



DARK HERESY™

ENEMIES WITHOUT™

THE ORDO XENOS
OF THE ASKELLON SECTOR

WARHAMMER®
40,000
ROLEPLAY



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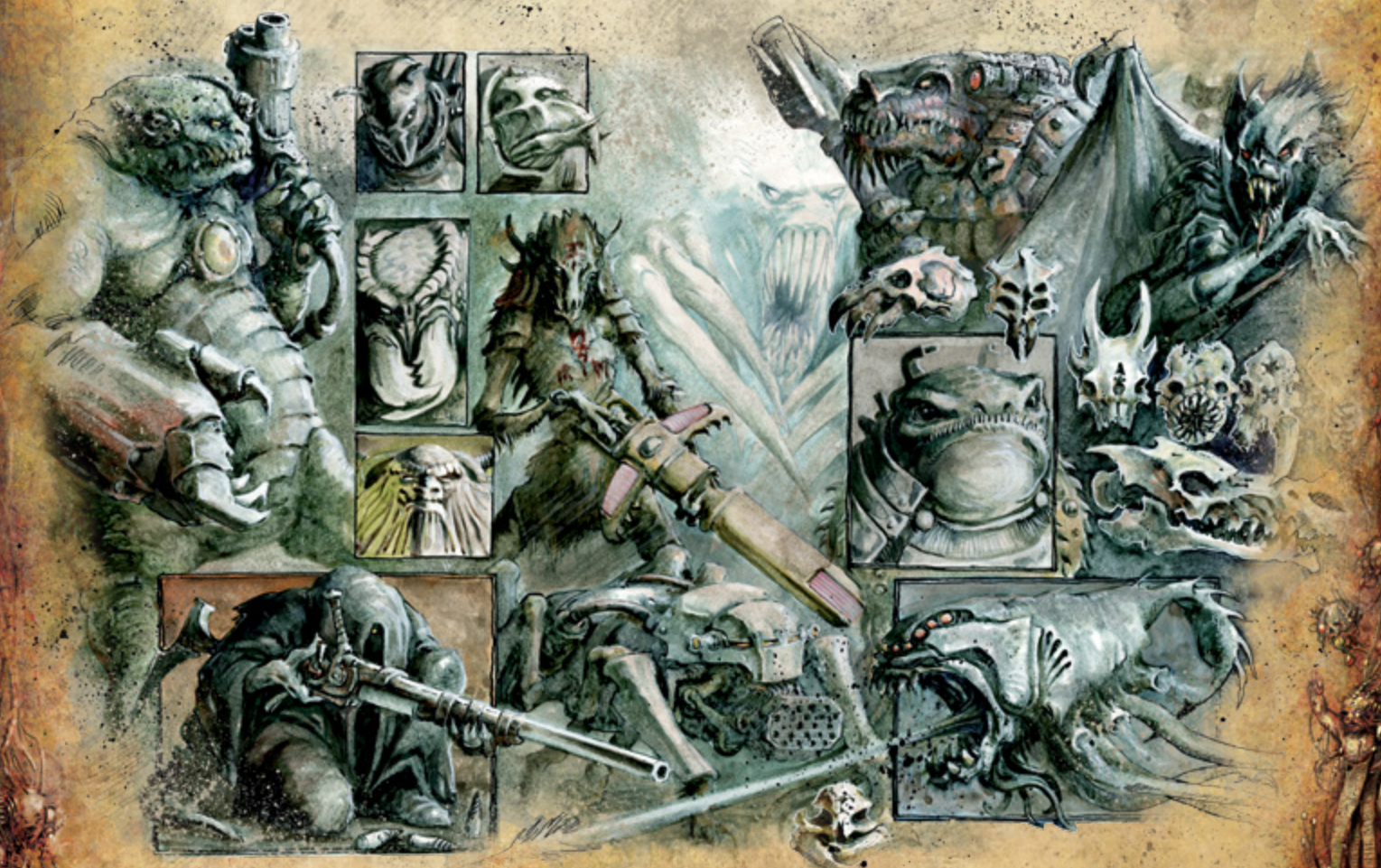
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THERE CAN BE NO MERCY AMONG THE STARS. ONLY AN ETERNITY OF WAR.



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They were gathered in an old Cult Mechanicus temple, where the faithful had once kneeled in binaric worship of the Ommissiah. Unlike most of the surroundings, it was largely intact, with a cogged dais surrounded by wide concentric pews. Not much else remained of the settlement, forgotten like the world itself after the evacuation. Rubble littered the surface now, following decades of unending, unexplained tectonics that tore apart most of the crust and lead to the planet's quarantined status. There was only a smattering of orbital beacons to broadcast warnings, serving only to help those below conduct illicit business without unwanted attention. Not that business was going smoothly.

"This is becoming a waste of my time." The large man's words were strong, muffled by his smooth obsidian mask but still loud enough to cut through the atonal notes drifting through the temple. He gestured at the assorted xenotech laying on the dais, ensuring the thick slabs of alien synth-tissue running along his sleeveless arms were clearly visible. "Common trinkets, all of them. Not worth the Edge Syndicate's interest."

The two individuals facing him shifted in their thick coveralls, blue marks on their wrists showing their Cerulean Pact affiliation. Their masks were dark shells worn over their heads, which did little to hide their nervousness. "Of course, Trader Arlz," the first said. "Merely to whet the appetite. We proffer true wonders now."

"And keep that one in my sight." Arlz pointed to a figure hunched several pews away behind the pair. "She's not Faceless."

"She is harmless," the Pacter replied. "A survivor we found during our excavations, shattered in mind. M'olles helps tend the machines, with no thoughts other than for that and her songs."

The target of their conversation did not look up, concentrating on her battered armonica. She continued coaxing wavering tones with leathery fingers, the spinning Desoleum glass glowing softly in the dimness surrounding her. Handcrafted brass articulations rotated a variety of lenses into the machines filling her empty eye sockets, moving in time with the plaintive tune.

The other Pacter reached down—slowly—for a bundle of rough fabrics, placing it on the remaining empty space on the dais. A gloved hand pulled away the material to reveal the collection of metallic objects within. Each glowed with pulsing lines of emerald, around shapes that defied clear purpose. The armonica's trembling melody grew more discordant throughout the temple, as if to reflect the inhuman nature of the items on display.

Arlz lifted up one of the artefacts, a tapered disc that created reflections of green runic patterns on his mask. "Yes, this is exactly why I came," he said. "Nicely done, M'olles."

The Pacters whirled to face a pair of laspistols. "Our Inquisitor wishes words with you," M'olles calmly stated. The armonica continued playing behind her, a brasswork device mimicking her fingers. Arlz tore out metal batons concealed in the slabs of false tissue along his arms, and slammed the backs of the traders' heads.

"I got your cue. So what are these?" Arlz asked, stripping the Pacters of their weapons. Unmasked, his dark face was smooth and marred only by a faded electoo of the Luftius fleet over one eye.

"Anathema relics, predating our species. Strixin had me investigate after his beacon-leech detected a landing. These two found them in a vault brought to the surface in a recent upheaval." Her lenses spun like buzzing insects as she examined another of the glowing devices. "He is concerned items like these are becoming less rare and more dangerous. I share his worry, but the chance to study them and what else might be buried here is quite...exciting."

She made to bind their stirring captives, but stopped. The music had slowed, the last notes fading to stillness like flies in sap.

"M'olles." Arlz's voice was soft but insistent. "Look." A garish, angular figure had emerged from the darkness at the far walls of the temple, drawing an elegant blade writhing with energy. It wore a smiling ivory mask, but its mocking gaze held no warmth.

Shards of colours danced around the creature as it silently moved closer, spectral fragments melding and then refracting into bizarrely hued patterns. Arlz's eyes began to water from the alien optics, but he quickly drew his own power sword and snapped off a fast autopistol shot. M'olles dove behind the dais, firing a wild lasbolt while pulling the glowing xenos devices down with her.

