power.

Polypsykana Operations

The "awakening" of psykers is primary to the goals of the faction. Despite the dangers, members believe that a true evolution will only take place should enough psykers emerge among humanity. They refer to this event as the "consciousness," a time when there will be more humans born with psychic powers than without. If this event is to come about, they must ensure that as many psykers as possible live to develop their powers and pass their gifts on to the next generation. They must also try to better understand just why some people are born with the gift and some without, a process still little understood within the Imperium.

Polypsykana Inquisitors

Once a teacher in the Scholastic Psykana, Hettesh Kane became a dedicated member of the Ordo Hereticus, using his considerable psychic powers to root out and destroy rogue psykers. His experiences and his own personal belief, however, led Kane to become more and more convinced that psykers, properly trained and of substantial moral fibre, could achieve almost anything. He took to schooling and developing those he captured rather than destroying them and, though he was not always successful, began to turn some of those who were once foes into acolytes and agents. Kane continues his work within the Calixis Sector, and though he does not hate or despise those without psychic ability, he certainly pities them. His gaze is firmly fixed on a time when all mankind will be able to shape the warp to their will.

Polypsykana Secrets

The Polypsykana has developed and successfully tested a drug known as "vision." Based on the more common drug, spook, but at least four times as powerful, vision awakens more of a person's mind to the warp and allows him to truly tap into that vast reservoir of energy. Users of vision can exhibit multiple Minor Psychic Powers and, on rare occasions, crude versions of major powers. Unfortunately, the side effects are even more severe than spook. Repeated use in even the most strong willed of individuals can lead to mutation and, in some cases, even possession.



INQUISITOR GLAVIUS WROTH

Glavius Wroth is a staunch Amalathian, an outspoken champion of order and unity in the face of the manifold threats that the Imperium faces. Unaligned to a specific Ordo, Wroth is a powerful and experienced operator within the Ordos Calixis, well-connected to the pillars of Imperial order across the sector. However, he has arguably as many enemies as he has allies within the Holy Ordos and must maintain a careful balance in order to survive—chiefly through knowing far too many secrets to easily move against. Wroth is a tough and robust figure with a subtle mind and a blunt tongue. His bearing and manner give the impression of a no-nonsense Arbites Investigator, and this bluff exterior conceals much of his true depth and intellect. Little is known of Wroth's distant past or apprenticeship within the Inquisition, a state that he undoubtedly deliberately maintains, but his present reputation rests in no small part on the excoriation and execution for heresy of his fellow Inquisitor Eustis Ionfell and his network.

Glavius Wroth

Glavius Wroth Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
43	43	36	46	36	51	37	59	43

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 16

Skills: Awareness (Per)+10, Barter (Fel), +10, Charm (Fel), Ciphers (Acolyte, Underworld, War Cant) (Int) +20, Ciphers (Inquisition) (Int) +10, Command (Fel) +20, Common Lore (Adeptus Arbites, Administratum, Ecclesiarchy, Imperial Creed, Imperial Guard, Imperium, Underworld) (Int) +20, Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech, War) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +10, Drive (Ground Vehicle, Hover Vehicle) (Ag), Evaluate (Int), Forbidden Lore (Cults, Heresy, Inquisition, Ordos) (Int) +20, Forbidden Lore (Mutants) (Int) +10, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology, Psykers, Warp) (Int), Inquiry (Fel) +20, Interrogation (WP) +10, Intimidate (Str), Literacy (Int) +20, Logic (Int) +10, Navigation (Surface) (Int), Scholastic Lore (Archaic, Bureaucracy, Cryptology, Legend) (Int) +20, Scholastic Lore (Imperial Creed, Judgement, Philosophy) (Int) +10, Scrutiny (Per) +20, Search (Per) +10, Secret Tongue (Acolyte, Administratum) (Int) +20, Secret Tongue (Ecclesiarchy) (Int) +10, Secret Tongue (Gutter, Military) (Int), Security (Ag) +10, Shadowing (Ag) +10, Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int) +20, Swim (S).

Talents: Air of Authority, Armour of Contempt, Basic Weapon Training (Bolt, Las, SP), Fearless, Foresight, Good Reputation (Administratum, Inquisition), Hardy, Heightened Sense (sight), Into the Jaws of Hell, Iron Discipline, Iron Jaw, Light Sleeper, Melee Weapon Training (Power, Primitive), Mental Fortress, Peer (Adeptus Arbites, Administratum, Government, Inquisition), Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, SP), Resistance (Poisons, Psychic), Strong Minded, Touched by the Fates† (3 Fate Points), True Grit.

† See Page 188 for details of this new Talent.

Armour: Best quality enforcer light carapace (Arms 6, Body 6, Legs 6) with Hexagramatic Wards and Rosarius (see page 189 of **The Inquisitor's Handbook** for full details).

Weapons: Best Quality Boltgun (90m; S/2/–; 1d10+5 X; Pen 4; Clip 24; Rld Full; Never Jams), one spare clip, good quality power sword (1d10+8†† E, Pen 6; Balanced, Powerfield, +5 to attack Tests).

Gear: Auto quill, antique chron, heavy robes, filtration plugs, micro bead, data slates, 3 doses of de-tox with injector, seal of office as an Inquisitor.

†Includes Strength Bonus.

In the service of Glavius Wroth

Wroth is usually concerned with multiple investigations at any one time, relying on a large network of acolytes. Most of these retainers he controls from a distance via intermediaries and go-betweens, while his personal entourage is constantly changing to suit the needs of his current operations. These operations tend to focus on threats emerging within the body of the Imperium, particularly the divisions of the Adeptus Terra, though he does not limit his concern simply to a particular source of threat.

Wroth rarely intervenes personally in an investigation, preferring to use the skills of his acolytes save where only the weight of his personal presence will do. Among his acolytes, Wroth values those that are autonomous and who share both his outlook and fearless devotion to their high callings. Above all, Wroth looks for loyalty and rewards that loyalty in equal measure. Wroth personally vets his acolytes with paramount care and diligence, and as a result trusts them to act without his direct guidance, essentially offering them a free rein under his authority. To those that have met him personally, Wroth seems to be the Inquisition personified, a direct and charismatic leader who inspires devotion and fear with unshakeable purpose and faith, whose gaze misses nothing, and whose only mercy is a swiftly granted demise.

Secret Agendas and Hidden Truths

Glavius Wroth is much concerned by the activities of his fellow Inquisitors, spending much of his time covertly studying their affairs. As a result, he has many who wish him ill. Chief amongst his concerns is Lord Inquisitor Zerbe, the master of the Tyrantine Cabal. Wroth suspects him of heretical conspiracy and of covertly building a shadow network of agents who answer to the inner circle of the Tyrantine Cabal alone. Wroth has come to believe that the worst rumours of a mysterious organisation called the Tenebrae Collegium are true and has put much effort into discovering the extent and intentions of this phantom organisation. He aims to instigate its eventual downfall; however, he knows that he will need both incontrovertible proof and powerful backing to make his charges stick.

"The best assurances always come from the barrel of a gun."





INQUISITOR ANTONIA MESMERON

Antonia Mesmeron is a follower of the obscure Oblationist school of Radicalism. She believes that the powers of the warp, the weapons of the alien, and the devices of the unclean are utterly corrupting and any who truck with them must face the ultimate sanction. Yet to the Oblationist, only through the weapons of the enemy can the enemy be defeated and so those of pure soul must embrace the damnation and sacrifice themselves for the future of the Imperium.

Her unknown master passed this doctrine to Mesmeron long ago, and her conviction in its truth has only deepened in the years that she has roamed the stars seeking out the weak and misguided who have fallen to the temptations of the warp or the whispers of the alien. Her approach is that of a righteous executioner who rips out heresy root and branch when it is discovered without remorse or distinction of innocence. Wielding weapons of unspeakable horror and sorcerous power, she usually personally removes the root of a heresy and instigates a storm of purges that removes any possibility of corruption remaining. Then, as quickly as it began, the storm passes and Mesmeron is gone.

In the service of Antonia Mesmeron

Mesmeron works from the shadows, and those who serve her usually do so in ignorance of the identity of their master, nor do most know that they are acolytes of the Inquisition. She has no qualms about sacrificing their lives or worse as she feels necessary. Indeed, Mesmeron is believed long lost by most in the Holy Ordos that have heard of her name, and, even in Ordo Malleus where she once served openly, she is thought to be dead—although some no doubt know the truth. Many of those agents that the rogue Daemonhunter employs operate on the fringe of the Imperium as freelance infiltrators, mercenaries, and assassins.

Mesmeron has many links to extremist sects and fanatic vigilante groups of the Imperial Creed. Very few truly know just what and who they serve, and these act as Mesmeron's trusted agents, organizing the activities of her unwitting pawns and hirelings. Mesmeron has good reason for this extreme level of secrecy—her presence and activities in Calixis must remain secret, as the depth of Radicalism to which she has descended could well begin a sector-wide manhunt were they to become known to the wider Inquisition.

Secret Agendas and Hidden Truths

Though Mesmeron and her trusted acolytes go to some lengths to keep her activities and existence hidden, a slew of dead cultists, murdered noble families, and gutted organizations cannot go unnoticed by the Holy Ordos. Other Inquisitors operating within Calixis have begun to suspect that something or someone is at work. Linking several such bloodbaths together, they have concluded that there is more than just a murder cult or freelance enterprise behind these activities.

Antonia Mesmeron

Antonia Mesmeron Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
52	42	38	37	37	43	42	53	51

Movement: 3/6/9/18 Wounds: 17

Skills: Awareness (Per), Barter (Fel) +20, Chem-Use (Int) +20, Ciphers (Acolyte, Occult, Underworld) (Int) +20, Command (Fel), Common Lore (Ecclesiarchy, Imperial Creed, Imperium, Underworld) (Int) +20, Common Lore (Adeptus Arbites, Administratum) (Int) +10, Common Lore (War) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +10, Drive (Ground Vehicle) (Ag), Evaluate (Int) +20, Forbidden Lore (Cults, Daemonology, Heresy, Inquisition, Psykers, Warp) (Int) +20, Forbidden Lore (Archeotech, Mutants, Ordos, Xenos) (Int) +10, Interrogation (Fel) +20, Intimidate (S) +20, Invocation (WP) +20, Literacy (Int) +20, Logic (Int) +20, Medicae (Int), Psyniscience (Per) +10, Scholastic Lore (Archaic, Chymistry, Cryptology, Imperial Creed, Legend, Numerology, Occult, Philosophy) (Int) +20, Scholastic Lore (Astromancy) (Int) +10, Scholastic Lore (Beasts, Bureaucracy) (Int), Scrutiny (Per), Search (Per) +20, Secret Tongue (Acolyte, Ecclesiarchy) (Int) +20, Security (Ag), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int) +20, Swim (S), Tech-Use (Int), Trade (Apothecary, Copyist, Embalmer) (Int).

Talents: Armour of Contempt, Basic Weapon Training (Bolt, Las, SP), Blademaster, Combat Master, Dark Soul, Disturbing Voice, Fearless, Furious Assault, Hatred (Daemons, Heretics, Mutants, Psykers), Master Sorcerer† (Psy Rating 4), Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Power, Primitive), Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, SP), Sorcerer, Swift Attack, Touched by the Fates†† (3 Fate Points).

†See Page 116 for details of Sorcery.

††See Page 188 for details of this new Talent.

Sorcery (Minor Arcana): Call Item (7), Deaths Messenger (15), Fearful Aura (9), Precognition (8), Resist Possession (8), Sense Presence (9), Whispers of the Warp (11).

Sorcery (Major Arcana): Bio-lightning (16), Compel (19) Constrict (15), Daemon Wrack (23), Dominate (26), Fire Bolt (13), Seed Mind (28).

Armour: Light flak coat (Arms 2, Legs 2), carapace breast plate (Body 5)

Weapons: Daemon sword (1d10+6 E†††; WP 31, Aetheric Render, Balanced, Dark Fire, The Beast Within, Uncanny Resilience, Warp Touched). For full details of Daemonic weapons see page 120 of **Chapter IV: Malleus**. Bolt pistol fitted with a red-dot laser sight (30m; S/2/–; 1d10+5 X; Pen 4; Clip 8; Rld Full) loaded with inferno shells, 1 spare clip of inferno rounds, Fra'al glass knife (1d5+5††† R; Pen 4; Toxic (1d10) see page 73).

†††Includes Strength Bonus.

Gear: Greater Malefic Codex, good quality cybernetic eyes (includes Dark Sight system), respirator, writing kit.





VI

The Hunted

Nemesis, I Name Thee

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The Noble Art of Villain Design

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The Most Wanted Heretics of the Calixis Sector

Chapter VI: The Hunted: Wanted Heretics of the Calixis Sector

"If you set yourself against me you will die, it is inevitable."

—Coriolanus Vestra

This chapter showcases seven of the most notorious and dangerous heretics at large in the Calixis Sector. These heretics are infamous amongst the Inquisition, and their apprehension and the termination of any associated with them is a top priority for those who serve the Holy Ordos. These villains range widely in scope, nature, and goals, but differ in most cases from the cults and other threats detailed in this book in that they are largely solo operators. When they do gather followers around them, it is only to serve them rather than to further any cause or long term goal.

These enemies have all been declared Excommunicate Tratoris by the Holy Ordos and are marked for death.

NEMESIS, I NAME THEE

A nemesis is a reoccurring villain whose schemes the Acolytes have thwarted and whose vengeance spitefully dogs their steps. A nemesis is a classic plot device for a long-term campaign; few things motivate players more than discovering that their nemesis is behind the conspiracy that they have uncovered, and nothing is more satisfying for those players than when they finally bring their nemesis down. To help you introduce and use a nemesis in your game, there are a few guidelines that are worth bearing in mind:

A nemesis should not be behind every heresy: While it is important that a nemesis reoccurs in your campaign, if he is omnipresent his impact is lessened—better to save him for the main events.

A nemesis should hurt the Player Characters: For a nemesis to be an effective threat, he must genuinely have the potential and the motivation to damage, undermine, or kill the Acolytes, their allies and friends, etc. More to the point, he also has the power to get away with it, at least for a time. This way a nemesis can easily become a genuinely loathed figure that players will do almost anything to destroy, a villain the players love to hate.

A nemesis should escape until the final showdown: In order to be an effective focus of the PCs' thirst for vengeance, they must confront their nemesis several times and have him slip through their fingers (or defeat him only to find out someone else was pulling his strings—the real nemesis!). This makes the satisfaction when they finally triumph all the greater.

Using this Chapter

Each of these men and women is a monster in human form; their crimes are legion and their atrocities many. Each is intended to be a worthy adversary for any group of Acolytes, and any one of them can become the arch-nemesis for a campaign or simply provide a memorable villain for a single adventure.

Profiles for the Most Wanted?

Profiles for the most wanted heretics in the Calixis Sector are not included in this chapter. This omission is quite deliberate, as the danger, abilities, and powers of these heretics have not been pinned down or specified. These factors are for the GM to decide and fit to your games; they can be moulded into as powerful a villain as your particular game demands. To help you, this section includes a new Talent, Touched by the Fates, that is ideal for building powerful villains—the sort that require more than a lucky bolter round to take down.

Touched by The Fates (Talent)

Prerequisites: Non Player Characters only, they must have free will, and may not be applied to Daemons and other non-living creatures.

The NPC has a number of Fate Points equal to half his Willpower Bonus (rounding up). He may use these Fate Points in exactly the same way as Player Characters and may even "burn" a Fate Point to survive death and destruction (if possible), although this should always happen "off camera." If in any given situation the NPC would be defeated and the scenario resolved in the Acolytes' favour, the NPC will return another day (probably for revenge!). In addition, the rules for Righteous Fury also apply to this NPC.



THE NOBLE ART OF VILLAIN DESIGN

One of the best things about roleplaying games from both a player's and a GM's point of view is the memorable villains and opponents who can appear during games. The best of these will be talked about fondly long afterward, and their reoccurrence over the course of a campaign can provide tension in the game, greatly increasing the player's sense of satisfaction when the villain is finally bested. **Dark Heresy** is no exception to this, and the milieu of the 41st Millennium has a very wide selection to choose from when creating your own dark-hearted monsters with which to oppose your players— insane cultists, rabble rousers and demagogues, renegade Inquisitors, deadly assassins, daemon-possessed killers, lunatic scientists, hardened mercenaries, crime bosses, alien warlords, star pirates, dissolute nobles, and fiery religious zealots—the list is almost endless and the choice is yours.

Several of the cults and organisations within this book contain powerful villains, such as Lady Solace of the Pilgrims of Hayte, that you can use as a template for particularly powerful NPCs. However, the best guide to creating a villain is simply to pick a well defined idea of what you want him to be. One of the best tricks to the creating a cool villain is to give him a good narrative, a back-story, a personality, a style of his own, and his own motivations. You can even go so far as to give him a "signature" in the shape of a recognisable modus operandi, a visual style, or an exclusive goal. It is these things that make for a first rate villain, not simply a set of Characteristic scores, Talents, and game mechanics. Once you have an idea for "what" and "who" your villain is to be, then it's time to pick up a rule book and lend him some definition, not the other way around!



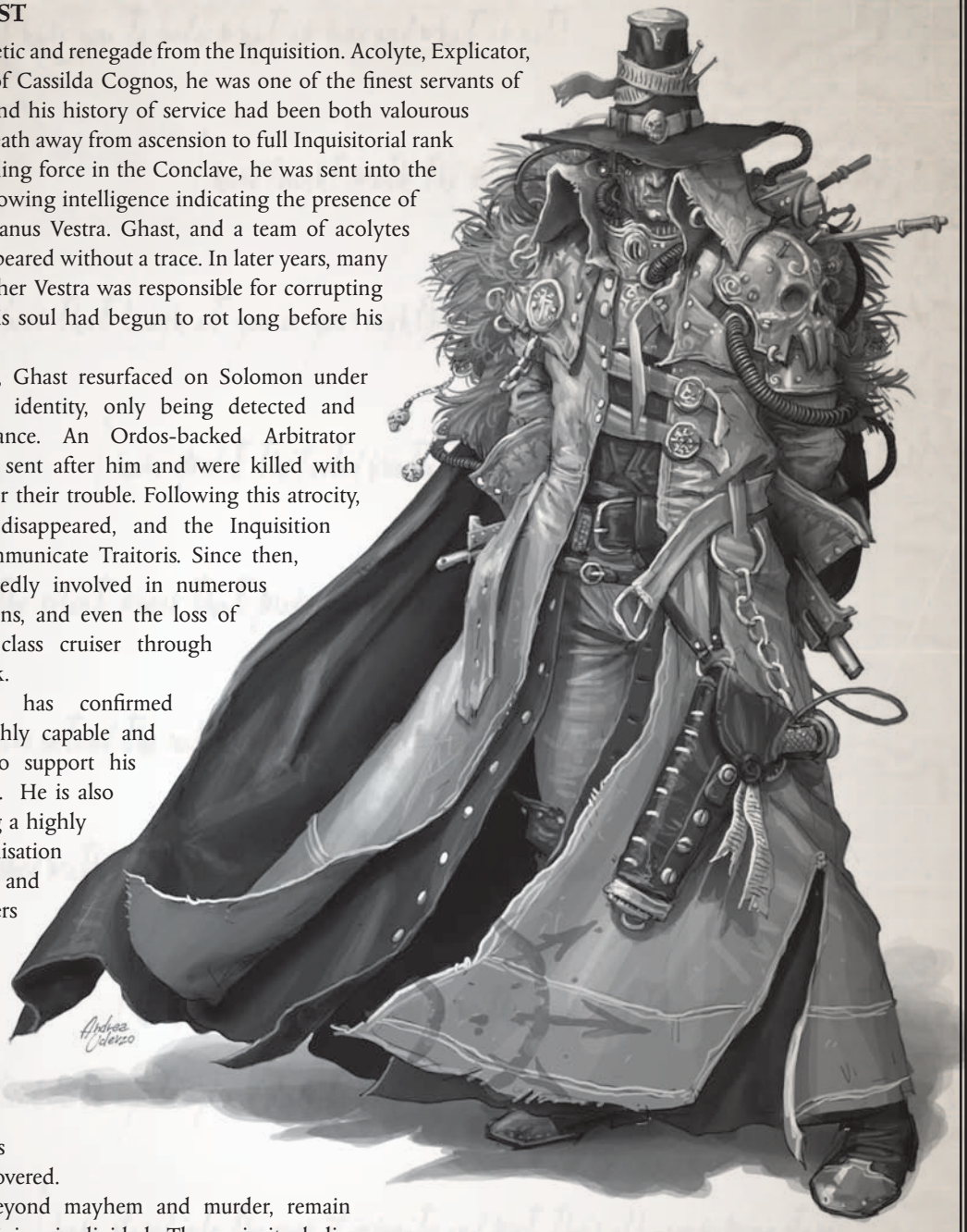
Ferran Ghast

Ferran Ghast is a heretic and renegade from the Inquisition. Acolyte, Explicator, and personal pupil of Cassilda Cognos, he was one of the finest servants of the Ordos Calixis, and his history of service had been both valourous and renowned. A breath away from ascension to full Inquisitorial rank and becoming a leading force in the Conclave, he was sent into the Adrantis Nebula following intelligence indicating the presence of the renegade Coriolanus Vestra. Ghast, and a team of acolytes sent with him, disappeared without a trace. In later years, many would wonder whether Vestra was responsible for corrupting Ghast or whether his soul had begun to rot long before his disappearance.

Seven years later, Ghast resurfaced on Solomon under a near-perfect false identity, only being detected and recognised by chance. An Ordos-backed Arbitrator execution team was sent after him and were killed with ruthless efficiency for their trouble. Following this atrocity, Ghast once more disappeared, and the Inquisition declared him Excommunicate Traitoris. Since then, he has been reportedly involved in numerous heresies, assassinations, and even the loss of an Imperial Spite class cruiser through sabotage in dry-dock.

The Inquisition has confirmed that Ghast uses highly capable and dangerous vassals to support his considerable abilities. He is also suspected of forming a highly dangerous organisation of infiltrators and assassins that answers personally to him. Every Acolyte and Ordos vassal has a standing order to pursue Ferran Ghast to his death should any lead or clue to his whereabouts be discovered.

Ghast's goals, beyond mayhem and murder, remain unclear. Current opinion is divided. The majority believe Ghast to be a genius madman who serves only his own petty spite, whilst a minority suspect that there is some other hidden agenda or other grand design at work.





