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IN TO THE LIGHT

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Ebon Sourcebook
for

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IN TO THE LIGHT

EBON SOURCEBOOK

DEVELOPING EBONS IN THE WORLD OF PROGRESS

"I strive to understand. It is my hope that my struggle will not be in vain; that it cannot be in vain. It's the struggle itself that's important."

Root, SCL 7 Ebon Operative with Wildcats, Mort 903 SD

Introduction	In To The Light... who, why and what...
Paths of Light and Shadow	History of the Ebon race Static - The Ebb - Dark Lament Brain Wasters - Necanthrope Society Glossary of Terms - The Last Laugh.
Edge of Darkness Blade of Light	Background - New abilities and skills Feral Ebons - The Ebb as Art not Science Ebb Crystals - Gore Cannon generation

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Published by; Chocolate Frog Enterprises 7 Jubilee Close Byfield Northants NN11 6UZ	Dare to hope. Learn to Feel. Challenge the apathy. Look beneath the surface. But don't make waves. Go against the flow. refuse / resist Kaos SD	Produced by; Max Bantleman Chris Cotgrove Shona McPherson Sam Pay Glenn Berry
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IN TO THE LIGHT

IN TO THE LIGHT

A n E b o n S o u r c e b o o k

By: Chris Cotgrove and Max Bantleman

Thanks to: Shona MacPherson & Sam Pay

This booklet looks in to some aspects of the Ebon race in the World of Progress. It is an exercise in expanding the background of the Ebon race, of giving them some 'deeper' roots in the WoP. Some of it has appeared in some form in THE BIG PICTURE, bits of Max's stuff... Chris's is all new and spanky. Use what you like, take what you want, ditch the stuff you don't like, use whatever you can for inspiration or base material; change, butcher, chop, bastardise, warp whatever you want to make it fit with your WoP.

Yet again, the booklet has no artwork. We are fabulously unsuccessful in attracting budding artists to our hopeless cause. Could it be the lack of monetary reward for their work? Surely not...

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Chris and Max have come at the Ebon race from two different angles. Chris' stuff is very coherent, and offers a well ordered view and basis for Ebon society and their development, included is Sho's in depth look at Brain Waster society. Max's is a collection of thoughts, ad-hoc rules changes, play tested variations and is only really here because he wants it here, and we can't be bothered to argue with him. The two sections are not meant to compliment each other specifically, though there are plenty of places where they do. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to develop Ebons and the Ebb, either in this booklet or in your WoP. There is only what is right and wrong for you (and your players).

The Ebon race, the Ebb and the use of Flux are such a massive topic that it would take three or four of these type booklets to do them justice. We have chosen to scratch the surface with this one, hopefully becoming more focused with the next, maybe even getting organised by the time the third is ready...

This booklet is mainly aimed at GM's, though players will find much of use and interest. Remember; it is

just the beginning, just a guide, just somewhere to start, just something to add to your own invaluable ideas about the WoP and the nature of the Ebb.

Many thanks to: Shona for the twisted visions that make up the Brain Waster sections. Sam Pay for some excellent concept ideas, and of course the dreaded photocopying....

"SLA Industries immerses characters in a world that enhances emotions of all kinds; hopes, dreams, nightmares, to build and destroy. SLA Industries is of personal experience, it is a dark, deep pool that reflects the things that are with us all the way to our death - maybe even after that...."

"There is too much truth in the World of Progress to be ignored. The truth that SLA Industries hides so well is the source of great knowledge and advancement. I sense that such information I seek is the key to unlock the misery that has grasped the last 900 years of our existence. With cunning, secrecy and enough foresight, I can discover the very essence of my life, without risking it from SLA Industries itself." 'Shine', SCL 9 Ebon Scout.

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PATHS OF LIGHT AND SHADOW

(Dedicated to Expression, Destruction, Emotion.)

By: Chris Cotgrove Shona McPherson

PREHISTORY

In the beginning the Ebon species evolved on their homeworld of Static much like any other. Very little is known of the times before Intruder's arrival, only legends and myths found inscribed within the Tas Tuo give any indication of ancient Ebon society. The legends speak of a time when Ebons fought amongst themselves, and eventually matured beyond war and entered into an age of peace; as nomadic tribes, they wandered the turbulent surface of their world, seeking to understand it, but it remained tantalisingly beyond their reach. Evolution began to shape them, granting them abilities to survive the encroaching Ice Age. Here can be found the first glimpses of true Ebb use, in the ability that Intruder would develop into the discipline of Red Thermal. Like other species, the first truly distinct achievement of the Ebons was the harnessing of fire.

Time passed, and the Ebons survived. The Ice Age diminished, and the glaciers retreated back to the polar caps; the climate of their planet slowly stabilised, becoming temperate and calm. As was their nature, the Ebons themselves changed to reflect this.

It was around this time that a wanderer came to Static.

I n t r u d e r : T h e E b o n M e s s i a h

"He arrived on the surface of our world and met with our leaders. He was fascinating, captivating. His sensitivity astounded us - we were prepared to worship him, but he told us that there are no gods, nothing to believe in but ourselves and the universe around us. His arrival can be found inscribed upon the walls of the Tas Tuo - learn well, and you too will be able to understand such as I. Beware though, there is knowledge here that can scorch an inquisitive mind. It is kept locked away for a reason, remember that. Anyway, where was I? Oh yes. His arrival. He taught us the way to live our lives, and showed us the way to tap into what we had laid aside for so long. To someone like me who has lived with the Ebb for all their life, it barely seems conceivable for one of us not to be touched by it; it must have seemed like a miracle for those first few. True, there are Ferals, but even they

can sense and reach out for the flow of the Ebb - a large amount of what is termed "the human condition" or "human nature" can be attributed to the human race's lack of sensitivity; to the Ebb, I mean. (smiles) Truly, we owe everything to Intruder."

The relationship of the Ebon race to Intruder is a very special one. With his arrival on Static, Ebon society changed, altering to his directions; his gift was the knowledge of their potential, and the philosophy of the Ebb.

He saw the potential in the Ebons, a chance to make a difference; his vision helped him to shape the Ebons into something unique; eventually, it would also lead him to sacrifice his soul to DeathWake to save them, in the blind hope that in the future, they might take the place that that he originally intended for them. He walked among the Shaktars as a warrior, and a leader. To the Ebons, he is a teacher, and a friend - someone who truly understood.

T h e G i f t O f K n o w l e d g e

Intruder took the Ebons under his wing, acting as a mentor, shaping their inherent potential to shape reality into a number of Disciplines of the Ebb. He also took the existing system of Glyphs and turned it into a teaching aid, and created the first DeathSuit, basing its properties on the ancient suit of armour that he himself wears. He brought together his teachings at the site of the Tas-Tuo, a great spire that stands at the heart of the largest continent on Static, and gave the Ebons the riddle of the Principal Formulae - the enigma at the heart of reality, that when solved, would yield the ultimate truth. At the end of this subtle and arduous learning process, only when the Ebon race truly knew itself, would they attain harmony with creation; along the way they would learn to care for it, treat all living things with the respect they deserve.

S l a y e r

However, his original intentions have been subverted, turned into something very different.

Slayer saw another potential within the Ebon race, far removed from the bright vision of Intruder; as soon as he realised this, their fate was sealed. By threatening their destruction, Slayer not only ensured Intruder's loyalty, but also his co-operation in keeping them ALIVE. As long as the Ebon race lives, Intruder will owe fealty to Slayer - that does not prevent him altering their nature, however. He carefully watched Intruder and his students, and saw the way for him to unlock the dark nature that the Ebons kept caged behind their emotions. With a cruel smile, he banished

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Mandrake beyond White Earth, and sat back to observe the results of his experiment. He watched as the Yung folded space into the unknown regions beyond the World of Progress he had created, listened to the tears of Draco, and felt the anguish and nausea of Durer as he gave up his existence...

When the creature that had once been Durer crawled from the White, Slayer knew that his plans for the Ebons had begun successfully, but that he needed someone to help him carry them through to its ultimate conclusion. That person would be the recently returned Necanthrope, Teeth. He knew that deep down Teeth hated him, but then so did Intruder - and that as long as his plans matched Slayer's, he would at least pay lip service to him. And if he turned, he would be utterly destroyed - Slayer made no pretence of the extent of his power, and his original threat still holds Teeth in check, waiting for the right time to strike... He rewarded Teeth with the position of Preceptor (lit. "Teacher") of the Ebon Race, and gave the new-born Necanthrope unparalleled power to guide his brethren down the same path he himself had taken, into the White, and beyond...

Ever since, the Ebon species has been controlled and driven not by their intuition, but by the orders of the Preceptor.

B r a i n W a s t e r s

If the prospect of an existence beneath the domination of Necanthropes was not terrible enough, with the birth of the scarred child Albrecht Durer came a new horror - the curse of Brain Wasters. At first, Draco was pitied for giving birth to the son of the Preceptor, and many accused him of altering the development of the child with his Necanthrope Ebb abilities. In secret, Ebon all mothers thanked all of Creation for not cursing their own children in such a fashion. However, this gratitude was short-lived. Before long, Ebon families all across the World of Progress began to produce Brain Waster offspring - many Elders spoke out, saying that the Universe had finally turned against them, was showing them the error of their ways, reminding them of their nature, as if that this was proof that the Ebons should find their own path away from SLA Industries. They were quickly silenced by the Preceptor and the nascent Necanthrope Society, and damned as subversives. Since that time, the Brain Waster subspecies has flourished across the World of Progress - they seem more in tune with its nature than their Ebon brethren.

Once a Brain Waster is born, it will breed true - no Brain Waster family gives birth to an Ebon child. Brain

Waster births to Ebon parents are becoming rarer, it has been noted that as a rule, very few Brain Wasters are actually born on Static itself - in these cases, the child is sent to live with a Waster community on Mort.

This policy is enforced by the Department of Ebb, but is carried out without complaint by the Ebons; this serves to foster and distil resentment within the Wasters themselves, directed at the Ebons. The Brain Wasters are opposite in every way to the Ebon species - cruel, violent, arrogant and superior - whereas the Ebons reflect a myriad of different emotions, the Brain Wasters are driven by only rage and hatred of everything else around them.

They destroy without thought, injure without compunction, turning the creative force of the Ebb into a destructive one, using it as a weapon. And what makes it even more disturbing is that to this day, no one truly knows why Brain Wasters exist. The prevalent theory is that the Brain Waster gene has always been present within the Ebon genetic makeup, but what actually caused it to emerge is unknown - the Wasters themselves claim that it is proof that they are the next evolutionary step up the ladder from the Ebon species, that they are redundant. Understandably, the Ebons cannot accept this.

D a r k L a m e n t

With the induction of the Ebon species into SLA Industries, it was called upon for a new department to be formed to cope with the unique needs of their race, and to shape them into a valuable resource for the Company.

The Department of Ebb was created, staffed exclusively by Ebons, and operating under the watchful eye of the Preceptor. Eventually, it also extended its directives to Brain Wasters, and formed links with the Necanthrope Society.

K a r m a

"AND LET NO EBON REVEAL THE SECRETS HELD WITHIN THEIR GENETIC CODE. ANY SUCH REVELATION SHALL BE PUNISHED. OUR GENETIC STRUCTURE MUST REMAIN SACROSANCT. HEAR MY WORDS, UNDERSTAND, AND OBEY." - The Preceptor

The arrival of the Ebon race, and its talent for manipulating the powers of the Ebb detracted from the attention long-focused on the achievements of SLA's biogenetics division, Karma.

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Early interest in the Ebon genetic makeup was met with hostility by Preceptor Teeth; he banned all genetic tests on all Ebons or Brain Wasters, placing such matters firmly under control of Dark Lament.

Karma also saw the possibilities of Ebons being able to use their telepathic talents in the development of Stormers - the methods used at the time were relatively crude, and increased production time. Even though this was put to Head Office, it was deferred to Dark Lament, and again, immediately refused. With these actions, the first foundations of a vendetta were laid, one that has lasted over nine hundred years to the present day. Over time, this extended far past any commercial rivalry, becoming instead a conflict of ideals and philosophies.

Dark Lament state that Karma technology is an imperfect perversion of life, and cite it's effect on the flow of the Ebb as proof; in response, Karma has often criticised Dark Lament for meddling with dangerous forces that they do not understand - every case of an Ebon going rogue is met with a reserved but venomous comment from Karma's media representatives.

T h e P r e s e n t D a y

900 years after Durer threw himself into the White, the Ebon species lies firmly under the leash of Necanthrope Society and the Preceptor, who are willingly aided by the Brain Wasters.

A steady stream of Ebons and Brain Wasters undergo the Ritual of Steel and Lead, entering the White. Despite the many who do not return, with every passing year, the Necanthrope Society grows stronger, feeding from the vitality of the two races.

Creativity and imagination are harnessed for the good of SLA Industries and forced down paths of cold logic and rigid mathematics by Dark Lament and its Science Friction devices; the old teachings lie discarded, and many have been made illegal. Knowledge freely given by Intruder to assist the development of the Ebon race has been forbidden by the Preceptor, as it would lead away from the White and onto another stage of evolutionary development altogether.

Glyphs still exist, but are strictly forbidden for use by the Ebon species as a whole; only Dark Lament itself is allowed to imbue a glyph with any sort of active Ebb power. These are used in the form of Glyph Pillars and commercially sold Glyph artifacts; a pale shadow of their true potential.

DeathSuits have become the only accepted way of channelling Flux to create Ebb ability; by and large,

both Ebons and Brain Wasters have become completely dependant on them. The old ways are slowly dying.

However, beneath the heel of SLA domination, certain factions within both species are beginning to plan to throw off the oppression of the Necanthrope Society...

S T A T I C : T H E E B O N H O M E W O R L D

"I've visited Static a fair few times. Even though I was born in DownTown, whenever we fold space into the system, it feels like I've come home. The planet itself is perfect, a jewel that sits slowly turning in space, displaying its beauty for all to see. You might take some time getting used to breathing unpolluted air, or walking around in sunlight; at first, you'll miss the rain - then you'll forget about it. Everything feels so alive there, existing in harmony with everything else. When I leave, it feels like I'm tearing away part of myself." Gideon ("Fade"), Ebon Kick Murder Operative, SCL 7

Static is virtually untainted by SLA Industrial pollution, which is strictly prohibited by Teeth and Dark Lament to prevent damage to the planet's ecosystem. The planet is teeming with life, and those who visit have an intense feeling of connection to the universe at large. If pollution exists on Static, then it is of a very different sort to the type that has destroyed Mort's ecosystems - a "taint" perhaps caused by Dark Lament experimentation, or the presence of Necanthropes within the planet's biosphere.

The climate of Static is slightly colder than usual, a leftover from the Ice Ages which saw the evolutionary advances that gifted the Ebons with the potential to use the Ebb. The terrain is very similar to our Earth's wilderness areas (think the Highlands of Scotland, the Swiss Mountains, or the backwoods of Canada).