The creature easily avoided their attacks and made a twisting leap, punching one of the Pacters with a spike extending from its fist before alighting on a far pew. Here it paused, a smear of colours, as the trader screamed out blood and then grew still.

Arlz glanced at the remaining Pacter and tossed over his other sword. "Die on your feet at least!" he shouted. "The laughing ones don't take prisoners!" The Pacter grabbed the blade out of the air and executed a fine parry against what would have been a decapitating strike. The battle then really commenced.

They fought well together against the alien, though its sword still drew more blood than theirs. The figure's sleek form was a kaleidoscopic tangle of lights, coalescing together in moments of blurred pigments before bursting apart as it attacked. It was impossible to focus on it, ensuring a constant pressure that kept them on the defensive. The only constant was the mocking grin.

It finally drove them apart and was gracefully lunging at Arlz's chestplate for the kill, when there was harsh, tearing sound and a spray of jade energy. The creature collapsed in mid-leap, half its body a crumbling ruin of ruptured tissue and torn bone.

"Ah, so that is what that does." M'olles held one of the relics, viridescent light still dripping from a conical protrusion on one side. "It seems others are also interested in what was uncovered here," she said, stroking the xenos device. "Such wonderful toys."

"Lucky shot," Arlz muttered. He turned and walked towards the Pacter. "So, now what do we do with you?"

"Down!" Arlz dropped at the Pacter's cry. The trader's sword flew through the air and into the alien rising behind him, its spiked fist ready to attack. The creature toppled backwards, the grinning mask impaled on the long metal and leaking crimson tears.

Arlz looked thoughtfully at the Pacter, then at M'olles. "That was good. Kept level, and fought well to boot. Might even have some good connections. What do you think Strixin would say?"

"I vouch for her," M'olles replied. "I worked with Rhia for these months, and she is worthy despite her current...vocation. I was far worse, you recall." She looked at the Pacter, and pointed at the alien corpse. "This is the true fight. There are only two sides—living or dead. We must be xenosfuge, or be extinct. Your choice."

"Well then," Arlz smoothly continued to the Pacter, "are you interested in something even more dangerous than just dealing in utterly proscribed and deadly alien artefacts?"

Rhia slowly pulled off her helmet, and ran a hand through tangled ashen hair. "Or...?" she said, staring at them both with a steady gaze. "I don't have any real choice here, do I."

Arlz laughed and took a pull from a flask of aralesque. "The Emperor always gives a choice. Just rarely a good one. You'll get used to that if Strixin takes you on as an Acolyte." He regathered the other xenos relics into their bundle. "Let's get to work."

INTRODUCTION

“There is no end to the abomination of the alien. Do not allow any guise of sentience to stay your hand—there can be no hesitation when the survival of humanity as a species is at stake.”

—Inquisitor Kartize, Ordo Xenos

One of the first, terrible truths humans discovered when they ventured beyond Terra and into the stars is that they were not alone. Wherever Mankind went, it encountered the alien. Some civilisations were long dead, having fallen to self-destructive hubris, natural disasters, internecine wars, or external predations. Others, though, were very much alive, and myths from the Dark Age of Technology speak of the terrifying first encounters with alien races. As humanity resurged into the galaxy in the 30th Millennium, the Emperor led His armies across the galaxy to reconquer the stars against the alien—perhaps the first and greatest danger to the nascent Imperium. Endless blood and ichor were shed in eradicating species after species.

Not all aliens could be eliminated, however, and many continue to threaten Mankind over the millennia. The brutal Orks, enigmatic Eldar, and others have resisted the Emperor’s decree that humanity must rule the stars. New alien races are discovered each day as well, several of which have become new, worrisome threats to the Imperium. The relics and arcane devices of long-extinct species can also still contaminate humanity. Even worse, some foolishly dare to employ alien services or use inhuman technology, despite the dangers of giving aid to the Imperium’s sworn foes.

It is a hostile galaxy in which Mankind faces inhuman enemies from all sides; in the Askellon Sector itself, the plague of the alien is ever-present despite countless Wars of Purgation. It falls to the Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos and their Acolytes to stand against these enemies without, a threat that is perhaps the clearest danger to humanity and its dominance over the galaxy. Failure would mean consigning Mankind to become yet another species fallen and forgotten.

ENEMIES WITHOUT explores these alien threats to Mankind within the Askellon Sector, and is divided into three chapters:

CHAPTER I: XENOS

Aliens have menaced Askellon with enslavement and conquest from the time of its first troubled settlements. This chapter delves into the histories of the aliens lurking within the sector and the actions of the Ordo Xenos in combatting their presence, as well as the often secretive nature of Inquisitors of this faction and the Acolytes chosen to serve them.

CHAPTER II: TO SCORN THE ALIEN

In this chapter, players gain new options to craft Acolytes ready to face the alien threat, along with potent new weapons, vehicles, and talents. Acolytes also learn of the horrid xenos relics of Askellon, and find new rules for Explications to better research and gain power against these threats. For those Acolytes of Radical leanings, new assets including alien mercenaries are available to aid in defending Mankind.

CHAPTER III: THE PROMISE OF XENOCIDE

The book concludes with Askellian worlds imperilled by the alien, with rules for using each as a new Acolyte home world. It also includes an examination of the alien masters of the webway: the Eldar. Game Masters gain investigation templates to craft new adventures involving each world and alien race, plus guidance for running alien NPCs and Ordo Xenos themed adventures, developing Warp and space travel events, and generating new alien threats.



CHAPTER I: XENOS

The Imperium rules over a dominion spanning millions of worlds. This claim is not without contention, for there are innumerable other species seeking its destruction and the enslavement or eradication of humanity. Some alien races might only wish to peaceably co-exist with Mankind, or merely occupy their handful of worlds. For the Imperium, there can be no peace with the alien. War is constant across its borders and within its systems against inhuman raiders and xenos conquerers. For thousands of years, though, it has survived and only become more firmly enthroned in its galactic supremacy.

Despite its self-proclaimed manifested destiny to rule over the galaxy, humanity has seen horrifying glimmers that it is perhaps only a lesser player on the galactic stage. Scholars of forbidden histories and those who dare learn of xenos lore have found evidence of civilisations that could have crushed the Imperium with a thought, and wars in the heavens so titanic that the fabled Great Heresy was but a minor skirmish in comparison. Of many such races there are only shattered ruins, burnt out stars, and planetary debris to indicate they existed, with some galactic scars so vast that they have always been assumed to be disasters of unknown but natural origin. Only a very few know better, and have the strength of will to understand the full nature of the alien threat and the power to fight to see that humanity does not join the list of races consigned to extinction. They are the Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos.

Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos have taken on the duty of protecting Mankind from the threats posed by the enemy without. This can include alien races actively warring against the Imperium and those attempting to subvert and destroy it through less overt means. This threat also includes the dangers from races long dead, or thought extinct—for even normal concepts such as death may not hold meaning when dealing with inhuman physiologies and mentalities. These Inquisitors know a glowing bauble unearthed from an alien tomb, a mere trinket that a hive noble might display to his peers in social gatherings, might be as deadly a menace as an invasion of Ork marauders. There is no end to the threat that the alien can pose, even from those who have been extinct for longer than man has walked upright.

This chapter examines the Ordo Xenos and its activities within the Askellon Sector, as well as legends and myths of the sector concerning the Ordo Xenos and its agents. It illuminates what it means to be a member of the Ordo Xenos, the beliefs and actions of such Inquisitors, and thus how those Inquisitors (both Puritan and Radical) might direct their Acolytes to operate. It also delves deeper into events related to the xenos threat in Askellon, including the occluded origins of the Vaxi Atrocity and several alien-tinged aftermath incidents, the forbidden—yet thriving—Faceless Trade in illicit xenos items, and the many alien menaces within Askellon that threaten its already-tenuous continued existence.