Myrchella Sinderfell



Lady Myrchella Sinderfell is one of the most ellusive and destructive heretics active in the Calixis Sector. Intelligent, resourceful, and cruel, over the centuries Myrchella Sinderfell has sampled blasphemous pleasures, dallied with diverse heresies, and committed atrocities of the most vile nature for no other reason than her own gratification.

Born into the high Sinderfell family of Scintilla, Myrchella Sinderfell was raised as part of a lineage whose wealth and holdings spanned the Calixis Sector. It is said that in her younger years she showed exceptional promises in all areas of education, with no sign of the madness to come in the first decades of her life. When she came of age, Myrchella used the Sinderfell wealth to assemble a vile court of sorcerers, xenophiles, flesh crafters, and corrupt savants in the seclusion of the Sinderfell manse on Quaddis, collecting them and their knowledge like a true dilettante of the vile. The corruption of Lady Sinderfell was finally betrayed to the Inquisition by one of her mistreated servants.. The Holy Ordos razed the Sinderfell manse in a single night—it is said that the fury of the assault could be seen from the balconies of far Xacarph.

Lady Sinderfell escaped the wrath of the Imperium to recreate her blood-soaked court of blasphemy over and over again. On Malfi she suborned the leadership of a sanguinary cult and bathed in blood every day for a year. On Kalf she and her entourage burned town after town, hunted the survivors through the night, and unleashed unclean spirits to plague any who remained.

Myrchella Sinderfell is known to draw around her a court comprised of heretics. These heretics have included rogue psykers, warp dabblers, xenophiles, hereteks, dissolute nobles, corrupt Navigators, scholars of the proscribed, and dealers with daemons. These courts are rarely enduring and are often discarded in flight or destroyed for diversion by Lady Sinderfell herself.

Sinderfell prefers to assume the identity of others and corrupt families, cults, and organisations to her own ends (usually including murder and wanton infliction of pain). She is known to favour numerous devices of forbidden technology, some of xenos design, to further her proclivities. Though reported as killed on board the *Phoenix's Ransom* by Judge Uzzriah, and again in the Castigation of the Red Vaults of Luggnum, Lady Myrchella Sinderfell is still believed at large in the Calixis Sector.

Myrchella Sinderfell's avarice, spite, narcissism and sadism are obvious and reflected in every part of the heresies that have made her notorious. She has wallowed in gore, inflicted pain, and darkened her fractured soul not for an ideal but simply because it makes her "happy."

Magos Vathek



The facts of Magos Vathek's career, before he was cast out from the Adeptus Mechanicus and became a hunted renegade are entirely unknown, and the tech-priest authorities have been singularly unforthcoming in this regard. It is thought that he was attached to the Explorator fleets of Archmagos Thule before some incident or event drove him mad, turning him into a renegade hunted equally by the Inquisition and the forces of the Machine Cult.

Vathek is obsessed with acquiring and perfecting dark technological lore. In particular, he desires the technological means to restore full life to dead tissue, although he is also known to have created forbidden weaponry, crafted flesh gholams, and experimented with a variety of prohibited alchemical and energy systems. His forbidden experiments are already reckoned to have cost upwards of 3,000 lives, most notably in a mass casualty event known as the "Morningside Incident" on Solomon, and on a smaller scale during the "dockside ripper" murders on Dreah. At the end of the latter, Vathek slew a Mechanicus force sent to destroy him and escaped off-world. He is also known to have attacked a previously unknown resurrectionist cult on the cemetery world of Pilgrim's Pause and left great slaughter in his wake, plundering the cult's own dark secrets. Vathek's current whereabouts and activities remain unknown.

In appearance, Vathek looks to be a heavily augmented tech-priest, habitually robed in tattered black, surrounded by a multitude of black-iron and brass mechadendrites fitted with surgical tools, callipers, and energy coils. He is known to have incorporated the forbidden technology of a Sarkossan wave generator into his own carapace, and his face is covered by a silver skull mask grafted onto necrotic muscle and bone. He is believed to be no longer "alive" in any meaningful sense, but propelled by the power of his own dark technology. He has proven extremely difficult to slow or destroy with conventional weapons fire, and extreme measures are to be advised when confronting him.

Aside from his drive for dark scientific lore, Vathek appears to have no known goals or plans. He also does not cooperate with or serve others, fashioning only unliving servitors as his needs arise. Some theorise that Vathak's true obsession is somehow discovering a means to restore biological life to his own decaying flesh.

The Burning Princess



The life and true nature of this appallingly powerful rogue psyker, known by rumour and dark repute over the last few years (since her first recorded appearance during an uprising on Pellucida IX) as the "Burning Princess," remains a mystery to the Holy Ordos. It is a mystery made all the more poignant and galling by the clear presence of a witch hunter's brand on her cheek.

The Burning Princess is an alpha-plus level rogue psyker and by some estimates the most powerful currently at large in the Calixis Sector. She still appears to be a young woman in her late teens, and if this is true, it may be possible that her powers will only increase with maturity should she survive.

Already a pyrokinetic of extraordinary ability, she can transform herself seemingly without effort or risk into a walking holocaust of flames, able to focus her abilities with pinpoint accuracy to char a hole through warship armour. A wanderer, she has been encountered working alongside several renegade and mutant groups, and even for a time upon a pirate raider vessel operating out of the Hazeroth Abyss. Such is her threat that a specially equipped taskforce under the noted Witch Hunter Fhendahl was founded to trace and apprehend her. It successfully tracked her to an abandoned settlement on the ill-reputed world of Dusk, where she prevailed and everyone in Fhendahl's mission burned. She is still at liberty, and her current whereabouts remain unknown.

This witch's motivations remain as mysterious as her identity and true origins. After-action reports by traumatised survivors have claimed her both to be a dead-eyed marionette, seemingly uninterested in the horrors she inflicts, while others paint her as a laughing devil, filled with malice and sadistic glee. The truth remains unproven.

Coriolanus Vestra



Brother Missionary Coriolanus Vestra was a loyal, even revered, Imperial Missionary who fought to bring the light of the Emperor to those who knew it not. His zeal was marked by his superiors—Cardinal Fortis noted on several occasions how Vestra undertook missions in totally uncharted regions of space, always returning to bring news of thousands of new followers of the Imperial Creed. The final mission undertaken by Coriolanus Vestra records that he ventured into the Halo Stars in search of human communities lost for millennia. He did not return and was presumed to have perished.

What exactly occurred to Vestra on his journey into the Halo Stars is not known, but it can be easily inferred that something occurred that caused him to break his faith and turn him against the Imperium that he had so devoutly served. The fact that Vestra uses the phrase "bathed in the light of the black sun" in some of his blasphemous addresses, has been the focus of much analysis and may pertain to some dark revelation that turned Vestra into the arch-heretic he is today.

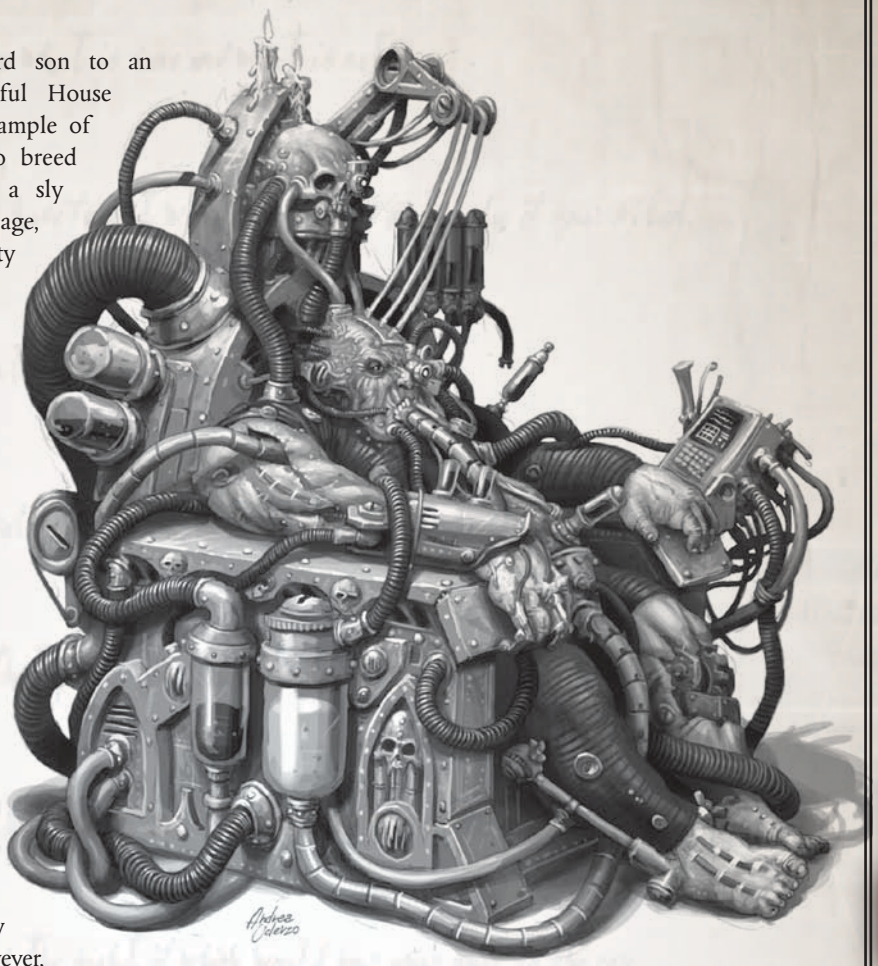
Fifty years after his disappearance, Coriolanus Vestra secretly returned to Imperial space. He slipped onto the world of Lassiv in distant Hecuba, a dishevelled shadow among many. Two years of meticulous and brutal endeavour saw Vestra dedicating Lassiv and the souls of its people to the ruination of the Emperor's realm from beneath a banner topped with the planetary governor's severed head. It was not, however, until after ten more years, three befouled worlds, and countless acts of heresy that the true identity of this arch-corruptor was uncovered. The anger and shame of the Ecclesiarchy has not abated in the eight decades that have passed since that revelation.

Coriolanus Vestra's chief treachery is his association with a great number of cults and heretical organisations, including the Serrated Query, the Brotherhood of the Horned Darkness, the Pale Throng, and the Masqued of Malfi amongst many more. He is, however, only ever a peripheral figure and an intermediary who prefers to work alone as a freelance agent of sorts for the duration of a particular task or objective. He often incites rebellion through demagoguery and acts as a go-between and facilitator for different heretical and malefic cults in order to create a larger force of disorder.

Coriolanus Vestra's spite and zeal in persecuting his personal war against the Imperium cannot be doubted. It is unknown if Vestra, beyond a desire to simply bring anarchy and destruction, has any discernable grand scheme.



Tobias Belasco



Tobias Belasco was born the third son to an impoverished wing of the powerful House Belasco on Malfi and is another example of the ability of certain noble lines to breed unpardonable monsters. Reportedly a sly and deceitful glutton from an early age, Tobias railed against the gentle poverty in which he was raised and the fallen status of his line. As he grew, he put his remarkable intellect and cunning to work and quickly displaced or murdered his way to control of his family's line, restoring its fortunes in the process. He was quickly taken into the service of the Belasco Great House, where he acted as a dealer in rare antiquities and brokered many profitable deals for his clan.

This elevation appears not to have been enough for him. Soon he took to seeking thrills by dalliances with petty cult groups, fellow epicures, and jaded wantons, living far beyond even his prodigious means. Rather than risk embezzling funds from his notorious clan, he took to blackmail, murder, and the Cold Trade to fund his notorious life of excesses, eventually leading him to dealing in slavery. However, as the years passed, not even this was enough to alleviate his boredom. By what means he finally descended into complete criminal insanity is unknown, although a lifetime of immorality and substance abuse no doubt played some part in it. Not satisfied with killing his enemies, he instead took to abducting them in secret and eating them slowly, one piece at a time.

When these shocking crimes finally came to light, it proved too much for his infamous noble house to stand. Tobias fled Malfi via his Cold Trade connections with a portion of his wealth and his family's assassin cadre at his heels. For more than 50 years he has been on the run, turning up on dozens of worlds and using many aliases to stay one step ahead of his former clan.

He is also a fugitive of the Ordo Xenos, whose ire he provoked when he killed and ate several of Inquisitor Van Vuygens' acolytes who were investigating a xenos-slavery ring that he had instigated on Snowden's World. Torn between his desire to remain hidden and a desire to continue his opulent lifestyle through black marketeering, deception, and murder, Tobias has managed to remain one step ahead of his many hunters over the years thanks to his quick wits, formidable intelligence, and a thoroughly nasty imagination. Now in his late nineties, his past is catching up with him—his obscenely fat bulk must be held up by a suspensor chair and he is rapidly reaching the limits of how long his wrecked constitution can be kept alive through black market implants and chem treatments.

Despite his debased and corpulent exterior, Tobias Belasco is a genius-level intellect who has a talent for deception, commerce, and murder that borders on the supernatural. He is marked for death not only by the Inquisition but also by his former family, and attempts to maintain a veil of secrecy at all times.

Tobias Belasco's only motivation is to continue his life of wickedness and feed his dread addictions. Rumours have reached the Inquisition that Tobias is searching for a more radical solution to his problems in the shape of a forbidden Halo Device.

EXCOMMUNICATE TRAITORIS

The Unknown Heretic



Lord Inquisitor Caidin has taken the unusual step of releasing and confirming a capture/termination warrant against a party whose true name, nature, and activities remain unconfirmed. The existence of this "unknown heretic" has never been definitively proven, except perhaps by a telling absence of perpetrator, evidence, or motive in certain cases of great concern to the Inquisition. Like a dark void hiding amid the blackness of night, his existence can be inferred from instances of mystery and apparent coincidence linking together a telling string of mysterious deaths and disappearances over the last decade and a half.

These deaths have uniformly occurred among the contacts or affiliates of Inquisitors, and, as a result, operations have been repeatedly compromised or crippled through the termination of vital agents, data-sabotage, theft, and entire covert operation cells simply vanishing. Forensic examinations reveal nothing. Alone, each incident could be dismissed as coincidence, but together they form a web that darkly hints that there is a traitor in the Inquisition's midst. This unknown individual appears able to move and kill at will within the Imperium, leaving no trace behind.

Recently, the deaths of Inquisitors Chalan and Severon are believed to be the work of the faceless traitor—both died when pursuing operations based on intelligence thought to have originated from within the ranks of the Ordos Calixis. In both cases, the method of killing took the form of ambushes that appeared to mimic the methods of well known heretical or blasphemous organisations. This alone indicates that the unknown heretic has access to the highest quality information and materiel. For example, the psychic wracking of Inquisitor Severon was carefully hallmarked to replicate the horrors perpetrated by the Pilgrims of Hayte, a subterfuge that could only be orchestrated by one who is intimate with the details of the Pilgrims of Hayte's modus operandi. Worryingly, Inquisitor Chalan was notoriously circumspect, to the degree that he could only have been drawn-out by someone that he trusted.

Recently at Lord Caidan's express arrangement, a more esoteric investigation has been undertaken. Auguries and divinations by the most potent seers have revealed an empty and impenetrable void around events surrounding the suspected activities of the unknown heretic—as if the whole incident has been simply ripped from history, leaving a rent in the fabric of things in its place. This void has consequently added an even darker dimension to the investigation.

The heretic's motivations and goals are unknown, but it seems the foundations of the Holy Ordos are the direct target.



VII

The House of Dust and Ash

Overview of the Adventure

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Part One: The Master of Chamber XIII

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Part Two: A Voyage Over a Poisoned Sea

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Part Three: The House of Dust and Ash

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Part Four: Death Trap

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Aftermath

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NPCs and Antogonists

•

Player Handouts

Chapter VII: The House of Dust and Ash

"He was a man that voyaged into the darkness further than any man before him, but what he found there never equalled the blackness in his own soul."

—Lord Sector Marhanus Sult
speaking about Erasmus Haarlock

The House of Dust and Ash is an adventure intended for use with experienced Acolytes (suggested to be around their 4th or 5th Career Rank), set around the auction of several rare relics and curios belonging to the infamous Rogue Trader Erasmus Haarlock. Malign forces move behind this auction, and through it a conspiracy of revenge from beyond the grave will ensnare a number of powerful and dangerous antagonists. Thanks to the machinations of an infamous Inquisitor, it will entrap the Acolytes as well. Drawn into this deadly intrigue, it is up to the Acolytes to unlock the secrets of the Haarlock legacy in order to survive.

Overview of the Adventure

As the adventure begins the Player Characters are transferred temporarily into the service of a shadowy and notorious figure in the Holy Ordos, Inquisitor Silas Marr, on the bleak and poisonous industrialised hive world of Solomon. Marr has in mind to use the Acolytes to perform a covert investigation and observation mission by having them attend, under false identities, the auction of several artefacts belonging to the estate of Erasmus Haarlock, a Rogue Trader long believed lost. The auction, one of several to disperse his goods from properties across the sector, is being held at the House of Dust and Ash—a huge and ancient crematoria and tomb complex that dominates a volcanic promontory set amid Solomon's toxic Balemire Sea known as the Burning Isle.

Thanks to Marr's intervention, the long hand of Inquisitorial authority has covertly held back the auction with legal wrangling until a small team of Throne agents (the Acolytes) could be planted at the sale. Their job is to observe events and look for wanted heretics and potential conspirators among the bidders—dangerous individuals and groups who might be drawn by the promise of forbidden items among the Rogue Trader's belongings. This, at least, is what Marr has informed the Holy Ordos and the Acolytes' Inquisitor. However, it is not the whole truth. Marr has a secret agenda.

Marr believes that Erasmus Haarlock (see Player Handout 3 on page 230) is neither dead nor lost, and that he has arranged the auction to draw out his enemies and entrap them. This suspicion is the reason he has used his influence to requisition the Acolytes' help. He prefers to risk them rather than lose his own servants in what he thinks could be a potential death trap. However, not even Inquisitor Marr fully suspects just what is about to transpire or what monsters will be drawn to Haarlock's legacy…

Using this Adventure

This adventure is intended for a group of three to six Acolytes, who should be somewhere around Ranks 4 to 6. The group should preferably represent a good mix of Career Paths, with those suited for investigation and interaction as well as combative types needed for success. The adventure also comfortably accommodates more powerful characters, as the plot and its resolution are a challenging one. As part of the adventure's narrative, the Acolytes are inducted into the temporary service of another Inquisitor, and so the adventure can be easily slotted into an ongoing campaign. Alternatively, The House of Dust and Ash is suitable as a continuation of the arc of previously published adventures such as Edge of Darkness, Illumination, and those within Purge the Unclean.

This adventure is also intended in no small part as an introduction to the darker forces and intra-Inquisition politics that the Acolytes might encounter as they progress in power, possibly providing a springboard to further conspiracies and campaigns. The House of Dust and Ash is also deliberately laced with hooks and leads that can be later used by the GM for adventures yet to come.

Structure

The adventure itself is divided into four parts that should be played in the order that they are presented. The adventure has numerous optional encounters and room for expansion. It might take as little as two or three sessions of play to complete, although it will likely be longer, depending in part on how much interaction or investigation the Acolytes undertake of their own accord—and how much opposition the GM throws at them in the adventure's finale!

The adventure has a large cast of Non Player Characters that the GM will need to represent. For brevity, these have been grouped into several Dramatis Personae sections, and the GM is recommended to thoroughly familiarise himself with these characters, their roles, and their motivations before play. Detailed statistics for several important NPCs and antagonists can be found grouped together in the Appendices at the end of the adventure, along with a planetary datafax for the world of Solomon and a basic map readout of the House of Dust and Ash for use during play.

The adventure breaks down as follows.

Part One: The Master of Chamber XIII

The Acolytes are unexpectedly inducted into the service of the sinister Inquisitor Marr and learn of their new mission and the events that surround it.

Advice For the Games Master

The House of Dust and Ash plunges the Acolytes into the heart of a number of ongoing intrigues and the power plays of several powerful cults and dark forces moving in the Calixis Sector. Rather than focus on a specific mystery or investigation, or even a direct conflict against a known or suspected enemy, this adventure instead focuses on what happens when the Acolytes are caught up in plots and events over which they have little knowledge or direct control. The Acolytes' principal goal is to survive. In order to do this, it will not be enough for them to simply battle with blade and bolt round—although there will be a good deal of that too. They will have to use their wits to uncover the true nature of what is going on, and if they don't, they won't survive.

This is a very plot-driven adventure, and you must take care to thoroughly familiarise yourself with the ins-and-outs of what's going on before proceeding. Most importantly, you should decide exactly who the Scion of Haarlock will be—see page @@ for more details.

Running this adventure might seem to be a daunting prospect for the GM, but though it might seem a complex juggling act at first, it essentially boils down to two tasks. The first is the organisation and portrayal of the numerous factions and NPCs gathered for the auction, and the second is driving forward the adventure's narrative.

To help you with this, several detailed Dramatis Personae text boxes (see pages @@ and @@) have been included to help frame and portray the major NPCs. The adventure itself operates on a broad event-driven timeline, regardless of any wild tangents that the Acolytes might pursue—of course, feel free to follow the Acolytes' lead if it suits your style of play. Lastly, we recommend that you endeavour to make notes during play so that you don't forget what's going on and the state of various NPCS.

A Dark and Turbulent Stage

This adventure drops the Acolytes "in at the deep end." They soon find themselves caught up in events as they evolve and are manipulated and endangered by the deadly and mysterious forces at work around them. Although narrow in physical scope (the adventure chiefly occurs at three self-contained locations), this adventure's setup is extremely open in terms of action and interaction for the players. The events can be resolved in a number of ways, and they may well have deadly consequences for the Acolytes if they fail to navigate them successfully. If, however, they should triumph and escape, thwarting Haarlock's vengeance, they can take pride in a considerable accomplishment and will have their eyes opened to new horrors, mysteries, and aspects of the Inquisition's shadow war previously unguessed at.

Adjusting the Adventure's Power Level and Lethality

It is important to note that The House of Dust and Ash has been written as an unashamedly dangerous adventure and at times an unforgiving one, although of course you, as the GM, can be as harsh or forgiving as you deem necessary and appropriate in your own game. Indeed, we encourage you to modify the adventure as you see fit in this regard. You may, for instance, lower the number or power levels of the adversaries involved.