Ebon construction aren't necessarily designed to be beautiful or graceful, but instead expressive; other races view Ebon architecture as being very alien. Buildings would not be designed to evoke certain emotional states in whomever looked upon or entered them, either through careful and very clever manipulation of principles of geometry, or through the use of Glyphs etched into the construction. Large scale construction techniques are kept to a minimum, deemed too much of a disturbance of the natural order. However, this doesn't stop Dark Lament setting laboratories and Science Friction construction plants.

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There is an orbital shipyard for the construction of FoldShips.

Ebons gather regularly around the Tas-Tuo, the central repository of Ebon knowledge, learning and studying the Disciplines that Intruder helped them create centuries before. This would be the oldest and largest construction on the planet's surface, a spire that reaches a mile into the sky, and has vaults deep below the ground (containing ancient texts and dangerous Ebb artifacts that cannot be destroyed). Time and space acts very strangely around the Tas-Tuo, a distortion caused by the presence of so many Glyphs.

Every Ebon born on Static usually makes a pilgrimage to the Tas-Tuo at one point in their lives.

Immigration to Mort is handled through the Department of Ebb; travel to Static is also handled through the department, and is rigidly controlled - it is far easier to leave the planet than it is to get onto it. Thousands of Ebons leave every year, fascinated by the prospect of an entire universe beyond their world; almost always, they regret their decision, try to return, and find that they cannot. Static is primarily the homeworld of the Ebon race, but also serves SLA Industries as a Resource World. Anything that has an impact on the balanced ecosystem is very closely watched and controlled, and often refused outright.

BPNs on Static are few and far between, and are almost always Jade.

Certain areas of the main spaceport are reserved for other races, and travel beyond these trade zones is not permitted. Only Ebons have free reign to travel over the planet as they like; Brain Wasters are not allowed free access to Static, as it is feared that their presence may be somehow detrimental to the development of the Ebon race.

The majority of Brain Wasters are born on Mort; those few who are born on the Ebon Homeworld (a VERY rare occurrence) are sent to Mort as infants to live with a Waster community; this practice fuels the hatred and resentment that Brain Wasters feel for Ebons, especially since even a Static-born Waster can never set foot on their "homeworld". The Department of Ebb strictly enforces this practice.

STATIC PLANETARY DATA

Climate: Mostly temperate, slightly larger than normal polar caps (remnants of Ice Ages) Terrain: Deciduous forest, mountains. A third of the surface is covered by ocean; ice and tundra in the northern regions of the planet. Atmosphere: Mort standard,

breathable, no pollutants. Day/Night cycle: Mort standard. The winters are slightly longer than most worlds, again a remnant from the Ice Ages. Population: (all Ebon) Static has one satellite moon, named Celhdry; Dark Lament maintains a small research station here.

The Necanthrope Construct of "Lair" sits in orbit around Static; it is theorised that the Dark Lament space station actually leeches Flux from the planetary biosphere in order to survive - a vast parasite, crouched in space next to its host.

Necanthropes very rarely descend to the planet's surface, only to collect vassals and nascent Necanthropes. They react badly to the planet - one Necanthrope was heard to remark that it "seems to hate them"; one theory is that Static rejects Necanthropes in the same way a body fights a disease.

The Static system is constantly visited by a steady stream of FoldShips, either transporting Ebons to and from their Homeworld, or visitors from elsewhere in the World of Progress. Ion Drive shuttles transport visitors to the planet's surface. A fleet of Force FoldShips patrols the system, ruthlessly hunting down and destroying any who would attempt to attack Static.

THE EBON UNDERGROUND

Intruder left behind a group of elders loyal to him to watch over the Ebons in much the same way that Teeth acts on behalf of Slayer. All these Elders belong to the family of Draco.

They slowly built up a resistance movement, against the domination of the Preceptor and the Necanthrope Society. The more militant factions of the Underground try to track down and kill individual Necanthropes. They are in possession of ancient records smuggled off of Static, detailing the Illuminary. They have kidnapped several Ebons who are on the verge of "getting close", and are keeping them safely hidden away from the prying eyes of Necanthrope Society. These Ebons are secreted away within subterranean chambers below DownTown, hovering on the edge of sanity, as their view of reality begins to alter...a labyrinth full of pale, wide-eyed Ebons, and their nightmares...

The Underground offers a safe haven and teaching to Ferals and Rogues; they develop Glyphs and use Ebb artifacts instead of Dark Lament technology.

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D R A C O

Draco was banished to Static by Teeth centuries ago, isolated from the rest of the Ebon race, seeing her as an embarrassing reminder of his past as Durer. He would have killed her, but considers it more of a torment to keep her alive. When he banished her, he made some very specific instructions, which were effective for so as long as he lived. Slayer left it entirely up to Teeth to decide what to do with her, and was very pleased with his final choice. As a result of Teeth's instructions, Draco still exists almost nine centuries later. Whether she lives in the conventional sense of the word, however, is another matter entirely. She clings to sanity like a drowning man to driftwood in a storm. For the last 900 years, she has wept for those she loves, believing them dead - her lover Durer, her friend Mandrake, and her child, Albrecht. Intruder has hidden her away from Teeth, more out of guilt than anything. The damage to her mind is virtually irreparable - she has tried to kill herself many times, despite the taking of one's own life being against Ebon principles.

Her sanctuary lies in the midst of an otherwise beautiful garden; an Ebon tower constructed of white stone, inscribed with healing glyphs; she is kept alive by Ebb Healing, channelled through these, which also serve to retard her ageing to the point of virtual immortality.

The sanctuary has a light, dreamy atmosphere; diaphanous veils filter the sunlight as it falls through the arched windows, flowers grow around the white stone columns, and tinkling of wind charms echoes in the air. It should present a scene of beauty, but something about it radiates incredible lingering sorrow. Walking through the gardens and wondering, you might notice the odd bloody handprint against a column here and there, or a place where the flowers have been viciously attacked, a veil that has been torn down and shredded.

Then a heartbreaking wail will drown out the wind-charms - a cry that speaks of the plight of the entire Ebon race. When Draco was imprisoned here, she was told that a knife also would remain here, if she had the strength to use it. The knife must remain within the boundaries of the sanctuary; Draco's attendants move it every day, and try to hide it. However, after 900 years, they are running out of places to hide the blade. Every day, Draco frantically runs through the tower and its grounds, an insane fumbling search, inevitably finding the knife, and plunging it into her heart. Of course, the Glyphs in the walls of the sanctuary acti-

vate, and heal her wounds, keeping her alive long enough for her attendants to take the knife away and enact proper healing.

She cannot leave this place without entering the white, and Teeth knows that Draco would rather die than let that happen. He also knows that Intruder would keep her alive at any costs, just on a matter of principle.

In doing so, Teeth creates a never-ending torment for Draco, and in a way, for Intruder.

DESCRIPTION A very beautiful Ebon woman, who looks (and is) absolutely insane with grief. She radiates grief and sorrow in a similar way to a Necanthrope incarnation - an indicator of how close she is to "transformation". All Ebons who enter her presence cannot help but weep with her.

T H E E B B

"The creation of a true work of art does not require just thought and planning. A balance of these qualities is needed, along with talent, imagination and creativity. Only then can you create a true masterpiece." - She'ne, Ebon Elder

Ebons and Brain Wasters are the only two species in the World of Progress that are known to have the potential to actively channel and focus the energy known as flux. Individuals of other races often get Ebb and flux confused. Flux is the energy that powers an Ebon's abilities, something that can be stored within a DeathSuit, and quantified by Dark Lament technicians.

The Ebb however, can only be experienced - it is the philosophy of life that an Ebon or Brain Waster must learn and adhere to in order to become an effective channel for flux; it fine tunes their emotional and mental states in order to do this.

The main differences between Ebons and Brain Wasters lie with how they apply this philosophy.

T H E E B O N V I E W

An Ebon believes they are an integral part of a living, breathing universe that thinks, dreams and remembers just like any other living creature. It has a boundless supply of creativity, and this is what Ebons equate with flux. When they formulate and channel flux, they are opening themselves up to and becoming one with everything around them in order to express the creativity and imagination of the Universe itself.

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Flux also represents the means of expressing yourself in the purest, most elegant way possible. The Universe moves in mysterious ways, and underlying everything is one fundamental equation named the Principal Formulae (its real world parallel is the Unified Field Theory of Quantum Physics) that once solved, will render all else irrelevant, and achieve enlightenment.

The only way to discover the elements of this ultimate truth is to look for them wherever they might be found. As an Ebon child develops, its curiosity is encouraged and directed; they see patterns in, and naturally empathise with everything.

THE BRAIN WASTER VIEW

Most Brain Wasters do not follow any conscious philosophy - they instead have one imprinted upon them by their Necanthrope Elders and their peers. They are taught from a very early age that they are members of a superior species, and of all the races of the World of Progress they alone are worthy to serve SLA Industries and the Preceptor.

They are told to follow his dictates without question, and then eventually they will undergo the trial in the White and emerge as a Necanthrope, leading their kind on to greatness.

Their ability to channel flux gives them power, pure and simple, and places them at the top of the evolutionary chain (below Necanthropes, of course). They are also taught that the nature of life is suffering, and therefore the only way to truly understand their existence is to embrace it: either dealing pain to others or in the more extreme factions of their society, to themselves.

This engenders arrogance, violence and superiority in the Brain Waster psyche; whether the Waster consciously follows this philosophy of pain or not, they carry it out regardless, having been part of their society since its conception.

XENOPHOBIA

The views of others towards the Ebons and Brain Wasters vary wildly.

Humans in particular have a highly xenophobic attitude towards both races, citing that if Necanthropes are the "true form" of Ebons, what sort of minds do they hide beneath their beautiful exteriors?

The bias against Brain Wasters is obvious, and finds its roots in the violent, callous and cruel manner in which they treat others, as well as their general destructiveness. Many fear the use of the Ebb, unable

to feel comfortable around a power they cannot themselves experience. To those who do not understand its intricacies, formulation is magic; and there are no shortage of potential "witchfinders" in the World of Progress. There are occasional incidents of Ebons and Brain Wasters becoming the victims of mob hysteria after being blamed for technical failures, outbreaks of illness, and even local disasters. The Shaktars feel particularly strongly for the Ebons, as they have maintained good relations ever since they joined SLA Industries. Along with the Wraith Raiders, both have a long history dating back to the Conflict Era, and both Shaktars and Ebons have a unique view of the Universe that stands them alone. Unlike Wraiths, who have easily adapted to the environment of the World of Progress, both species have a belief system that frequently leads them into moral conflict with the dictates of the Company.

Ironically, considering the ongoing vendetta between Dark Lament and Karma, Ebons also get on very well with 313 Stormers. However, this does not extend to Vevaphons. Glimpses into the alien minds of the biomorphs disturb Ebons greatly, and they tend to avoid contact when possible.

Wraith Raiders are wary of Ebb users, always watching them very closely.

GLYPHS

Glyphs are present everywhere in Ebon society; they are physical representations, echoes if you will, of patterns of energy and thought that exist as part of the Ebb; this pattern forms the pathway for Flux to alter the physical, consensual universe. Once you decipher the pattern itself, you are able to affect the physical reality that the glyph represents. By and large, Brain Wasters prefer the use of Dark Lament tech over glyphs, preferring a fast and easy route to power rather than the time-consuming study that comprehension of glyphs involve.

Glyphs are activated by touch or through a conscious intent to open up a flux channel - the rarer or more expensive Dark Lament glyphs constantly channel Flux (for example, on Glyph weapons and armour).

FORMULAE

Formulae can be defined as the level of understanding of the nature and structure of reality.

The more an Ebon understands Formulae, the more capable they are of manipulating reality at a deeper level. They also slowly, inevitably become one with it,

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integrating themselves with their universe. The currently accepted form of Formulae is based upon the original teachings of Intruder, and those corrupted by Preceptor Teeth, leading the Ebon into the White, to emerge as a Necanthrope. It can be advanced through the study of Ebb disciplines (which are after all, techniques for manipulating reality with the power of the mind). Each level is harder to attain, as the knowledge required to advance is hidden with greater and greater subtlety. Every Ebon possesses Rank 1 in this "skill", indicating that they are aware that the reality in which they live is mutable, and capable of change according to their will.

By rank 9, Necanthropes will take an interest in the character, and begin to Observe them, mustering for the psychic attack known as the Dream Demons, insinuating themselves into the Ebon's waking and sleeping consciousness, drawing out their innermost nightmares.

At rank 10, the Dream Demons are unleashed. Beyond this point, most Ebons will surrender themselves to the white.

Increases in Formulae past this point usually lead to increases in power, incarnation, etc for Necanthropes.

If for some reason an Ebon is prevented from entering the white, and is passed over by the attention of Necanthrope Society, an altogether different change begins to take place.

Glyph shielding can be used to delay this process, as well as some specialised, little known Ebb abilities. Their senses also begin to expand, on all levels - periods of sensory overload or deprivation are common, as well as sudden waves of mental activity as their communication talents tap into the collective consciousness of those surrounding them.

Ebons who reach this state are often recluses; all else is a distraction, and the presence of a great number of minds is unbearable until they learn how to block out the thoughts of others. They will have ceased to actually speak, and will rely on Communication.

They experience visions, either flashbacks to the past, or prophetic glimpses of the future. By this point, to outsiders, they could be termed schizophrenic. They gain the Rank Disadvantage of Uncontrolled Ebb - their powers require conscious attention or will begin to take the place of physical action; for example, an Ebon may use Telekinesis to pick up and manipulate objects instead of actually holding them, or will unconsciously strike out with Blast at people or objects that anger them.

The Ebon begins to lose their unconscious grip on reality, often physically fading from sight; they have to consciously concentrate on maintaining a physical body.

They decide consciously become one with Reality, and relinquish their hold on a physical form. The Ebon vanishes, converting their body into pure Flux. (If they return from this harmonious state (which is VERY rare), it will be as a being fully integrated with the Ebb, and the reality of the World of Progress (akin to the Kilneck).

The DeathSuit has been discarded long ago as inefficient; they naturally tap into the Ebb, and Channel flux as a matter of course. Their physical form is actually a form of solidified Flux, and as such, is immortal - they will only ever die by violence.

However, this form is no less un-natural than the Necanthrope, save that it is the intention of the Ebon Underground to forcibly alter the development of the Ebon race in this direction, away from the white, and perhaps to a brighter future.)

THE DISCIPLINES OF THE EBB

"The Ebb was not meant to be caged by numbers, or shackled in geometry."

Each Discipline was taught to the Ebons by Intruder, as an extension and development of their natural inherent potential to channel Flux, and understand the Ebb.