ENEMIES WITHOUT NUMBER

"If you can confront the xenos, look upon the xenos, even think upon the xenos, without revulsion, then you are as damned as they."

—Inquisitor Loffengar, Ordo Xenos

The alien is everywhere. In those reaches of the galaxy where humanity has yet to push its frontiers, the alien lurks in wait to destroy it. Where the Imperium has torn worlds from the grip of the alien and made them its own, its enemies move to avenge themselves and take those planets back. Even in the Imperium's heartlands, the subtle touch of inhuman infiltrators can end lives and doom worlds that thought they were safe beneath the Emperor's Light.

To some, this has been a secret whose revelation comes as a terrible shock. Some have guessed it for themselves, and some have been taught it by bitter, scarring experience. It is a truth that Imperial propagandists bury under an avalanche of comforting misinformation. The sermons, lesson-books, sanctioned pict-shows, and carefully planted street-corner tales create a picture of a galaxy under unshakeable Imperial control, quaking from the thunderous tread of a human race in the final stages of its march to divinely-ordained domination. Out beyond the Imperium's borders are tiny pockets of misshapen and contemptible things barely worth dignifying with the word "enemy," still in existence only through the blind good fortune of being low on the Imperium's list of upstart vermin to be exterminated.

But the truth is that final human dominion is not the glorious historical inevitability that Imperial mythmakers peddle. The path to dominance runs two ways. The place the Emperor carved for His people erodes a little every day, and must be cut anew into a contested galaxy full of predatory foes.

Nor is the threat of the alien confined to unmapped reaches of Wilderness Space, safely beyond the Imperium's fortified borders or buffer-zone of hardscrabble frontier colonies. The Imperium is not a monolith but a patchwork, frayed and moth-eaten, riddled with gaps and holes. Every pocket of space that has fallen out of contact after the last Warp storm, every backwater world mapped a millennium ago and then allowed to lapse into *carta obscura* by an Adeptus Administratum too busy to remember its existence, and every stubborn holdout where the Imperial advance snagged and failed to take hold shelter xenos enclaves deep within Imperial borders, corruptions that must be investigated and extirpated.

The simple existence of such species is blight enough on the galaxy; that aliens such as the Ork, Eldar, or Tyranid actually make war with humanity is an unconscionable insult. But as grand as the spectacle is of an Imperial crusade trampling a xenos infestation into oblivion, the alien is an enemy which often defies a straight military response. The alien threat vector can be every bit as subtle and insidious as the seeping corruption of the Warp or the invisible gnawing of heretical thought.

Such threats are everywhere. Far to the galactic South, upstart alien empires send their ambassadors and traders to infiltrate the permeable borders of the Imperium, weakening the resolve of loyal citizens with soft words, decadent ideas, and beguiling technologies. Foul races flower along the Imperium's most vital

BRONISLAW CZEVAK

Czevak has become arguably the Imperium's foremost expert on the Eldar, culminating a long lifetime's study with an extended period living aboard a craftworld and becoming one of a handful of humans admitted to the Black Library by the enigmatic Harlequins. That achievement made him a target of the Chaos sorcerer Ahriman, who captured the ageing Inquisitor to wring the Library's location from him. Czevak's fate is not known for sure, but tales are surfacing of a strangely rejuvenated Czevak reappearing to his former Acolytes from the Eldar webway, which he can somehow navigate and from which he continues his machinations against Chaos and Eldar both.

trade routes, slipping their contagions into the fleets that provide each sector's lifeblood, corrupting whole worlds as surely as their biology corrupts the beauty of the human form. Other alien, more insidious migrations flit through inhabited systems like a swarm of bad dreams, leaving insanity in their wake.

The threat need not even be so active. Even the remnant of an alien presence can bring disaster. A tiny animal smuggled into human domains as a curiosity for a noble's menagerie could bring plagues, contamination, or ecosystem-wrecking infestations. What a salvager takes for a harmless lamp could be a Necron transdimensional portal node, awaiting a final keystroke before plunging a world into unfathomable terrors.

The xenos threat is ever-present, protean, and unrelenting. The duty of the Ordo Xenos is to be all of those things in return.



STANDING WATCH AGAINST THE DARK

“To wrest human souls from the grip of the Daemon; to defeat the temptation within our own hearts and minds... There is a grace and a grandeur to the work of the Malleus and Hereticus. But the Ordo Xenos? It has no more gravitas than hacking away weeds in one’s garden.”

“By all means pursue your grace, grandeur, and gravitas then, sir. And in your prayers tonight, ask that your temptation to those things be lifted from your weak and sinning mind, so that you might feel some humility in the presence of those who ensure your garden remains safe to parade all your fine qualities in.”

—Apocryphal exchange between Inquisitors Byphon and Merrinus

The foes of the Ordo Xenos come in all the bewildering variety that a galactic diversity of ecosystems can provide, from strange artefacts and bestial infestations to entire civilisations of inhuman sophistication and malevolence. To battle them, an Ordo Xenos Inquisitor must command an equally bewildering array of lore, skills, and disciplines. He must be ready to put seemingly unconnected fields of knowledge to use and improvise weapons and defences against creatures whose technology or biology are utterly alien to the last enemy he faced, or indeed to anything the Imperium has encountered before. The particular nature of its foes and this work has led the Ordo Xenos to evolve in distinctive ways.

The unbreakable will of a Daemonhunter makes no difference to an enemy that is biological, not supernatural, while the unshakable faith of a Witch Hunter cannot cower an alien. Even the cultural and political power of the Ordos might be of little use in some far-flung world of inhuman monsters. To an Ordo Malleus Inquisitor, defeating his enemy is a profound trial of personal willpower; to an Ordo Hereticus Inquisitor, it is an exercise in moral righteousness and faith. To an Ordo Xenos Inquisitor, it can often be an effort in biology, logistics, and tactics, however esoterically they might have to be applied. His armoury is his skills, wits, and knowledge more than simply his iron fortitude.

THE WORK OF THE ORDO XENOS

“To slay is to pray’, they tell us. So check your ammo and draw your blades, my friends, because these inhuman scum are about to help us glorify Him-on-Earth. First volley, FIRE!”

—Acolyte Benguarre Kess, during the Perikal Scouring

The word Inquisitor tends to evoke two images in the popular imagination of the Imperium’s citizenry. There is the grand and terrifying incarnation of the Emperor’s merciless authority, enthroned above a column of Acolytes and soldiers while the flammers roar and the execution pyres blaze. There is also the silent, all-seeing eye in the shadows, whose gaze sees every wrong and marks sinners for punishment. Like his colleagues, every Ordo Xenos Inquisitor must be prepared to work as covertly or overtly as his mission requires.

LEADING IN THE LIGHT

The Imperium’s favoured way to greet a xenos species is at the point of a gun, and Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos often find themselves at the spearhead of the mighty Imperial military machine, in a war they instigated or one whose balance their skills are helping to tip. Any Imperial army on an alien front might find at least one Ordo Xenos Inquisitor attached to its command; where the war is against an unusual or unfamiliar species it could even be an entire conclave, with definite ideas about military priorities and objectives as well as useful knowledge and advice.

Within Imperial borders, the Ordo Xenos takes command of the constant purges and cleansings of alien enemies infiltrating and infesting the body of the Imperium. One of the most infamous of such foes are the Genestealers, who bring a contamination that passes down through generations and endangers the populations of worlds. Such infestations are such a deadly threat because these aliens work actively and cunningly to hide it, spread it, and defend it. Once such a contamination has a foothold, the Ordo Xenos is sure to be at the head of the Imperium’s response, marshalling and arming the untainted forces of the planet and purging the threat with as much ferocity as any of their Ordo Hereticus comrades.

Less sophisticated foes can be no less pernicious if not met with force of arms. The Ordo Xenos may find itself battling swarming predators that run wild over an Imperial world unless they are stamped out, plagues or parasites carried back from frontier settlements into populous centres unprepared to handle them, or seemingly non-sentient beasts taken as trophies or livestock that are far more than they appear.