For less experienced Acolytes, the easiest way to do this is to remove the character of Master Nonesuch at the auction, as he and his followers are easily the most dangerous of the opponents that the Acolytes must face. You may also want to decrease the number of Wreckers in the skyship attack and the number of creatures unleashed in the adventure's final act.

Building on What is Written Here

Much of this scenario is open-ended, relying on the GM to fill-in his own details where needed, and you are positively encouraged to do so. Make this adventure an axis point in your campaign and set up all your plans and plots to come; make the intrigues, enemies, and conspiracies within your own or exchange them for ones of your own devising. It will only increase the enjoyment both for yourself and your players and add depth to the game.

Part Two: A Voyage Over a Poisoned Sea

The Acolytes, travelling incognito, take passage on the skyship *Cygnan Martyr* along with several other interested parties headed to the auction. The intrigues begin with bribery and murder, culminating in an ambush and piracy before they reach the Burning Isle.

Part Three: The House of Dust and Ash

Upon arrival at the great crematoria, the manoeuvrings and plots begin in earnest. The Acolytes meet their contact and receive some very disquieting news. They also have time to conduct investigations and intrigues of their own, as well as view the auction lots on offer and the potential bidders involved before the main event.

Part Four: Death Trap

The auction commences and Haarlock's trap is sprung, ensnaring all within its deadly embrace. From this point onwards, the Acolytes have 13 hours to live as the great crematoria counts down to destruction. They must uncover the secret of Haarlock's trap and survive the attentions of their fellow attendees if they are to escape with their life intact.

Part One: The Master of Chamber XIII

Lorelii Dekanta

"A senior Explicator in the service of your master, Lorelii Dekanta is a striking and severe-looking woman in her late middle age. Serving as an emissary and translator, Dekanta is an adept trained by the Sororitas Dialogous and is an expert negotiator and experienced acolyte who serves as one of your Inquisitor's close advisors. You have worked with her before and know she is well-respected by her peers, having a reputation for steadfastness and wisdom."

This adventure begins with the Acolytes being temporarily being reassigned from their usual duties to the service of Inquisitor Marr, a mysterious and sinister figure within the Inquisition. They are drawn first to a meeting with Marr in his chambers in the Halls of the Chancellery Court on the world of Solomon, before he sends them on their mission.

ACOLYTES, INTERRUPTED

For the Acolytes, entering into Marr's service should be a jarring moment, a clear indication that something unusual or not within the normal bounds of protocol has occurred. Just how this effect is achieved is up to the GM to fit into his ongoing campaign, but it is suggested that either a journey being made by the Acolytes or a routine task, such as a courier mission or prisoner escort, is interrupted and they are abruptly diverted to Solomon with only the most perfunctory notice. Alternatively, you could fabricate another mission for their usual Inquisitor that takes them to Solomon and proves to be a dead end (perhaps suspiciously so), leaving them already set up and waiting for Marr's order.

In any case, a trusted associate of their master who is already known and well-disposed to the Acolytes should make the first approach to them. He or she has gathered them together in a private chamber of a spire in the hive-citadel of Gloriana, the capitol of the bleak world of Solomon. If you already have such a trusted NPC in your campaign, use him, if not introduce the character of Lorelii Dekanta (see sidebar). Once they are together, the agent signals the importance and authority of her mission by the use of high level ciphers before informing them that they are being assigned to the service of another Inquisitor here on Solomon. He requires them for a mission of some urgency, with their own Inquisitor's full agreement.

The agent reveals to them that Marr may be found acting in the public guise as a notary and script-broker. He is located in the thirteenth chamber of the thirty-ninth level of the outer ward, at the Halls of the Chancellery Court, a vast Administratum legal complex that dominates the Jargan Prefecture of the city. The agent has obtained for them a speeder-carriage, which waits to take them to the Court as soon as their meeting has concluded. If they are new to Solomon, at the GMs discretion, the Agent will give each of them a copy of the Solomon planetary datafax on a data-slate (see Player Handout II on page 228-229).

Questioning the Agent Further

A **Challenging (+0) Scrutiny Test**, if successful, will reveal that the agent has some disquiet about the matter. A further **Challenging (+0) Charm Test**, a well role-played interaction, or prevailing on some past relationship on the Acolytes' part may elicit the following responses (see T**able 7-1: What the Agent Knows**). This information, with some supposition and deduction, might also be gleaned by an Acolyte through the use of the **Forbidden Lore (Inquisition)** Skill. The agent does not, however, know anything else about the particulars of their mission, nor will the agent accompany them. Instead, the agent must continue the task the Acolytes have been diverted from..

Table 7-1: What the Agent Knows

Degrees of Success	Details Known
Standard Success	"This matter is somewhat irregular, to say the least. It is unusual for such a request to be made outside the circle of an Inquisitor's close allies, let alone outside his Ordo."
One or Two Degrees	"I know little of Inquisitor Marr, but his reputation is a mysterious one, and I do not know him to be one of our master's allies. However, I do know that he was already aware of your presence and requested your aid specifically. Arrangements were made in haste to accommodate him."
Three or More Degrees	"Be on your guard, for though it is wrong to speak ill of one of the members of the Holy Ordos, Marr has long held a sinister reputation. I have heard many powerful people, even those within the Conclave, turn to hushed whispers and glance over their shoulders fearfully when they speak his name. I know neither his Ordo nor his alliance, only that he has sat here on Solomon like an old spider in a web as long as any can remember."



THE HALLS OF THE CHANCELLERY COURT

After a flight lasting half an hour or so through the smog-filled and twilight skies of Hive Gloriana, passing between the soaring jagged black metal architecture and blade-like peaks of its spires, the speeder-carriage sets the Acolytes down on a platform before a vast, hulking building of gargantuan proportions. This frightening, cathedral-like structure stands fully a kilometre wide, and its upper reaches are lost in a shrouding mirk of polluted fog. Carved from black volcanic basalt, its sheer faces are illuminated by the arcs of greenish stab-lights and its façade is almost entirely devoid of ornamentation, save for a huge clock face marking Solomon's 13 hour cycles. This edifice is the Halls of the Chancellery Court.

Once inside, the Acolytes find a labyrinthine tangle of cold and dimly lit chambers, stairways, courtrooms, halls, and archives, all facing into a vast echoing central vault. Their weapons are not allowed beyond the gated and heavily guarded portico. The weapons are individually tagged and sent for storage for the duration of the Acolytes' visit regardless of who they claim to be or what business they claim to be on.

Once past the barrier, they find themselves caught up in the busy rush of hundreds, possibly thousands, of black-clad clerks, sombrely robed advocates, hovering servo-skulls, and scurrying menials, all conducting business under the watchful eyes of carapace armoured guards with iron portcullis-style helms. Here and there, supplicants and claimants of every conceivable origin and station can be found variously waiting, walking, arguing, and queuing, many adding some trace of colour to the dark and solemn proceedings.

Although more malign GMs may wish to draw out getting to Marr by forcing the Acolytes to wade through interminable bureaucracy and red tape, it is recommended that after some time goggling at the immensity of it all, a grey-faced, silent and scarecrow-thin clerk be sent to lead them to his master's chambers.

More information on the Chancellery Court and its business can be found on Page 167.

A Meeting with Marr

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

> After an interminably slow and meandering journey following the grey clerk, you arrive on a particularly dilapidated and almost abandoned mezzanine level high up in the shadows of the great vault. You are led to a non-descript and battered looking door with a small brass plate labelled "XIII."
>
> The door opens automatically, and you are ushered into a dark and dusty room, furnished in black wood and stacked from floor to ceiling with crack-spined books, roll upon roll of parchment, and heaps of yellowing documents. A feeble fire gutters in a hearth in one corner, and grimy glow-lamps set in recesses in the walls shed flickering light. A second grey-faced clerk appears soundlessly from a side door bearing a tarnished looking silver tray on which are piled wax-sealed parchment envelopes. He offers one to each of you before soundlessly retreating again.

At this point, give each of the players a copy of Player Handout I, Marr's writ of authority. The clerks are as dead-eyed and vacant as servitors (and indeed suffer from frequent mind-cleansings) and will answer no questions. Marr will leave them waiting a while to read the writ and mull over its contents before making an entrance. When he does, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

> A large set of doors concealed within one bookcase-wall swings open and a hunched figure is brought in, carried in a dark sedan chair by two servitors and accompanied by a gaunt young woman in a heavy stiff-backed dress with a gauzy mantle.
>
> The sedan chair is lowered before you, and the servitors detach their carrying rigs and stand impassively against the wall. The seated figure is that of a withered elderly man with long, lank hair and a narrow, sharp face. He is encased in several layers of threadbare and soiled-looking clothes, and a moth-eaten fur shawl covers his shoulders. He succumbs to a wracking fit of coughing and has blood dabbed from his mouth afterward by the gaunt young woman. Silently he examines you with vividly intense amber eyes that seem to shine with a feverish light before he speaks to you in a bitter, rasping voice.
>
> *"I am Silas Marr,"* he says, pointing at the letters in your hands, *"and it would seem that you… are mine."*

Marr is an unashamed grotesque. He is bitter, sardonic, and leering, and has nothing but apparent scorn for the solemnity of protocol, or in fact the rest of the Calixis Conclave. But he is neither stupid nor does he wish to entirely alienate the Acolytes. He presents his seal if asked, and will meet any

challenges to his authority or attempts at levity or banter with rasping amusement as long as they do not go too far. The woman at his side is an appallingly powerful psyker and will meet any attempts to use psychic powers by the Acolytes, no matter how subtle, with a painful telepathic intrusion that will leave them in no doubt of the consequences involved.

Marr is a consummate deceiver, and the persona he is presenting the Acolytes is no more nor less than just what he wishes them to see. Any attempt to discern any hidden purpose behind his façade (through the Scrutiny Skill, etc.) must make an Opposed Test versus his Deceive Skill of 78, and even then the Acolytes will learn no more than that he is withholding facts from them.

The Matter at Hand

Once Marr has dealt with the matter of the Acolyte's service he will move directly on to the mission that he would have them undertake. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

> *"I called upon your assistance because an unexpected matter has arisen, the action that your master spoke of in the writ. My own Acolytes whom I would trust to carry this out are all otherwise engaged with tasks I cannot lightly withdraw them from, and your arrival in the area has been fortuitous to say the least. The auction is to be held at a place called the House of Dust and Ash, a great crematoria and tomb complex set on an island some 900 kilometres distant from the southern edge of the hive, over the Balemire Sea. The island is exempted from many laws by ancient right and from prying eyes by its isolation, and so a perfect place for renegades to gather.*
>
> *"I require you to undertake this task for me. You will be my agents at the auction, gathering intelligence about those who attend it, discerning their desires and true nature. See what rats are drawn to the stench of Haarlock's carrion feast. Unless you discover a heretic whose destruction warrants breaking your cover or a threat too dire to ignore, you need do nothing else but be my eyes and ears.*
>
> *"I will not mislead you, it is to a saurian infested jungle I am sending you, and there may be those in attendance who would do you harm simply because you might be a rival. Indeed, such people would kill you if they knew your true allegiance. So I trust to your skill and judgement. You have not failed your master in the past, and I trust you will offer me the same measure of worth… Do this for me and you will find me a grateful master, however temporary, and such debts I do not forget…"*

The Arrangements

Time is pressing. Since having discovered word of the private auction, Marr has ma naged to stall matters with some legal wrangling from the Administratum, but now the auction will go ahead in three days time. Marr, operating under the guise of a minor Rogue Trader called Ezekiel Sunder, has successfully petitioned the Haarlock estate for entry into the auction. The Acolytes will work under cover as Sunder's chosen agents and bid in his stead. Marr will suggest that they select one from their number to serve as a "principal" in this and that the others should act the parts of experts, advisors, or bodyguards as most appropriate to their talents.

Marr provides the Acolytes with the relevant identity documents: an auction invitation, respirators, corrosion resistant vapour cloaks, a medi-pack, and formal livery for the auction. He also gives them a data-slate detailing numerous wanted heretics suspected to be in the sub-sector, a thousand Thrones each in petty cash, and a credit block drawn on the Chancellery Bank valid for sums up to one million Thrones. The credit block may only be accessed by code from a valid Chancellery matriculation engine, such as the ones used at the auction. This gear (and any other personal items they may have left elsewhere) is inside a speeder-carriage waiting to take them to the skyport, where the vessel *Cygnan Martyr* has been chartered to take them (and others) to the auction by the Haarlock estate. Time is of the essence, and they should leave within the hour.

Some Pertinent Questions

The Acolytes will no doubt have some questions about the mission specifics, and you can have Marr answer these off-the-cuff or provide them with details based on the information found at various points in this adventure. Here are a few likely questions and answers:

What can you tell us of the House of Dust and Ash?

The House of Dust and Ash is a huge funeral and crematoria complex whose origins are somewhat vague. It has existed for millennia and pre-dates the mass pollution of the planet. It exists and runs largely autonomously by rights granted to it under Solomon's ancient laws. It is considered to be a mark of renown and privilege among many of the world's elites to be cremated and interred there, and there are thousands of vaults and tombs in the complex.

The House is also traditionally considered to be "neutral ground" by many factions on Solomon, often hosting private meetings, negotiations, and, as in this case, auctions over the years. The island facility is run and maintained by a religious order known as the Sorrowful Guild. However, there is also a small Administratum and Chancellery presence maintained there as well, which in recent years has been forced on the Sorrowful Guild who run the place. The Guild's job is to ensure that the proprieties of contract and commerce are observed, acting in accordance with the House's long-standing rights and laws.

Who was Erasmus Haarlock?

Erasmus Haarlock was the last in a long line of infamous Rogue Traders, one of whom was said to be the first to chart the stars of what would later become the Calixis Sector. Haarlock himself had a dark reputation and is said to have travelled far into the Halo Stars and seen a great many strange and terrible things. He was last seen more than a century ago and is now believed to be dead. The private auction is being held by agents of his estate for reasons that remain undisclosed.

What are the items on sale?

The precise contents of the auction are closed until the event itself, but are said to contain *"wondrous objects and relics from stars beyond the Emperor's light."* Marr, however, has a contact on the inside, an Chancellery Advocate called Mayweather, who has managed a cursory study of the items. From his reports, Marr has determined that they pose no obvious great threat, though many of the items are extremely valuable and some are proscribed. The Acolytes should feel free to bid on and purchase any they deem fit in order to maintain their cover, *"particularly innocuous seeming written matter. The Haarlocks were always ones for ciphers and such trickery,"* Marr will add. In particular, they should feel free to purchase anything they consider too dangerous for others to obtain.

Who is expected to attend?

A private auction of this type will gather attention from many quarters, including collectors, the idle rich, those interested in xenos-lore and arcana, and most likely agents of wealthy combines and commercial interests, as well as less legitimate parties. Haarlock's infamy will no doubt bring out other shadowed interests as well.

Why not simply raid the place?

Marr's answer is simply that he believes that gathering information will ultimately lead to more valuable results, and subsequently far more important investigations and persecutions. *"If any of you are hunters, think of it as laying in ambush by a watering hole in the desert, and taking your pick of the kill,"* Marr explains.

What are we expected to do?

The Acolytes are expected to gather intelligence, bid at the auction, monitor who buys and bids, guard themselves from harm, and exercise their own judgement as to more direct methods, but to be wary of the consequences of doing so.



Silas Marr's Agenda

Just who and what Inquisitor Silas Marr is, is a matter not closely dealt with by this adventure. Suffice to say, he is a powerful and shadowy figure in the Inquisition seemingly beholden to no single Ordo, nor is he under the direct control of the Conclave itself (to any meaningful degree). From his base of operations on Solomon, Marr's information gathering network spins out across the Calixis Sector and beyond. None but he knows just how far his power extends. The fate of the ancient Rogue Trader clan of Haarlock is one of the many matters that interest him. He believes that the last page in the history of their deeds, both bloody and great, has not yet been written—and he is not wrong.

Part Two: A Voyage Over a Poisoned Sea

After a lengthy flight during the hours of night in an unmarked and servitor-controlled speeder-carriage, the Acolytes travel to the outskirts of Hive Gloriana. For a time, hissing corrosive rain splatters the resistant glass of the carriage and the air-scrubbers work to remove the acrid tang from the air. Read or paraphrase the following as they approach the skyship:

> Dawn is rapidly approaching as the speeder touches down on the landing pad of the air dock. A red haze of light is starting to creep across the horizon, illuminating the incongruous shapes of the skyships docked to their mooring masts. A turbulent, green-black sea stretches out southward. The wind blowing from the sea is heavy with acrid vapour, and you can see twisted masses of corroded metal and the upper floors of decayed buildings jutting out from the dark waters like the bones of titanic skeletons. The *Cygnan Martyr* is easily located, and you can see that the crew are already preparing to depart with the dawn.

The Flight of the Cygnan Martyr

The *Cygnan Martyr* is a privately owned skyship transport, one of several that have been chartered by the Haarlock estate to ferry interested parties to the auction. Having taken aboard its passengers, it expects to make relatively good time traversing the Balemire Sea southwards to the Burning Isle, a journey its captain estimates will take around thirty hours at cruising speed.

In addition to the Acolytes' party, there are around a dozen other passengers on board, as well as the skyship's crew, their luggage, and supplies. During the voyage, they will see other traffic moving distantly, encounter occasional flybys by patrolling Munitorium gunships (checking their clearance), and even see towering columns of flame reaching into the seething storm layer far above from a bulk tanker landing station on the horizon. Gradually the traffic will dwindle until they are alone save for the black poisonous seas below and the angry storms above, picking their way across a bleak and lifeless vista, heading ever southward.

The Skyships of Solomon

Skyships are low altitude aircraft whose use on Solomon is quite widespread for journeys outside the hive-citadels, especially where the traveller's chosen path does not follow that of the great atomic steam-turbine rails that tie together the planet's sprawling industry. Their use has grown out of locally existing technology (speeder and grav systems are relatively common on Solomon) and the hazards of the local environment which makes ground travel through much of the planet's interior zones dangerous, slow, and unpredictable at best. Low altitude flight by skyship is flexible and also avoids the turbulence of Solomon's ever-present high storm layer.

To a causal observer, a skyship looks much like a conventional lighter-than-air cylinder dirigible, but its skin is metal and the interior of the upper and lower quarters contain the gravity suspensor arrays. This leaves the hollow central core to be partitioned into propulsion engines (the suspensors provide lift but not thrust), passenger and cargo compartments, and a control deck. Solomon's skyships come in numerous classes and sizes, ranging from relatively small courier vessels to opulent pleasure-barges of its jaded guild and noble patriarchs.

The Skyship and Crew

The *Cygnan Martyr* is a medium sized transport. It looks somewhat like a tarnished, gunmetal-coloured fish some 40 metres long by 14 metres wide, terminating in a high steering fin and a cluster of directional thruster units at the rear, with an iris-like control dome and a cluster of arc-lamps at the front. A ridge of tall lightning-conduct spines run long its back. The mid-decks hold several staterooms and passenger cabins, and two windowed observation decks leading out onto air-balconies on either side of the ship. Upon boarding, the Acolytes are directed to a single cabin with several bunks which has been assigned to them. Aside from the cabins and the observation decks, the rest of the ship is off-limits for their journey.

The most important members of the skyship's 15 crew are its Captain Elias Shadrack and the first mate and steward Nahun Grist, who also doubles as the ship's cargo master. Grist has also been charged with looking after the passengers. See the Dramatis Personae on page 205 for more details.

The Passengers

There are four other parties, totalling 13 passengers plus the Acolytes aboard the *Cygnan Martyr*. The other passengers include: a scholarly looking adept named Lanus Cisten and his young assistant and scribe named Whent, two well-armed middle aged men with the look of bounty hunters going by the names of Vymer and Quill, and a merchant in crisp formal

attire called Octavia Nile accompanied by her two silent bodyguards and a hooded adept. The last party is that of a grossly overweight cleric in opulent Ministorum robes, Abbot Tamas of Shale, who is trailed by four mendicant looking journeyman-clerics whose dishevelled appearance only serves to make their master seem more florid.

The Observation Deck

The observation deck is where (other than in their cabins) the Acolytes and other passengers must spend their time. The deck is a spacious chamber with a high ceiling and wide widows fitted with retractable brass shutters on either side. Armoured doors lead to the ship's open balcony platforms. The area is furnished with a number of chairs, tables, couches, and a small bar area, along with numerous railings, hand loops, and strategically placed crash padding (in case of rough skies). The décor is by no means lavish; however, some effort has been made to elevate the bare metal with whitewash and a mural depicting the triumphs of the Angevin Crusade. Meals are served on the observation deck during the course of the journey, and at least two of the crew are present at all times, day or night.

The Balemire Sea

The Balemire Sea over which the *Cygnan Martyr* flies is a heaving, angry mass of polluted water, intermittently pierced by the jutting spires of sunken cities and the wreckage of past industrial exploitation. Highly corrosive and utterly toxic, an unprotected human immersed in its waters would last agonised seconds at best. The sea appears utterly dead except for the occasional shadows of strange and vast shapes moving through the depths.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE OF THE CYGNAN MARTYR

The following details the roles, personality and motivations of the NPCs to be found on board the skyship.

Captain Elias Shadrack

A dour, no-nonsense man with hard eyes that have seen much, Shadrack is a former Imperial Guard Lieutenant who returned broken in body and spirit from the Margin Crusade 11 years ago and who spent a full year recovering in a Hospitaller facility. He has fought hard to be where he is now and sees the captaincy of his ship as some measure of freedom in a universe of shackles and chains. He is more than willing to skirt the edge of the law or even take dangerous jobs, such as this one, if it means keeping his ship flying. He means to see his ship stay in the air and complete his contract—in that order, preferably with a minimum of fuss. He holds no illusions about the nature of his cargo and has posted armed guards at all of the vital areas of the ship.

The captain spends much of his time on the command deck (where the Acolytes will need permission to go) or in his stateroom below it, but he will greet the passengers as they come aboard and dine with them and the crew.

Captain Elias Shadrack's profile can be found on page 222.

Nahun Grist

Nominally given the job of the ship's steward and cargo master, Grist is a bald, paunchy man who habitually wears a strapped down hand cannon at his side. His manner gives the impression of crudity and ignorance, but he is never the less quick-witted and a hard bargainer. He is also a proficient cardsharp and regicide player who will happily entertain a game with any passenger who offers, and be well disposed to gracious winners and valiant losers alike.

Grist has the task of looking after the passengers on the trip and will readily talk to the Acolytes, but will not do or say anything that he thinks might endanger the ship or the contract. The passage is paid for, however the meal and drinks are not, and he will make sure that the passengers behave themselves and pay their way.