Originally, Disciplines had a series of Glyphs associated with them, until Intruder designed and constructed the first DeathSuit. They were deeply intuitive, gradually teaching a student to rely on and develop their own inner feelings; at this point the DeathSuit was still intended to be a teaching aid, to bring the Ebons closer to the Ebb, but has been altered over time to control their development and potential.

Failed Formulation (optional rule)

This deviates from the idea that if an Ebon fails their formulation roll, the flux they have expended just harmlessly dissipates. After all, the Universe is fundamentally creative, and if the Ebon lacks concentration to direct the Flux, it will still seek to express itself in the best way possible; similarly, a Waster will see that the anger and hatred within them breaks away, demanding to be unleashed to do whatever it will.

It is not possible to fail rolls on the use of free or passive abilities, only on rolls that require any degree of

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concentration on the part of the Ebon. Also, under normal circumstances, Necanthropes cannot create a failed formulation, due to their total integration with their DeathSuit, and as such, their intimate connection to reality.

Each discipline listed here includes an example of failed formulation, but these effects are only to be used as a generic guideline; a GM should decide upon such effects on a case-by-case basis, dependent on the situation.

Free abilities

All Ebons have access to these - they represent the inherent potential that every Ebon possesses to sense and manipulate the flow of the Ebb, and the initial teachings that are built upon when an Ebon begins to learn the Disciplines of the Ebb.

Failed formulation: not possible under normal circumstances - see above.

Blast This discipline probably was developed by the first Brain Wasters, and indicates the first of the teachings of Preceptor Teeth or Albrecht Durer. It relies on emotional intensity (usually negative; rage, hatred or anger works best) to achieve its effects. Failed formulation: effects go wild; in the case of Blast, a storm of raw flux is unleashed that destroys everything breakable in the area - glass shatters, windows explode, non-combat ceramics crack. In the case of Bomb, treat as a randomly thrown grenade.

Communication One of the older disciplines, detailing the way the Ebb merges with thought, intent and memory. It also indicates that telepathy has always been inherent within the Ebon genetic makeup - at higher levels of learning, most Elders constantly use this Discipline, as it is a much more elegant and expressive way of communicating with people. Failed formulation: uncontrolled telepathic empathy with those around them, something like mental tinitis. d10 rounds, - to Concentration rolls as the Ebon tries to block out the telepathic din.

Detect One of the first disciplines taught by Intruder, dealing with the perception and sensing of the Ebb, the different "tastes" of Flux, and the Ebb-presence of others. It was originally designed to increase the Ebons general awareness of the universe around them, to engender a sense of connection to it. Failed formulation: "Ebb blindness". Suddenly, all sensation of the Ebb VANISHES. This is highly disconcerting for an Ebon or Brain Waster; - to Concentration rolls for d10 rounds until the blindness fades, as the Ebon cannot fully sense the flow of flux around them.

Other Detect abilities WILL NOT ACTIVATE. There are rumours of Necanthropes developing actual Ebb abilities to induce this effect in others, for use against rogues and Ferals.

Enhancement Deals with actual physical enhancements, such as increases to strength and reflexes; developed parallel to or just before Protect; these abilities are the ones most envied by Karma, as they parallel and often exceed the capabilities of their implants; their scientists eyes glaze over with the thought of achieving a Nuke Tendon boosted by Flux... Failed formulation: physical distortion and epileptic fits as the Ebons musculature spasms and their nervous system misfires. These effects last for d10 rounds.

Healing Flux is a creative energy, that flows through all things; it prefers living things as they are the ultimate expression of the Universe's desire to create. The discipline known as Ebb Healing deals exclusively with the repair, maintenance and manipulation of the flow of Flux in living creatures; it was intended to provide a means of empathy with all living things. Due to the influence of Brain Wasters and Necanthropes, however, it can now also be used to interrupt and destroy life processes.

Failed formulation: physical damage, wounds opening. Wounds on the subject to be healed are empathically duplicated on the Ebon's body, whilst remaining on the subject, or complete wound transfer takes place - the subject is completely healed, whilst the Ebon suddenly exhibits all damage and wound effects.

Illumination Manipulation of visible light and photons. Failed formulation: the creation of areas of bright light or complete darkness

Protect Deals exclusively with the DeathSuit, and how it is integrated with its wearer. It is theorised that this discipline has its origins in the use of something like glyph armour, as the ability was dormant, and only had to be re-awakened. Surprisingly, no record of this mythical protection exists. Failed formulation: negation of DeathSuit protection

Reality Folding With the use of this Discipline, an Ebon converts matter into Flux, merging it with the universe, and reassembling it at a predetermined specific point. Failed formulation: items randomly fold, or you randomly fold. You still cannot Fold into solid objects or other living creatures, however.

Red/Blue Thermal The ability to control and adjust temperature, through the control of rate of molecular vibration and thermal capacity. This was the first abil-

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ity to be developed by the Ebon race, to cope with the onset of an Ice Age on their homeworld. Blue Thermal evolved parallel to it, due to demands for balance within the Ebon psyche. Red Thermal abilities are based on the control of the rate of molecular vibration to alter or generate extremes of heat. Failed formulation: random pyro/cryokinetic activity

Senses How the Ebb directs perceptions of reality. It began to develop as an offshoot of Communication. Failed formulation: self-induced sensory overload or sensory deprivation. Sensations of intense claustrophobia or agoraphobia.

Telekinesis Manipulation of physical objects using sheer force of will. Everything in the physical universe is governed or connected to the flow of the Ebb - this also applies to the conventional laws of physics, which can be altered through the channelling of Flux. Failed formulation: random telekinesis/"poltergeist" activity

M O R T

E b o n E m p l o y e e s

As well as the hundreds of Ebons that are inducted into Meny and pass out as Operatives, there are flourishing communities of Ebons all across the World of Progress. There are Ebons native to Mort for instance, that have a slightly more cynical outlook on life than their brethren on Static; their perceptions have been shaped by their surroundings, and the sensations that flow through them day after day. Ebons who do not join SLA are required to register their status with the Department of Ebb, or risk classification as a Rogue or Feral. Whereas humans make up the percentage of manual and factory labour across the World of Progress, Ebons are valued for their imagination and creativity, and their manual dexterity. They will often be found in specialised trades such as fashion designers or artists - those at the lower end of the scale can be found working as skilled labourers on production lines, turning out mass-produced electronics or jewellery for example. This is more creative than working in one of the many SLA-run factories, but is still a pale shadow of the creativity of the Ebb; despite their lack of active formulation and flux channelling, these civilian Ebons can still sense the Ebb all around, but it remains frustratingly out of reach. Such a production line can be one of the most depressing places in the entire World of Progress, as a hundred sullen-faced Ebons construct delicate works of art with scarcely a blank glance. Once seen, and added to the fact that the xenophobia demonstrated by other races is extended

to these unfortunates, despite their lack of Ebb ability, this makes joining SLA Industries a likely prospect for any young Ebon.

Many of these Ferals are recruited by Soft Companies offering access to illegal glyphs; their offers are accepted by the Ferals, in an attempt to harness their inherent potential and to touch the beauty and the power of the Ebb before they are gunned down by SLA Operatives...or worse.

D A R K L A M E N T

To outsiders, Dark Lament is clearly divided into three related sections: The Department of Ebb The manufacturing facilities that create Science Friction technology Overseer of the Ebon species (in its capacity as liaison to Necanthrope Society, as directed by the Preceptor).

However, as one delves further into its procedures and operations, this distinction begins to blur, fading away until only one vast subsection of SLA Industries remains. This is the true face of Dark Lament, a towering edifice that looms over the Ebon race, casting its all-encompassing shadow on their everyday lives. In some respects, this is also the true face of SLA itself.

The Dark Lament Cathedral on Mort serves as both the head offices of the World Of Progress' sole supplier of Science Friction technology and as a centrepiece for SLA's evolutionary domination of the Ebon race.

It is an imposing, intimidating place; the second largest construction on the surface of Mort, next to Head Office itself, it takes the form of a towering gothic spire, made of a substance resembling obsidian and covered with baroque carvings, strange geometry, and inscribed with an untold number of glyphs. It seems to drag in and reflect light in a strange way; casual glances reveal what appear to be shapes moving an inch or so under the surface of the building.

Along the entire central core of the building runs a number of vast Glyph Pillars, channelling Flux throughout the structure to where it is needed. Non-Ebons are made VERY uncomfortable just by looking at it; Ebons can sense massive amounts of raw flux being channelled around and through the building, being diverted through the superstructure itself, almost as if it was alive.

At this scale of construction, the underlying nature of Dark Lament Science Friction becomes apparent - that whilst it may look organic, it merely mimics the living; it is expression and thought given physical form - the subconscious mind and all its shadows

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granted a physical existence. The DeathSuit is also an example of this - it shows clearly what would otherwise be hidden beneath the surface.

Upon entering the building through its vast double doors, Operatives are struck with a deathly silence. Every movement creates minute echoes that reverberate off into the distance, and sounds constantly touch upon the edge of hearing. Glyphs cover the walls and columns, blending with the mock-organic sculptures. Ebons and Brain Wasters of all varieties walk through the high vaulted corridors; occasionally, Ops will catch the passing aura of a Necanthrope, but see nothing (as many Necanthropes prefer to travel unseen through the building using Illumination, watching over its inhabitants). Unlike other SLA subsidiaries, Dark Lament has a resident staff - Ebons and Brain Wasters who work within its walls are often born within the building itself, and some never leave through the entirety of their lives. (the majority of residents providing a stock of Vassals for the Necanthrope Society). To an Ebon, this place is imposing and stifling, whilst to others its internal dimensions are almost claustrophobic; sometimes corridors will appear to stretch for miles, or walls seem to be slowly closing in. The one thing that an Ebon or Brain Waster notices as they move deeper into the building is a vague, mounting sense of unease; in very sensitive Ebons, this sometimes manifests as panic.

This is due to what lies beneath the building, miles below the actual surface of Mort. As Artery serves as Karma's centrepiece, so does the Cathedral act as Dark Lament's; the levels below the structure are filled with laboratories and Science Friction manufacturing facilities, as well as a number of storage vaults.

At the lowest level, reachable by only a few elevators and shafts, and touched on by several large Glyph Pillars, lie the Battery Vaults. This is one of the darkest secrets of Dark Lament. Within these titanic chambers are row upon row of black featureless cylinders, arranged around several mighty Core Glyph Pillars (which are exposed at this level). The flow of Flux here is so intense that it manifests physically as bursts of what appears to be lightning, leaping between the pillars, illuminating the chamber with an eerie, flickering radiance.

In each cylinder is an Ebon or Brain Waster that has refused the domination of the Necanthrope Society, and has paid the ultimate price. They have been physically altered by Dark Lament technicians to channel vast amounts of Flux - far more in fact, than is safe for any living creature to store in their body at any one

time. The result is that the individual burns out very quickly, as raw flux breaks down the structure of their physical bodies, converting it to pure energy; this is of course, unimaginably painful, and the psychic anguish generated by these unfortunates can be felt by those walking on the surface, many miles above. The process is quite a simple one - the subject is implanted with a number of Glyph Channels, which are placed roughly in the locations of chakra points in the human body (the groin, stomach, heart and head), then they are locked into a foetal position.

The cylinder is then fitted into a rack, and the occupant is "plugged in" to a large scale equation accelerator, that replaces the DeathSuit in this function, and are forced to formulate by Necanthropes using a very specialised form of Communication. It is said that this accelerator has attained a sentience of its own, in a similar manner to the DeathSuit, a composite mind formed from the agonies of all the Batteries. The average life span of a Battery is short, stretching out if the subject clings to life through the mind-numbing pain - however, there is no reprieve from this torture, and every day, burnt out husks are removed from the cylinders and replaced by terrified Rogues and Ferals.

Only Necanthropes will be found working here - even the most borderline psychotic Brain Waster would be driven over the edge by the waves of psychic anguish that leak through the buffering systems in the racks; Necanthropes on the other hand, say they can appreciate the expressions behind the emotions released by the Batteries. They walk silently amongst the racks, often stopping at certain cylinders to taste the agony of their prisoners, and display a genuine regret when one burns out. However, they are always pleased to see a new arrival, and eagerly await the induction of new blood into their macabre "choir".

Since no-one in their right mind would ever work here for long, no-one disagrees with them.

The raw flux generated in the Battery Vaults is siphoned off by the Glyph Pillars that form the centre of the Spire, and is stored for later use (either in local experiments or to provide energy for Burn and Eternal Gems; this Flux is also used in everyday Science Friction manufacturing, creating DeathSuits and FoldShips alike. Ebons would be horrified to discover that the very thing that enables the Ebon race to focus their abilities is created as a result of their pain; Brain Wasters would probably find it ironic.

SLA INDUSTRIES

The Department of Ebb

All Jade BPN's are issued through the Department of Ebb, and squads that accept these missions are required to have at least one Ebon or Brain Waster Operative. Often, these Ops are summoned to Dark Lament or are visited by representatives of the department (usually a Necanthrope) for additional briefing. On some occasions, a Jade will be specifically assigned to a certain squad or Operative on the orders of the Preceptor himself, in the manner that Head Office assigns its Platinum BPN's.

Science Friction

Science Friction material, in a similar way to glyphs, is an expression of thought and emotion, given a physical form. It can resemble either a cross between plastic and metal, obsidian or crystal, chitin, or a pliable, flexible material (resembling either muscle fibre).

It is psycho-reactive, and can be moulded by thought and emotion into a certain form; it is also capable of holding imprinted glyphs, which are known as a matrix - this is how most Dark Lament enhancements are created (i.e. Thermal Gauges, Flintlocks, etc), along with flux storage devices like Burn Gems. On the whole, Dark Lament mimics the living (possibly as a parallel to Karma, which is organic technology that mimics the artificial).

THE DEATHSUIT

The Dark Lament DeathSuit is a sophisticated piece of Dark Lament technology, designed to increase the ease and efficiency by which its wearer taps into and channels flux. A correctly trained user can formulate an Ebb equation in seconds, creating a pathway for flux to travel much faster than someone using Glyphs; however, this process is largely based on mathematics and logic, rather than the intuitive emotional form used by Ebons in the past - science killing magic... The original suit was designed by Intruder centuries ago, to act as an aid to learning for the Ebons of the time; however, over the years, it has been forced upon every Ebon and Brain Waster that wishes to use Ebb Disciplines, to the point where they have grown dependant on it. A DeathSuit is able to act as an Equation Accelerator simply because it has glyphs layered into it; as the Ebon gradually progresses in his training, they gain a greater comprehension of how to access and channel Flux through different glyphs in the suit, and thereby manifest new Ebb abilities. Ebons view a DeathSuit as a constant companion, and are greatly reassured by its visual appearance. This is a subtle pointer to the basic differences between

human and Ebon psychology - after all, would any human find wearing something that looks like a skinned man comforting?