Confrontations such as these are reminders that the calling of the Inquisition requires its followers to be all things, taking on a martial role as well as carrying out investigation and judgement. While not every Inquisitor has the martial prowess to stand on the front line when battle is joined, every Inquisitor must ensure that he and his Acolytes can protect themselves when inevitably the battle comes to them.

The ultimate expression of the Ordo Xenos’ martial work comes not from its Inquisitors but in the post-human form of the Deathwatch, the secret Chapter drawn from across the ranks of the Adeptus Astartes. The Deathwatch’s oaths of founding bind it specifically to the battle against the alien, and its warriors are some of the deadliest specialists the human race is able to field. They come to the Deathwatch skilled and hardened from experience in their own Chapter, and their Kill-teams combine that expertise with potent and specialised weaponry and marry it to the combined knowledge of the Inquisition.

The insistence of ambitious Inquisitors notwithstanding, the Deathwatch are allies of the Inquisition rather than its servants. They have their own orders and oaths to fulfil, their own fortresses to garrison while watching for potential incursions, and their own masters to answer to. But they are the Ordo Xenos’ last sanction before Exterminatus itself, the most potent military weapon that its Inquisitors can wield. The sombre black livery of the Deathwatch by an Inquisitor’s side is a chilling sign of the magnitude of the threat that has arisen, and of what is at stake when battle is joined.



MOVING IN THE SHADOWS

It is a mournful fact that not all adversaries in the battle against the alien are aliens themselves. Misguided or actively treacherous humans provide plenty of work for the Ordo: whether acting from ignorance, delusion, or malice, their deeds must be brought to light and cut down.

The simplest misstep to take is the handling of xenos artefacts, whether referred to as “Faceless Trading,” “the Void Market,” or any other nickname that tries to sweeten the reality. Whether it is a loyal trooper ripping an odd-shaped souvenir from an enemy corpse, a scholar bringing home a carving from some long-dead city, or a smuggler sneaking a crate of incomprehensible alien devices back from the frontier to sell to rich collectors, one of the banes of the Ordo Xenos’s work is the endless ignorant masses who are drawn to, rather than repulsed by, the works of inhuman hands. Worse still, there is no reliable way to know which of these artefacts is a harmless trinket and which can doom a world by its mere presence.

Such activity is mostly banal and easily policed, the points of vulnerability easily identified. The Ordo Xenos keeps watch over shipping routes and colony stations, and has eyes in the Departamento Munitorum, the Chartist Fleets, and the various academic, trading, or surveying guilds whose activities might expose them to temptation. Many Ordo Xenos Inquisitors retain networks of spies, informants, and data-thieves to ensure they receive word of anything suspicious, while others prefer to descend upon their suspects for very public sweeps, audits, and trials, providing forcible reminders of the consequences of over-familiarity with the alien.

More difficult and dangerous are those who fully understand their crime and its consequences, and actively work to hide it. Traders who pander to misguided appetites for alien artefacts or specimens acquire immense profits. Such profits can be both in simple wealth and in influence and favours from those they supply, as these often noble personages dare not allow their illicit transactions to come to light.

Rooting out and destroying such perverted enterprises is one of the most demanding and dangerous tasks of the Ordo Xenos. Simply grasping one thread of the operation can take months or years of work by dedicated undercover Acolytes and other agents who endanger their lives and take mortal risks as they impersonate wealthy buyers or unscrupulous collaborators. Once the extent of the operation is known, Inquisitors and their Acolytes can move with lightning speed to end their investigation, using their own ruthless operatives and often drawing on the sector’s battlefleet and the Adeptus Arbitres to ensure that none of their targets escape. Once the network has been purged, its treacherous agents either dead or yielding up their secrets to the Inquisition’s interrogators, the restless eye of the Ordo Xenos moves on.

Rarer, but more troubling to the right-thinking servants of the Ordo Xenos, are humans who directly traffic with aliens themselves. These are far further between, and usually easier to identify. There are relatively few places in the Imperium where sentient aliens directly interact with humans outside of battlefields in the first place, and the crudity of cross-species communication means that in most cases the terms of the transaction will be base and obvious so that there is no room for misunderstanding. The most common trade is some form of Imperial goods—raw materials, foodstuffs, fuel, or even weapons—bartered for services.

Some overconfident planetary lords think they can enlist a Kroot hunting pack or Eldar Ranger to spy or skirmish for them, or even a mob of Ork Freebooterz to make war for them. Others think they can get away with bringing in xenos muscle for mines or farms, particularly aliens whose biology lets them work harder and longer in punishing environments. Then there are the cowards who think they can spare their part of space from war by placating a nearby alien enclave with trade or tribute, or ship captains who buy off alien corsairs for safe passage. All are answerable to the merciless attention of the Ordo Xenos.

The most troubling of all human wrongdoing in the Ordo Xenos’ remit are xenophile cults and their heretical delusions. Simple material gain is no excuse to seek out alien contact, but it is a reason most Inquisitors can understand. But there is little understanding of what makes Emperor-fearing men and women seize on inhuman fantasy and elevate it above their fellow humans. The Ordo Xenos has stamped out cabals who thought they could follow the shadowy interstellar paths of some alien race on strange pilgrimages to transcendent knowledge, heretical cells that had built their own religions around a fleeting brush with Eldar raiders, and feral tribes who fought for possession of a wrecked Necron head that they believed would return to life when held by the chosen prophet.

INQUISITOR KRYPTMAN

Kryptman has been the Imperium's staunchest defender against the Tyranid Hive Fleets since he discovered the very first accounts of their arrival on Tyran itself and became one of the great heroes of the Tyrannic Wars. Many say the arrival of Hive Fleet Leviathan pushed Kryptman to the point of madness. The tipping point for many of his fellow Inquisitors came when Kryptman attempted to cripple Hive Fleet Leviathan's advance by using repeated Exterminatus orders to scorch away any source of sustenance from the swarm's path, costing scores of worlds and untold billions of Imperial lives. For this he was expelled from the Inquisition and vanished, although rumour says he continues his struggle with the Tyranids outside the Imperium and in secret.

ILLUMINATING THE TRUTH

Detailed research on its foes is one of the most powerful weapons for the Ordo Xenos. These topics might range from knowing how to tweak a certain toxin to be especially deadly to one breed of alien but harmless to humans, to understanding the life-cycle of a xenos beast that might betray its presence in the teeming hive-city it has vanished into, to knowing how to play different tribes of marauding aliens off against one another, or even to something as simple as the weak point in an enemy's anatomy that is especially vulnerable to a bolt shell. All are assets beyond price when human lives are at stake.

It is not unusual or shameful for Ordo Xenos Inquisitors to consider themselves researchers as much as detectives, spies, or combatants. Not only do they make full use of the formidable intelligence-gathering powers all Inquisitors wield, but they often go beyond them. They have sponsored the establishment of research stations dedicated to observation, vivisection, and psychometry of xenos specimens, and expeditions intended specifically to gather samples and data. Whole libraries of biological and xeno-anthropological data have been founded, packed with treatises and field reports, and pored over by adepts and savants looking for new weapons or insights. The ruins of dead civilisations are routinely sealed away from prying eyes so that Inquisitors can strip them of any insights or knowledge that might help them to doom yet more alien civilisations to oblivion in their own turn.

The researches of the Ordo Xenos are by no means an exercise in gentle scholarship, however. Observations about how aliens fight—and how they kill—must be carefully verified if they are to be of use. Weapons intended to kill the alien in turn must be tested and proven before they can be trusted to work in the most dreaded and critical of battles.

On the Radical fringe there are Inquisitors who study the xenos by associating with them, willingly keeping their company, adopting their ways, and even becoming their students. Other Inquisitors would condemn such laxity, insistent that it can only lead to the softening of their determination to war upon the alien, and the intellectual drift into treachery against their own species. Such matters are maddeningly convoluted, and have opened deep schisms between Inquisitors within the Ordo Xenos itself.