Nahun Grist's profile can be found on page @@.

Lanus Cisten

Woefully out of his depth and actually every bit as innocent as he appears, Cisten is a minor scion of one of Solomon's guilder families who has devoted himself to a life of academia and lore. Ancient history is one of his passions, and tales of Rogue Traders and their voyages have always held a fascination for him. Independently wealthy and getting on in years, Cisten sees this auction as a once in a lifetime chance to own a piece of the things he has dreamt of and studied for years—purely for research, of course. Though he will not admit it, Cisten will grow increasing frightened as matters progress and he will be happy to talk to and befriend anyone who flatters his expertise. Indeed, he can provide a great deal of helpful background knowledge if he becomes an ally of the Acolytes in what is to come. In particular, he has come across garbled and contradictory stories of the Gilded Widow and other great and perilous treasures the Haarlocks are supposed to have possessed.

Cisten is accompanied and assisted by a young junior scribe called Whent, who fetches and carries for him. Whent is a somewhat feckless and stolid young man, mutely terrified of absolutely everything since leaving the hive-citadel. He will be useless in a fight and is liable to scream and generally get in the way.

Lanus Cisten's profile can be found on page 222.

Vymer and Quill

These are two middle-aged, largely nondescript men, well armed and dressed in rugged, well worn clothes. They watch everything, reply with bland civility if questioned, and give next to nothing away. They state their names and describe themselves as *"bonded agents representing a party who wishes to remain anonymous,"* if asked, and astute observes will detect a hint of Malfi in their otherwise neutral accents (a **Routine (+30) Scrutiny Test**). They will not start any trouble, except

The Observation Decks

Primary Accessible Decks

Primary Observation Deck

Secondary Observation Deck

Side Elevation

□ = 5x5 Metres

Primary Observation Deck

Secondary Observation Deck

Plan

Primary and Secondary Observation Decks

Doorway to the Control Deck

Doorway to the Staterooms

Doorway to the Upper Suspensor Arrays

Doorway to the Upper Cabins and Cargo Compartments

□ = 2x2 Metres

Primary Observation Deck

Doorway to the Lower Cabins

Doorway to the Lower Suspensor Arrays

Secondary Observation Deck

Key

1 = Air-balcony

2 = Windows with Rectractable Brass Shutters

3 = Armoured Doorway to the Air-balconies

4 = Bar Area

5 = Stairs Down to the Secondary Observation Deck

6 = Stairs up to the Primary Observation Deck

The Cygnan Martyr

I

132-89 /cs AW

The Cygnas Martyr

Cartopict L.J.L. IS 1/114/ B126

I&P Ref: 2260612

in pursuit of their goal, but will stand for none either—they will, for example, actively defend the skyship if it is attacked, and both are highly skilled and remorseless killers.

The truth of the matter is that they are Malfian Bloodsworn, deadly bounty hunters drawn to the auction not to bid but to kill one of the participants. The identity of their target is up to the GM, but it is suggested that they will need confirmation of their target's identity from a blood-sample, rather than having definite information on the target who they are after. How they obtain this positive identification is another matter. Alternatively, they might take a more direct approach and use a literal process of elimination, killing everyone they suspect of being their true target.

Vymer and Quill's profiles can be found on page 223.

Octavia Nile

Octavia is an attractive young woman dressed in formal business attire, with fine manners and a cool, easy charm. She happily and smoothly engages the other passengers to find out who they are and their business at the auction. Her primary purpose is to find who amongst them are her direct rivals for the purchase of the Greyskin Psalter (one of the items in the sale, see page 218), so she can have them done away with in the most expeditious fashion.

Although she will claim to be working for an undisclosed guild cartel, she actually works for the Logician cult. Her silent, equally well turned-out bodyguards are never far away, but stay discreetly back to let her work. The hooded and robed adept that accompanies her party is actually an extra level of insurance for her mission's success in the shape of an Ashen Tear Assassin.

Octavia is a quick-thinking opportunist and not above attempting to bribe a likely looking Acolyte for further information on the group's intentions. She might also covertly poison anybody she thinks she can get away with by tainting their drinks or have one of her bodyguards put a bullet in a rival's back during any suitable distraction.

Octavia Nile's profile can be found on page 223.

Abbot Tamas of Shale

A heaving, sweat-stained cleric with blotchy skin and fingers like writhing meat-worms, Tamas is a loud, highly-strung missionary who repeats loudly at length to any that will listen that he has received a divine vision that has led him here to bid on a holy saint's relic. Whilst he has no definite proof, he believes that the relic is included the auction. His journey has been funded by his congregation, who have all given generously so that Tamas can secure the holy artefact.

The "abbot" however is nothing of the kind; he is a daemon-worshipping cult magus bound to the entity known as Tsyiak, the Crow Father—the same daemon that the Acolytes may have already fought against and thwarted in the adventure *Illumination*, which can be found in the **Dark Heresy Core Rulebook**. Those that are with him are the remnants of his cult, the bulk of which he sacrificed or enslaved in order to pay his passage here. The abbot's deception is not the finest, undermined by lack of in-depth knowledge of the Ministorum and his own nagging insanity and malevolence, which he is struggling to keep in check.

The daemon has sent him a dream image of the prophetic device known as the Gilded Widow, an item that will be the centrepiece of the auction, and charged him to acquire it at all cost in order that he might use it to free the daemon once more. If one or more of the Acolytes were responsible for ending the daemon's last attempt to enter the physical universe, the magus will immediately recognise them from the fevered dreams sent by his otherworldly master and will have the second goal of murdering them as painfully as possible. But until the Gilded Widow is in his hands or secrecy no longer matters, he will attempt his master's revenge as covertly as he can manage.

Tamas's fellow "believers" are an unwholesome looking lot, and a mantle of piety doesn't sit well on them. Sallow and feral looking, they will have great difficulty staying out of trouble in the skyship's confined space. One in particular, a stick-thin man with scabrous, bandaged hands named Arko, may be encountered at night alone on the deck, draining bottle after bottle of gorsk-white. Arko has a vicious temper and a sadistic streak and will cause trouble.

Abbot Tamas's profile, and that of his followers, can be found on page 223.

The Crew

The remaining crew of the *Cygnan Martyr* are tough, hardy professionals, many of them ex-servicemen recruited by Shadrack. Aside from their duties, they eat and spend some of their off-duty time on the observation deck (or at least smoking lho-sticks on the balconies), but keep largely to themselves. If suitably approached or bribed, they will talk, but will not act against the safety of the skyship or turn on the captain.

The Crew's profile can be found on page 222.

ALL ABOARD FOR THE BURNING ISLE

It is up to the GM how much detail and how many events go into making up the Acolytes, journey to the House of Dust and Ash. He may wish to cut "straight to the chase" and only deal in cursory terms with the Acolytes' fellow passengers and the voyage itself—perhaps throwing in a little bad weather to keep everyone in their cabins for the length of the voyage. However, it is recommended that you try to make the journey something of an adventure in and of itself, spicing things up with a few encounters to foreshadow the trouble ahead, as well as convey that they are travelled to a distant and dangerous place far removed from Solomon's more civilised heartlands.

With this longer, more in-depth approach, you can spend one or two sessions of play on the voyage, using it to build tension, seed plot information, and have the Acolytes interact with their fellow passengers and discover more about the auction and Haarlock himself. By starting the intrigues and dangers here in a more confined way, it will prepare the

Acolytes for the tangle of plots and murderous intrigues that they are walking into on the Burning Isle. Hopefully it will also prepare them to face the events yet to come.

Conversation, Bribery, Assassination, and other Pastimes

Over the course of the thirty-hour voyage, the GM has ample time to have the Acolytes interact with the crew and their fellow passengers, allowing them to dig around for information and size up the potential opposition, and maybe even get into a spot of trouble. Any number of situations could happen around mealtimes, which are served communally on the observation deck from the galley bellow. The Dramatis Personae for this section of the adventure details the NPCs onboard and their motivations.

The following section outlines some of the potential events and encounters that could take place during the voyage of the *Cygnan Martyr*. **Table 7-2: The Echoes of What Was** provides suggestions on what the Acolytes might learn about the Burning Isle from the steward, the crew, or even from fellow passengers on successful Charm or Inquiry Tests.

Storm Warning

Sudden, violent storms of squalling winds and heavy, corrosive rain are far from uncommon over the Balemire Sea, forcing the skyship to slow to half speed in order to keep altitude, which makes for a very bumpy ride. Such a storm, with its incessant howling winds, cacophonies of thunder, and hissing rain, confines most passengers to their cabins and distracts the crew, making a perfect cover for a variety of nefarious purposes…

Each hour that the storm lasts, the Acolytes must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or suffer a level of Fatigue. If this Test is failed by three or more degrees, the Acolyte is incapacitated with nausea and vomiting. Carrying out any delicate action or Agility related task while the storm rages has its Difficulty increased by one level.

Storms like this can happen at any time but are most lethal when combined with other events, such as the Wrecker attack detailed below.

The Wreckers of the Shard

So far from the harsh rule of Solomon's hive-citadels, foul weather is not the only threat to a lone skyship travelling southwards. When the *Cygnan Martyr* is no more than four or five hours out from her destination, the first mate, Loom, directs crewmen to set up a drum-fed heavy stubber on each balcony rail. The weapons are manned by a gunner and a scope-carrying spotter. The crew seems somewhat nonchalant about this and if challenged will reply, *"This is wrecker territory, the patrols don't sweep this far out. I wouldn't worry though, there's not much risk of an attack down this way, not enough traffic."* The crew's confidence, however, proves unfounded.

The skyship passes close to the rusted skeletal ruins of what looks to have once been a great hive spire jutting from the black waters. This navigational marker, known locally as the southern shard, is harbouring a wrecker vessel which attacks the *Cygnan Martyr*.

The Wrecker Skyship

The wrecker's craft is a salvaged skyship, somewhat larger than the *Cygnan Martyr* but in far worse condition. It is a fire-blackened shell that has much of its hull skin ripped away from its structure, and its overtaxed suspensors are imbalanced, producing an eerie discordant moan as it flies. Nevertheless it is fast, its scavenged impellor units belching fire and smoke as it gains rapidly on the *Martyr*, *"flying like madmen,"* as one crewman will observe. Unless the Acolytes have the capability, the skyship has no armament of sufficient strength to stop the huge wrecker ship before they attempt a boarding action. Note that targeted fire from the heavy stubber and sniping by the Acolytes may well reduce the impact of the coming assault.

Table 7-2: The Echoes of What Was

Degrees of Success	Details Known
Standard Success	"We've put in there once before, carrying passengers, but I never set foot on the place. A great black island of smoking rock. It's far from anything, all alone in the poisonous seas. Nothing but ruins, mire-beasts, and worse. I was glad when we put our rudder fin to it."
One	"The House of Dust and Ash is the only thing of note on that rock, and that place has been there forever. Some say it's stood on that isle long before the sky was blackened and the poison sea rose. A palace of tombs, vaults of the high and mighty going back longer than any knows. They get visitors too, more than you'd think… some for the dead, and some on other business…like yourselves I suppose."
Two	"It's an ill-omened place if you ask me, nothing but the dead and the ashes that rain down from the high vents. We had an adept on here once, she said the House takes power from the molten fire below it and turns it into light and energy. If you're rich enough you can even have your remains burned by the consuming molten flame."
Three	"Oh it's not just a great tomb on the Isle. If you know where to look… follow the rock round from the air dock and you'll find a barter-town down by the western edge of the rock, down in the caves. Not much to look at, a few scavengers and reclaimators mostly, but they've got a gyn-sink, and they're better company than those cold corpses in their marble tomb… Deadtown they call it, and why not, eh?"

The Boarding Action

The wrecker skyship closes with the *Martyr,* and the captain issues the order for all crew to stand by to repel boarders. The Acolytes (and the other passengers) at this point can help in the defence or hide in their cabins as they wish, but regardless the attack continues. The crew arms themselves with lasguns and gaff-hooks, and thermal cutters are brought up to cut free any wreckage or grapple-lines as needed.

The wreckers begin by firing rocket-propelled grenades at the *Martyr's* impellers to slow it down and breach its shutters. Then they fire winch grapples and slam side to side with the *Martyr*, launching a frenzied boarding action.

There are 30 wreckers on the enemy ship, savage fighters who expect no quarter and give none. They wear ragged stitched together chem-suits with insect-like goggles and crude breathing tubes jutting from their masks. They are well armed and do not retreat unless they suffer heavy losses (50%). Their simple goal is to kill everyone on board and plunder the ship.

Should they be defeated, their vessel likely veers away erratically and plunges burning into the black waters. Damaged but unbowed, the *Cygnan Martyr* limps on to its destination. Any prisoners taken prove to be sickly and poisoned looking dregs and minor mutants who spit their defiance. However, if sufficiently "persuaded," they reveal that the wrecker's chief was tipped-off to the coming of a rich prize to the area, but they don't know by whom. Their fate at the captain's hands is the same as that of their dead comrades—a walk off the skyship's balcony.

Profiles for the Wreckers can be found on page 224.

Running the Skyship Battle

When running the boarding action, there is no need to roll for every blow struck by both sides, just the parts that directly affect the PCs. This should not be a battle of attrition, but a frenzied, confused melee. The wreckers board in waves over the balcony in an all-or-nothing attempt to overwhelm the defenders. They come in fast and hard with guns blazing. Good use of cover and "smart" fighting by the Acolytes is needed if they are to prevail. The wrecker's assault should leave the *Martyr* badly damaged and several crewman, and possibly passengers, dead. Left to chance, the skyship will be overwhelmed.The Acolytes' actions are needed to tip the balance, and the better they perform, the fewer defenders should die.

As for the other passengers, it is suggested that the abbot and his followers hole themselves up below deck and take no part, Cistan likely gets injured trying to help, and Vymer should be knocked out by an initial rocket-propelled grenade strike on the hull, taking him out of the fight. Finally, Quill (after pulling his companion to safety) and Nile's bodyguards fight defensively from cover.

If all appears lost and one or more of the Acolytes are down, a generous GM might choose this as the right time to unveil the true nature of Octavia Nile's "adept" who will butcher the remaining wreckers. This will, of course, shift the balance of power onboard the *Cygnan Martyr* considerably…



The House of Dust and Ash
+ Solomon - 132/89/CS/NW - Hive World
+ GGR: 159.055/004.021
+ Sorrowful Guild Pict Record: 00567 - AA Ref: 7784NR
+ Level 0 (10%)
Death is a blessed state,
for the dead know no heresy
Administratum
Cells
Entrance
Hall
Private
Chambers
1: Zoom In -+- 2: Zoom Out -+- 3: Level Up -+- 4: Level Down
SOLOMON
CS:132.89
Orb. Dist. 1.12 AU
1.06G/Temp. 23°C
Hive World
Niche Grade:
Exactus Extremis
Aestimare: 12
Population: 13,000,000,000
++ A man who refuses to die in the service of the Emperor has no life ++
DATA-SLATE. Model. 76.ST-E2.41K

Part Three: The House of Dust and Ash

Landing at the Great Crematoria

As the *Cygnan Martyr* approaches the Burning Isle, a pall of heavy black smoke flows up incessantly from it like a city aflame. Drawing closer, the Acolytes discover a volcanic peak, perhaps three kilometres across, dominated by a cluster of huge windowless domed structures, each covered in thick grey-white layers of soot. The largest central dome is bracketed by three immensely tall obelisks, which channel the smoking volcanic fumes high into the sky above. This structure is the House of Dust and Ash.

The *Martyr* docks beside three other skyships at a berth at the foot of the volcanic mound, near some prefabricated buildings that are clearly more recent additions to the area. A dozen figures move about between the buildings and the gantries. Notably, two other skyhooks and landing gantries have been prepared but stand vacant.

If the Acolytes fought well during the wrecker attack, either Captain Shadrack or Grist will take them privately aside to thank them, offering a last piece of advice before docking. Read or paraphrase the following:

> *"I don't know who you really are or what your business is in this forsaken place, but I've a feeling it's none of your own doing. You've helped save me and mine, and I'm a man who pays his debts so I'll tell you this and you can make of it what you will.*
>
> *"Some say this place is a tomb, but it's more than that if you ask me. It's a place for burying and forgetting, a prison for the dead… It's old and dark and all the fire in the heart of Solomon won't warm the hearts of those that lay here… One other thing, this ship and others like it were hired by those night-black mourners to fetch folk to this 'auction,' but I don't think any one of us was hired to fetch anybody back…but we will wait, as long as it takes to patch up this old girl anyway. Just mind you're back here when we fly."*

Disembarkation

Disembarking down the gantry stairs, the first thing that the Acolytes notice is that it appears to be lightly snowing. They will quickly realise this is not snow at all, but a soft, sparse continuous fall of greasy ash.

After setting foot on the brittle, hard ground, they are left to their own devices for some time as gaunt-looking workers in the papery grey overalls and bomb collars of Munitorium indenture sluggishly unload the skyship of luggage and supplies under the bored eyes of a handful of PDF troopers. The abbot and his followers impatiently stalk off up the hill, while Vymer and Quill nonchalantly walk away past the prefabs in the direction of Deadtown. The others are content to wait.

If questioned, the PDF troopers show disinterest and tell them that *"Somebody will be along soon,"* if pressed. The ash continues to fall.

If the Acolytes wait long enough or start off up toward the House themselves, they are eventually met before they reach the doors by a harassed-looking middle-aged man in the hooded mantle and robes of a senior adept, followed by a PDF trooper. The man wears half-moon, wire framed glasses and sports a starched, high-collar shirt and a severe black cravat under his robes.

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *"I am the senior provost here. My name is Hiram Bland, servant of the Adeptus Terra. I have the honour of administering the Haarlock estate auction. I am glad to see that you arrived safely and in time for tonight's reception. If I might have your credentials?"*

Upon checking their particulars, Bland gives them a data-slate containing a map of the great crematoria, marking important locations of note, including the lodging chambers they have been assigned. Having established this, he will hurry them along.

Read out or paraphrase the following:

> *"You have the run of the place, except where you'll find a locked door. The main gate is always open… Sadly it is not as accurate a map as we would like…so try not to stray too far… the complex is surprising large, and er…very old.*
>
> *"Feel free to ask assistance of any of my…adepts, or the troopers who guard us here. We are not many and confine ourselves to the auction area marked on your map. There are others of course…the ones in the black shrouds, they are the Sorrowful Guild…the caretakers of this place I suppose, but I doubt you'll get much out of them…and their servitors… A few others about the place…visitors, pilgrims and such…but I can't answer to that."*

Bland will answer any other reasonable questions the Acolytes may have about the auction, the attendees (he knows names but nothing else), the staff, the timetable of events, and the House itself. He is clearly nervous and keen to be back in his offices. As soon as politely possible, he will break away from them and leave them to their own devices.

Table 7-3: Fragments of the Haarlock Line

Degrees of Success	Information
Standard Success	The Haarlock line is a family of ancient and powerful Rogue Traders, whose origins go back over 4,000 years to the bloody days of the Age of Apostasy where the Imperium turned on itself in fratricidal civil war.
One	Even among their kind, the Haarlock have always been noted as sinister and vengeful figures. There are numerous apocryphal stories of murderous intrigues and the sadistic revenge that they have inflicted on those who have wronged them. Some tales even claim that they were able to entrap the souls of those who offended them in everlasting torment, or were able to loose the blackest horrors enslaved from the voids beyond the light of the Golden Throne.
Two	According to some sources, the world of Solomon is named after Solomon Haarlock, who is said to have been the first to chart the region of space now known as the Calixis Sector. The House of Dust and Ash is reputed to have once been the site of his outpost long before the world was colonised by the Imperium, built and maintained by unknown arts gleaned on the Haarlocks' long and deadly voyages.
Three	By ancient accord, the powerful families of Solomon paid deference and tithe to the Haarlock line in a tribute payable when one of the heads of the great houses died. Each family made ritual offerings and propitiation, even over the long years when the Haarlocks were absent from Solomon—lest the returning Rogue Trader fleets wreak a terrible vengeance on the world. Over time, these ritual observances changed, and the custom of the "death gift" to the Haarlocks evolved into the funerary rites of the House of Dust and Ash.

The Structure of the Great Crematoria

The Acolytes' map (see page 210) is at best somewhat inaccurate and more likely substantially or even deliberately wrong, supplied as it is by the Sorrowful Guild. Just how easily the Acolytes can find their way around (and make it back) if they go exploring is left up to the GM, as is the contents of the House of Dust and Ash's many rooms and the part they may play in the adventure.

Here are some brief descriptions of the locations that may come into play during the course of the adventure:

The Entrance Hall

The entrance doors of the House of Dust and Ash are broad enough to drive a super-heavy tank through and twice again as high. They lead on to a cathedral like space, flanked on either side by rows of 20 metre tall statues of saints bearing aloft braziers of pure volcanic fire. Two emaciated-looking gun servitors of ancient design guard the inner doorways. Here and there, adepts, indentured workers, and servitor drones crisscross the vast and shadowy hall on errands of their own. Numerous doorways, staircases, and landings lead off the hall to other parts of the complex.

The Administratum Cells

A chain of rooms immediately to the left of the entryway have been taken over by the Administratum to oversee its business on the island, overseeing dispositions and struggling to archive the Great Crematoria's files for the Chancellery Court. The cells are packed with copyist desks, cogitators, eithographs, and stacks upon stacks of documents. There is also a vox room, a vault, a small armoury (containing weapons and ammunition for the PDF troopers), and separate offices for the provost and several senior advocates. Day or night, these cells are guarded by shifts of four PDF troopers.

The Receiving Rooms

Set on the second floor of the entrance hall and accessed by several staircases from the ground are a number of formal reception rooms, librariums, shrines, and refectories. Somewhat dusty and dimly lit by gas-lamps and fire jets set into ornate hearths, these rooms are decorated in a high, archaic style giving an overall impression of ancient and faded grandeur. These rooms are filled with strange curios, memento mori, relics, and a great deal of portraiture and statuary, nearly all either eulogising the loved dead or dwelling on the theme of the grave. Several of the rooms have bells which may be rung for the somewhat sluggish attention of silent servitor drones who scurry away through concealed passageways to bring drab food, strong wine, and other refreshments.

Several guests and even a few off-duty adepts can be found scattered around these rooms (there's not a lot else to do) when other more portentous events are not transpiring, and a number of these rooms have unlocked doors which lead to the vaults beyond.