Brain Wasters, on the other hand, view their DeathSuit primarily as a tool, a means to an end used to access the power that is their birthright. It is only later that they become attached to the DeathSuit, in preparation for their imminent transformation into a Necanthrope. The DeathSuit bonds to its host-wearer gradually, as the Ebon learns to access the glyphs layered within; this is psychological as well as physiological. The DeathSuit is a symbiote; it protects the Ebon, channels and stores Flux, and acts as an equation accelerator, in return it feeds from the Ebon's flux and bodily fluids, and accesses part of their memories and personality, eventually attaining sentience.

Losing a DeathSuit

For any Ebb user (except Ferals) losing a DeathSuit is a traumatic and shameful experience, muck like causing the death of a loved Parent or Mentor. It is to be avoided at all costs. Like all armour, DeathSuits have an ID that acts as a kind of 'hit point' total for that piece of armour; when the ID reaches zero, the armour no longer offers any protection, it's PV is reduced to zero and it is effectively destroyed. If a DeathSuit has it's Torso ID reduced to zero, or it takes a number of points of damage that equal the torso ID (in whatever location/s), the DeathSuit is lost. Once the total has been exceeded, any further 'damage' does not count towards the ID lost in the DeathSuit.

Losing a DeathSuit affects an Ebon in two ways; 1) Formulating 1) Protection

Formulating The Ebon has been totally reliant upon their DeathSuit to perform the complex formulations necessary for the manipulation of Flux and the drawing in to this world of the powers of the Ebb. Without a DeathSuit, the Ebon can only 'formulate' abilities of equal rank or lower than their 'Formulae'. Each time they use an ability, they need to 'formulate', but instead of their CONC as the 'base' they use their Formulae.

Protection Any armour values of the DeathSuit are reduced to zero all over the suit once it is lost. The suit becomes a piece of dead flesh, more of a hindrance than a help. While still 'wearing' the dead DeathSuit, the Ebon suffers the following negative modifiers; DEX -3, CONC -2, DIA -2, to 'Formulate' -3. The psychological damage can be as great, if not worse, than the physical effects. The Ebon will develop one rank of phobia for each 10 points of ID 'killed' in the

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DeathSuit, i.e. an Ebon wearing a Medium DeathSuit loses it in an exchange with a Feral Ebon, they gain 12 ranks of phobias (DeathSuit was boosted to 120 max.). Phobias gained through the loss of a DeathSuit begin to fade and disappear once the Ebon takes on a new DeathSuit; they recede and vanish at the rate of 1 Rank per week (from those gained through the loss of the DeathSuit only).

Mourning An Ebon must mourn their DeathSuit, purging it from their psyche before they can move on from the loss. This period of mourning is; (20 weeks minus Formulae), i.e. an Ebon with Formulae 7 mourns for 13 weeks before they can begin to wear a new DeathSuit.

F O L D S H I P S

FoldShips form the commercial backbone of the WoP. Without FoldShip technology, the Known Universe would be a much smaller place than it is today; it currently is the only form of practical interstellar travel.

There are many different classes of FoldShip, some only carry a crew of around 10-100, whilst others are miles across, and capable of transporting many more as crew and/or passengers.

Every FoldShip is constructed around a standard framework, and massive amounts of Flux (mostly obtained from Flux Batteries) are used to jumpstart the process. Each one is a unique work of art, created by large-scale Dark Lament Science Friction techniques. The ship "grows" around the frame - its final appearance depends on the emotional state of the construction crew at the time, and some say the FoldShip itself; it is certain that a large percentage of the construction work is actually done by the vessel as it "grows".

Once the ship is fully grown, and its personality and sentience fully awakened, an Ebon or Necanthrope is chosen to become the ship's Navigator. Navigators, once assigned and bonded to a FoldShip, rarely ever set foot on planets for any length of time. After several Folds, any world seems constrictive and claustrophobic - only the vastness of deep space holds any great fascination for a Navigator, as they see a thousand uncharted courses and systems, waiting to be discovered. The bonding process works both ways; the Ebon and their DeathSuit merge with the FoldShip's alien consciousness, and behavioural changes become apparent - you might find a Navigator standing silently staring into space, for instance. The design of their DeathSuit also subtly

changes to match that of their vessel - both become an extension of the other, as the FoldShip also alters slightly to match the personality and appearance of its Navigator.

The Navigator and FoldShip share sensations, and to an extent, memories. There are rumours of very old Necanthrope Navigators that can maintain a mental link with their vessels while it is still in orbit, or remember events hundreds of years before they were born.

These traces remain even if the Navigator dies (or is killed before they turn Necanthrope). When the bonding takes place, the new Navigator is becoming part of a composite personality, made up of themselves, the ship, their DeathSuit, and the remnants of all those who previously occupied their post. Once bonded, the ship now acts on the Navigators instinctive commands; instructions can be easily sent through the ship via Communication (in fact, this amplified ability is used as a standard form of FoldShip communication). As such, the bonding process creates an interface between the intellect of the FoldShip and its crew, in the form of the Navigator. The remainder of the crew of the FoldShip all operate equipment that amplifies and enhances their natural Ebb abilities - the sensor operator using a Detect Amplifier, the gunners using Glyph Cannons (a large-scale flintlock).

Some FoldShips are so large that entire families of Ebons grow up on them, never setting foot on worlds. Entire generations are born on the Ship, maturing with it, and often die here as well, without ever having left. As such, these communities bond very closely to the Ship itself.

The Ship chooses itself a new Navigator from its "family" when its current one dies. The actual heart of these vessels is the Fold Chamber, a perfectly spherical and completely enclosed compartment. The Navigator must fold into the compartment, and once enclosed, physically and mentally merges with the vessel around them.

The compartment is inscribed with a number of glyphs, designed to amplify a Navigators Folding talents (some say that it is the connection to the alien perceptions of the FoldShip itself are what amplifies the Ebons Folding abilities, not the glyphs that line the chamber, that they can see the paths between the stars much more clearly.) Flux provided by Glyph Pillars goes towards fuelling the reality-spanning Folds that the ship makes. These are regularly cleaned of Ebb Crystal growths, to prevent "accidents".

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There are old tales of ships that were lost "between", having Folded and never reappeared. What happens to these lost ships is unknown - some say they are trapped in a limbo between realities, others merely say that they have defected to some Soft Company like DarkNight or Thresher.

The majority of FoldShips are constructed for transport of passengers or for trade purposes. However, on occasion, a FoldShip is created for the purposes of warfare. Then it is called a Force FoldShip. Corsairs and Soft Company fleets universally fear the Force FoldShips - the largest group forms the Static system patrol fleet, but Dark Lament also fields several roaming hunter-fleets for use in distant star systems.

These ships are very old, and most saw action during the closing stages of the Conflict Wars; their memories go back almost to the very beginning of the World of Progress. Given time, one of the larger Force FoldShips could lay waste to a planet's surface (and have done so on more than one occasion), their destructive power is so great. Almost always, a Force FoldShip will have a Necanthrope Navigator, as Ebons lack the sociopathic aggression needed to drive the Ship onward in battle, and many find it disturbing to communicate or bond with such an ancient mind.

D A R K L A M E N T I N Q U I S I T O R S

"Some call us sadists. We prefer the term...professionals." Charnel, Necanthrope Inquisitor

Usually, when subversives are discovered within the hierarchy of SLA Industries, two departments have the jurisdiction to deal with them. These are Cloak Division and Internal Affairs.

However, they are excluded from dealing with Rogue and Feral Ebons - all matters concerning the Ebon race as a whole fall within the authority of Dark Lament. Ebon subversives are dealt with by the Inquisitors, a group formed by Albrecht Durer soon after his induction into the company, and his emergence from the white. They also oversee the task of the development of the Ebon species, and report directly to Albrecht - he takes orders only from his father, the Preceptor. They work extensively with Cloak Division (department of Extraction), Internal Affairs (and are rumoured to work with Stigmartyr) to uncover treachery & subversion within SLA. They are also called in to interrogate captured Rogue Ebons. All are Ebons and Brain Wasters trained in the Investigation/Interrogation package, whose Ebb abilities are specialised towards Communication. The

minimum SCL requirement to become an Inquisitor is at least 5.

The upper echelon of this sub-department are Necanthropes; none are below SCL 3. They report directly to the Preceptor, and are despatched only in extreme cases, and at his order.

An Ebon or Brain Waster can only become an Inquisitor through invitation by Dark Lament, if that individual has exhibited "talent" in difficult interrogations. If this invitation is refused, they will not be asked again, and no repercussions will be taken. As well as purely physical or neural techniques, Inquisitors are capable of using a subject's worst fears against them, trapping them in a utterly terrifying mindscape. Through the use of Ebb Healing, they are also capable of inflicting absolutely agonising and horrific injuries, then healing wounds to begin again - after several such attempts, most subjects break, and tell everything.

Often, Inquisitors are issued non-standard or otherwise restricted Science Friction, mostly specialised in interrogation. To supplement their Ebb abilities, Inquisitors tend to learn a range of psychological interrogation and torture techniques (Ebons using Psychology, Wasters using physical torture). Methods vary; Brain Waster Inquisitors tend to bully their subjects, before torturing them, while Ebon Inquisitors prefer more subtle, psychological techniques. Necanthrope Inquisitors are the worst; for example, Charnel (SCL 4) has a trademark of vivisectioning live animals in front of his subjects, casually chatting away as he does so....

EXAMPLE

Skills: Persuasion, Torture, Psychology, Physiology, Intimidation, Detect, Rival Company (usually DN), Streetwise, SLA Info, Interview, Forensics, Paramedic, Medical, Surgery

Ebb: Communication 13, Healing - used to prolong the "durability" of a subject..., Senses 11, Detect 6

Advantages/Disadvantages: Exceedingly Cool, Sadist, Sociopathy, Bad Reputation: Inquisitor

Personality: Obsessively tidy (lays out all instruments neatly before beginning). Perfectionist. A veneer of politeness conceals a warped mind.

Quote: "Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin."

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Equipment Scalpels, pain-inducing drugs, truth serums (all carried in an organic black case). Mindprobe (carried in black crystal cylinder) Jade Probe, Distracter, Ebb Medical Kit Several Burn gems (for "difficult" subjects, with a high pain threshold). Some are rumoured to use otherwise illegal pain-inducing glyphs. Necanthrope Inquisitors are "assisted" by their Gore Cannons...

D a r k L a m e n t M i n d p r o b e

Increases Communication by two ranks (for the purposes of Mind Read.)

Vaguely resembles a squid or octopus; its tentacles wrap around a subjects head, whilst the lower "body" end merges with the arm of the Ebon's DeathSuit. Three oily black eyes stare from the probe, and several tentacles and tendrils (vary between individual probes) writhe and sway when not in use. Suckers on the end of these anchor to the forehead and temples of the person being probed. The probe itself seems to sense the fear of a subject, and thrashes eagerly as it is brought closer... Fear check - 2, when the probe is first seen; - 5 if you know it is about to be used on you... This is only provided as standard equipment to Dark Lament Inquisitors. When not being used, it is carried in a black crystalline cylinder. It moves out of the cylinder of its own accord, and then merges with the arm of the DeathSuit, looking like some sort of alien hand. It is not known whether these probes are Science Friction devices, or merely life forms which are able to form a limited bond with a DeathSuit. It is believed that they are at least partially sentient.

A l b r e c h t D u r e r

T h e S c a r r e d C h i l d

Soon after his birth, Teeth took the infant Albrecht away from Draco (who he then banished to Static). With the assistance of his Vassals, he raised and groomed the child, teaching him his place in the universe. Albrecht helped his father create the Torture cults and the philosophy of pain that they embrace, and he is Necanthrope Society's link to Brain Waster culture - the first of their kind, and the first Waster to return reborn from the White. He is in many ways the opposite of his father - whereas Teeth is a media figure known across the World of Progress, very few people actually know what Albrecht even looks like.

He is a shadowy figure, moving behind the scenes, advancing the plans of his father, and directing the actions of the Inquisitors within Dark Lament, using them as the Ebon equivalent of Cloak Division and Internal Affairs. These otherwise untouchable depart-

ments are brushed aside in Ebon matters - his Inquisitors take jurisdiction over all subversive Ebons and Brain Wasters; only past a certain level, will he relinquish his authority and let Stigmartyr step in.

He follows his father's orders out of obedience and respect - he teaches this to others, illustrating the need to obey with graphic methods when necessary. He never kills anyone offhand or quickly - always keeping them alive, trapped within an agonising existence. He has passed on his skills to the Inquisitors that work within Dark Lament. He led the Cult of the Scarred Eye to the distant planet of Pain, and helped the Brain Wasters to create a colony there - though he is Necanthrope, he feels a strong sense of kinship with them, viewing them as compatriots and loyal servants. This is the only view he has that differs from Teeth's to any great degree regarding the other races of the World of Progress - all others are simply inferior.

D e s c r i p t i o n

(F o r G M u s e o n l y)

As one of the very first Necanthropes, Albrecht is very powerful, and carries an intense incarnation of suffering. The surface of his DeathSuit resembles cracked black glass; those who have actually seen him compare its appearance to the Dark Lament Cathedral. Shards of glass extend up past his shoulders, and over his arms; razor sharp slicing shards tip his fingers; several shards frame an otherwise angelic Ebon face, which clearly displays the scarred eyes of a Brain Waster - his eyes themselves are black spheres of obsidian, and his hair falls in a long mane around his shoulders. Silver/gunmetal Friction barbs pierce his DeathSuit in many places; following the line of his jaw and his collarbone.

B R A I N W A S T E R S O C I E T Y

"All life is suffering, and the only way to truly understand it is to either inflict or experience suffering." Albrecht Durer

T H E S T R O N G S H A L L I N H E R I T

One of the more logical offshoots of the Brain Waster natural attitude of superiority in the World of Progress is the formation of "exclusive" communities, "Brain Waster Only" clubs, culture, even some peculiar Downtown cults have been set up built around the intrinsic Brain Waster belief that they, somehow, are infinitely superior to every other race in the World of Progress. Of course, other races would comment that the recent popularity of "separatist" culture among

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Brain Wasters has got more to do with the fact that other races do not want to socialise with them... One of the best-known examples of a "Brain Waster exclusive Zone" is the Heretics level of the Pit, where non-Brain Waster intruders venture at their own peril.

The natural evolution of this Separatist philosophy was realised in the existence of the little-known Brain Waster community world, a planet known in the World of Progress only as "Pain". This colony was set up in around 600 S.D. by a group of die-hard separatist extremists, led by their patriarch, Albrecht Durer. He envisioned Pain as his great experiment, the way to unite Brain Wasters, with his philosophy of pain as the force that would bring them together.