PURITANS AND RADICALS


"My old master had a verse in his Book of Hours that said you are not fit for Inquisition until you truly know how to hate. That's half right. The longer I serve, the more I think that we're not fit for Inquisition until we truly know how to hate our fellow Inquisitors."

—Inquisitor Myctosa, Ordo Xenos

"One way, many means" could be said to encapsulate the Inquisition, and one of the many things that sets it apart from the other great organisations of the Imperium is that it allows its members free rein in how they carry out their vocation. Most unusual of all, such freedom is not simply methodological but doctrinal. One of the Inquisition's greatest strengths and deadliest weaknesses is the freedom of Inquisitors to arrive at their own concept of their calling.

This makes the Inquisition a fearsomely adaptable opponent, capable of adopting any tactic or paradigm and flowing toward an enemy's weaknesses like water finding the crack in a dam wall. But that freedom is bestowed upon men and women raised in the stultifying intellectual conformity of Imperial society and often possessing extreme, or at least eccentric, personalities. Peer beneath the millennia of secrecy and mystique, and the Inquisition is a deeply riven and turbulent organisation whose powerful members can turn on each other every bit as eagery and ferociously as they hunt down their putative enemies.





The most common ideological spectrum along which “Puritan” and “Radical” Inquisitors are ranged is that of willingness to use the enemy’s methods and devices against itself. Some Inquisitors might find no issue with employing a weapon customised by the alien Jokaero, while others insist that to fight for Mankind, only those weapons men have crafted should be used. Many might find great amusement in seeing Orks cut open by one of their crude choppas, but sterner minds would only see the beginning of a slide towards tolerance for the alien.

The use of actual living alien agents (or, Throne forbid, allies) is a darker shade of grey. Interrogating a captured alien is uncontroversial, as is manipulating them with ruses or lies designed to expose weaknesses, set them fighting one another, or lead them into traps. Hiring or recruiting a xenos agent, as some Radicals are rumoured to do, is markedly more dubious amongst many Inquisitors, even if it was done with deliberate planning to ensure the alien did not survive the mission. At the far end of the Radical spectrum are those who engage with aliens as equals, the infamous few who admit, even boast, of studying among the Eldar or wandering with Kroot packs. Such individuals must pick their company carefully when they return to their fellow humans, for some of their peers would cut them down in a fury as soon as their deeds were out in the open.

If the furthest outliers of Radicalism presume to treat sentient aliens like equals, engaging with them on non-hostile terms and even forswearing humanity’s unique birthright in favour of coexistence, then the other extreme, the Ordo Xenos’ most diehard Puritans, are those who deny the innocence of any life but that which sprang from Holy Terra. A malicious and sentient enemy of humanity such as an Eldar Reaver? A ravaging interstellar threat like a Tyranid swarm? A dangerous predator like the Catachan Devil? A domestic beast like a grox? A simple crop like the Hydraphur daggerfruit or even the alien grasses of Chogoris or Attila? Abomination. Blight. All of it.

It is easy to dismiss such zealous Puritans as fanatics who dogmatically refuse any dealings in thought or deed with the alien, lest it contaminate their core humanity. But although they mostly admit, with varying degrees of grace, that there are greater dangers out in the dark and the banal uncleanness beneath their feet may not have its turn under the flamer during their lifetimes, when their fanaticism goes unchecked they can be as dangerous as the most xenophilic Radical. The Ordo Xenos does not like to speak of the massacres, terrible famines, or demented extinction attempts carried out by Puritans from its ranks who finally crossed the line into the maddest and most uncompromising extreme of their calling, but it knows that such maniacal excess is not beyond its members, and it must be ever vigilant.

BECOMING AN ACOLYTE

"It's a question I hear often. How can there be so many of them out there, allowed to spread so far and grow so strong? Why did the Emperor allow it? Why doesn't He stop it?" Well, who says He's not stopping it? By whose will is it that you're standing here, now, with a hand ready to take up a weapon? Think!"

—Inquisitor Iaktobal, Ordo Xenos

No one human can fight the darkness alone. It is sinful arrogance to think otherwise. Whether he employs a household staff of armourers, doctors, and librarians, leads a small personal team of elite agents on scrupulously planned espionage missions, or marches through hive cities at the head of thousands-strong processions of servants, every Inquisitor must at some point put his trust in his Acolytes, recruited to guard his back, extend his reach, and expand his pool of skills.

An Inquisitor delving through Imperial society in search of a xenotech smuggler may often have need of the kind of covert agents for which the Inquisition is famous. Deep-cover informants and data-harvesting operations can be supplemented with savants, calculi, and investigators seconded from the world's Adeptus Arbiters garrison. An Inquisitor would not hesitate to plunder that garrison, and the world's standing militias, for troops when soldiers are called for.

Like Inquisitors across the Ordos, those of the Ordo Xenos recruit Acolytes for force of arms. Adeptus Astra Militarum veterans are popular recruits, especially those who have survived campaigns against the particular enemies an Inquisitor expects to be facing. In contrast to the Inquisition's daemonic enemies, xenos species can be effectively fought with experience, and soldiers who have faced a particular foe are likely hardened to its terrors. The deference that military commanders show to an Inquisitor who joins them to fight against the alien often turns to frustrated despair as that Inquisitor departs after the fighting with their unit's most capable and experienced warriors in tow.

Just as Ordo Hereticus Inquisitors must collect Acolytes skilled in navigating the politics and subcultures of human worlds, the Ordo Xenos must recruit agents skilled in surviving alien ones. The Ordo Xenos provides plenty of work for hunters and rangers from feral or frontier worlds, ingrained with the particular resourcefulness that hostile planetary conditions require, and often talented at hunting and bringing down dangerous quarry, skills that an alien-hunting Inquisitor can readily adapt.

The Tech-Priests and others sanctioned adepts from the Adeptus Mechanicus are often highly valued as Acolytes for Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos. These Inquisitors are aware of the need to expand and refine humanity's knowledge of its xenos enemies, and in this the devotees of the Machine God are their natural allies. The Adeptus Mechanicus has always held fiercely to its independence, though, and only brave or foolhardy Inquisitors would test the boundaries of the Machine Cult's power by trying to simply dragoon a Tech-Priest into service. Typically, unless an emergency has thrown them together, such Acolytes must be recruited with diplomacy and more than a little guile. Canny Inquisitors can work to build up lasting alliances with the Cult Mechanicus all across their area of operations, so that they have that organisation's unique skills to draw on at short notice.

EMIL DARKHAMMER

Inquisitor Darkhammer is a Puritan of the dourest Monodominant stripe, a zealot intent on scouring every scrap of alien life from the stars by the bluntest and most brutal methods possible. He has over thirty Exterminatus orders to his name, leading to horrified denunciations of Darkhammer as being more dangerous to humanity than the aliens he fights. Most recently he burned the world of Cavlock to deny a xenotech artefact to his rival Helynna Valeria, an action that finally earned him an Excommunicate Traitoris decree at her hand. Darkhammer pursues his calling undaunted, insisting that destroying the alien vindicates any number of human deaths.



More easily recruitable are often the scribes and scholars of the Imperium's surveying fleets and datavaults, where previously gathered lore concerning the alien might reside. Such Acolytes can bring a wider scope of expertise, often with direct experience across many worlds.

As well as recruiting Acolytes for their physical abilities or particular skill sets, Inquisitors may take on recruits shaped by alien contact in particular ways that meet their particular needs and temperaments. Those Inquisitors who work to end every investigation with an extermination have particular uses for the death world natives, who are accustomed to a daily battle for survival and who have been trained from birth to see any unfamiliar life form as an implacable threat. Some Ordo Xenos Puritans have the habit of recruiting the survivors of alien incursions, for example, sometimes to an almost ghoulish extent of picking through refugee ships or massacre sites for potential Acolytes. Many Inquisitors consider consuming hatred and a drive for revenge to be more than acceptable substitutes for battle prowess or combat instruction. Such hatred is abundant in the Adepta Sororitas, of course, and the Ordo Xenos often takes on individual Sisters as Acolytes for their zealous fervour as well as their superior training.