Timetable of the Adventure

The *Cygnan Martyr* has arrived around late morning, which gives the Acolytes time to settle in and explore somewhat before the Formal Reception (see page 214). This social affair held to start the auction process is attended by the participants of the auction, as well as the advocates, adepts, and Greel the High Mourner. The day (a 26 hour local-time period on Solomon) following this event is the Day of Viewing (see page 215), during which the items on sale may be examined. The next day is the day of the auction itself (see page 219), starting with lots of the lesser items, followed by the sale of the "greater items"—those judged to be the rarest or most valuable. The auction culminates in the demonstration and sale of the artefact known as the Gilded Widow.

The librarium holds a great many rare and valuable books, although many in a lamentable condition. Many deal with ancient or apocryphal histories and genealogies, several of which concern the line of the Haarlock clan. Acolytes undertaking a thorough search must pass a **Difficult (–10) Search Test** to find several items of interest. If they can comprehend these archaic tomes, requiring a **Challenging (+0) Literacy Skill Test**, they may discover important information about the Harrlock lineage which will come in handy later. See **Table 7-3: Fragments of the Haarlock Line** for details.

In addition, a relatively new-looking volume lies open on a reading table and looks as if it has only been written recently. It details some of the lore of the last scion of the line, Erasmus Haarlock (see Player Handout III on page 230).

Haarlock's Crypt

At the end of the great hall is a single huge black mausoleum, its high flat sides ornately carved with skulls, saints, conflict, blasted starships, and burning worlds without number. This, the cipher and the inscription at the head of the tomb proclaims in High Gothic, is the tomb of Solomon Haarlock.

Detailed examination, requiring a **Challenging (+0) Tech-Use** or **Security Test**, reveals that the black granite tomb contains two separate doors set flush to its sides with no visible means of opening them. The one on the left side contains a an engraving of a blazing, black sun etched into the black marble that reads, "Death is but a Door," with a recessed space at the centre in the shape of a hollowed out sunburst. The one on the right is carved with a mass of screaming, distorted faces and reads, "Here Dwell the Children of the Kingdom."

Should the Acolytes loiter here a while, an impossibly tall-seeming figure clad in a heavy black winding-sheet and shroud approaches soundlessly from the shadows. This personage is Greel, the High Mourner. He addresses them in a rasping voice and asks them who they are and their business in the House of Dust and Ash, ushering them to leave unless they have a very good reason not to.

For more information about Haarlock's Crypt see Exit Strategy on page 221.

Private Chambers

Accessed from the right of the entrance hall, there are several levels of sleeping chambers. Private and austere, these windowless suites are arranged in concentric circles around a series of spiral staircases and can potentially house hundreds. One staircase is being used by the adepts and troopers, while another has been set aside for the auction patrons. The patrons have tactfully been placed in a random order on different floors as there is more than enough rooms to accommodate them all.

Each set of chambers has a single, unique iron key that fits a complex clockwork locking mechanism requiring a successful **Difficult (–10) Security Test** to breach.

The Altar of Fire

A metallic staircase leads down from the great hall, the walls of which change from polished stone to volcanic rock as the heat steadily increases. Following the scent of scorched metal ever downwards, the steps eventually arrive at a vast, vaulted chamber filled with an immense conglomeration of thundering and sparking ancient technology, perched over a vast lake of molten rock and fire a half kilometre across—this is the island's burning heart.

The Garden of Lost Saints

A spacious circular chamber that occupies much of the domed upper portion of the main structure, this area is where the formal reception (see page 214) and eventually the auction itself will be held. It takes the form of a huge, open gallery several hundred metres across, filled with arbours of stone flowers, spiralling ornamental walkways, statuary, and sculpture. The roof of the dome is painted in a great star map of the Calixis Sector. Astute observers will note it is at least a thousand years out of date.

The Auditorium

At the very centre of the Garden of Lost Saints is a circular, tiered auditorium of spectacularly white marble set with graven carvings of mathematical symbols and strange scripts. It is here that the auction (see page 219) will be held, with the auctioneer on the raised dais at the centre, while the bidders and their parties fill out the stone biers that surround the space.

The Vaults

The House of Dust and Ash is a vast and maze-like structure. Beyond the private chambers, reception rooms, and high vaulted doors of its interior is what seems another world of endless, curving white marble corridors that wind and snake along, lit by a dim, omnipresent white radiance. Stretching out seamlessly from the rest of the complex and disappearing into the rock below, without rhyme or reason within this white labyrinth are living chambers, crematoria, mortuaries, tombs, reliquaries, and sepulchres, many of widely differing forms, decor, and function. Some are covered in dust and others are spotless as if newly furnished. Hidden here are the ancient vaults of Solomon's great families, most long gone now to dust with none but the Sorrowful Guild to mourn or remember them.

The effects of these blankly curving white corridors and the unfailing steady light and silence can be extremely disorienting, Acolytes must make a **Challenging (+0) Awareness** or **Tracking Test** to find their way around down here, and the adepts and troopers have learned to stay in the easily accessed chain of staterooms and chambers set aside for them near the main entrance. Here, before the funerary complex proper begins, the walls are plain stone and the rooms lit with standard luiminem lamps, and it is easier to believe that you have walked straight into some purgatorial realm of the dead.

Locutor Mayweather

The Acolyte's contact, the advocate Locutor Mayweather, quickly makes himself known to them on their arrival, probably as they are shown to their rooms. He is visibly desperate and afraid, and as soon as they are alone and he is satisfied with their identity, read aloud or paraphrase the following (Mayweather rants and slowly edges into screaming hysteria):

> *"Forgive me if I seem frustrated but I admit I was hoping for a few squads of stormtroopers at least, Maybe the blessed Astartes or perhaps even for that old monster to leave his damn dusty chamber or send that pet witch of his…I speak out of turn, I know, but terror it seems has made me brave or desperate… Ah, but I see from your faces you have no clue either…do you?!*
>
> *"Let me put it succinctly. Things have changed since I made my last report. A second group of items have unexpectedly entered the auction, and I dare not imagine what they are. Marr would smash this rock apart if he knew of them I'm sure! Do you know that two of the skyships haven't made it here? No word… they just disappeared. I was terrified that you were lost too…but the ones that have arrived, dear God-Emperor! They're heretics and killers all…*

Mayweather will carry on screaming and break down sobbing unless the Acolytes can snap him out of it. Sufficiently calmed, he can be more carefully questioned, able to relate the following:

> *"That's not all, in the last few days, there have been disappearances…deaths… Yesterday, a trooper was found dead in the atrium, his head ripped open and his brain gone…gone! And that fool, Bland, he doesn't know what else to do but carry on as if nothing was happening! All of a sudden the mourners are everywhere, watching, silent and patient, with their white faces and their black tears…waiting for something. We have to get out, do you understand? We have to get out!"*

Communications: He can no longer raise Marr on his private vox because of the storm fronts closing in, nor to his knowledge can anyone else on the island.

The Missing and the Dead: There are two adepts, one trooper, and four indentures that have gone missing without trace in the last five days plus two confirmed deaths. The first is the trepanned trooper he spoke of and the second an indenture who was crushed when a statue (an auction exhibit) slipped unexpectedly.

The Auction: He can also give his impressions of the other attendees and staff (see the Dramatis Personae) but knows nothing of any of their hidden natures. He is able to broadly describe the new "greater exhibits," but again knows nothing of what they truly are, save for the fact that he was terrified when he saw the Gilded Widow.

The Events As They Unfold

Having been deposited at the House of Dust and Ash at the behest of Inquisitor Marr, confronted with the grim reality of the place, and given Mayweather's disquieting news, it is up to the Acolytes to absorb events and decide what they think is really going on and how they should respond.

At this stage, it is up to the Acolytes to investigate matters, talking to the various NPCs and determining what their motivations might be, while the GMs task is to respond appropriately to the PCs actions (using the adventure setup and the Dramatis Personae as guides). How the Acolyes behave and what they do next may be of vital importance later. Indeed, the more they can uncover about what's going on here and the true nature and goals of the other attendees, the more chance they will have in the adventure's desperate final act. Their actions may also have a direct influence on the outcome of events, as they have the opportunity to not only size up their potential enemies, but also make allies—perhaps getting Bland and his staff on their side. However, if they are less successful or less circumspect in their actions, they will probably provoke suspicion and conflict with equal measure—suffering attempts on their lives or prompting one of the many factions to act prematurely in order to get what they want.

In addition to the consequences of the Acolytes' own choices and actions, the auction itself will go ahead in the order prescribed for it. Certainly Bland and Greel will try to stick to this timetable regardless of whatever else transpires around them, each for their own individual reasons. The first stage for this sequence of events is the formal reception, held on the night of the Acolyte's arrival.

The Formal Reception

This event will be held in the Garden of Lost Saints (see page 213) and attended by all of the bidders, advocates, and adepts, while PDF troopers in parade dress stand guard. Chairs, tables, and a lectern have been set up, with hand lanterns providing light in the largely darkened chamber. It will feature a formal announcement of the auction and its rules by Provost Bland, a portentous eulogy to the dead, and a cryptic prayer to *"He who held stars and wonders in the palm of his hand,"* which will leave the listeners unsure of just who is being praised—the God-Emperor or Haarlock.

This prologue will be followed by a somewhat surreal (and not a little sinister) social event where drinks and food will be served on silver platters by Mourners in formal black robes and blank white ceramic masks, while mournful choral and organ music drifts in from some unseen source. The reception lasts for a few hours in which the Acolytes have the perfect opportunity to size up and interact with their fellow bidders and the adepts. See the Dramatis Personae for more details.

Table 7-4: Deadtown Rumours

Degrees of Success	Chenshan's Information
Standard Success	"Oh there's a surprising amount of traffic down here, nice and off the beaten path you see. Past the patrols but not so far out as to be all the way off the map, you understand? Scavengers, mutos, dealers, high citadel fronters… even off-worlders like your good selves. You'd be surprised the folk you see out here."
One	"We don't have much to do with that black house nor indeed do the weepers have much to do this us. 'Side for a little business here and there, you understand. But we get a few of those trooper boys down here and even a quill pusher or two on the sly, and it's seen to that they stay safe…long as they don't stray too far out of line! It seems they too have a few sorrows to drown these days. Who would I be if I didn't oblige?"
Two	"Oh there's been a few jonnies in the past, thought to rob the place by force or cunning. Even a few stories of scavs finding a way in through some ancient tunnel or another, and you know? Not a single one I ever heard making it back out again. No, them tunnels are a fiction written for the idle of brain and body."
Three or more	"A bad business, I've heard there's some turned up dead and others who just plain vanished up at the house. The weepers are acting strange, and that tall man that's master of them was seen out on the rock spires talking to some shrouded kill-jacker captain in the dead of night…you understand? Some say a bad business, very bad."

The Day of Viewing

After the reception is over, the garden is sealed-off and prepared for the viewing and auction, with the items arranged in glass cases on biers and plinths all along the walkways. Each item is marked with a lot number and brief description, with all the greater items arranged within the central auditorium.

During this time, none may enter the Garden of Lost Saints without being scanned for weapons or other such suspicious devices, none of which, except a data-slate to mark down items of interest, may be taken within.

The area is guarded by a heavy PDF contingent, backed up by watchful gun and combat servitors belonging to the Sorrowful Guild. Servo-skulls drift silently overhead, and waxy cherubim perch, leering down from tombs and the backs of statues while watching for malfeasance.

During the day, the Acolytes are free to come and go as they wish to study the lots, whilst the other bidders do the same. Lanus Cisten, should he have survived the wrecker attack, spends all day here filled with oblivious joy and, if well disposed from their previous encounters, happily accompanies the Acolytes and offers his own opinions on anything they ask.

Ten Little Adepts

From their arrival right up to the auction proper, it is not only the Acolytes who have their own agenda. Many of the bidders are quite happy to spend the time attempting to increase their own chances at the auction through sizing up their rivals, indulging in a little breaking and entering of the private chambers, bribery, coercion, threatening behaviour, provoking fights, attempted theft, accessing the Administratum records, and even an outright assassination. Parallel to all of this, members of the Sorrowful Guild are making secret preparations for what is to come and getting rid of anyone they encounter who is straying from the path.

It is up to the GM just how much or little to make of these events and motivations in the space of time allowed. If your players are happy to spend their time digging around the place and uncovering secrets let them, if they are of a more combative mix, there are plenty of potential opponents for them here—from surly bodyguards to "rogue" servitors, etc. If, however, they are at a loss as to what to do next, the easiest thing to get them going is to have the bodies start to fall.

After an appropriate amount of time has passed in the game, the auction occurs; proceed to Part Four: Death Trap.

DEADTOWN

About a kilometre around the volcanic cliffs of the Burning Island is a small settlement known colloquially as Deadtown. Set back in a series of caverns along the shoreline, the settlement is a ramshackle place and home to various scavengers and dregs. Primarily Deadtown is used as a black market trading post for the local area, with many wrecker crews, reclaimators, skyship crews, and even off-duty troopers to be found drowning their sorrows here.

It is a dangerous and largely lawless place; however, its dangers are more of an obvious kind as opposed to the ones that the Acolytes will face in the House of Dust and Ash. The folk of Deadtown have little to do with "the house" and roundly think it accursed, believing the Sorrowful Guild (with whom they sometimes grudgingly trade) unnatural and cursed as well. The locals do keep a weather eye on the comings and goings of the place, however, peddling tales and stories of strange comings and goings if a little coin is spread around. The best information and the best trade can be gleaned from Chenshan, the proprietor of the settlement's only drinking hall and its unofficial boss.

Chenshan is a stocky, weathered looking man with a sour demeanour and eyes like chips of flint. He wears a faded frock coat over a reclamator's worn coveralls, and one would think him just another scavenger but for the wary respect others give him and his trailing bodyguard of silent, slab-muscled and iron-masked heavies. In fact, Chenshan is the undisputed master of Deadtown, with a score of stone killers

at his disposal. He sees his cut from every scavenger deal, vice payment, and illicit transaction that goes on here, and is not a man to be crossed.

If approached for trade or information he is amenable to hard currency but precious little else, and any attempt to threaten or harm him will be met with immediate lethal violence.

Muscle and Guns

Deadtown can also serve another purpose, providing a place for the Acolytes to trade and get hold of some extra firepower and gear. Despite its out of the way location, the town has a thriving black market of salvaged and stolen goods, in particular drugs and weapons. For the right price, the Acolytes might even be able to hire one or two extra armed heavies to back them up (use the Wrecker profile) but this will be costly and depend upon good negotitation skills.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE OF THE HOUSE OF DUST AND ASH

In addition to the many parties that survived the journey to the auction onboard the *Cygnan Martyr*, several other bidders are in attendance, having arrived on the other surviving skyships. These are Magyar Marshrek, Captain Rubio of the Ozmandius, and Master Nonesuch. Additionally, the GM is encouraged to further fill out the auction's roster with additional NPCs and potential antagonists both fair and foul of his own devising. Perhaps these NPCs will lay the seeds for future investigations and adventures. The preceding chapters of this book are filled with potential cults, factions, and groups that could have members drawn to the auction. If you already have an established long-term villain or cult in your campaign, why not have one of his agents attend as well?

Feel free to throw in as many bystanders, effete noble collectors, merchants' factors, and other persons for the adventure as you are comfortable with. You may simply "sketch in" these characters, keeping them as window dressing for the unfolding events, or run-up full profiles, motivations, and goals as you see fit.

The Attendees

Captain Rubio of the "Ozmandius"

A tall handsome man, whose looks and appearance have much to do with surgery and a great deal of money, Rubio is dressed as the very epitome of what he imagines a Rogue Trader to be. He wears an ornate silvered breastplate, high saurian-skin boots, a demi-cape of crimson silk, a rakish hat, and a sheathed powerblade at his side. He has an annoying tendency to preen and an appalling ego. If engaged in conversation, he makes various heavy hints about being a far-travelled voyager, having a number of far-fetched tales up his sleeve to back-up his claims.

In truth, he is the spoiled third son of a Chartist Captain, the *Ozmandius* is his private yacht-launch, and he has never seen any stars but those of his family's lucrative trade route. He is constantly surrounded by "loyal" crew and various hangers-on—who are loyal only to his coin. He is a coward but has a braggart's pride, and if he finds offence, he will order one of his lackeys to provoke a fight with the individual involved. Rubio has begun to actually believe his own lies and coming to the auction is, in all certainty, a step too far. Rubio is unlikely to survive his folly.

Captain Rubio and the crew of the *Ozmandius's* profiles can be found on page 225.

Magyar Marshrek

This man, attending the auction alone and without entourage, has the lethal air of a stalking beast. He wears battered-looking but functional armour with an old sabre-wolf pelt across his shoulders. His hair and beard is worn ragged and long. Marshrek is, in fact, a Rogue Trader, although he does not advertise the fact. He is a holder of a lesser charter who has been eking out an existence as a beast hunter and mercenary on the fringes of the sector.

Marshrek has just traded a ransom in proscribed creatures to Solomon's Beast House and is hoping to find something in Haarlock's auction that will open up greater fortunes for him. If caught in Haarlock's trap, Marshrek will revert to his instincts as a hunter, slipping away on his own to stalk and kill, looking for a way out.

Magyar Marshrek has the same profile of a Beast Slaver found on page 89.

Master Nonesuch

A charming, patrician man of indeterminate age, Master Nonesuch dresses in the high quality but sober clothes of one of Solomon's Guildmasters and walks with an ornate cane. He claims to be an interested party, a dilettante "collector" indulging a highly priced hobby. Nonesuch is here to bid on "such items as I can afford." He personally meets and greets all who attend the auction, exchanging pleasantries and small talk with any disposed to do so. He is attended by a small, well dressed, and perfectly comported staff composed of three flak-coated bodyguards and a young female private secretary who wears a severe-looking whalebone-ridged dress. All of Nonesuch's staff appear effortlessly polite and civilised, but at the same time somewhat distant and emotionless.

When an Acolyte comes into close contact with Nonesuch, the GM should make a secret **Hard (–20) Perception Test**, unless they are a psyker, in which case they should take a **Difficult (–10) Psyniscience Test**. On a success, the Acolyte is filled with a sudden sense that something is unaccountably and terrifyingly wrong about this man, who to all other appearances seems outwardly normal and quite charming.

Master Nonesuch is, in fact, possibly the most dangerous of all the auction's attendees, a member of the horrific and dangerous xenos race known as the Slaugth. He is one of their Overseers currently constrained within a hollowed-out sheath of flesh, while his "staff" are fashioned from living human bodies invaded and piloted by Slaugth flesh-parasites.

Nonesuch is here because his kind has had dealings with the line of Haarlock in the past. The Slaugth want to be certain that the Haarlock line is dead as members of that family are one of the few powers in the sector with enough knowledge to recongize the Slaugth's current plans (see the Amaranthine Syndicate entry on page 75). Nonesuch will perhaps be amused by the turn of events at the auction, and as matters worsen, he will, at first, take great delight in observing the trapped humans turning on each other. When the temptation becomes too great, he will slip his stolen skin in order to feed.

Master Nonesuch has the same profile as a Slaugth Overseer found on page 80.

The Staff and Others

Locutor Mayweather, the Contact

Mayweather is Marr's inside man. A Chancellery Advocate assigned to the Administratum staff, he is every inch the small-minded, unctuous, officious pedant his calling in life requires. Small in stature, he has a fidgety, breathless, nervous energy that should remind the Acolytes of vermin when dealing with him. No acolyte himself, Mayweather has fallen into Marr's service through blackmail over certain financial irregularities he was party to some years ago, and he consequently stays loyal through mortal terror of the Inquisitor.

When the Acolytes arrive, he is a troubled, frightened man. He would like nothing more than to flee the House of Dust and Ash, but is prevented from doing so by his service to Marr.

Locutor Mayweather's profile can be found on page 224.

Greel, the Head Mourner

An immensely tall man, swathed in a black cloak and robes, with a sallow face and sunken eyes, around which are tattooed rivers of black tears flowing across his cheeks. He looks every inch a spectre of death.

Greel is the head of the Sorrowful Guild, the pseudo-religious order that maintains the House of Dust and Ash, and the only one of its number who is prepared to speak readily to those attending the auction. Greel is not only the defacto governor of the island, but also the appointed representative of the Haarlock estate. He is dismissive of any talk of missing visitors or Administratum staff, and he will be singularly unhelpful in general, preferring to answer questions in riddles and portentous statements, if he chooses to answer at all.

The Mourners of the Sorrowful Guild number around a hundred individuals. They are silent, grim, and pallid figures who move about the Crematoria soundlessly and shrouded in black, so very like the shades they clearly seek to imitate. The Mourners can often be found conducting inscrutable rituals to grieve for and tend the dead. Behind this passive façade, however, they are as fanatical as any raving cultist. They are aided in their task by a number of ashen grey and embalmed looking servitors, including several combat and gun models who guard the Crematoria's gates and forbidden areas, and a phalanx of servo-skulls and dead-eyed cherubim.

Greel and his followers have kept faith with the Haarlock clan—the secret masters of the House of Dust and Ash—over the long centuries, and he and his guild are more than willing to die to see Haarlock's will done.

Important Note: Greel wears a black iron amulet in the shape of a sunburst around his neck as a symbol of his office. This amulet is a key that opens the door in the side of Haarlock's vault, and is one of the only means of escape.

Profiles for Greel and the Mourners can be found on page 226.

Hiram Bland, the Provost

Bland is the Administratum provost assigned to the House of Dust and Ash to manage the auction and see the legal requirements are carried out. His command, such as it is, consists of 12 advocates, 40 scribes and clerks, a 25 strong platoon of PDF troopers, and the same number again of indentured Munitorium labourers, few of which desire anything more than to be assigned away from this grim and sinister posting when their tour of duty is complete.

He is a harassed, fearful man, frightened enough to spend every hour guarded by a PDF trooper. Several of his staff have gone missing in recent days, and, as events unfold, he will try his best to carry on with the formalities, no matter how bad things become. He has no liking or trust for the Sorrowful Guild and is one of the few NPCs that would welcome the Inquisition's involvement, should the Acolytes reveal who they are.

Hiram Bland's profile can be found on page 224.