TORTURE CULTS

These groups originated on Mort, in Lower DownTown. They are the creation of Albrecht Durer, in an attempt to lend his people a purpose and a place in existence. Not every Brain Waster actively follows the teachings of the cults, or even knows of their existence, but all Wasters have their philosophy deeply imprinted upon them from a very young age. The cults have existed at the undercurrents of Waster culture since its conception, but are by no means predominant; they are a subtle, gradual influence, as Albrecht intended them to be. The creed these Cults subscribe to is essentially an atheistic one, which preaches the True way to complete dominance of Body, Soul, and Ebb through stretching the limits of the physical mental and spiritual to the absolute maximum, through the infliction of extremes of pain and mental anguish. These are referred to as the Mysteries by cultists - the only way to access the higher and deeper levels of these teachings is to reach and surpass a different, ever-increasing threshold of physical and mental endurance.

Within the main body of the Torture cults exists an unknown number of different sects, each practising their own variant on the philosophy of pain granted them by Albrecht Durer. This also goes towards explaining why so Brain Wasters naturally gravitate to areas like DownTown - they are in the perfect place to both inflict and experience the suffering of those around them.

The occasional human or alien observer to their rites never fails to be horrified by the mysteries of the various Torture Cults; often, the mental Ebb powers of an entire congregation will be focussed on the one individual going through some manner of Rite or Initiation.... perhaps a dozen individuals will be channelling HUGE amounts of Flux into the Initiate just to

keep him alive with Healing, while the remains of the congregation carry out a number of unpleasant practices using Red or Blue Thermal, or more conventional means of inflicting pain.

Such experiences are actually beneficial to the Brain Waster who survives, and has his sanity still intact; a rise in Cool Rating not dissimilar to that achieved by a near miss on the Fear table is one benefit which is often acquired, as well as bonuses to Stamina and Formulate (being taken apart by and then being slowly and painfully pieced back together by Ebb Disciplines can actually be educational to the more deranged student of the Ebb.)

Variations on these rituals include the use of Senses and Communication to ritually blind initiates - sensory deprivation increasing other senses like touch, for example; or the use of Communication to share the pain of an Initiate or Acolyte, or subject people to their worst nightmares - through the conquering of their fears, Initiates prove that their will is as strong as their body. More extreme versions of the Cults perform even more arduous rituals still. Occasionally, drugs are often used to enhance (never to dull) the pain sensations. Or, on frequent occasions to mark the induction of new initiates, or the advancement of an initiate within their sect, specialised Science Friction implements known as Friction Barbs are employed.

FRICTION BARBS

A friction barb is a long, thin, sharp object made of a metallic Dark-Lament manufactured substance. Friction Barbs have a razor-sharp spike at one end, and a hook at the other: both ends are designed for cutting into flesh. It is believed that the concept of Friction Barbs came from the early practice of some Cultists of Using shards of bones taken from Ebons and Wasters as piercings. These could be inserted into the body and still channel Flux. A variant of this practice is the filing down of teeth into points.

Friction Barbs vary quite a lot in size and length: the typical barb is between six centimetres and one metre in length. In diameter, they range from just a few millimetres, to as much as half an inch thick.

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They have certain psychoactive properties that allow their shape and consistency to be altered at the molecular level, altering their pliability. Friction barbs are not a mass-market product, and in fact are manufactured by a very small, little-known subsidiary of Dark Lament for the exclusive use of the Brain Waster Torture Cults. Rumour has it that these strange implements are the product of one deranged Necanthrope who hand makes the barbs to order. However, this is purely speculation and cannot in any way be confirmed (as are the rumours that the Barbs are in some way connected to the Battery Vaults beneath the Dark Lament Cathedral).

Friction Barbs have one purpose, and one purpose only: they are "holy relics" of the Torture Cults, and are used extensively in their quasi-religious ceremonies of purification through pain.

A S C E N S I O N T H R O U G H A G O N Y

In such a ceremony, a Brain Waster supplicant will have one end of the barb inserted into his flesh, either by himself, or with the aid of his fellow Cultists. The science friction material of the harpoon-like barb is designed in such a way that it will pierce THROUGH the subjects' DeathSuit, and bury deep into his flesh. Now comes the hard part. The material from which the Friction Barbs are constructed is designed in such a way that it will respond to the users' Ebb manipulation abilities and meld itself to his will, for as long as he maintains concentration.

With the Barb lodged deeply through DeathSuit into muscle and flesh, the supplicant then WILLS the device to move, and worm its way back towards the surface.... Cultists report that the Barb's emergence back OUT of the surface is even more painful than the entry wound, as the DeathSuit fabric will resist the barb's exit; also obviously the amount of physical assistance a Brain Waster can give to the barb when it is on the inside trying to get out is fairly minimal.

From this point, the Brain Waster repeats the process, folding the sharp tip of the Friction barb in and out of his DeathSuit and flesh, until finally the pain overcomes him, and he is forced to stop.

In this way, the Brain Waster is almost "sewn" into his DeathSuit, the barb appearing as a hook-ended blood-encrusted needle from the outside.... throughout the embedding ceremony, the barb writhes as if alive, and glows a hot sickly luminescent green colour. All wounds caused by the barb are cauterised.

While all Torture Cultists wear at least one friction

barb somewhere on their body, status and respect is afforded to those who choose to use larger and heavier Friction Barbs, to those who manage to achieve the longest series of "friction stitches" with their barb before they pass out, and also to those who choose to perform Barb Piercing on more painful and debilitating parts of their anatomy; a Barb piercing weaving in and out around the eye is considered to be the ultimate achievement in pain and self-control.

After the piercing ceremony has been completed, the barb will cool down to an metallic finish, and will appear almost as a line of "staples" on the DeathSuit of the wearer. Dependent on the positioning of the particular barb placement, the wearer may then choose to snip off the sharp ends of the barb to facilitate movement, or may instead leave them intact as a decoration/possible close combat enhancement.

Some cultists also inscribe their Barbs with the scriptures of their particular sect. It is said that the older Barbs actually absorb some of the pain experienced by their users, in the same way that a DeathSuit slowly becomes sentient; these are always "carried" by higher level members of the Cult.

When a piercing is performed on a DeathSuit-covered area of the anatomy, the DeathSuit will automatically attempt to heal itself AROUND the wounds the barb has left, and thus the science friction fabric will become permanently interlaced with the Ebon flesh, almost like glue: this process is extremely painful to the wearer.

This serves as a constant reminder of the Torture Cult philosophy...in a way, they PHYSICALLY adopt their ideal, and display their advancement along the path towards enlightenment for other Cultists to see; they also demonstrate their obvious superiority to other races as well.

The symbolic elements of the ceremony are incredibly important to the Torture Cultists, as this symbolises and prefigures the Cultists' eventual conquest of self and body, as the melding of DeathSuit and flesh in a blaze of agony prefigures the final state to which the Torture Cultists aspire: the interdermalisation of Necanthropehood.

The ritual forms the first steps on the path to truly becoming one with the DeathSuit... and demonstrates their commitment to their trial in the white.

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TRANSAGONIA SURGEMUS

Rituals are occasionally tantric as well as purely sadistic, however this is not as common as disapproving Ebons would like to make out: the Mysteries of the Torture Cult are more about a highly spiritual form of self-discipline and the conquest of will over body, rather than the sick orgiastic lust-crazed frenzy which Ebons believe it to be. The most extreme of these Cults even perform highly ritualised mental and spiritual torment; for example, the Cult of the Scarred Eye insists that its members painstakingly and slowly destroy another individual, before an Initiate can be fully accepted into the Inner Mysteries.

(NOTE: it is looked down upon for a Brain Waster to actually kill another - not only from the point of view that this is weakening the gene-pool, preventing the ascension of one of their number to Necanthropehood, but also that maiming and chastisement is preferential to death. This serves to provide a valuable lesson to all members of Waster society - the weak wither, while the strong flourish.)

It was such activity, and the negative attention it began to draw from the Media and law enforcement agencies, that drove Albrecht to lead his people on to the next stage of social development, to a distant planet in a series of backwater systems known as the Hell Worlds. He chose the most hostile of these worlds, and personally Folded his followers there within the Force FoldShip "Scalpel", proclaiming their first test - before breaking the will of the rest of the lesser races, they would break this world to their will. Landing on the surface, the colonists began to ravage the planet, unleashing the power of the Ebb upon the predatory flora and fauna. Fire and ice scorched and froze the earth, entire areas were reduced to molten rock, which when forcibly cooled created jagged, razor-sharp rock formations. The evidence of the ravaging can still be seen - great rents torn into the earth, entire forests burned to ash, swamps turned into arid wastes - to the sensitive mind, the whole world screams in agony...

Amidst the destructive rage of his followers and bathed in the tortured screams of a once-living planet, Albrecht christened the world "Pain".

A TORTURED HOMEWORLD

During the three centuries that Pain has existed as a Brain Waster colony, its society has changed and evolved rapidly, stabilising into its present form. Originally, its ruling bodies were arranged in a series of "houses", each formed from the families of the original settlers. Status was decided by the bloodline to which you belonged, and your distance from the Founder of your house. Now, 300 years later, much has changed; following an uprising 150 years ago, it is now ruled by the families of Wasters who have proven themselves to be strongest in their use of the Ebb, and their advancement in the practices of the Torture Cults - a dark mystic dictatorship, perpetuated down the generations by selective breeding, headed by those who are getting close, and their Necanthrope Elders.

Watching over everything is Albrecht Durer. He involves himself in the affairs of the colony on a regular basis, often visiting the world on sabbaticals - the headquarters of the Inquisitors is found here also, and this is where all new members of that order undergo their initiation and training.

The original colonists did not take any kind of farming equipment with them; they did not seek to tame the land, they sought to ravage it and make it their own. Thus the lowest level of Painite Society is that of the hunter-gatherer, truly feral Brain Wasters, who once thrown out of their families for degenerate actions, are driven to an exclusively carnivorous, animalistic existence beyond the boundaries of civilisation. Some of the more lucid of these virtual savages set themselves up as witchdoctors for the smaller rural settlements. Although the planet itself is hostile to humanoid settlement, the flora and fauna and other natural resources were comparatively rich -with the arrival of the Brain Wasters, this changed.

Large areas of the planet are blackened and scorched from the release of Red Thermal and Blast, where no plant will grow again. Natural resources will run out on Pain within two hundred years if the voraciousness of its inhabitants is not tempered. Dark Lament has already prepared for this contingency by creating numerous development laboratories on the planet's surface, forging the way for Pain to become one of their leading Industrial Worlds in much the same way that Artery functions for Karma.

However, a crisis point has been reached on the world of Pain, and it came from within the Brain Waster race, rather than from any threat Pain itself could offer; the women of Pain are frequently barren,

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and the colonists are slowly dying out. Many have drawn a parallel to the emergence of Brain Wasters in Ebon society.

THE TWO SIDED COIN

"The Ebons - bedwetting emotional dinosaurs. They should leave behind their dreams of childhood, grow up and WAKE UP. Look around you - life is shit, and being all sugary-sweet to people doesn't change any of that. Mark my words, they'll be Brain Wasters brawling in bars on Mort long after the last of their pathetic species has gone to dust."

Much has been written elsewhere in this volume about the peculiar dichotomy between these two closely related, sister races. The Brain Waster gene appears to be carried as some kind of mutation in the Gene-pool of the Ebon race. It is a recessive gene, and at any point a Brain Waster child may be born unexpectedly to any Ebon family.

However, when Brain Wasters have children, they breed absolutely true. This is part of the reason why Wasters are so universally hated by Ebons: their race is numerous, and is bound to eventually over-run the main Ebon race.... Brain Wasters would describe this trait as proof of their genetic superiority, and view themselves as the next evolutionary stage. Ebons view the Wasters as a form of racial cancer, gradually infecting them, turning them into the antithesis of their nature. However, 100 years ago, on the planet of Pain, a closed Gene pool made up exclusively of Brain Wasters began to lead to significant biological problems for its inhabitants.

CONFLICT

As time passed, more and more female Waster children were being born sterile, and many of those who still COULD have children were giving birth to babies with such extreme birth defects as to render them nightmarish creatures, newly born monsters whose very presence rips large sickening holes in the usually calm flow of the Ebb. At first, these creatures were killed as abominations, until Albrecht commanded that they be turned over to him. He in turn surrenders them to Dark Lament and the Necanthrope Society.

These "Incarnthropes" (or "Incarnates") are the next true evolutionary stage between the Wasters and Necanthropes - a living, breathing creature with the rage and sheer malice necessary to tap the Disciplines normally only available to a Necanthrope.

Eventually, the governors of Pain were forced to recognise the necessity of introducing some fresh

specimens into the gene pool. They turned to Albrecht and Dark Lament for help, and it was granted without hesitation; however, the subsequent research showed that the best possible solution to the "Incarnate problem" was to introduce Ebon genetic strands back into the race. Naturally, this news was greeted with horror by a large number of families, and nearly caused all-out civil war to ensue; the scars that this conflict caused are still present, livid amongst the old wounds of the Ravaging, and echoes of titanic battles fought between small armies of Wasters still last to this day. The Painites have since split into two factions - the Traditionalists, those who are willing to accept the idea of interbreeding with Ebons in order to clean the polluted genepool; and the Supremacists - those who would rather die than see this occur, as they have grown to believe that there isn't ANYTHING better than a Brain Waster (even a Necanthrope). It is these Supremacists that are beginning to disturb the Preceptor - they are beginning to deviate from his path. Soon he will force Albrecht to take action, or step in himself to curb this growing insolence.

Dark Lament provides regular shipments of Feral Ebons to Pain via FoldShip; these unfortunates live out the rest of a mercifully short existence as slaves to the ruling families, as breeding stock for the Traditionalists, or simply as subjects of "amusements".

Occasionally, an Ebon from Static will be brought here as a Vassal to a Necanthrope Elder. In this case, the Ebon is treated with a grudging, malicious form of respect, after all, they have been chosen by the true rulers of Pain to serve.

Usually, however, Necanthropes on Pain will choose Vassals from their own family, maintaining a distinct bloodline across the generations. They also differ from other Necanthropes in that they will tutor vassals towards their trial in the white, but only if they can prove that they are strong enough to stand alongside their superiors.

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NECANTHROPE SOCIETY

Spiders In The Web

Lurking in the shadows, observing the development of the Ebons and Brain Wasters, are the Necanthropes. Led by their patriarch, Preceptor Teeth, they watch and wait, guiding their unknowing charges towards the white, leading them to become one with their Society.

Preceptor Teeth

The first Necanthrope, patriarch of Necanthrope Society, the head of Dark Lament and the overseer of the Ebon race. When he speaks, it is *never* to an individual but always to the masses (either to a crowd, or to an entire species). He appears on T.V, but never in "personal interviews" like Intruder or Slayer; he keeps himself distant from all those around him except Necanthrope Society. He communicates his orders to the Ebon race through the Department of Ebb in a constant series of "decrees" or "commandments". He severely punishes those who deviate from these orders, always making an example of these unfortunates in order to show the consequences of disobedience to others. His voice is a combination of whispers, normal tomb-amplified speech, screams and howls, emanating from all of the mouths on his body; when angered, his cry of rage is said to be one of the most terrifying sounds in the World of Progress. His entire presence is one of looming menace and power. His incarnation is nausea - not the sort that induces vomiting, but instead a sickened feeling of absolute and total despair.