For those of a more flexible, even Radical bent, recruits from the fringes of Imperial society are often more likely to fit with the Inquisitor's agendas. While Puritans hold strict beliefs on the sanctity of the human form, Radicals are known to recruit mutants whose biological quirks can give them an edge infiltrating or combating alien threats. Rogue Trader crews can also provide skilled, experienced, and resourceful Acolytes, often with knowledge and experience of alien interaction that is very hard to find in more conventional Imperial recruits. For those Inquisitors who wish to employ and reward such experience, it can be well worth the work of drawing such adventurers away from their famously freewheeling and independent-minded masters.

Some Radicals go even further, recruiting confirmed hereteks and xenophiles who have likely dabbled in alien technologies or immersed themselves in xenos languages and cultures, even living within their societies. Such inside experience makes these rogue elements invaluable to Radicals, even as they would earn a death sentence at the hands of more Puritanically-minded Inquisitors.

XENOS IN ASKELLON

"There are no strangers here, only enemies we have not slain yet."

—Inquisitor Sarrow Gorn, the Scourge of Abboth V

The Imperium of Mankind is beset at every quarter by xenos strains that would deny the Emperor's right to dominion over the stars, and this fact is as true in the cursed Askellon Sector as it is anywhere else. The alien is a threat to the very soul of humanity, which the preachers of the Imperial Creed never allow their flocks to grow complacent about. The sermons and teachings of the confessors and saints warn that contact with the non-human is amongst the very worst kinds of blasphemy, and to deliberately seek out and consort with the alien is to invite death or excommunication from the bosom of Mankind and the eternal damnation of the soul.

Despite what the preachers tell the masses, however, contact between humanity and various alien species does in fact occur, and on a far larger scale than most would give credit for. There are Inquisitors in Askellon who would seek out the knowledge of ancient alien civilisations, in particular the Eldar, determined that the Imperium avoid mistakes that have damned entire galactic empires. Rogue Traders are granted specific writ to have truck with alien races, at least so long as they are beyond the borders of the Imperium. Many such men and women consider the Askellon Sector to be such a place, if not in name then in fact, and so openly deal with aliens such as the mercenary Kroot. Many Rogue Traders have also sought out writs of trade to operate within the sector as well, seeking out riches in the many still-unexplored regions between established systems.

HELYNNA VALERIA

Valeria is a Radical Inquisitor through and through, for whom there is no line that cannot be crossed if she judges it necessary to her work. Her lifelong devotion to acquiring xenos lore and technology was to have culminated in the recovery of the ancient device known as the Dimensional Forge from beneath the Imperial world of Cavlock, until her Puritanical enemy Emil Darkhammer subjected the world to Exterminatus to deny her the prize. Valeria has excommunicated and condemned Darkhammer, and now pursues her vendetta against him across the Imperium, her higher calling collapsing into the simple desire for revenge.

There are also some who exist on the very edge of sectors who have always looked not towards distant capitals or even towards the impossibly far away Terra, but whose faces are turned outwards toward the black voids. On frontier worlds and outcast enclaves, those only dimly aware of the rule of Terra and its vassals or who wilfully deny such authority coexist with all manner of minor xenos filth, often simply to survive. To merely know of such alien trading is often to invite death at the hands of the Inquisition, or others. To dare to know even greater details of the many alien interactions within the Imperium is beyond the ken of most humans.

In the Askellon Sector, there are but a handful of known xenos strains active, even as the bones of countless others long passed fester in the ground beneath the Imperium's feet. The masses are kept fearful and paranoid of the very existence of species other than humanity, and in truth the vast majority never have cause or reason to interact with an alien, unless they are called to make war on them. Others are all too aware of their existence and interact with them in a variety of ways, to a myriad of ends. In truth, few in the sector are aware of such things, for while knowledge is power, for many it is a burden, or else a death sentence.



THE PERNICIOUS ELДАР

Of the various strains of xenos active in the Askellon Sector, the Eldar and their various sub-strains are one of the most visible, to those who know where to look, at least. Many reasons have been posited as to why this might be so, with some of the most learned of savants committing their entire careers to further study into the matter. Over the millennia, a range of theories have risen to explain their continued presence and interest in the sector, with some theories being proved wrong or passing out of favour to be replaced with others as evidence shifts. Over recent years, much of the debate at the rarefied level of Inquisitorial circles has revolved around why the Eldar appear to have chosen to remain in a region of space so clearly and drastically afflicted by the Warp when, as a space-faring people, they need not do so. It has been noted again and again that the Eldar are, if anything, becoming ever more active in the region. As the Pandaemonium grows in turbulence, so the Eldar appear to grow more restless, even—so some have claimed—desperate, in their activities. These actions can vary greatly, but it has been noted how the Eldar frequently launch small, stealthy raids against key targets either just before, or just after, an increase in Warp storm activity. Sometimes they are clearly seeking to evacuate some object or some being, or to investigate what effects the Warp incursion might have inflicted on a world or region. Often, however, the Eldar have attacked seemingly at random, often with the apparent aim of dissuading human activity in an area they clearly regard as exclusive to themselves.

There are several different types of Eldar active in Askellian space, perhaps most numerous of which are the forces of Craftworld Miandrothe. The existence of this gigantic, star-going ark is almost entirely unknown in the sector's ranks of humanity, although its presence is suspected by a very small number of Inquisitors, in particular those of the Ordo Xenos. Only a handful of humans are aware of its actual existence, and many innocents have unwittingly gone to the grave to maintain this carefully guarded secret. Others, however, may yet have ascertained by study or observation that the Eldar maintain a strong and decisive presence in a region of space many humans would dearly love to abandon. What such agents intend to do with this information remains a mystery, and for many a deep cause for concern.

Far less predictable even than the mysterious activities of the Craftworld Eldar are those of the Corsairs of the so-called Dusk Vipers clan. These wild-hearted warriors range far and wide across the Askellon Sector and presumably beyond, utilising Warp routes and portals entirely unknown to human Navigators to strike from the least predictable quarter. The activities of these pirates and outcasts vary from outright and wanton raiding for resources to attacks that can only be described as sporting hunts. Those Inquisitors with any real knowledge of Eldar Corsairs know that they represent not a general type but a spectrum, and that each band, even each Corsair, can be wildly different from the next and motivated by entirely different drives. Some align themselves to their craftworld cousins and can act in a highly noble manner, while others are barely discernible from the raiders of Commorragh and are wicked, cruel, and intent only on inflicting pain and suffering on what they regard as lesser races.

Those vile Eldar that live within the shadows of the webway, known to xenos scholars as the Dark Eldar, are themselves active in the Askellon Sector, though their attacks are even less predictable than those of their craftworld and Corsair kin. This particular strain of the Eldar species is known by Ordo Xenos adepts to raid along a string of outlying systems within Askellian space, and all evidence shows they have been doing so as far back as records are kept. In particular, Dark Eldar raiders have plagued the outlying frontier systems rimward of the Thule Sub-Sector for many generations. Most attacks have been limited to small-scale, targeted slave raids on the less populated worlds, and to the once-per-century incursions against the densely populated hive world of Hulee V. Unlike attacks by their craftworld or Corsair cousins, attacks by the Dark Eldar in Askellon tend to be launched towards a single, simple objective—the taking of slaves to be dragged back to the bleak pits of Commorragh. In the main, the Lords of Askellon have remained aloof and largely uncaring of the fate of these unfortunates, unless tithes and quotas should happen to be affected—in which case largely ineffectual precautionary patrols are often all they can do to deter them.