RELICS FROM BEYOND

The lesser items from Haarlock's estate include all manner of relics and curios, many of which are merely antiques or rarities, although a good deal are of un-provenanced or xenos origin. The GM is encouraged to create a list of items—this could consist of almost anything conceivably rated Rare or Very Rare from **Dark Heresy** or **The Inquisitor's Handbook**, as well as the Cold Trade entry on page 72 of this book. Enterprising GMs may also want to "stack the deck" and put some weapons and equipment on sale that may help the Acolytes with what is to come.

The following are items in the "greater" auction.

A Book Unbound

An apparently leather folio filled with loose parchment pages. The leather is, in fact, xenos-hide, and the loose leaves inside contain fragments of various archaic and proscribed works, interspersed with fragments of a personal journal.

Effects: The contents of the folio, if put into some order, will grant the reader +10 to Forbidden Lore (Xenos) with regards to the arts of the eldar corsairs and the forgotten inhabitants of the Halo Stars. The folio also contains unrelated lore and partial instructions on the creation of Dybuk. The first time that anyone reads more than a small portion of the folio, he gains 1 Corruption Point. Anyone who reads all of the contents of the folio gains 1d5+1 Corruption Points , which includes the 1 Corruption Point for reading a small portion.

Bloody Seal

This gilt seal, the width of a human palm, shows the symbol of the aquila clasping keys in its claws. Anyone who passes a **Challenging (+0) Forbidden Lore (Heresy) Test** will recognise this as a symbol of the pre-Thorian Ecclesiarchy. The seal is still stained with dried blood that will not come off.

Effects: When the rim of the seal is twisted, it projects a hololith of the face of Gorge Vandire, once marking the bearer as his personal emissary. Contained within the seal are engrams to unlock all pre-Thorian and archaic ciphers used in Imperial records. Owning such a thing is considered heresy in itself.

Silver Key

A large and ornate key made of tarnished silver, inscribed with archaic human symbols that can be translated by anyone with **Speak Language (Archaic)**. The symbols translate as *"shown me the portals of sleep."*

Effects: Up to the GM to decide.

Greyskin Psalter

A battered but sizable prayer book of archaic style and design, bound in unidentifiable grey skin. The book is displayed open, and anyone looking at the text who is able to read High Gothic and who has **Knowledge (Imperial Creed)** will realise that it is gibberish, with words and phrases in entirely the wrong order.

Effects: The Psalter is actually an encoded navigational codebook, describing worlds and journeys beyond the light of the Golden Throne, undertaken millennia before the Calixis Sector was founded. Included within are the location of things thought to be mythical. It is priceless to those who covet its secrets.

A Shattered Pauldron

An Adeptus Astartes shoulder plate, torn and badly damaged. It is crimson in colour with the symbol of a black, fanged skull blazoned on it. Origin unknown.

Effect: None, but as a relic of the Astartes, it has great value and the mystery of which Chapter it belonged to might prove a dark one.

A Xenoflesh Mask

A vile looking hood-like mask of withered grey-green flesh, featureless but for a wide, circular, lamprey-like mouth. Marked: Xenotype Unknown.

Effect: None, except that psychic senses directed at it will generate a queasy feeling of crawling horror and dank forgotten places. It is, in fact, the skinned face of one of the creatures Haarlock named "the Children of the Kingdom," of which more active examples will later be encountered.

An Onyx Statute

A beautifully carved statue of a three-eyed, bat-winged felid, around a metre tall. At the statue's neck is a strange gorget of what appears to be tarnished copper.

Effects: The statue is a xenos-relic, older than mankind. The gorget, which may be detached from its neck, is a Halo Device (see page 97).

An Unknown Portrait

A somewhat disturbing, blurred looking portrait, about half a metre square, encased in a solid block of crystal. Etched in azure lettering at the bottom, in High Gothic, is the phrase *"The Mirror of my Blood."*

Effects: The portrait is designed to capture the image of one of Haarlock's bloodline. Six hours after a scion of Haarlock has looked at the portrait, it will change to show their likeness. Of course, such a person may attempt to vandalise the portrait (should he discover its effect) in order to prevent discovery of who he really is.

A Primitive Doll in a Glass Jar

A small rag and stick doll, trapped in a dusty, stoppered bell jar. The air within the jar seems somewhat smoky and looking at the stitched eyes of the doll will fill any onlooker with unease.

Effects: A tormented and particularly vicious Astral Spectre is trapped within the jar (see page 350 of the **Dark Heresy Core Rulebook**). Use of the Psyniscience Skill will reveal this fact. Breaking the jar, which is ordinary glass, will free the spectre. An unscrupulous or desperate Acolyte might use this as a weapon.

The Gilded Widow

A life-size automaton formed from gold and encrusted with agates and rubies, dressed in an archaic gown of crimson and purple silks. The automaton has an open aperture in its chest, revealing an intricate clockwork mechanism of staggering complexity. The figure is seated on a high-backed throne with an inbuilt table set before the figure, all carved with geometric and occult symbols. The gilded figure's head rests on its chest, and in its right hand it holds a ruby chalice, whilst in its left hand is an ivory set of the Emperor's Tarot in a silvered slip-case. The label reads *"The Most Sacred and Wondrous Oracular Device, Known to Men as the Gilded Widow."*

Effects: The device is extremely unnerving to look at, even when inert. Chronometers malfunction nearby, auspex systems register malfunctions, and any Psychic Power attempted nearby suffers Psychic Phenomena on any roll of a "double" number. The device is also entirely impervious to harm. The awaking of the Gilded Widow triggers the last part of the adventure—see Part Four: Death Trap.

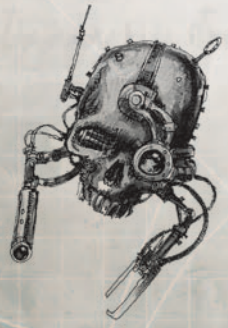
Part Four: Death Trap

The day after the viewing, the auction proper begins with the surviving bidders seated on the tiers of the auditorium while Bland conducts the business of the day. Each item appears on a hololith projector beside Bland—the physical objects are still arrayed around the gardens with the security measures as before. The auction of the lesser items takes a couple of hours, during which the Acolytes may bid on what they wish—up to their credit limit, of course! Before the sale of the greater items, the earlier purchases go to the hands of their new owners and refreshments are served. A number of Mourners drift silently into attendance, including Greel, who leans on a very heavy and ornate crooked iron staff. Before matters resume, there is some commotion between the mourners and advocates, and eventually a troubled looking Bland returns to the podium to speak.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

> *"Before bidding is commenced on the greater lots, several parties have requested…and the High Mourner has insisted…against my wishes, that a demonstration be carried out, before its sale, of the oracular device known as the Gilded Widow."*
>
> Carried reverentially on a litter by six Mourners, the Gilded Widow on her throne is brought to the dais beside Bland. Greel removes a heart-shaped ruby crystal that pulses slowly with a crimson inner light from within his robes and fits the "heart" into the Widow's chest. The transformation is sudden and remarkable, and the gilded figure shudders to life. Elegant metal fingers cut and spin the cards from the tarot deck, as Greel and the Mourners back away from the dais, bowing as shocked gasps and murmurs escape the crowd. The Gilded figure lifts her face and eyes of uttermost cold darkness to study the crowded auditorium.
>
> *"ASK AND BE ANSWERED,"* the gilded Widow states in an empty, mocking voice.

The acolytes may, of course, have already guessed that something awful is about to transpire, but any PC with the Psyniscience Skill, a Dark Pact, or Pure Faith will know immediately and without doubt that the whole auditorium has been filled with a presence of ancient and implacable evil.



The Riddles of the Gilded Widow

How the GM handles the next section depends very much on how the Acolytes react. Unless they have managed to sneak something past the guards, the Acolytes are unarmed. If the Acolytes do not intervene, the widow answers questions put to her in the shape of either riddles or blunt shocking assertions after turning and reading her cards. Some suggested examples follow. Very soon, however, someone will shout the fateful question, *"Is Haarlock dead?"* At that, all hell will break loose.

Gilded Questions and Answers

Q: What Are You?

A: *"I am she who my father froze in her beauty and her grief; alone and weeping forever I shall sit, cursed to foretell and to know, but never act or feel, save for the void that hungers evermore within."*

Q: Who are We?

A: *"You are serpents of lies and self-deluded fools. You seek for much yet know little. You are those who have come to despoil the house of the dead only to join its number."*

Q: What is to Come?

A: *"The black sun burns and he comes, riding its wake. The last voyager, the herald of all woes. At its passing the eye shall be snuffed out, the carrion lords thrown down, and the hungering ones torn from the outer dark. All this I see cast amid these cold stars."*

Q: Is Haarlock Truly Dead?

A: *"The traveller and the scion both do live, one without and the other within. Blood of his blood, born of his line, flesh so frail caught in this web, death shall be their inheritance. Haarlock returns and hell follows with him!"*

The Trap is Sprung

At this last pronouncement, the Mourners fall to their knees wailing and screaming as the whole structure starts to shake and a roar echoes up from the bowels of the earth. The lights flicker and distant explosions can be heard, servo-skulls drop from the air, and servitors collapse lifeless. After a few moments, the complex stops shaking and the roar steadies down to a continuous low rumble.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following as the Gilded Widow speaks:



"Know this, the traveller has set our course and the ship cannot be turned. Thirteen hours you have, thirteen hours until his wrath drowns you all in fire and ash, sealed here in the tomb that has been prepared. Fitting punishment for you who would take from him what is his. Never do you learn the lessons of the past, doomed to repeat history's sins. But first you will suffer, first you will be shriven!

"You have but one chance and one chance alone to placate the traveller. One gift will assuage his just fury: Give me the blood of the scion of Haarlock, let it flow to fill this chalice and you shall live, but if my cup remains empty the Children of the Kingdom will gnaw your flesh and darkness will bury your bones."

There will be a few moments of shocked silence, followed by Master Nonesuch smiling and slowly applauding, whilst some of the more quick-witted attendees begin to flee, and a lot of people pick themselves up off the floor, dazed and confused by the shocking turn of events.

Provost Bland staggers dazed to his feet and cries out, asking what it all means, at which point Greel rears up behind him screaming:

"Fools! You are trapped here, buried alive! Death to the defilers of the tombs! Death to those who profane his name by stealing from our master!"

At which point a power blade springs from his staff to form a scythe and he cuts Provost Bland in two in a welter of gore. At his command, his brethren, those still not on the ground wailing, "We are the dead!", draw silver blades from beneath their robes and fall upon the bystanders and guards, attacking indiscriminately. The chaos spreads as all over the complex the Mourners attack the adepts and guards in a series of bloody ambushes and running battles.

The adventure's last bloody 13 hours have begun.

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

From this point forward, the adventure turns suddenly into a death trap, as the countdown to destruction occurs. The Acolytes have 13 hours to escape the House of Dust and Ash or the firestorm program will complete—inducing an eruption from the volcano on which the House sits, killing everyone Making matters worse (if they could be any worse!) is the insane death obsessed cult (the Mourners) and the various monsters and villains who have also been trapped inside, all vying to get out and spill the scion's blood for the Gilded Widow.

Murder in the Halls

It is a desperate race against time for the Acolytes to stay alive and work out how to escape Haarlock's death trap. Meanwhile anarchy and death stalk the House of Dusk and Ash as the Acolytes' fellow bidders also attempt to do the same, while letting their own true colours show. The Acolytes may be able to forge impromptu alliances or rally help—it all depends upon what they have done previously and how they choose to handle the ensuing chaos. It is not just the predations of their fellow auction attendees they have to fear, but Haarlock's trap as well, as it has a few more surprises in store.

Countdown to destruction

Things go bad and get progressively worse during Haarlock's thirteen hour game of torment:

- **–13 hours:** The Gilded Widow makes her pronouncement, the House is sealed, and a void shield materialises around it, preventing any escape by violent means. The servitors shut down, and all the mechanical locks on the internal doors open and jam. The Mourners go berserk, attacking anyone they can find.
- **–9 hours:** The servitors wake, acting erratically, moving randomly to attack and self-destruct, as if driven insane.
- **–7 hours:** Haarlock's crypt opens, unleashing the Children of the Kingdom to devour anyone left alive.
- **–3 hours:** The power, light and air cleansing systems fail throughout the complex as the generator systems begin to overload.
- **0 hour:** The firestorm program is complete, and the volcano erupts, its force contained briefly by the void shield around the complex, annihilating everything inside.

Running the Last 13 Hours

The last stage of this adventure is unashamedly violent and punishing. As GM, you should ratchet-up the tension by demanding quick decisions from your players and keeping to your own ticking clock—feel free to announce the progress of it as things go along. Also, don't be afraid to have things happen "off camera." This will help convey the notion that it is not just the Acolytes who are caught up in this mess—everyone else has been forced into their own desperate struggles to survive. Now is the time for the NPCs' masks to slip, and backstabbing, betrayal, and plain murder are all on the cards. While some NPCs such as Nile or the bounty hunters may be open to reason and co-operation (while it suits them, of course), others such as Abbot Tamas and the Slaugth will give their true natures free reign.

The adventure has been deliberately designed to provide the GM with a large cast of characters (and a few hundred trapped "minor players"). Many of these the PCs will now be familiar with, and the GM has carte blanch to kill them off in a variety of spectacularly gruesome, heroic, or cowardly ways as matters worsen.

Will the Real Target Please Stand Up…

The principal purpose for this elaborate and sadistic death trap is for Erasmus Haarlock to draw-in and kill any surviving members of his own bloodline. The auction, held long years after his supposed death by Greel and his servants, was intended solely to bring out into the open any such scions that had escaped his decades long fratricidal campaign to destroy every other kin and claimant to the mantle of the Haarlock Charter but himself.

There is indeed a member of the Haarlock bloodline attending the auction, and the only apparent way to shut off the slaughter is to find the Haarlock scion and present him to the Gilded Widow before the thirteenth hour has arrived. The identity of the scion is a mystery left up to the GM to determine. Any of the human NPCs provided are possible candidates. A particularly vicious GM may choose to have more than one, or even make the scion one of the Acolytes.

Sowing the Seeds

There are a number of ways before this point where the GM can sow the seeds to identify the scion. You can use subtle clues like familial resemblance in the various statuary and portraiture around the House, descriptive passages in old books found in the library, and certain doors and access panels opening for them but not for others. In the final catastrophe, you can have the servitors (responding to ancient protocols) either refuse to attack the scion or even rush to his defence if he is attacked. However, the best tool for determining the scion's identity is the family portrait in the greater auction lots (see the relic description on page 218).

Sowing the seeds and clues as to who is the Haarlock scion requires the GM to do a little preparatory work before running the scenario. Time spent designing a handful of clues will pay-off in the long run.

EXIT STRATEGY

There are two ways out of the trap. The first is by giving the Gilded Widow the blood she requires. If she gets this, she raises the chalice to her lips and drinks, provoking a shocking transformation. The metal casing shatters, releasing the triumphant woman within who will be raised up in a blazing fury of crimson light. As good as her word, she she unlocks the main doors, lowers the void shield, and re-channels the firestorm to expend its power through the house vents, spreading fires that eventually gut the complex, but leaving those within just enough time to escape before she departs in a blaze of light. If the players are foolish enough to try to stop her, treat her as an unbound Daemonhost.

The second option is using the door within Haarlock's crypt, accessed by the amulet worn by his chief servant, Greel. Within the crypt is the master control for the main doors to the entrance hall, which if triggered, opens a path through the void shield and opens the main doors for exactly five minutes before the system seals the shield once more. All that is required is for the Acolytes to make good their escape across the hall past anything that might try to stop them. They may then wish to flee the island as soon as possible by the waiting skyship—before it too is turned into a flaming ruin.

Aftermath

Acolytes who successfully make it out alive, possibly clutching all sorts of trinkets and prizes from the auction, will have quite a tale to tell to Inquisitor Marr on their return. They will also possess a sizeable amount of intelligence on those who were drawn to the auction. In particular, they have obtained a single piece of information massively important to the future safety of the entire Calixis Sector—Erasmus Haarlock is not dead, and forces long thought silent are now in motion once more. The question as to what Haarlock is planning will tax Inquisitor Marr and the Ordos Calixis for some time to come…

REWARDS

The House of Dust and Ash is a particularly challenging adventure, and for its successful completion the GM should be looking to hand out 200–400 xp per game session, depending on what happened and the dangers faced by the Acolytes. Particular sharp thinking, bloody heroics, or cunning plans should also be rewarded with further xp bonuses in the region of 50–100 xp. Additionally, if the PCs poured the scion's blood into the Gilded Widow's chalice or opened the void gate, having turned the wheel of destiny, they should gain an additional permanent Fate Point.

It is also worth noting that there is a considerable amount of loot available to the Acolytes, especially during the final chaotic 13 hours of the adventure. Some of the NPCs carry considerable sums of cash, and it is probably a good idea if most of the items and cash remain out of the hands of the Acolytes. This goal can be achieved by Inquisitor Marr stepping in at the end with the power of the Inquisition to confiscate stolen gear and wipe credit blocks and the like. After all, the Acolytes should be happy to escape with their lives. However, a generous GM may have Marr allow them to keep a small amount of funds or equipment or may allow certain minor items to be beneath his notice.

THE HAARLOCK LEGACY AND OTHER DARK CONSPIRACIES

The GM is free to spin no end of further adventures from the ashes of this one, and there are a great many leads to follow:

What of the other auction attendees and the powers they represented?

What of the fate of the Gilded Widow?

What shadowy forces helped Haarlock arrange the auction in the first place?

What secrets do the relics salvaged from the auction hold?

Perhaps the most worrying—what of Haarlock's legacy on other worlds, and what of his return?

NPCs and Antagonists

Aboard the Skyship

Captain Elias Shadrack

Elias Shadrack Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
37	40	36	35	34	35	36	42	30

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 15
Skills: Awareness (Per), Carouse (T), Ciphers (War Cant) (Int), Climb (S), Command (Fel) +10, Common Lore (Imperial Guard, Imperium, Tech) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Drive (Ground Vehicle) (Ag), Gamble (Per), Inquiry (Fel), Intimidate (S), Navigation (Ground) (Int), Pilot (Civilian Craft) (Ag) +10, Secret Tongue (Military) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Survival (Int), Tech Use (Int), Trade (Merchant, Officer) (Int).
Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Las, SP), Jaded, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Nerves of Steel, Pistol Training (Las, SP), Quick Draw, Rapid Reload, Sound Constitution (×3), Swift Attack.
Armour: Reinforced coveralls with flak panelling (Body 3, Arms 2, Legs 2).
Weapons: Mono knife (3m; 1d5+3† R; Pen 2), heavy laspistol with overcharge pack (30m; S/2/–; 1d10+4 E; Pen 0; Clip 15; Full).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: 2 spare overcharge clips for laspistol, master command key for the *Cygnan Martyr*, battered copy of the *Imperial Infantryman's Uplifting Primer* (Margin Crusade edition), key to the ship's vault, 30 Thrones.

Nahun Grist

Nahun Grist Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
37	35	35	35	30	37	37	31	36

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 14
Skills: Awareness (Per), Barter (Fel) +10, Carouse (T), Command (Fel), Common Lore (Imperium, Underworld), Deceive (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag), Evaluate (+10), Intimidate (S) +10, Speak Language (Dreg Cant, Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (Crewman, Merchant) (Int).
Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Las, SP), Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Nerves of Steel, Street Fighting.
Armour: Reinforced coveralls (Body 2, Arms 2, Legs 2, Primitive—keeps value against corrosives).
Weapons: Mono knife (3m; 1d5+3† R; Pen 2), hand cannon (35m; S/–/–; 1d10+4 I; Pen 2; Clip 5; Rld 2Full), pump shotgun (30m; S/–/–; 1d10+4 I; Pen 0; Clip 8; Rld 2Full; Scatter).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Respirator, tool belt, cargo manifest, spare clip for hand cannon, 20 Thrones, lucky charm.

Skyship Crewman

Skyship Creman Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
28	28	35	35	30	26	27	25	30

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 10
Skills: Awareness (Per), Carouse (T), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (Crewman) (Int).
Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Las), Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Pistol Training (SP).
Armour: Reinforced coveralls (Body 2, Arms 2, Legs 2, Primitive—keeps value against corrosives).
Weapons: Club (1d10+3† I; Primitive) or knife (3m; 1d5+3† R; Primitive), and when armed to repel boarders either stub revolver (30m; S/–/–; 1d10+3 I; Shots 6; Rld 2Full; Reliable) or lasgun (100m; S/3/–; 1d10+3 E; Pen 0; Clip 60; Rld Full; Reliable).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Respirator, tool belt, 1d10 Thrones, lucky charm.

Lanus Cisten

Lanus Cisten Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
23	30	25	30	26	42	30	34	30

Movement: 2/4/8/16 **Wounds:** 11
Skills: Awareness (Per), Charm (Fel), Common Lore (Administratum, Imperium, Tech, War) (Int) +10, Evaluate (Int), Forbidden Lore (Cults, Heresy, Xenos) (Int), Literacy (Int) +10, Medicae (Int), Navigation (Stellar) (Int), Pilot (Civilian Craft) (Ag), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int), Scholastic Lore (Archaic, Cryptology, Heraldry, Legend, Philosophy) (Int) +10, Trade (Archivist, Author, Copyist) (Int).
Talents: Foresight, Peer (Academic, Government), Pistol Training (SP).
Armour: Concealed xeno-mesh vest (Body 4).
Weapons: Unarmed (1d5-1† I; Primitive), stub automatic

(30m; S/3/–; 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip 9; Rld Full).
†*Includes Strength Bonus.*
Gear: Fine quality robes, respirator, vapour cloak, data-slates, writing kit, journal, antique chron, 700 Thrones, familial signet rig, personal vox, credit block for 450,000 Thrones, also various textbooks, medi-kit, and four spare clips for automatic kept in baggage.

Whent

Whent Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
20	20	33	30	30	28	30	20	33

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 10
Skills: Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Literacy (Int) +10, Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (Copyist) (Int).
Talents: Paranoia.
Weapons: Unarmed (1d5† I; Primitive), stub revolver (30m; S/–/–; 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip 6; Rld 2Full; Reliable)—note that he is unskilled in this weapon's use (–20 BS).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Robes, respirator, vapour cloak, data-slate, pict recorder, satchel of writing supplies, 5 Thrones, lucky pen.