If this aura is directed, one cannot help but cower before him in terror, and obey his every command. He carries a pathological hatred of all things not Necanthrope - all others are inferior, worthy only of conversion, domination or death. He carries special scorn for the Ebon species, citing that their emotions hold them back from true greatness - existence as a Necanthrope. For Teeth, he sees a rigid, unwavering path from birth, through life, and then into the white - the loyal and the worthy will emerge to stand to serve at his side at the pinnacle of the evolutionary ladder.

The Brain Wasters please him greatly, as they represent the success of his domination of the Ebons; also, they are his loyal servants, and assist in the oppressive corruption of his hated former species. However, he has decided that the growing dissent amongst some of the more Separatist factions must be curbed, and will soon take direct action against them - what form this

will take is as yet undecided. He is keen to point out the inevitability of the white to new Ebon and Brain Waster students at Meny, and personally addresses all new arrivals at the SLA academy. In doing so, he imprints upon the hearts and minds of all Ebons and Brain Wasters that join the Company the need to submit their will to him, and accept their unavoidable destiny. Teeth has his own plans for the Ebons and Brain Wasters - he sees them only as the raw materials he needs to strengthen Necanthrope Society, through the propagation of his own species - Necanthropes. He obeys Slayer through fear, and because their plans for Ebons are identical. He waits and plans for the time to bring his species out from Slayer's domination, either attempting a coup to take control of the World of Progress, extending the domination of Necanthrope Society to all races, or destroying the "lesser races" and leading his people into the unknown vastness beyond White Earth to create their own everlasting civilisation. Slayer knows the hatred that Teeth carries, and the futility of his schemes, but allows the Preceptor his illusion of free will - that way he is predictable and easy to control.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This glossary simply defines common terms used throughout the Sourcebook within their own context; they are by no means intended to trap the creativity of an individual GM.

Celhdry The solitary Moon of Static. Pale blue when viewed from Static. Dark Lament maintain an observation/research station on it's surface.

Ebb A philosophy of existence; emphasis varies between Ebons and Brain Wasters. Adherence to an aspect of this philosophy develops the outlook and trains the mind in the necessary techniques to be able to channel Flux effectively.

DeathSuit A form of armour, designed by Intruder, that acts as both a protective garment and an equation accelerator. It is used by all SLA-trained Ebons and Brain Wasters to channel Flux efficiently.

Feral An Ebon or Brain Waster that has not been trained in the disciplines of the Ebb. They either cannot actively channel Flux at all, can only do so with the use of artifacts like Glyph Cards, or very rarely can channel Flux intuitively without the use of a DeathSuit. Ferals either carry registration tags as such, which are worn visibly at all times, or are ruthlessly hunted down by the Department of Ebb.

Flux The most common way to describe flux is a fluid model, something that flows, can be channelled, and pools in certain areas.

Formulae The level of understanding of the nature of reality, and how it is connected to the Ebb. The Principal Formulae that all Ebons seek is an ultimate truth that underlies all of reality, providing an unparalleled insight into everything.

Glyph An inscribed pattern that represents a thought, intent or emotion, and how it relates to an aspect of physical reality. When concentrated upon, it becomes a pathway for Flux to travel through, altering reality as a result.

Matrix A glyph pattern that has been inscribed into an object, that permanently channels Flux. This forms the basis of most commercially available Science Friction technology.

Necanthrope lit. "dead person", an Ebon or Brain Waster that has endured the Ritual of Steel & Lead, and emerged from the white. Often, they are changed physically and mentally due to the nature of this trial - the reliving of traumatic or nightmarish experiences, culminating with the decision to

return.

Pain The Brain Waster "homeworld"; a colony created 300 years ago by Albrecht Durer.

Ritual of Steel and Lead, The A well-known informal name for the rite experienced by all Ebons or Brain Wasters who are about to endure their trial in the white. It involves the prospective Necanthrope being physically killed (with either a sword or BLA Blitzer respectively), and their body being unceremoniously thrown into the white.

Rogue A Dark Lament-trained and equipped Ebon or Brain Waster who has defected from SLA Industries to join another Soft Company. They are always tracked down by Dark Lament.

Science Friction A term used for the technology developed by Dark Lament, relating to any device designed to channel or store Flux to achieve a specific effect.

Static The Ebon homeworld. The majority of Ebon operatives are born and raised here.

Tas-Tuo The books of knowledge, also the name of the structure on Static in which they are housed. The Tas-Tuo is a centre of learning for all Ebons, and contains centuries of accumulated knowledge written down by generations of Ebons.

white, The An ethereal light, located within Cannibal Sector One on Mort; it opened seemingly spontaneously over 800 years ago. It is so bright that it is visible from space. Usually, an Ebon or Brain Waster who is getting close must journey to Mort (a sort of pilgrimage) to become a Necanthrope; a variant of this involves travelling to the Necanthrope orbital platform of Lair, where a small gateway has been opened; yet another involves the gathering of a Union around a prospective Necanthrope, and the enacting of a ritual to "summon the white" to that location. Once the corpse of an Ebon or Brain Waster is thrown into the white, their spirit is subjected to a trial of monumental proportions, a true test of survival.

There are many views on what the white actually is. These include: a portal into another dimension, an astral/spirit realm, or a limbo through which all souls pass to reach the afterlife.

The simplest definition is "it's where an Ebon or Brain Waster becomes a Necanthrope".

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THE LAST LAUGH

The room was shrouded in darkness. A figure could be vaguely seen seated in the ornate high-backed chair, its features made ambiguous by the flickering light of dying candles. "It would be so easy for me to tell you the Truth" said the figure. "Do you really want to know?" I shook my head. The voice sent chills down my spine. "They say that the White burns away all our illusions, reveals us for who we truly are. The light of truth is terrible to look upon, you know. So bright you wish to run back to the shadows, tear what you know right out of your head. But it is far too late for that."

The figure shifted in its seat, leaned forward slightly. When I saw its face, I fought back the impulse to run. Dead white skin framed otherwise perfect features, but where its eyes should be were two pools of darkness.

"I think that the light shone through me, bleached me out - in more ways than one" said the figure. It laughed, a low whispering chuckle that seemed to reverberate around the shadowed room. "And my eyes, my beautiful blue eyes...they ran away, shrouded themselves in darkness, to escape the light. My companions no longer know me - but then, I hardly know myself..."

I started to move towards the door. Something had altered in the creature's manner - I sensed it in the same way as prey detects a predator. The wistful reminiscence had ended, and he seemed grounded in the present.

"Going so soon? I hardly ever get visitors these days. " I reached the door, and ran through it, back to the safe world outside that room. But the words of the Necanthrope seemed to carry themselves to me. "This is the price of knowing the Truth. Hide in the shadows where you belong, and let those.... enlightened beings, like myself, deal with everything. Life's too short..." And the laughter of the Necanthrope followed me as I fled.

EDGE OF DARKNESS BLADE OF LIGHT

(Dedicated to seeking fulfilment and daring to hope.)

By: Max Bantleman

B A C K G R O U N D

Most people make the common mistake of assuming Ebons are simply humans with some sort of psychic gift. This is simply not the case. Ebons are a race apart from humans, they are aliens; as alien to Humans as any Shaktar or Wraith Raider.

Even though Ebons themselves may liken their race to humans, this is done with the insight and understanding denied to us (humans). If we ever need reminding of just how alien the Ebon race is, we need look no further than the nearest Necanthrope. Ebons live for, and through, their emotions, they seek meaning in everything, they look for the answers to the riddle of life, they are constantly seeking knowledge and truth. To an Ebon, the truth is it's own reward.

Intruder is seen as the father of the Ebon race, it is he that brought them to Slayer's attention after the Conflict Wars, and he set them on the path to study of the Ebb. Ebons are born to quest for knowledge, they spend their whole lives seeking enlightenment, it is their reason for being. The expression of self through emotion is taught to all Ebons from birth, their parents show them the value of self examination, of seeking meaning in everything they see and do. Fate and destiny play a large part in the shaping of an Ebon, more so than other races, for Ebons believe in the power of the universe to guide them through the force of the Ebb. From birth to adolescence Ebons are taught by their families, learning the basic skills necessary to survive in the harsh World of Progress. The tendency for Ebons to gather together is continued on in to adult life, where they seek each others company to discuss, to learn, to share their discoveries. Ebons can only really be understood by other Ebons. That is not to say that Ebons do not enjoy the company of the other races, far from it. They can learn much from contact with non Ebons, experiencing new emotions, coming in to contact with new philosophies and out looks on life. All experience is to be valued. The relationship between Ebons and Brainwasters is a strained one, for although they are of the same 'stock', they are totally different in their make up and attitude. Ebons see Brainwasters as a shameful corruption of their race, whose violent excesses and destructive

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drives are to be guarded against and disowned. Open hostility between the two races is rare as Ebons tend to keep themselves at a distance from Brainwasters, avoiding confrontation if at all possible. There are those Ebons that have dedicated their lives to the understanding of Brainwasters, their goal is to help the Brainwasters see the error in their ways. These Ebons are both despised by Brainwasters and misunderstood by other Ebons. The force of the Ebb powers the Ebon race, holds it, binds it, drives it on. Understanding of the nature of the Ebb is every Ebons goal, for understanding the Ebb is understanding the fabric of the universe. The all consuming passion of every Ebon, through all stages of their development, is the understanding of the Ebb and the 'solving' of the great mystery of life. Ebons sometimes express their quest for understanding as 'The Endless Knott', which is represented by a five pointed question;

Who am I.... Why am I here.... Where am I going....
What is the nature of the Ebb.... When will I change....

Who am I? refers to the Ebons thirst for self understanding, for knowledge of their soul and control of their spirit. Ebons who are at ease with who they are, who have discovered their selves, can then progress to question other things, safe in the knowledge of their own belief.

Why am I here? This forces the Ebon to confront the purpose of their existence, what they have to achieve with their life. It is a primary factor in determining the direction of the Ebons life, and hence the direction their enquiries will take, what they will ultimately be looking for.

Where am I going? helps the Ebon direct their efforts, channel their energies, prevents them from wasting their talents and gifts. Usually it defines the Ebons physical goals of corporate achievement, what they want from SLA and what they are prepared to sacrifice.

What is the nature of the Ebb? This is the greatest mystery, the greatest challenge and the Ebons life long undertaking. Understanding the Ebb is the root of all investigation and discovery. The realisation that the Ebb may be different things to each Ebon is a recent concept.

When will I change? When will the White call me to it's womb of transformation? When will I become Necanthrope?

All of these questions must be faced, though they are seldom answered by the young Ebon. As the Ebon grows in his understanding of the Ebb, he feels drawn

to the White, by forces he can barely begin to visualise, let alone begin to understand. Only by entering the White and re-emerging as a Necanthrope can an Ebon answer the final riddle. Only a Necanthrope can truly understand the nature of the Ebb. Some Ebons see the transformation to Necanthrope as a distortion, a corruption, an unwanted metamorphosis which will cause them to abandon much of their closest held beliefs and emotions. Necanthropes are the ultimate double edged sword; elation and grief personified.

Ebons will develop many close relationships in their lifetime, giving of their friendship and never tiring of sharing their emotions. Deep thought will go in to every action, every sentence. To be an Ebons close friend is to be involved in every mood change, every bout of depression, anguish and self doubt. But there are compensations. Ebons radiate warmth and joy, their very presence lifts a room with expectation, their attentions can be so intense as to seem the only thing worth while.

The closest relationship in an Ebons life will be with their DeathSuit. The understanding of the formulae's that control the Ebb used to be achieved through Glyph Cards. These clumsy tools were replaced with the DeathSuit, Dark Laments greatest contribution to the expansion of the Ebon race. With the DeathSuit the Ebon can channel and store Flux, using their relationship with the DeathSuit to complete the equations and understand the formulae's, enabling them to manipulate Flux with a speed, accuracy and efficiency not possible with Glyph Cards. Without his DeathSuit an Ebon would be crippled, reduced to a fumbling fraction of their former selves.

The DeathSuit becomes part of the Ebon, growing with them and eventually joining with them. Necanthropes emerge from the White completely as one with their DeathSuits. It cannot be stressed enough how important a DeathSuit is to an Ebon. They use it to express their mood by changing it's appearance, it can act as armour, and it stores and channels flux. The destruction of a DeathSuit is a tragedy beyond compare in the Ebons life.

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The WoP and the Ebon Race

A question often asked by GM's and players alike is; what are the proportions of the races within the WoP? Basically, how many of everything is there? This becomes especially important for Ebons, Wasters and Ferals, as they are inherently powerful beings with the potential to unbalance any game world. Of course, it is up to each individual GM to structure their WoP according to their own vision, and all we can offer are some guidelines; change the figures to suit your own worlds:

Necanthropes	Total: 0.0001%	Mort:0.001%
Ebons	Total: 0.5%	Mort:0.2%
Brain Wasters	Total: 0.3%	Mort:0.1%
Feral Ebons	Total: 0.05%	Mort:0.01%
Shaktar	Total: 1%	Mort:0.3%
Wraith Raiders	Total: 1%	Mort:0.3%
Stormers	Total: 1%	Mort: 0.5%

Another question that needs answering, is how do Ebons integrate and live on Mort, and anywhere outside Static? Are all Ebons outside Static working for SLA, i.e. Operatives? Do all Ebons on Mort come from the ranks of Operatives, or are there 'non active' Ebons on Mort? Do all Ebons wear Deathsuits and practice Ebb use and Flux manipulation, or are the communities and individuals on Mort who simply live as over sensitive 'humans', with maybe some empathic ability? Do 'non-Operative' Ebons simply have to register with SLA? Non-Operative Ebons, those who do not have a Deathsuit, and are not 'Feral' by nature, may simply have access to all level 1 Ebb Abilities, powered by Flux that is gathered while they sleep (equal to their CONC), and then, if not used, is dissipated through their dreams. Access to the level 1 Abilities would be triggered by emotions and the use of a CONC roll (as a skill).

All obvious questions, but all things that need setting out clearly by the GM to set the scene for Ebons in their WoP.

NEW ABILITIES AND SKILLS

Natural Empathy

This is the Ebons natural ability to sense the mood and feelings of those around them. Though it is an ability present in all Ebons, it is bought as a skill during generation (or after) to reflect the study of it's nature.

Ebons live for and off of their emotions, they are highly sensitive to the feelings of others and may learn to 'read' the signals that indicate many of the emotions common to all races, such as love, hate, suspicion, trust, etc. As the Ebon fine tunes this ability, they may be able to detect such things as exact degrees of stress, intent, truthfulness, etc.