Of all the kin of the Eldar known to have a presence in Askellon, it is the Harlequins who are the most mysterious. Reports of small “troupes” of Harlequins turn up rarely in the sector, but when they do, it is inevitably in connection to some matter of great import. Often, the aliens seem concerned with the threat of the Ruinous Powers, such as when a cursed artefact is uncovered or a site they deem forbidden is trespassed upon. This linking of the two, existential threats to the Imperium—the alien and Chaos—is deemed by some as deserving of immediate intervention, though on what terms none seem to be able to agree. Some at the very highest levels of the Ordo Xenos, concerned with the fate of the Askellon Sector, have even proposed that contact should be made between the Eldar and themselves in order to explore the notion of cooperation against a common foe. They would follow the example of the notorious Inquisitor Czevak, who alone of all men appears to have gained the trust of these inscrutable Eldar. Attempts have even been made to contact certain adepts amongst Czevak’s extended retinue in the hope that they might travel to Askellon and offer their counsel. To date, neither Czevak’s agents nor the Eldar have responded to attempts to establish contact, though it is unlikely that the minds behind such schemes would set their ambitions aside.

On several occasions, the Dark Eldar have appeared to launch targeted raids against specific members of the Askellon nobility, and several, largely inconclusive Inquisitorial investigations have been launched to establish just why. In 334.M40 for example, three minor ranked scions of House of Duss, a prominent line of civil administrators from the world of Juno, were taken in the midst of a grand banquet held in the then capital city of that world, Divinity Salvus. Witnesses described how the shadows beyond the guttering candle lights simply closed in about the noble scions, and when they receded, all three were vanished. The guests panicked, many fleeing from the great hall, but Lord Duss remained in his seat, his expression downcast and evidently resigned to what had occurred. When pressed on the matter by his peers, Lord Duss would only state that the “shadowed ones” had “taken their due as their right,” and would brook no talk of rescue or recrimination.

When accounts later reached the ears of the Inquisition, an investigation was launched and some evidence was uncovered to suggest that Lord Duss had been involved in a long-running relationship with the Dark Eldar, a partnership of sorts, which had recently gone sour. The investigation team determined that the victims of the kidnapping were beyond aid, but that Duss should nonetheless pay properly for the crime of consorting with the alien. He was poisoned at the height of the next state banquet, and it is said that, after his cold form had collapsed into his Vanth squab, the meal continued in utter silence until all eleven courses had been consumed. The petrified guests were said to have glanced towards the shadows continuously, as if expecting that the fate of the Duss scions would befall them as well.



THE BARBAROUS ORKS

The xenos Orks are an omnipresent foe across the entire Imperium, and the Askellon Sector is far from immune to their periodic incursions, known in their own debased tongue as “Waaaghs!” No matter where they are to be found, Orks follow a broadly similar pattern of expansion and invasion. Initially divided into primitive warring tribes, Orks spend generation after generation fighting amongst themselves until a leader strong enough to defeat all rivals establishes a single empire. This stage invariably sees the Orks take to the stars upon passing Space Hulks or by the ramshackle warships they somehow contrive to construct despite their evidently primitive minds. When an Ork empire goes on the warpath in this way, it is looking not for territory to expand into, but foes to defeat, for the species is natural selection writ large, the strong growing ever more stronger with the defeat of each enemy.

Inevitably, such invasions bring the Orks into Imperial space, triggering calamitous wars indeed. It is only at the expense of countless lives and immeasurable resources that such invasions are defeated, as they have been on numerous occasions throughout the history of the Askellon Sector. Yet the Orks as a species do not fear, or even truly understand, the notion of their own mortality, believing they can never truly be defeated. In this they are correct, for when Orks fight and die in great concentrations, they release many millions of spores, seeds by which future generations are spawned. The spores grow and eventually produce more Orks, and though it may be much later, these continue the war the previous generation began. Thus, once an Ork invasion touches a world, that planet is invariably doomed to incessant war as ever more spores are released, the cycle continuing for all time.

The majority of the Ork invasions that have struck the Askellon Sector over the millennia have emanated from the unexplored Wilderness Space to the Trailing of the sector beyond the Rubicon and Thule Sub-Sectors. It has long been surmised that a substantial Ork empire must lie somewhere in the inter-sector void, for it is from that direction that many invasions have descended, following the very same Warp routes that Port Lokhart was established to protect. The Imperial Navy squadrons of the Askellon Station Command have struggled to hold back numerous Ork attacks in their history, from small raids to huge migrations, but when aided by the fleets of the Surena Dynasty, they have just about managed to do so. The smaller attacks are thought to represent individual Ork warleaders flexing their muscles or testing the sector's defences. It has been suggested that the largest attacks actually represent Orks being displaced or even fleeing some foe that is feeding on them out in the darkness. If true, the scale and nature of that enemy cannot be imagined, and many amongst the Ordo Xenos dismiss such theories out of hand.

While the squadrons based at Port Lokhart have been largely successful in repelling Ork attacks on the verges of the Thule Sub-Sector, in other areas the situation is very different. The Askellon Sector accounts for an enormous volume of space; it is estimated that over the years, several dozen frontier worlds have been entirely lost to Ork invasion. On the world of Myros Kappa in the Stygies Sub-Sector, however, they simply cannot be eradicated. For some reason that no xenos-savant has yet been able to explain, the Orks keep returning to Myros Kappa, intent upon tearing down its defences and claiming it for themselves. Myros Kappa occupies a strategically important Warp juncture and has secondary value in the form of substantial mineral resources, and so the Imperium has fought tooth and nail to retain control of the world, never once ceding defeat even in the face of alien invasion of unprecedented scale. And yet, each time the Orks are eradicated, they return due to their unique method of reproduction, a means known only to the highest levels of the Imperium's command. Invariably, the first Orks spawned are primitive beasts ignorant of their ancestry, but the surface of Myros Kappa is so strewn with wreckage that they instinctively arm themselves for war with the weapons dropped by their forebears, and the cycle continues anew.

With the slowly worsening strategic situation in the Askellon Sector, the region's high commanders are now considering something none of their own predecessors dared imagine or propose. Some are considering abandoning Myros Kappa forever, unleashing such utter devastation upon its surface that the Orks can never return again, even if it is rendered useless to humanity in the process. To date, this plan has yet to gain major backing amongst the sector's general staff, but it has come to the attention of a cell of Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos who hold somewhat Radical faction beliefs. These unnamed lords and ladies support the plan, if it can be timed to coincide with a large external Ork invasion, so that the newly spawned “feral” Orks can be destroyed along with the external threat. A major issue with this plan, however, is that drawing the external invasion onto Myros Kappa might result in its passing through other, potentially still-valuable systems, which the Imperial Guard would be forced to leave to their fate as part of the wider strategy. It remains to be seen whether these Inquisitors can insinuate their plot into the general staff's strategy, and whether any rival faction would oppose it.



THE MEN OF IRON

While many Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos devote their careers to combating the threats of the Eldar or the Orks, a smaller number concentrate their efforts on an enemy that has yet even to be named, in the Askellon Sector at least. This foe is the subject of numerous ancient portents, and is held by those few with access to such texts as a danger as great as any that Humanity has ever confronted. To date, those who cleave to such beliefs are few and not yet bold enough to openly voice their warnings. Their Acolytes, however, operate ceaselessly across the sector and beyond to investigate any incident that might reveal something of this ancient foe.

A small cell of Inquisitors and Acolytes has coalesced around the respected veteran alien hunter Klor Durran, a man whose knowledge of the myriad xenos threats that assail humanity is all but unsurpassed in the region. Durran has not operated openly in the sector since before he even earned the rank of Inquisitor, and subsequently he has moved largely unseen from world to world. At each place he visits, he consults with long-established contacts and allies, and records yet another fragment of a threat he is now utterly convinced is slowly awakening across Askellon.

Klor Durran believes that amongst the numerous cold, dusty tombs of alien empires on which the sector is built lies a species which not only refuses to die, but which is returning one day soon from the black depths of extinction. This species, he believes, was once ubiquitous across the galaxy and the master of technologies Mankind could never imagine.