Vymer and Quill

The two Bloodsworn have a common profile:

Vymer and Quill Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
45	45	35	40	35	30	38	40	25

Movement: 4/8/12/24 **Wounds:**15
Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Concealment (Ag), Dodge (Ag), Drive (Ground Vehicle) (Ag), Inquiry (Fel), Interrogation (WP), Intimidate (S) +10, Medicae (Int), Security (Ag), Shadowing (Ag), Silent Move (Ag), Speak Language (Dreg Cant, Low Gothic) (Int), Tracking (Int).
Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Las, SP), Disarm, Heavy Weapon Training (Launcher, SP), Hip Shooting, Iron Jaw, Jaded, Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Primitive, Shock), Nerves of Steel, Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, SP), Rapid Reaction.
Armour: Light carapace and flak (Head 3, Arms 3, Body 5, Legs 3).
Weapons: Hand cannon (35m; S/–/–; 1d10+4 I; Pen 2; Clip 5; Rld 2Full), combat shotgun (30m; S/3/–; 1d10+4 I; Pen 0; Clip 18; Rld 2Full), shock maul (1d10+3† I; Shocking), 1 frag grenade, 1 blind grenade, 2 photon-flashes.
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Rugged clothing, 3 hand cannon clips, 3 normal clips and 1 clip of inferno shells for shotgun, photo-visor, respirator, 300 Thrones, data-slate of bounties, bloodsworn charter, medi-kit (Quill only), credit block with 300,000 Thrones (Vymer only).

Octavia Nile

Octavia Nile Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
28	35	30	30	35	40	35	45	40

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 13
Skills: Awareness (Per), Barter (Fel) +10, Charm (Fel) +10, Chem-Use (Int), Ciphers (Logician) (Int) +10, Command (Fel), Common Lore (Imperium, Tech) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10, Evaluate (Int) +10, Forbidden Lore (Archeaotech, Heresy, Xenos) (Int) +10, Literacy (Int), Logic (Int) +10, Scrutiny (Per) +10, Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int), Tech-Use (Int), Trade (Merchant) (Int) +10.
Talents: Jaded, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Touched by the Fates (2 Fate Points).
Armour: Concealed mesh (Body 3, Arms 2, Legs 2).
Weapons: Compact Laspistol (15m; S/–/–; 1d10+1 E; Pen 0; Clip 15; Rld Full; Reliable).
Gear: Good quality clothes, auspex, filtration plugs, personal encrypted micro-bead, data-slate, spare clip for laspistol, hotshot pack for laspistol, a cerebral annihilator (see page 48), ring with a concealed compartment of poison, portable stummer, magnoculars, injector with two doses of stimm and one of panimmune, 1000 Thrones, credit block for 3 million Thrones.

Nile's Bodyguards

Nile's bodyguards are Logician Crucible Agents (see page 50). Their cover identity skills are Shadowing (Ag) and Pilot (Civilian Craft) (Ag). They are wearing flak armour (All 4) and are armed with autopistols loaded with manstopper rounds and fitted with red dot sights (30m; S/–/6; 1d10+2 S; Pen 3, Clip 18; Rld Full). They carry four spare clips, mirco-beads, photo-visors, respirators, and vapour cloaks.

Nile's "Adept"

Nile's Adept is actually an Ashen Tear Assassin (see Page 51).

Abbot Tamas of Shale

Abbot Tamas of Shale Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
35	28	40	40	22	38	33	45	23

Movement: 2/4/8/16 **Wounds:** 23
Skills: Awareness (Per), Blather (Fel), Carouse (T), Ciphers (Occult) (Int), Command (Fel), Common Lore (Imperial Creed, Imperium) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (Cults, Daemonology) (Int) +10, Intimidate (S) +10, Invocation (WP) +10, Psyniscience (Per), Secret Tongue (Crowfather) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (Skinner, Seer) (Int).
Talents: Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Pistol Training (SP), Resistance (Disease, Poisons, Psychic), Sorcery (effective Psy Rating 2) Strong Minded, Unshakeable Faith.
Traits: Dark Pact, Mutation (Corpulent Flesh).
Dark Rituals: Tamas knows several dark rituals, including ones to receive messages via dream sending from his master and to summon Unclean Spirits.
Crow-Belly: Should Tamas be killed, his corpulent flesh will splits open and a flock of murderous Shale Crows pours forth (see page 391 of **Dark Heresy**).
Sorcery: Compel (19), Fearful Aura (9), Inflict Pain (10), Psychic Crush (18), Weaken Veil (11), Whispers of the Warp (11).
Armour: Natural armour (All 4).
Weapons: Sacrificial blade (3m; 1d5+4† R; Primitive), stub automatic (30m; S/3/–; 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip 9; Rld Full).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Lavish Ministorum robes, Malefic Codex, 30 Thrones, credit block for 800,000 Thrones.

Shale's Believers

Tamas's followers are Cult Initiates (see page 337 of the **Dark Heresy Core Rulebook**).

The Wreckers

Wrecker Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
35	28	35	30	33	20	30	30	20

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 10
Skills: Awareness (Per), Carouse (T), Chem-Use (Int), Common Lore (Imperium, Underworld) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S), Speak Language (Dreg Cant, Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (Scavenger).
Talents: Basic Weapon Training (SP), Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Nerves of Steel.
Armour: Patchwork chem-robes (All 2, Primitive—keeps value against corrosives and flame).
Weapons: Blade (1d5+3†; Primitive), crude stub revolver (20m; S/–/–; 1d10+3; Pen 0; Clip 6; Rld 2Full) and either a boarding axe (1d10+4† R; Primitive, Unbalanced) or autogun (90m; S/3/10; 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip 30; Rld Full).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Filtration mask, grapnel and line, trophies and trinkets, spare clip for each weapon.

The House of Dust and Ash

Provost Hiram Bland

Hiram Bland Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
18	24	28	30	30	35	32	36	36

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 10
Skills: Awareness (Per), Barter (Fel), Charm (Fel), Ciphers (Chancellery Court) (Int), Command (Fel), Common Lore (Administratum, Imperium) (Int) +10, Deceive (Fel), Evaluate (Int) +10, Literacy (Int), Logic (Int), Scrutiny (Per), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (Assessor, Auctioneer, Copyist) (Int) +10.
Talents: Pistol Training (Las).
Armour: None.
Weapons: Compact laspistol (15m; S/–/–; 1d10+1 E; Pen 0; Clip 15; Rld Full; Reliable).
Gear: Provost's hooded robes, personal vox, Administratum signet ring coder, data-slate, respirator, auto-quill.

Advocate Locutor Mayweather

Locutor Mayweather Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
28	28	35	35	30	26	27	25	30

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 11
Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Barter (Fel) +10, Charm (Fel), Ciphers (Chancellery Court, Inquisition) (Int) +10,), Common Lore (Administratum, Imperium) (Int) +10, Deceive (Fel) +20, Evaluate (Int) +10, Literacy (Int) +10, Logic (Int), Scrutiny (Per) +10, Scholastic law (Judgement) (Int), Security (Ag), Search (Per), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (Advocate) (Int) +10.
Talents: Paranoia, Pistol Training (Las).
Armour: None.
Weapons: Compact laspistol (15m; S/–/–; 1d10+1 E; Pen 0; Clip 15; Rld Full; Reliable).
Gear: Encrypted long-range vox, spare clip for laspistol, data-slate, respirator, auto-quill, hip flask of amasec, multi-key, 1 dose of stimm and injector, 300 Thrones.

Adepts and Advocate

Adept and Advocate Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
20	22	30	30	30	30	25	25	25

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 9
Skills: Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Administratum, Imperium) (Int), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (any one) (Int).
Talents: None.
Armour: None.
Weapons: Unarmed (1d5†; Primitive).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Data-slate or writing kit.

PDF Troopers

PDF Trooper Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
25	30	35	35	30	26	30	30	30

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 10
Skills: Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Imperium, War) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Interrogation (WP), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int).
Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Las, SP), Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Nerves of Steel.
Armour: Imperial Guard flak (All 4).
Weapons: Lasgun (100m; S/3/–; 1d10+3 E; Pen 0; Clip 60; Rld Full; Reliable), knife (1m; 1d5+3† R; Primitive).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: 2 spare clips, micro-bead, lamp pack, respirator, 1d10 thrones.

Captain Rubio of the Ozmandius

Rubio Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
33	28	30	30	34	31	30	37	38

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 10
Skills: Awareness (Per), Blather (Fel), Carouse (T) +10, Charm (Fel), Command (Fel), Common Lore (Imperium, Tech) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Forbidden Lore (The Warp) (Int), Gamble (Int), Literacy (Int), Navigation (Stellar) (Int), Pilot (Civilian Craft) (Ag), Sleight of Hand (Ag), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic, Ship Cant) (Int), Trade (Merchant) (Int).
Talents: Decadence, Melee Weapon Training (Power, Primitive,), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Quick Draw.
Armour: Mesh combat cloak (Arms 4, Body 4).
Weapons: Xeno-las pistol (40m; S/3/–; 1d10+3 E; Pen 2; Clip 12; Rld Half), power sword (1d10+8† E; Pen 6; Balanced, Power Field).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: High-fashion clothes, vox-bead, Jewellery worth 5,000 Thrones, filtration plugs, 3,000 Thrones in cash, credit block for 1.5 million Thrones, 3 doses of night dust.

Rubio's hangers on

Rubio has a sizable entourage, most of them fops and pointless lackeys. Of these, the only ones of note are three bodyguards from his family's armsmen cadre and his "champion" (use the Kill Squad Trooper and the Heavy from page 341 of the **Dark Heresy Core Rulebook** respectively).

Marshrek

Marshrek has the same profile as a Beast Slaver found on page 89. He is also equipped with a credit block for 800,000 Thrones.

Master Nonesuch

Master Nonesuch is an incognito Slaugth Overseer (see page 80), and his walking cane conceals his necrotic sceptre (see page 78. His mask of flesh negates his Fear rating.

The Flesh Parasites

Master Nonesuch's assistants are harvested human bodies piloted by Slaugth bio-constructs, a fact that will become apparent if substantial injury is done to them—particularly to the head, where a semi-insectile "mass" replaces the victim's brain. Driven by these vile creatures, the bodies must be completely destroyed in order to stop them.

Flesh Parasite Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
40	40	40	(9) 35	30	30	40	30	15

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 30
Skills: Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Imperium, Tech) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Trade (any one) (Int).
Talents: Pistol Training (Las, SP), Resistance (Psychic).
Traits: Fear 1 (Disturbing)–only when their bodies have become damaged, From Beyond, The Stuff of Nightmares, Unnatural Toughness (×3).
Weapons: Unarmed (1d5+1† I; Primitive), stub automatic (30m; S/3/–; 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip 9; Rld Full).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Sombre clothing, mirco-bead, respirator, data-slate, 2 spare clips.

Greel, the Head Mourner

Greel Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
35	20	40	40	30	32	38	50	30

Movement: 3/6/9/18 **Wounds:** 13
Skills: Awareness (Per), Charm (Fel), Common Lore (Imperial Creed, Imperium, Tech) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10, Intimidate (S) +10, Literacy (Int) +10, Scholastic Lore (Archaic, Legend) (Int) +10, Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int).
Talents: Air of Authority, Fearless, Master Orator, Melee Weapon Training (Power, Primitive).
Weapons: In the final part of the adventure, he carries a power scythe (2d10+9† E; Pen 6; Power Field, Unwieldy).
†Includes Strength Bonus.
Gear: Shrouding robes, black sunburst amulet, keys. In the final part, he is also be equipped with a rosarius (All—reduces ranged weapon Damage by 2d10, except on roll of "11" (see page 189 of **The Inquisitor's Handbook**).

The Sorrowful Guild

The Mourners of the Sorrowful Guild can be represented by the profile of the Cult Fanatic on page 337 of **Dark Heresy**, equipped solely with sacrificial blades.

The House Servitors

The House is served by numerous servitors of the standard types listed in the **Dark Heresy Core Rulebook** and **The Inquisitor's Handbook**; however, the House's Gun Servitors are equipped with cut-down heavy stubbers (80m; –/–/10; 1d10+4 I; Pen 3; Clip 200) and, in a handful of cases, melta guns (20m; S/–/–; 2d10+4 E; Pen 12; Clip 15).

The Children of the Kingdom

If the count down progresses far enough, the Children of the Kingdom are unleashed. They are a monstrous and savage xeno-form Haarlock encountered slithering through a world of ruined cities out in the Halo Stars. Awakened from their sleep, these blind, groping, semi-humanoid creatures spill out from the crypt and keep doing so in numbers left up to the GM.

Children of the Kingdom Profile								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
35	—	(8) 40	38	50	20	40	20	—

Movement: 2/4/6/12 **Wounds:** 12
Skills: Awareness (Per), Climb (S) +10, Silent Move (Ag) +10, Tracking (Int) +20.
Talents: None.
Traits: Bestial, Crawler, Fear 1 (Disturbing), From Beyond, Natural Armour (4), Natural Weapon (Bite), Sonar Sense, Strange Physiology, Toxic (Bite), Unnatural Strength (×2).
Armour: Natural armour (All 4).
Weapons: Bite (1d10+8 R; Toxic—take a **Difficult (–10) Toughness Test** or become paralysed for 1d5 Rounds).



PLAYER HANDOUT I: WRIT OF AUTHORITY

By Authority of the
Holy Inquisiton

I

Loyal Acolytes,

You are requested and required forthwith under the authority of the God-Emperor of Mankind to submit to this writ and order and serve the most Holy Ordos of His Inquisition.

I bind you over at His requirement to the service of Inquisitor Silas Marr on the world of Solomon for so long as he sees fit to the particulars of this task. Obey him as you would me, lest your lives be forfeit and shame be brought on my name.

On that planet you are to attend incognito an auction of goods from the estate of the lost Rogue Trader Erasmus Haarlock. Over the course of the aforesaid auction you are to monitor events as they unfold and observe the nature and intent of those who would disport for the relics and curios of this man's life. Your goal is to identify among them any that might have fallen from the Emperor's light or any that may be in service to factions and powers of interest to the Conclave.

Further knowledge of this world and your duties should be obtained from my esteemed colleague Inquisitor Marr, from whose hands this order has been delivered to you.

Remember, as related to me, this is foremost a mission of observation and guile, but do not hesitate to defend yourselves with utmost vigour and strike where your duty to the Emperor determines you have no other choice.

So in the Light of the Golden Throne with my prayers for your safe passage, and my certain faith that you will serve honourably and that I will see you all once more.

_____

Inquisitor
Conclave of Calixis

PLAYER HANDOUT II: DATASLATE ON SOLOMON

IMPERIUM DATA SLATE Model. 75.RT-E1.41K

//Query results for "solomon, world"
//Default: Display most relevent match executed

Solomon

++ Ignorance is a blessing not to be disdained by the wise ++

Population: 13 billon.

Tithe Grade: Exactus Extremis (Special).

Geography/Demography: Super-continental hive and industrial structure, which has lead to the eradication of all natural landscape, interspersed with polluted seas. High level of environmental toxicity, highly turbulent weather patterns with corrosive rainstorms and electrical disturbances common. Conditions on Solomon are at the limits of human sustainability and only maintained by a network of macro-atmosphere processing units. Population in steady decline.

Governmental Type: Parliamentary Oligarchy under the supervision of the Departmento Munitorium.

Planetary Governor: Archprefect Garth Jarndyce.

Adept Presence: Very High. Widespread Departmento Munitorium and Administratum presence dominate this world's political and economic structures. Important centres of power include the Halls of the Chancellery Court, the Planetary Overwatch Orbital, and the Central Tithe Census Fortress. Presence of Adeptus Arbities and Ministorum classified as Below Average for a hive world with Solomon's population and importance.

Military: Munitorium Security Forces, Parliamentary Guard (local PDF), numerous small private armies of the individual tithe guilds. Medium Quality. As an important military transhipping and supply point, Solomon also has a considerable orbital defence network.

Description: By Lord Militant Angevin's Sector Edict A-87635.597, Solomon was declared a client-state of the Departmento Munitorium, with the majority of Solomon's industrial output tithed directly to that arm of the Adepta. Fulfilling this tithe is the duty of the planet's guilds, who comprise Solomon's upper classes. This responsibility gives the guilds the second highest level of political power on Solomon, beneath the Departmento Munitorium. This is in contrast to most planets within the Calixis Sector, where industrial-feudal and hereditary governments are the norm.

The high tithe rating has resulted in Solomon's natural resources being almost completely consumed. Centuries of extreme manufacturing processes have destroyed the planet's biosphere, killing most native life-forms and limiting the majority of human habitation to protected hive cities.

There are five hive-citadels that cover the majority of Solomon's main continent and house most of the planetary population: Gloriana, Atropos, Morrigan, Albia, and Wrath. Between the hives, much of the landscape is occupied by industrial infastructure: pipe-farms, refinery complexes, chem-processing works, pyro-vent towers, foundries, and storage facilities. Although some of this is still in use, much has been abandoned due to decay. The rest is deserted wasteland, toxic seas, and abandoned urban zones and cities, much of which is classified as unsuitable for long-term human survival. These areas, which cover tens of thousands of square kilometres, are officially designated as the Interior Industrialized and Infastructural Zones by the Departmento Munitorium [See Section 23/u: Topographical and Zoning Maps of the Planetary Surface]. Local parlance refers to them as the "Interior."

[more]

PLAYER HANDOUT III: DATASLATE ON SOLOMON (CONT.)

IMPERIUM DATA SLATE Model. 75 RT-E1 41K

[cont from prev]

Solomon

++ Ignorance is a blessing not to be disdained by the wise ++

Discord and the Rule of Law: Solomon's population is in terminal decline due to the continuously increasing toxicity of their enviroment, and must be regularly replenished by forced immigration through the Administratum. Along with the relocation of low-class populations from other hive worlds, this includes the establishment of penitentiary labour camps for off-world prisoners and the organization of Solomon's sizable mutant population into an indentured workforce. Introducing these elements into Solomon's society has resulted in high levels of discord and many malcontents amongst the planet's population. Escapees from the penitentiary camps and indentured workforces especially have fed a growing population of outlaws in the Interior, limiting effective administrative control of the area.

Order within the hive-citadels is maintained by private armsmen and mercenary squads controlled and funded by Solomon's tithe-guilds. These squads are overseen by the Departmento Munitorium's Quastor-Prefects and the military authority of the Chancellery Guard. Both the Adeptus and guild law enforcement are primarily concerned with maintaining order and production levels. Protecting Solomon's citizenry is secondary. It is speculated that this has resulted in the general population's lack of trust in local and planetary authorities, and possibly contributed to civil discontent within the hive-citadels. There is also a large criminal underclass within the lower wards of all five hives, which the civil authorities have been unable to subdue.

The power of the Ministorum and Imperial Cult on Solomon is also weak, something the sector Ecclesiarchy has attempted to rectify without success. Ministorum investigations have revealed that the general citizenry regard the Imperial Cult as a "tool" of Solomon's upper classes and planetary government. This belief is considered to be a direct threat to civil stability. In turn, the tithe-guilds and Administratum have established some of the most severe penalties for sedition and civil disobedience in the sector. Despite this, the planetary populace has shown a marked tendency for rebellion, and local outbreaks of violence and rioting occur with some regularity [See Section 270/b: Civil Enforcement Statistics]. Members of the Adepta with business in the main industrial sectors are advised not to advertise their identity.

The general hopelessness, resentment, and morbidity of the general population also has given rise to the possibility of heretical outbreaks of various types. Investigations by Imperial authorities have turned up many legends of a possibly deviant nature [See Section 543/r: Curse of Solomon], as well as evidence of numerous cults, secret societies, and heretical followings [See Sections 578/r-611/b: Cryptographers, Sleepers of Solomon, Clockwork Watchers, Red Fist Revolution, Silent Death, Other Heretical Organizations]. This has on occasion become serious enough to merit investigation and purges from the Holy Ordos.

Relics of the Ancient History: Human habitation on Solomon predates the Angevin Crusade that founded the Calixis Sector. The planet's current name is believed to be attributed to the Rogue Trader Solomon Haarlock, who some sources accredit with using the world as a base of operations during his explorations of the sector in late M36. The pre-Imperial human habitation of the planet is often thought to have attributed to certain anomalies of culture and technology evident on Solomon and not present on other worlds in the sector, and consequently the cause of occasional finds of previously unknown archeaotech on the planet [See Section 789/w: Void Abacus].

PLAYER HANDOUT IV: ERASMUS HAARLOCK

The Haarlock Warrant

Rogue Traders are all but unique in Imperial culture in that they are given licence to travel freely between the stars, both within the Imperium and without. A Rogue Trader's charter gives him the right and authority to contact, trade, and make war beyond the Emperor's Light. Outside the fringes of mankind's domain, each Rogue Trader is a law unto himself.

The Haarlock warrant goes further, charging the Haarlocks to "Bring the truth of the God-Emperor of Mankind and punish the foes of man in the darkness beyond." It authorizes the raising and maintenance of a private fleet and army, going so far as to grant (with certain caveats) title to request arms, vessels, and support from the "Emperor's Servants."

In Imperial terms, this degree of power in the hands of a single individual is staggeringly rare. The value of the Haarlock warrant is almost incalculable, and many would do any deed to possess it.

Much of the four millennia history of the Haarlock line is lost, and what does remain shows a repeated wax and wane of their power as they fade in and out of Imperial history. Recently, however, Albrach Haarlock was slain at the Battle of Bitter Reach, casting his bloodline into conflict. During this, an unusual scion rose to prominence.

A nephew of Albrach Haarlock by his long-dead sister, Erasmus is recorded in the Abulon Chronicles as being without ambition, remarkable only for a sharp wit and a valuable talent for the mysteries of technoarcana and xeno-lore. He was granted the captaincy of a scout frigate, The Spear of Destiny. During the conflict, Erasmus was lured into a trap by Mathias Haarlock, an outcast family member who turned to the Ruinous Powers for aid. Assailed by warp fiends, Erasmus was terribly injured in the attack and lost his beloved wife and daughter. Certain sources believe this incident drove Erasmus insane.