Game System Stuff

The ability as governed by Diagnose and Charisma (add together divide by two). Empathy is used as a normal skill, with the relevant skill roll being made with modifiers for interference. The interference may be such things as a particularly close relationship with the target, or conflicting emotions within the Ebon towards the target, as well as physical things such as distractions through being fired at, etc. Natural Empathy has a range of the users CONC in metres. The Empathy skill is active for as long as the Ebon is able to concentrate on it's use, usually this will be CONC in minutes, but this may be altered by interruptions which may be severe enough to cause the Ebon to loose track of the skill, effectively switching it off.

The Gamesmaster must be careful in the way the skill is used, being aware of the signals the Ebon would actually be able to pick up on. A good example of the use of this skill is in a hostage situation where the Ebon is the negotiator. The Ebon would clearly be able to tell (through the skill) if the terrorist intended to kill the hostages, he may even be able to tell how mentally stable the terrorist is, though the emotions of the hostages may act as negative modifier, clouding the reading of the emotions of the terrorist. Our Ebon negotiator would be able to pick up on feelings, but not motives, he would know if the terrorist was going to start shooting hostages, but not why.

IN TO THE LIGHT

R e t r i b u t i o n (F l u x B u r n)

The Retribution skill is also known as Flux Burn, it is a form of Flux manipulation. The Ebon deals with Flux every day of his life, he becomes expert in it's accumulation and use. The gathering of Flux is essential for all Ebb use and each Ebon has their own way of tapping in to the Flux of the universe.

As they grow in experience, Ebons begin to realise that they are merely vessels, transmitters, for Flux. It is possible for an Ebon to tap into more Flux than they are able to control and use. This fact has been exploited by those that have learned Retribution. The Flux Burn skill allows the Ebon to tap massive amounts of Flux while only being able to 'safely' discharge a small proportion of it. The excess Flux is burnt off in a spectacular display which leaves the Ebon drained and wasted, their Flux storing and gathering ability burnt out. It takes an Ebon a long time to recover from Flux Burn and the skill is only used in dire emergency, or by Brainwasters who care little for their personal safety.

G a m e S y s t e m S t u f f

Retribution (Flux Burn) is an Ebb based skill (though it costs no Flux to 'use'), it is governed by the Ebons Formulae. It is bought during character generation, the same as all skills. The skill is used in the normal way, and is affected by the same modifiers as any Ebb use skill. Once the skill has been successfully used, the Ebon has Flux instantly available to them, the amount is equal to their Retribution Skill x Formulae stored in their body. Example: An Ebon, Mist, has 16 Flux stored in their body, they have a Formulae of 4 and a Retribution skill of 2. If at this stage she was to successfully use Retribution, she would have $(2 \times 4 + 16)$ 24 points of Flux instantly available to them.

The Flux generated by Retribution must be used in the same round it is gathered. If it is not, the Ebon takes damage equal to the Flux gathered in a randomly generated location, the damage ignores armour and may not be healed using drugs.

If the Ebon manages to use the skill properly, and channels the Flux in to Ebb use, they still suffer a massive 'come down' from the Flux Burn. The effects start from the first phase after the Ebon discharges the Flux.

Flux Burn after effects; -2 STR for an hour -2 DEX for an hour -2 CONC for half hour -1 DIA for half hour All Ebb use at an additional -5 modifier for successful use.

Ebons must be aware of the limitations of the skill when they use it. Remember it takes a phase to formulate an Ebb use, if the Ebon does not have enough actions, or is forced to use them in other activity, they take the damage.

Retribution is a very useful last defense skill, or a vicious first strike ability. Either way the Ebon needs to be sure that not too much will be asked of them after the skills use. Many Ebons shun Retribution and steer clear of those that learn it. Brainwasters love it.

A l t e r e d S t a t e

Ebons live in a world dominated by their emotions and their perceptions of the energies that are the Flux. Many people would say they do not inhabit the same universe as us, such is their state of awareness and consciousness. Many of the Ebb abilities allow the Ebon to draw physical entities through the fabric of the universe in ways that astound and baffle us, Reality Folding and Telekinesis being the most obvious.

Using Altered State the Ebon enters a kind of twilight, shadow world of Ebb, where the pure forms of each thing reside, the essence of a thing in Flux. Ebons change the structure of their bodies, dissipating their physical form in the flow of the Ebb.

Altered State is an ability fraught with danger. Not only is the Ebon prone to loss of their body to the Ebb due to distractions and interruptions to their concentration, they are also drawn perilously close to the White.

G a m e S y s t e m S t u f f

Altered State is a Concentration based skill. It requires expenditure of Flux to successfully use. The Ebon is shifting their body partly in to the realm of the Ebb, blending with the Flux flow of the universe. In this state they are partially in the 'real' world, and partially immersed in the other realm. They may physically interact with this world, though this takes a lot of effort and Flux, and they have the ability to not interact with this world.

Ebons in Altered State move at their normal rate, they may pass through 'solid' objects (doors, walls, people, etc.) at a cost of 2 Flux per object, they must also make a CONC roll each time they do, to see if they are able to maintain the Altered State. Ebons failing the CONC roll, or not having enough Flux to pay for their passing through, immediately snap back in to the real world. Ebons must also pay Flux to physically open doors, windows, and interact in any other

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way with the 'real' world. Altered State allows the Ebon to 'drift' on currents of the Ebb, they move at 2 per phase and may pass over water or through the air. While drifting, the Ebon may pass through objects as normal, if they fail their CONC roll, their bodies are immediately subject to the normal laws of physics and may fall, drown, etc.. While in Altered State the Ebon can 'see' Ebb energy forms and Flux pools. They perceive people and objects partly as physical, and partly as Ebb. Ebons in the realm of Altered State perceive Necanthropes as brilliant white shapes, Brainwasters as dark shadows, other Ebons as coloured Ebb islands and all non Ebb users as phantasmal, semi-corporal beings. Ebons using the Altered State ability are prone to calls from the White. They feel irresistibly drawn to the White Realm, where their spirits and forms will be obliterated and reborn. For each round in Altered State an Ebon must make a DIA roll (as if it were a skill) with a -1 modifier for each round they have spent in Altered State. Success means they can sail close to the winds of the White. Failure means they are swept away and consumed by the fury of the White. Ebons that drown in the White are 'spat out' in to the real world with all of their Ebb abilities gone, stripped from them in the inferno of passing through the white. Ebons thrown from the other realm without their Ebb gift usually commit suicide or go insane, their emotions running out of control. They immediately gain three rank 10 psychoses (of their choosing). Ebons crippled in this way are immediately killed on sight by other Ebons in a form of mercy slaying. Even after successful use of the Altered State ability the Ebon must pay a price. They are disorientated and confused, taking a short time before they can co-ordinate themselves in the 'real' world.

After effects of Altered State; -1 CONC for an hour -2 DIA for half an hour -2 DEX for half an hour

Ebons in the Altered State are still partially in the 'real' world and are perceived by others as spectral images, ghost like and semi opaque. The Ebon in Altered State may still be attacked by those in the corporal realm, though they gain a -13 modifier when targeting the 'altered' Ebon.

F E R A L E B O N S

Mention has been made of Feral Ebons, though not much has been said about them. It is clear that they operate without a Deathsuit, using either Glyph Cards or some sort of 'natural' ability to formulate. But how can this be? Why aren't SLA out to recruit these Ebons and keep them 'feral', exploiting their ability to do without a Deathsuit?

B a c k g r o u n d

At the close of the Conflict Wars Intruder had brought the Ebon race within the SLA Industries fold. They were spared by Slayer from the destruction that faced the other races, Intruder became a messiah figure for them, someone who they loved and respected, someone who knew them for what they were and taught them all they needed to know about understanding and using the Ebb. Intruder saw the Ebons great potential and could not let them die. He knew Slayer did not understand what he saw in them, but he also knew Slayer would respect his decision to save them if he, Intruder, remained loyal to Slayer. So Intruder was bound even tighter to Slayer.

Once the Ebons were officially recognised by SLA Industries, their indoctrination and training began. Intruder went to Static, where he set up many training schools, using the best from the Ebon race to teach others what he had taught them. Among these original teachers were several 'Feral' Ebons, who seemed to be able to somehow use the Ebb without the usual use of formulae. These Ferals were gradually separated from the other Ebons, who were being taught using Glyph Cards. The Ferals were no longer present in any training school by 12SD., though there are rumours that Mandrake was in fact a Feral. Gradually the Ferals were hired by Dark Lament, or sent to Mort or to War Worlds, where their ability to formulate quickly was most needed. The Ferals began to realise that SLA had no place for them, and that, if anything, other Ebons and those within SLA actually feared them. In 101SD. the first Feral revolt took place, lead by Faeron, a Feral who had returned from Cross to unite the Ferals on Mort. Faeron took the Ferals away from SLA, leading them in to Cannibal Sector Five, from where they would strike out at SLA, stealing what they could of equipment and supplies. By 110SD. Ferals were being hunted on Mort as enemies of SLA, with the rest of the Ebon race reluctantly accepting the outlaw status of their brethren. Intruder has never, and (it is said) will never take part in the hunting down of Ferals. In 113SD. Necanthropes had cleared the last of the Ferals from Mort. Or so they thought.

IN TO THE LIGHT

But they were wrong.

Feral Ebons live mainly in Lower Downtown or in the Cannibal Sectors, occasionally a Feral can disguise himself and live in suburbia, for a while.... Ferals are hunted by SLA and so they tend to be always on the move. They rarely stay in one place for longer than a year, and never really make friends, trusting no one completely. It has been noted that Scavs have been seen in the company of Ferals, though whether this is purely a trading agreement no one is sure. Feral Ebons are extremely rare. Within the Ebon race itself, one child in a million is born Feral, that is with the ability to manipulate the Ebb naturally from birth. These offspring are sent to a special training school on Static, where they are taught to use Deathsuits, even though they don't need them. These Ferals live without knowing their Feral nature, if they ever find themselves aware of it, the curse that it also brings begins to destroy them.

Feral Ebons that produce offspring outside of Ebon society, produce 'Ebb Mules' 99% of the time and a Feral Ebon the other 01%. Mules have no Ebb ability and rarely live past puberty, when they are prone to suicidal depression.

The Feral Curse

Feral Ebons live with an inner conflict that they never resolve. Those that have entered the White have brought their insanity back with them. From the day they are born Ferals are able to use the Ebb, to manipulate Flux and to access their Ebb Abilities. From the moment they are born they struggle to understand what they are, what the Ebb is and what forces work through them. Feral Ebons come in to the WoP knowing the Ebb, and knowing that they are different, that their knowledge and ability make them outlawed, hunted, Ferals know from the day they are born that they can never be part of the WoP, they are born rebels, they are born wary of all things connected with SLA.

It does not take long for Ferals to realise the curse of their nature. Accessing the Ebb, the use of Flux, though done 'naturally' is still done using Formulae; only the Feral is not consciously aware of the nature of the Formulae. Feral Ebons begin to have 'insane insights' from the minute they are born. Eventually the insanity of their existence catches up with them, and they lose all control over their waking mind. It is at this stage that they seek the oblivion of the White. And when they do, Intruder is waiting for them.

Feral's use of the Ebb causes them to alter the relationship between their conscious and subconscious minds, until one is indistinguishable from the other. When this occurs, the insanity is complete.

Only Intruder can bring a Feral back from the White. How he does this is a closely guarded secret, known only to Slayer and Intruder, not even Senti knows the process. Faintly whispered rumours suggest Intruder somehow escorts the Feral in to the White.

What emerges from the White is unrecognisable as an Ebon, it bears no resemblance to the Feral that entered, leaving other Necanthropes looking sane by comparison. The only known Necanthrope of Feral origin on Mort is Frost, working for Cloak and Stygmartyr, she is an enigmatic figure seldom seen by the citizens of Mort.

Game System Stuff

So, how do Ferals' actually do it then? How do they use Flux and what is their command of Ebb Abilities. Here's how we work it in our WoP, change what you don't like, mess with it as you will.

How They Use Ebon Abilities Ferals do not consciously use the hyperbolic equations that other Ebons rely on. Instead their subconscious works through the equations using the language of dreams. The calculation takes 1.8 seconds, or three phases in combat rounds. Ferals may begin 'calculating' in any phase, as long as the ability 'goes off' in a phase in which they have an action. The Flux cost of the ability is paid upon activation, not at the beginning of the formulating.

Feral Ebons do not suffer the same negative modifiers as their Ebon cousins; they ignore anything that would cause them to 'lose concentration', as they are not actually concentrating on formulating.

This effectively means that Ferals do not make CONC rolls to successfully use Ebb abilities, once they start to formulate, they cannot be stopped.

Flux

Feral Ebons store and use Flux differently from other Ebons. Each Feral gains their KNOW in Flux every six hours, and they may 'store' Flux equal to their KNOW X Formulae. So a Feral with KNOW 10 and Formulae 4, may store 40 Flux. Every Feral Ebon must discharge Flux equal to their maximum storage every day, failure means they will discharge in their sleep, doing themselves physical damage equal to the Flux discharged.

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E b b A b i l i t i e s

Feral Ebons may have access to the full range of Ebb Abilities. Each Feral will show a preference for a number of abilities equal to their CONC divided by 2. So a Feral with a CONC 9 has access to 5 abilities. The Feral has access to all of the abilities within each group they have chosen, regardless of Rank, and may use any ability as long as they have the Flux to pay for it.

F e r a l C u r s e

The Feral Ebon pays a high price for their use of the Ebb. Every time they sleep, they dream. And when they dream they gain insight, this causes the creeping madness that afflicts all Ferals.

During the dream the Feral has to make a DIA roll as a skill, using the total Flux used since they last slept as a positive modifier (not Flux discharged during last sleep). Negative modifiers are damage points taken as Flux Burn during their present sleep and Formulae. Success means they fight off the madness for a while, failure means they gain an Insight Point. When their Insight Points exceed their Formulae and their DIA added together, they go insane. Ferals may be taught how to use Deathsuits if caught at an early age, usually before they are ten, and at this stage they may be taught how to block the Insight Dreams, if they are, they progress as 'normal' Ebons as long as they wear their Deathsuits. If they lose their Deathsuit, they revert to Ferals.

T H E E B B A S A R T - N O T S C I E N C E

One of the most often voiced criticisms of the Ebb rules is that they are too 'clinical', too 'scientific' and that they do not reflect the Ebon's emotional nature. So. How do we turn this on it's head then? First we have to decide what the fundamental drive of the Ebon nature is. And is there a difference between the basic Ebon and Waster drives and desires? If we leave the Brain Wasters as primarily looking at the Ebb as a 'tool', applying it through their use of Flux, then the basic rules of 'formulating' and understanding are fine. They allow the Waster to keep the Ebb within arms reach, but not to be smothered by it, until they feel the call of the White. For a Waster the increase in Formulae may come through physical use, i.e. Manipulation, of Flux as much as 'understanding' of the nature of the Ebb. This gives us a picture of Brain Wasters as being calculating, self centred, power hungry users of the Ebb, whose interest goes no further than what it can do for them, and how it can help

them turn Necanthrope. But for Ebons it's a different matter. For an Ebon, the Ebb is the very stuff of life, the force that runs through, binds and drives the universe. The manifestation of this force; Flux, is to be used sparingly and with respect. Ebons seek to 'understand' the Ebb, not just to use it. The 'feeling' of the Ebb is as important as the 'formulae'. For an Ebon, understanding the Ebb can only be driven by the heart, emotions, not the mind. For an Ebon, their search for knowledge drives their 'Formulae' up, showing an increased understanding of the nature of the Ebb.

To reflect this in game terms, the first thing we must do is alter the 'turning' guidelines. Ebons getting close at Formulae 10 makes no sense. For an Ebon, the irresistible call to Necanthrope can only come under specific circumstances, when their Formulae is much higher, when they are 'willing' to give themselves up to the oblivion of the White.

G a m e S y s t e m S t u f f

Each Ebon (not Waster) has a new 'characteristic', which is recorded along side their Formulae; Ego. An Ebon's Ego drops as their understanding of the Ebb (Formulae) rises. The Ego characteristic follows from the opposite end of the scale of the Formulae, and is directly driven by it. All Ebons begin with Formulae 1 and Ego 20. For each point their Formulae increases; their Ego decreases accordingly. So, if an Ebons Formulae is 3, their ego is 18. If their Formulae is 6, their ego is 15. An Ebon's Formulae and Ego should never 'match' (i.e. be the same number.) Once an Ebon's Ego falls below their CONC, they begin to hear the Call of the White. Once this happens, they must make a roll each day to resist the walk in to the White. Their Ego is rolled as a 'skill', if they 'succeed' they resist the call of the White, if they fail, they are driven to seek out the Black Cathedral to undertake the journey to Necanthrope. If the Ebon uses White Noise to negate the calling, they receive a +1 modifier to their resistance roll for each 'dose' administered that day (25 hour period).

IN TO THE LIGHT

E m o t i o n s

To reflect the fact that an Ebon, more than other races, lives through their emotions, we need to somehow relate the emotional state of the Ebon to their Flux / Ebb use. This can be undertaken in a number of ways, and will depend upon the individual GM and his players. Outlined below are two methods that can be used to create 'emotionally based' Ebon characters that relate to the universe, and so the Ebb, through their core emotions. Players choosing an Ebon character can opt for one of two paths;

1) A single defining emotional characteristic. 1) Ebb abilities tied to emotional states.

A Single Defining Emotional Characteristic

Many Ebons choose to identify their character with a single, 'core' emotional state. This is often reflected in their name, and always in their demeanour.

Their chosen 'base' emotion is 'ranked' to represent understanding and comprehension of it's effect on the Ebb. The emotional 'rank' is always equal to the Ebon's Formulae. Base Emotion; This must be chosen by the Player. The base Emotion is going to be the key characteristic governing their growth in the game, they must choose carefully, and use their core emotion to ground their role playing of the character. GM's and players must use the base choice as a 'core', with associated emotional states being used to cover the range of feelings and actions the Ebon will wish to express.

Example: Stone, an Ebon I&I character, has chosen 'Calm' as her base emotion. Between the player and the GM, a series of notes are made as to how this will affect Stone's reactions and general demeanour. Associated feelings and actions are all tied closely to the core emotion. In all dealings with both friends and enemies alike, Stone will remain Calm, this may well be taken as arrogance, superiority, aloofness, or being uncaring, it will be up to Stone to make her feelings and emotions known, primarily using the associated emotions. In combat, Stone will (try to) be cool, calculating, considered, with little thought for rash action. This could show itself in an unwillingness to rush in, or maybe a worried and unsure state if forced in to areas where she is required to act without thinking.

The base emotion must also be 'scaled', rated from 1-20. 10 must represents the 'normal' status of the emotion, with negative feelings of this emotion driving the factor down (i.e. towards 1) and positive feelings of the emotion driving the factor up (towards 20). It is recommended that a D20 is used to keep track of the scale both, by the GM and the player. Alternatively,

the emotional state can be 'tracked' only by the GM; who increases or decreases the track according to the Players projection of his character and the environmental modifiers imposed by individual situations. The Player would only be aware of the track when they used their Ebb Ability, and maybe not even then as the GM may simply ask them to role to Formulate and let them know if they succeed or fail.

When an Ebon wishes to use any Ebb Ability, they must 'Formulate' using their emotion. They do this by using their 'Formulae' as their emotional rank (skill), adding or subtracting modifiers as indicated by the emotional track. If the track is at 14, +4 to Formulate roll, if track is at 6, -4 to Formulate roll. The GM may wish to impose other modifiers to the Formulate roll, depending upon circumstance. These can range from support from the Ebon's squad (encouragement, both physical and emotional), to negatives from wounds and directly conflicting emotional stimulus as a consequence of the Ebb Ability (i.e. an Ebon with 'Compassion' as their core emotion, wishing to use Blast against an 'inferior' target).

Example: Stone has been involved with some very tense negotiations with a group of gangers in a Downtown market, she has kept her head at all times, and made some skill rolls in both Interview and Persuade, the situation has gone well. The GM moves the track to 12 to reflect this. Stone is feeling very calm, cool and collected, very centred and focused. As the squad moves away from the market they are ambushed by a squad of DN conscripts lead by an Insurgency Agent. Stone's squad scatter, looking for cover, trying to draw weapons and acquire targets. Stone states that she rises above the chaos, remaining calm, focusing on gathering her Ebb abilities. Stone stays standing, attracting some fire from the DN squad. The GM, who is feeling cruel, asks Stone to make a COOL roll, with a modifier of +2 (emotional track being at 12), against a Fear rating of 10 (being targeted by a DN ambush with no cover or support). Stone makes the roll. In the next phase she takes some small arms fire, which her DeathSuit easily turns aside. As she Formulates a 'Blast - Bomb', the GM allows her the +2 modifier from the emotion track, and awards a further +1 due to the fact that her DeathSuit is obviously up to protecting her against the small arms fire. If the Blast misses, or the DN Insurgency Agent turns some heavier ordnance on Stone, then the GM may start adding negative modifiers, as it will become harder for Stone to remain calm and collected. However, if the Players plays it out, remaining smooth, cool and calm, taking whatever is

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thrown at her, then the GM will take this in to account and leave the negative modifiers off.

It will obviously take some extra work from both the GM and Player to make the use of a single defining emotional characteristic work. The use of a single emotion must not be used as a limiting factor, but rather as a base from which to create, allowing the Player to use their expression of emotion as a measure of their character.

E b b A b i l i t i e s T i e d T o E m o t i o n a l S t a t e s

Using the basis that a single emotional state can define an Ebon, this second approach assumes that a single emotional state can underlie each of the abilities, differing from ability to ability.

Rather than 'tracking' each ability's associated emotion, the GM and the Ebon must take in to account the emotional state of the Ebon at the time they use the ability.

The associated emotional states should either be chosen by the Player or imposed by the GM. Listed below are some suggestions you may want to use;

Blast: Force Ebb Kinetic – Anger. Blue Thermal: Glacial Ebb – Calm / Cool. Communication: Voice of the Ebb – Friendship / Detect: Ebb Awareness – Curiosity / Enhancement: Augmentation – Introspection / Healing: Art of Healing and Purification – Compassion Illumination: Ebb Illumination – Optimism / Curiosity Protect: Ebon Guard – Fear / Self Preservation Reality Folding: Ebb Manipulation – Meditative Red Thermal: Inferno Ebb – Rage Senses: Sense Perception – Empathy / Sympathy Telekinesis: Force Focus – Determination Gore Cannon: Celrydreahead – No emotion associated, perhaps Determination / Single Minded / Superiority / Arrogance

It should be possible for an Ebon to associate the same emotion with two closely related abilities, but no more than two can be grouped together. Obvious pairings are Blast and Red Thermal, Communication and Sense. GM's should encourage a different base for each ability.

Once the Ebon has associated emotional conditions with each ability, they must then list the opposite of each emotion, as felt by them. This allows the Ebon and the GM to weigh each situation up as it occurs, i.e. if the Ebon identifies the opposite of Anger as 'Friendly/Relaxed', the GM would impose penalties where the Ebon wanted to use Blast when they were

extremely relaxed. These emotional states must be used as guides for play by the Ebon and as loose guidelines by the GM. If either becomes too rigid in their interpretation, then the game will suffer as the Ebon becomes a sort of 'automaton' 'Method Actor', switching from emotional states in an unrealistic way.

Now the Ebon has their associated Emotions sorted out, they must list them in an order of priority, reflecting the emotions they can most easily access at the top, and those least often felt at the bottom. This gives the Ebon a shape to their character, and offers guidelines for play, allowing the GM to judge consistency and to more accurately determine modifiers for any Formulation the Ebon undertakes. The GM will make the Ebon 'Formulate' (roll their CONC as a skill) any time they feel the Ebon is outside the required emotional state. The modifier will be the number of 'ranks' apart the two emotional states are on the Ebon's priority list.

U s i n g a ' G r o u p ' o f E m o t i o n s a s ' D e f i n i n g C h a r a c t e r i s t i c s '

The Ebon may choose to use a group of emotions as the 'core' for their character, usually choosing the strongest (most highly prioritised) compatible emotions from those defining their access to the Ebb Abilities. If used as a base for character actions, and role played strongly, the GM should allow the grouping to count as one 'rank' for purposes of Formulating.

Example: Wake, and Ebon I&I Op, has chosen the following emotional bases for their abilities; Blast – Anger, Blue Thermal – Calm, Communication – Friendship, Detect: – Curiosity, Enhancement – Introspection, Healing: – Compassion, Illumination – Optimism, Protect – Fear, Reality Folding – Meditative, Red Thermal – Rage, Senses – Empathy, Telekinesis – Determination. The emotions are prioritised as follows; Curiosity, Optimism, Compassion, Empathy, Determination, Fear, Introspection, Calm, Friendship, Meditative, Anger, Rage. The first five emotions are played as the core of the character, and the player makes sure Wake acts accordingly at all times. The GM is impressed with Wakes' consistent character and rules that the first five are 'core' emotions, counting as being no more than 1 Rank away from each other. As a 'group', they also count as 1 Rank, so Rage is as far a way from determination as it is from Curiosity. Wake is involved in questioning a Feral Ebon about a Glyph Card that the Feral has been caught with. The squad are attacked by an ambush; a group of Feral's have snuck up on them. Wake is heav-

IN TO THE LIGHT

ily involved in his task, his Curiosity is to the fore, his immediate reaction to the ambush is one of Anger, at having his investigation interrupted. The GM allows Wake to use a Blast without penalty (as long as the transition from Curiosity to Anger is role played). Once the attacking Ferals have been beaten off, Wake returns to the questioning. He wants to use a Thought Plant to get more information, the GM rules that Wake is still too Angry to make the switch easily, so he makes the Ebon Formulate with a -6 Modifier (difference in 'ranks' between Anger and Friendship). Once Wake has calmed himself, the GM will allow him to return to his normal self....

Self Control

There may be times when a GM and a Player may disagree over the ease with which an Ebon may move from one emotional state to another. In these instances role playing is of paramount importance. The GM may want to impose some limits, and this is where Self Control may come in. A GM may find it unreasonable to let an Ebon move from emotional extremes too easily, especially from the more violent / reactive emotional states to the calmer, more controlled states. The Ebon can generate a 'Self Control' Stat., which can be used as a 'skill', to be rolled to successfully regain composure. Self Control is equal to CONC plus DIA, with Ego used as a negative modifier. Example; Wake has CONC 10 and DIA 10, his Formulae is four, so his Ego is 17, so his Self Control is; $10+10-17=3$. If he wants to immediately move from Rage to Compassion, to heal someone in the heat of battle, he needs to make a Self Control 'skill' roll of 3, if the person Wake is trying to Heal is someone particularly close (or innocent), the GM may give Wake a positive modifier.

It can be seen that Self Control grows drastically with the increase in Formulae. Ebons with a high Formulae tend to use 'triggers' for emotional states; strong memories that evoke almost instantly the required emotion. This requires the Ebon to lose themselves in the transition, giving them little chance to do anything for the time required to transplant one emotion with another. GM's should allow the Ebon a number of phases equal to their Ego to force a change of extreme emotions.

Gore Cannon Generation Additional Rules

STR 20, DEX 15, DIA 10, CONC 8, PHYS 18, KNOW 9, HITS 35*.

*HITS can be increased by one per two Flux points spent in pre-cognitive healing, up to a maximum of 50 Flux (+25 Hits).

Weapons

Psycho Claw; DMG 16, PEN 12, AD 5. Rupture Fangs; DMG 12, PEN 14, AD 4.

Both Psycho Claws and Rupture Fangs require the Gore Cannon to expend two Flux per turn they are in use. The Claws and Fangs 'oscillate' between the real, 'corporal' world and the transient realm of Ebb Walk, allowing for massive damage and penetration through matter disruption.

Storage

Maximum Flux storage may be increased to 120, at a cost of 90 Flux to the Necanthrope. At this level, the Gore Cannon will always try to 'leech' and 'bleed' Flux, cycling through flux in an effort to prevent itself from shattering with Flux throughput. The controlling Necanthrope will have their personal Flux vary by +/- 10% per hour as the Gore Cannon alternately bleeds and leeches Flux.

Armoured Hide

Gore Cannons move their P.V. up to a maximum of 30 per 3 Flux spent, it's Hide has an ID equal to it's Hits, if this reaches zero; it is dead. The Gore Cannon can regenerate it's Hide using Flux, at a cost of 4 Flux per ID.

RANK 20: PsychoVenom

This skill costs the Gore Cannon (can only be powered by Flux within the Gore Cannon) 30 Flux. The PsychoVenom attacks the victim's mind and soul, with no save possible by the victim. The Venom has a PEN equal to the Gore Cannons STR. PsychoVenom attacks victims already existing fears and phobias. For each 5 Flux spent by the Necanthrope (once the PsychoVenom has hit), one rank can be added to a fear or phobia of the victims, chosen by the Necanthrope. PsychoVenom is 'fired' from the Gore Cannon using its DEX as the governing 'skill'. If the Venom penetrates, it will affect the first sentient being it comes in to contact with

The World of Progress is a terrible place to live,
especially for the Ebb-user. The dangers and terrors
are limitless for the open-minded. In order to survive,
you must understand that everyone, without exception,
is waiting to abuse, violate and exploit you.
The only way to survive in such a world is to truly
understand yourself and your limitations.

Here is your chance.