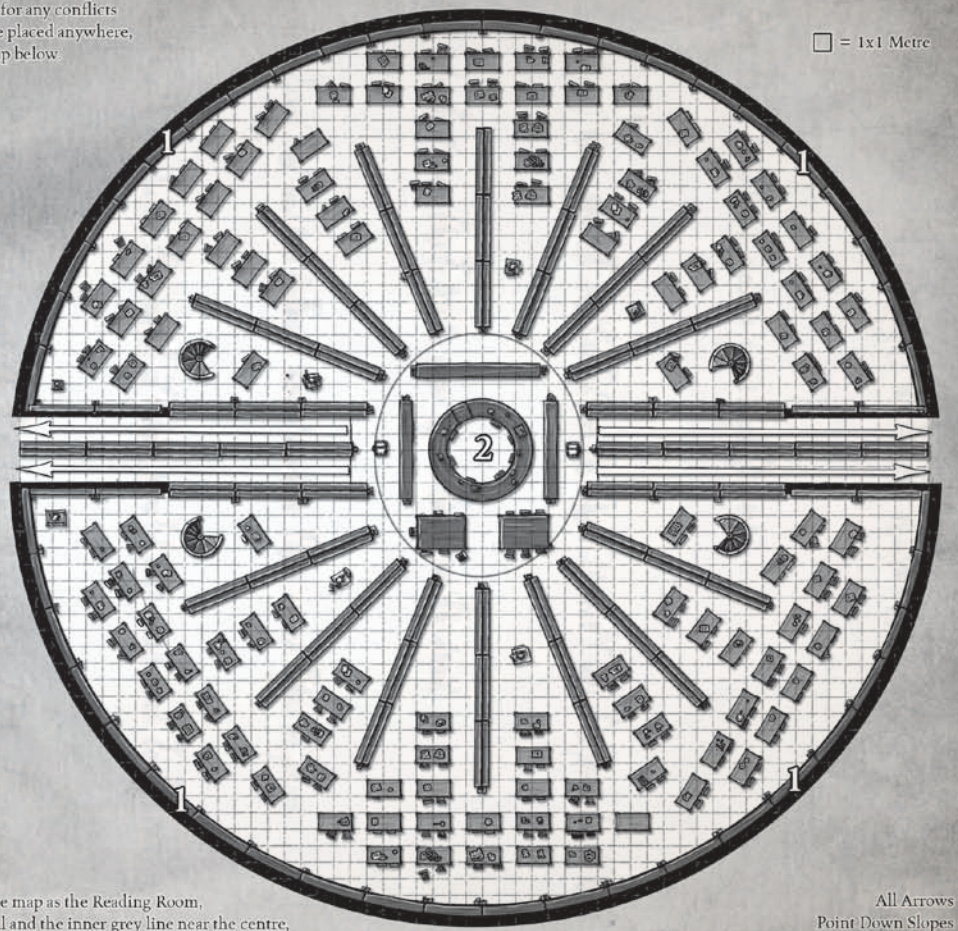
Ten standard years passed before Erasmus appeared again, and he had become a changed man, gaunt and terrible, possessing dire weapons and incomprehensible knowledge. In less than three years, Erasmus Haarlock succeeded in hunting down and systematically destroying every rival claimant to the Haarlock Warrant. Family members, allies, contacts, and anyone that stood between him and his vengeance were all considered forfeit by Erasmus. With his rivals destroyed, Erasmus was declared the Haarlock by a convocation of Imperial authorities from Solomon, Scintilla, and Ophelia VII. In the year 703.M41, Erasmus vanished without a trace.

The Reading Room

The Reading Room is used as a generic combat grid for any conflicts taking place in the House of Dust and Ash, so it can be placed anywhere, not just on the location suggested on the map below.



House of Dust and Ash



Key

1 = Wall of Enormous Bookcases
2 = Reception
= Spiral Staircase up to the Upper Galleries
= Bookcase
= Reading Desk
= Data Lectern

The Upper Galleries use the same map as the Reading Room, but only use the space between the outer wall and the inner grey line near the centre, which marks a balcony on the upper floors.

All Arrows Point Down Slopes

Imp Rec 1007368

I

132-89/CS/NW
The House of Dust and Ash
Cartopict 061/275/HYO

GM AID II: MAP OF THE CREMATORIUM





Tricorn Inquisitorial Archive: Scintilla

Name: Myrchella Sinderfell.
Known Aliases: Lady Orlea Grey, The Crimson Countess, The Red Angel of Vaxanide, The Lady of Torment.

Thought For the Day:
"The coin of the forbidden is worth little yet can buy souls uncounted."

Known Associates or Organisations: Myrchella Sinderfell is known to draw around her a court comprised of rogue psykers, warp dabblers, xenophiles, hereteks, dissolute nobles, corrupt Navigators, scholars of the proscribed, and dealers with daemons. These courts are rarely enduring and are often discarded in flight or destroyed for diversion by Sinderfell herself.

Confirmed Heresies: Numerous notorious atrocities: the Bleeding of Tarsus, the Enthrallment of the *Phoenix's Ransom*, the Red Vaults of Luggnum.
Preferred Methods of Operation: The assumption of the identity of others and subsumption of families, cults, and organisations to her own ends (usually including murder and wanton infliction of pain). Known to favour numerous devices of forbidden technology, some of xenos design, to further her proclivities.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Extremis.
Encounter Protocol: Terminate.

Lady Myrchella Sinderfell is one of the most elusive and destructive heretics active in the Calixis Sector. Intelligent, resourceful, and cruel, over the centuries Myrchella Sinderfell has sampled blasphemous pleasures, dallied with diverse heresies, and committed atrocities of the most vile nature for no other reason than her own gratification.

Born into the high Sinderfell family of Scintilla, Myrchella Sinderfell was raised as part of a lineage whose wealth and holdings spanned the Calixis Sector. It is said that in her younger years she showed exceptional promises in all areas of education, with no sign of the madness to come. However, when she came of age, Myrchella used the Sinderfell wealth to assemble a vile court of sorcerers, xenophiles, flesh crafters, and corrupt savants in the seclusion of the Sinderfell manse on Quaddis, collecting them and their knowledge like a true dilettante of the vile. The corruption of Lady Sinderfell was finally betrayed to the servants of the God-Emperor. The Holy Ordos razed the Sinderfell manse in a single night—it is said that the fury of the assault could be seen from the balconies of far Xacarph.

Lady Sinderfell escaped the wrath of the Imperium to recreate her blood-soaked court of blasphemy over and over again. On Malfi she suborned the leadership of a sanguinary cult and bathed in blood every day for a year. On Kalf she and her entourage burned town after town, hunted the survivors through the night and unleashed unclean spirits to plague any who remained. Though reported as killed on board the *Phoenix's Ransom* by Judge Uzzriah, and again in the Castigation of the Red Vaults of Luggnum, Lady Myrchella Sinderfell is still believed at large in the Calixis Sector.

Known Motivations and Goals: Myrchella Sinderfell's avarice, spite, narcissism and sadism are reflected in every part of her heresies. She has bathed herself in blood, inflicted pain and darkened her fractured soul not for an ideal but simply because it makes her "happy."

Her motivations are simple enough, but make her unpredictable. Where will she strike next?

-M.



Tricorn Inquisitorial Archive: Scintilla

Name: Lottie—(rumoured, surname unknown).
Known Aliases: The Burning Princess.

Thought For the Day:

"Innocence may mask the quintessence of horrors."

Known Associates or Organisations: The Stigmatus Covenant (former), the pirate crew of the raider *Storm Walker* (former), various uprisings and revolts of recidivist and heretical elements.

Confirmed Heresies: Witchcraft, torture, multiple counts of murder and mental violation, wanton destruction, piracy against Chartist vessels and vessels of the Commercia, the death of Witch Hunter Fhendahl, also believed responsible for the Acreage Cathedral Mount Firestorm.
Preferred Methods of Operation: Known to operate with pirate, renegade, and heretical organizations seemingly at random.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Extremis.
Encounter Protocol: Termination by special measures.

The life and true nature of this appallingly powerful rogue psyker, known by rumour and dark repute over the last few years (since her first recorded appearance during an uprising on Pellucida IX) as the "Burning Princess" remains a mystery to the Holy Ordos. It is a mystery made all the more poignant and galling by the clear presence of a witch hunter's brand on her cheek.

A pyrokentic of extraordinary ability, she can transform herself seemingly without effort or risk into a walking holocaust of flames, able to focus her abilities with enough pinpoint accuracy to char a hole through warship armour. A wanderer, she has been encountered working alongside several renegade and mutant groups, and even for a time upon a pirate raider vessel operating out of the Hazeroth Abyss. The "Burning Princess is classified as an alpha-plus level psyker. She has strong telepathic abilities, but her most prodigious power is as a pyrokine. She appears to be a young woman in her late teens, and it is possible her powers will only increase with maturity.

Such is her threat that a specially equipped taskforce under the noted Witch Hunter Fhendahl was founded to trace and apprehend her. It successfully tracked her to an abandoned settlement on the ill-reputed world of Dusk, where she prevailed and everyone in Fhendahl's mission burned. She is still at liberty, and her current whereabouts remain unknown.

Known Motivations and Goals: This witch's motivations remain as mysterious as her identity and true origins. After-action reports by traumatised survivors have claimed her as a dead-eyed marionette, seemingly uninterested in the horrors she inflicts, while others paint her as a laughing devil, filled with malice and sadistic glee. The truth remains unproven.

Addendum:

Damn! Damn! Damn!

2.193.656.M41—Inquisitorial Agent <classified> reports rumours of a 'burning woman' involved with civil unrest on St. Astrid's Fall.
2.274.656.M41—All contact with Agent <classified> lost.



Tricorn Inquisitorial Archive: Scintilla

Name: Coriolanus Vestra
Known Aliases: None known.
possibly "False Father of Melnor V Schism

Thought For the Day:

"The sword that you sharpen can be turned on you."

Known Associates or Organisations: Multiple cults and heretical organisations, including the Serrated Query, the Brotherhood of the Horned Darkness, the Pale Throng, and the Masqued of Malfi amongst many more. However, Vestra is only ever a peripheral figure and an intermediary who prefers to work alone as a freelance agent of sorts for the duration of a particular task or objective.

Confirmed Heresies: The death of the planet Lassiv with all of its inhabitants in the Hecuba Sector, the corruption of the Adorian sect of the Cult Imperialis, founding of the Bearers of Mirrored Visage, inciting the second rebellion of The Lost on Baraspine.
Preferred Methods of Operation: Incitement of rebellion through demagoguery, acting as a go-between and facilitator for different heretical and malefic cults in order to create a larger force of disorder.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Extremis.
Encounter Protocol: Capture or eliminate at all cost.

Brother Missionary Coriolanus Vestra was a loyal, even revered, Imperial Missionary who fought to bring the light of the Emperor to those who knew it not. His zeal was marked by his superiors—Cardinal Fortis noted on several occasions Vestra undertook missions in totally uncharted regions of space, always returning to bring news of thousands of new followers of the Imperial Creed. The final mission undertaken by Coriolanus Vestra records that he ventured into the Halo Stars in search of human communities lost for millennia. He did not return and was presumed to have perished.

What exactly occurred to Vestra on his journey into the Halo Stars is not known, but it can be easily inferred that something occurred that caused him to break his faith and turn him against the Imperium that he had so devoutly served. The fact that Vestra uses the phrase "bathed in the light of the black sun" in some of his blasphemous addresses has been the focus of much analysis and may pertain to some dark revelation that turned Vestra into the arch-heretic he is today.

Fifty years after his disappearance, Coriolanus Vestra secretly returned to Imperial space. He slipped onto the world of Lassiv in distant Hecuba, a dishevelled shadow among many. Two years of meticulous and brutal endeavour saw Vestra dedicating Lassiv and the souls of its people to the ruination of the Emperor's realm from beneath a banner topped with the planetary governor's severed head. It was not, however, until after ten more years, three befouled worlds, and countless acts of heresy that the true identity of this arch-corruptor was uncovered. The anger and shame of the Ecclesiarchy has not abated in the eight decades that have passed since that revelation.

Known Motivations and Goals: Coriolanus Vestra's spite and zeal in persecuting his personal war against the Imperium cannot be doubted. It is unknown if Vestra, beyond a desire to simply bring anarchy and destruction, has any discernable grand scheme.

Loathsome, to be sure. ++SS++



Tricorn Inquisitorial Archive: Scintilla

Name: Ferran Ghast.
Known Aliases: Numerous and unknown.

Thought For the Day:

"The worst enemies are those we make ourselves."

Known Associates or Organisations: Confirmed use of highly capable and dangerous vassals. Suspected of forming a highly dangerous organisation of infiltrators and assassins that answers personally to him.

Confirmed Heresies: Betraying the Holy Ordos, including the killing of the acolyte team under his command in the Adrantis Nebula, association with unknown and unnumbered heretics, killing of Arbitrator execution team on Solomon, murder of High Prefect Astronius on Vaxanide, destruction of the cruiser *War Child* in Fenksworld orbital dock.
Preferred Methods of Operation: Disguise, infiltration, assassination, ambush, and espionage. Appears to have experience in mind-cleansing techniques, blackmail, and murder for hire.
Threat Rating: Excommunicate Traitoris-Hereticus Terminus.
Encounter Protocol: Terminate with extreme prejudice. Eliminate all associates and parties with whom he has communicated. Do not capture, do not interrogate.

Ferran Ghast is a heretic and renegade from the Inquisition. Acolyte, Explicator, and personal pupil of Cassilda Cognos, he was one of the finest servants of the Ordos Calixis, and his history of service had been both valourous and renowned. A breath away from ascension to full Inquisitorial rank and becoming a leading force in the Conclave, he was sent into the Adrantis Nebula following intelligence indicating the presence of the renegade Coriolanus Vestra. Ghast, and a team of acolytes sent with him, disappeared without a trace. In later years, many would wonder whether Vestra was responsible for corrupting Ghast or whether his soul had begun to rot long before his disappearance.

Seven years later, Ghast resurfaced on Solomon under a near perfect false identity, only being detected and recognised by chance. An Ordos-backed Arbitrator execution team was sent after him and were killed with ruthless efficiency for their trouble. Following this atrocity, Ghast once more disappeared, and the Inquisition declared him Excommunicate Traitoris. Since then, he has been reportedly involved in numerous heresies, assassinations, and even the loss of an Imperial Spite class cruiser through sabotage in dry-dock.

Every Acolyte and Ordos vassal has a standing order to pursue Ferran Ghast to his death should any lead or clue to his whereabouts be discovered.

Known Motivations and Goals: Ghast's goals, beyond mayhem and murder, remain unclear. Current opinion is divided, the majority believe Ghast to be a genius madman who serves only his own petty spite, whilst a minority suspect that there is some other hidden agenda or other grand design at work.

Titus believes Ghast is hiding in the Solgenna Reach, possibly even Scintilla!

-M.



Tricorn Inquisitorial Archive: Scintilla

Name: Magos Vathek.
Known Aliases: The Brass Lord, the Necro-Sage, Vathek the Undying, the Dockside Ripper, etc.

Thought For the Day:

"Death is but a doorway."

Known Associates or Organisations: None.

Confirmed Heresies: Mass murder, desecration, tomb robbery, multiple counts of tech-heresy, the destruction of an Adeptus Mechanicus Secutor Maniple, possession of Malygrisian Lore, necromancy.
Preferred Methods of Operation: Covert experimentation on the dead, acts of mass homicide in furtherance of the discovery of forbidden lore. Known to defend himself with deadly force when encountered or disturbed.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Terminus.
Encounter Protocol: Termination with extreme force at safe remove.

The facts of Magos Vathek's career before he was cast out from the Adeptus Mechanicus and became a hunted renegade are entirely unknown, and the tech-priest authorities have been singularly unforthcoming in this regard. It is thought that he was attached to the Explorator fleets of Archmagos Thule before some incident or event drove him mad, turning him into a renegade hunted equally by the Inquisition and the forces of the Machine Cult. *The Mechanicus must be made to cooperate...*

Vathek is obsessed with acquiring and perfecting dark technological lore. In particular, he desires the technological means to restore full life to dead tissue, although he is also known to have created forbidden weaponry, crafted flesh gholams, and experimented with a variety of prohibited alchemical and energy systems. His forbidden experiments are already reckoned to have cost upwards of 3,000 lives, most notably in a mass casualty event known as the "Morningside Incident" on Solomon, and on a smaller scale during the "dockside ripper" murders on Dreah. At the end of the latter, Vathek slew a Mechanicus force sent to destroy him and escaped off-world. He has also attacked a previously unknown resurrectionist cult on the cemetery world of Pilgrim's Pause to plunder its dark secrets. Valthek's current whereabouts and activities remain unknown.

In appearance, Vathek looks to be a heavily augmented tech-priest robed in tattered black, surrounded by a multitude of black-iron and brass mechadendrites fitted with surgical tools, callipers, and energy coils. He is known to have incorporated the forbidden technology of a Sarkossan wave generator into his own carapace and is believed to be no longer "alive" in any meaningful sense, but propelled by the power of his own dark technology. He has proven extremely difficult to slow or destroy with conventional weapons fire, and extreme measures are advised when confronting him.

Known Motivations and Goals: Aside from his drive for dark scientific lore, he appears to have no known goals or plans. He also does not cooperate or serve others, fashioning only unliving servitors as his needs arise. Some theorise that Vathak's true obsession is somehow discovering a means to restore biological life to this own decaying flesh.



Tricorn Inquisitorial Archive: Scintilla

Name: Sira Tobias Ur'Rawthic of the House of Belasco.
Known Aliases: Lord Gault, Master Byros Rawley, Prelate Trace, numerous others.

Thought For the Day:

"They that wallow in sin deserve not the mercy of the pyre."

Known Associates or Organisations: House Belasco (outcast), the Masqued (former), the Beast House (probable), hires and disposes of lackeys as needed.

Confirmed Heresies: Multiple counts of murder, cannibalism, trafficking in illegal goods, slaving, gerrymandering, possession of prohibited xenos items and creatures, fraud, blackmail, impersonating an Administratum official, impersonating a Ministorum cleric, blasphemy, theft, and illegal sale of holy relics.
Preferred Methods of Operation: Belasco is a genius-level intellect who uses his almost supernatural talent for deception, commerce, and murder to maintain a veil of secrecy at all times.
Threat Rating: Hereticus Extremis.
Encounter Protocol: Termination or capture for trial, as appropriate.

Tobias Belasco was born the third son to an impoverished wing of the powerful House Belasco on Malfi. Reportedly a sly and deceitful glutton from an early age, Tobias railed against the gentle poverty in which he was raised and the fallen status of his line. As he grew he put his remarkable intellect and cunning to work and quickly took control of his family's line, restoring its fortunes in the process. The Belasco Great House quickly adopted him as a dealer in rare antiquities, and he brokered many profitable deals for his clan.

Unsatisfied, soon he took to seeking thrills by dallying with petty cult groups, fellow epicures, and jaded wantons, living far beyond even his prodigious means. Rather than risk embezzling funds from his notorious clan, he took to blackmail, murder, the Cold Trade, and eventually slavery to fund his excesses. However, as the years passed, not even this was enough to alleviate his boredom. Why he finally descended into complete criminal insanity is unknown, although a lifetime of immorality and substance abuse no doubt contributed. Not satisfied with killing his enemies, he instead took to abducting them in secret and slowly eating them.

When these shocking crimes finally came to light, it proved too much for his infamous noble house to stand. Tobias fled Malfi via his Cold Trade connections with a portion of his wealth and his family's assassin cadre at his heels. For more than 50 years he has been on the run, turning up on dozens of worlds and using many aliases to stay one step ahead of his former clan.

Torn between his desire to remain hidden and a desire to continue his opulent lifestyle through black marketeering, deception, and murder, Tobias has managed to remain one step ahead of his many hunters over the years thanks to his quick wits, formidable intelligence, and a thoroughly nasty imagination. Now in his late nineties, his past is catching up with him—his obscenely fat bulk must be held up by a suspensor chair and he is rapidly reaching the limits of how long his wrecked constitution can be kept alive through implants and chem treatments.

Known Motivations and Goals: Tobias Belasco's only motivation is to continue his life of wickedness and feed his dread addictions. Rumours have reached the ears of the Inquisition that Tobias is searching for a more radical solution to his problems in the shape of a forbidden Halo Device.



Tricorn Inquisitorial Archive: Scintilla

Name: Unknown.
Known Aliases: Not applicable.

Thought For the Day:

"Fear most that which lurketh unseen."

Known Associates or Organisations: None.

Confirmed Heresies: None.
Preferred Methods of Operation: Unknown.
Suspected Activities: See file attachment.
Threat Rating: Obscuro Terminus.
Encounter Protocol: Capture or termination at discretion.

I have my suspicions in regards to this one.
-M.

Lord Inquisitor Caidin has taken the usual step of releasing and confirming this capture/termination warrant against a party whose true name, nature, and activities remain unconfirmed. The existence of this "unknown heretic" has never been definitively proven, except perhaps by a telling absence of perpetrator, evidence, or motive in certain cases of great concern to the Inquisition. Like a dark void hiding amid the blackness of night, his existence can be inferred from instances of mystery and apparent coincidence linking together a telling string of mysterious deaths and disappearances over the last decade and a half.

These deaths have uniformly occurred among the contacts or affiliates of Inquisitors and, as a result, operations have been repeatedly compromised or crippled through the termination of vital agents, data-sabotage, theft, and entire covert operation cells simply vanishing. Forensic examinations reveal nothing. Alone, each could be dismissed as coincidence but together they form a web that darkly hints that there is a traitor in the Inquisition's midst. This unknown individual appears able to move and kill at will within the Imperium, leaving no trace behind.

Recently, the deaths of Inquisitors Chalan and Severon are thought to be the work of the faceless traitor—both died when pursuing operations based on intelligence thought to have originated from within the ranks of the Ordos Calixis. In both cases, the method of killing took the form of ambushes that appeared to mimic the methods of well known heretical or blasphemous organisations. This alone would indicate that the unknown heretic has access to the highest quality of information and materiel. For example, the psychic wracking of Inquisitor Severon was carefully hallmarked to replicate the horrors perpetrated by the Pilgrims of Hayte, a subterfuge that could only be orchestrated by one who is intimate with the details of the Pilgrims of Hayte's modus operandi. Worryingly, Inquisitor Chalan was notoriously circumspect, to the degree that he could only have been drawn-out by someone that he trusted.

Recently at Lord Caidan's express arrangement, a more esoteric investigation has been undertaken. Auguries and divinations by the most potent seers have revealed an empty and impenetrable void around events surrounding the suspected activities of the unknown heretic—as if the whole incident has been simply ripped from history, leaving a rent in the fabric of things in its place. This void has consequently added an even darker dimension to the investigation.

Known Motivations and Goals: Unknown, but it seems the foundations of the Holy Ordos are the direct target.

Dark Heresy™

Disciples of the Dark Gods™

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Disciples of the Dark Gods DH05
ISBN: 978-1-58994-458-9
54995
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