Such theories, of course, are far from rare in the Imperium, for Mankind is taught to hate the xenos, and the Imperial Creed is possessed of a decidedly eschatological fervour. What differs in Durran's case is that he has used the data he has gathered to predict a pattern of events and, without exception, these have come about. From Chartist vessels disappearing while traversing particular areas of space to the strange signals intercepted at outlying Adeptus Mechanicus research stations, Durran's predictions have proven unerringly accurate. Of course, this has led some amongst the Inquisition to blame the Inquisitor himself for the events. For such reasons, Durran remains hidden, his presence on any world noted only by his very closest and most trusted of confidantes.

Of the alien threat itself, Durran has issued numerous warnings, none of which have yet been fully heeded. He claims that in cold tombs all across the sector and throughout the Wilderness Space beyond, lie the slumbering metal shells of what he calls the "Men of Iron." Some mocked him for using this term, which to the initiated bears great weight and certain meanings relating to Mankind's Dark Age of Technology, and which instil primal dread in any afflicted with knowledge of that epoch. These ancient beings represent the last of a species forced to enter an aeons-long hibernation, what guttering spark remained of their mortal souls quiescent deep within the cold metal of their bodies. When their rulers at last awake, Durran holds, they will take up weapons of unsurpassed destructive power and call forth the innumerable hordes of warriors entombed alongside them. When that happens, Durran warns, Mankind faces assault by yet another terrifying threat, one which might very well tip the balance and send humanity spiralling into the depths of extinction.

And yet, for all his warnings of oncoming doom, Durran offers possibilities of hope. Deliverance, he theorises, might come from another source of woe. The tombs in which the Men of Iron slumber, so Durran claims, emanate some trans-dimensional resonance that appears to distort or even repel effects that draw upon the Immaterium. Passage along Warp routes has always been known to grow unpredictable about certain systems, with vessels becalmed without warning or suffering unpredictable temporal distortions. Durran claims that many such worlds are host to a tomb or other holding of the Men of Iron, and that as the time of their resurrection approaches, such effects grow ever stronger.

Durran's writings contain one last addendum. He claims that the awakening of the Men of Iron might throw back the Warp storms closing in around the Askellon Sector, or that conversely, if the Pandaemonium should prove too powerful, it might subsume the tomb worlds and thus suffocate the slumbering internees in the raw stuff of the Warp before they can fully awaken.

Either case would prove a calamity for the Askellon Sector, of course, but the former might also prove disastrous for the wider Imperium. Klor Durran has yet to state which ultimate end he believes should come about, but there are those among his rivals within the Inquisition who believe he might attempt somehow to precipitate whichever doom he favours, and already they are mobilising against him. It has been whispered in closed counsel between trusted allies that Durran is in fact a marked man, for certain factions among the Eldar are unlikely to stand idly by while he interferes in matters they themselves have a particularly close interest in. Others claim that Durran is nothing more than a puppet of still darker forces, and as such must be eliminated before he brings even more calamity down upon the worlds of the Askellon Sector.



THE NAMELESS STRANGERS

The worlds of the Imperium are as islands clustered together upon a raging ocean, with vast expanses of Wilderness Space separating each sector. Inter-sector space is almost entirely unexplored beyond those worlds that fall along known Warp routes, and none can say what terrors lie in the darkness beyond the Imperium's immediate control. The Askellon Sector is surrounded by Wilderness Space, which itself is wracked by the endless Warp storm that is the Pandaemonium. Yet still, even this beleaguered sector has frontiers which explorers might use as mustering points for exploration of the outer darkness, and even the long-established Warp routes leading to neighbouring regions grow ever more unstable as the storm closes in. Knowledge of such gateway worlds is highly valued indeed, and countless are the fools who have paid with their lives for the folly of seeking a route through the storms. For those few who do find a genuine route, the rewards are beyond the imagining of even the most decadent noble or ambitious explorer.

Beyond the storms, out in the deep void, are to be found not just riches, but numerous xenos strains, every one of them a potential doom to Askellon. Even within the sector's borders, such as they are, there are to be found alien infiltrators. Some flee before the leading edge of the Pandaemonium, driven unknowingly into Imperial space, while others intend to insinuate themselves amongst Mankind's stars and to prey upon the sector's populations. Some may have existed in the cracks all along, for a sector is a huge volume of space within which only a small proportion of worlds are inhabited, or even catalogued.

For many millennia, it was comparatively rare for xenos species to taint the stars of Askellon with their unholy presence. The Imperial Navy was highly effective in patrolling those borders left untouched by the storms, intercepting any alien fleets that sought to intrude upon human space. Perhaps once a generation a more serious threat arose, one previously unknown to the defenders of the region, and so xenos-war erupted across the stars. Imperial forces are well-versed in combating such foes as the barbarous Orks or the perfidious Eldar, and while these are ubiquitous threats across the galaxy, the void is host to an uncountable range of otherwise unknown strains, the capabilities of which may be entirely novel or unanticipated. Many such strains have sought to invade the sector's worlds, plunging millions of the Emperor's subjects into wars of survival against the most terrifying of enemies. Invariably, the invaders have been cast off, but rarely without heavy cost; even Juno, the sector capital, has been forced to defend itself from alien invasion. The annals of the Askellon Sector describe numerous Purgation Wars, vast conflicts that often consumed entire sub-sectors, sometimes the whole of Askellon, in which billions gave their lives to keep the abominations of the outer dark from tainting the sacred ground of the Emperor's Domains with their presence. Species entirely unknown to the greater Imperium have thus found their extinction at Askellon, and it is said by some that the soil of the more fertile frontier agri-worlds is made so by the uncounted bodies buried in it.

The sector's armies and fleets for many centuries were adept at holding the things of the void at bay, the numerous planetary hosts and navy squadrons possessed of countless battle honours. All was to change in the aftermath of the Vaxi Atrocity, when the armies of rival Inquisitors of the Ordo Hereticus made war upon one another in the Rubicon Sub-Sector, their masters split by wildly divergent factional beliefs. The Sector Praefect of the day, Lord Vhinjet Romonav VIIth, declared himself and his domain apart from the Imperium, and in so doing earned himself death at the hands of the agents of the Throne. The assembled armies of Askellon met their doom upon the hot ashes of Vaxi, an entire generation slaughtered for the sins of its lords and masters.

The Vaxi Atrocity had many far-ranging implications for the sector, not least of which that Inquisitors within agreed between themselves that hence forth they should operate in greater secrecy, lest they destabilise the entire region once more. This is exactly what occurred in the immediate aftermath, for the would-be secessionist Sector Praefect, as well as the warring Inquisitors, had drained the sector's worlds of armies and fleets for the titanic clash. These now lay slaughtered upon Vaxi's surface, or drifting as cold hulks about that now-cursed planet. It was not long before other eyes turned upon Askellon's worlds, and saw them barely defended and ripe for the taking.

In the space of a few short months, the outlying worlds of the Stygies Cluster and Thule Sub-Sectors came under the shadow of not one, but what seemed like dozens of alien threats. Silent, faceless infiltrators came in the night and took what morsels they could drag away, while elsewhere dark shadows moved across the night skies and left entire settlements empty in their wake. Shuffling, stooped, and stinking creatures hidden beneath layer upon layer of ragged cloth came from the deserts to fall upon populations left defenceless by the Praefect's folly. In the cold depths of space, a dozen Space Hulks appeared across a dozen systems, each a hive of alien abomination against which system defence craft could achieve very little. Instances of outcast humans making common cause with previously uncoded alien species increased exponentially, and it was during this period that the Kroot were first encountered in the sector, fighting in the employ of pirates and slavers across a score of outlying zones.

Since those dark days, the sector has recovered somewhat and many of these threats have been repelled, or else receded having naturally reached their high water mark. The Imperial Navy fleets and Astra Militarum regiments in the region never again attained its pre-Atrocity strength, but their more competent masters learned something about the horrors they were facing and how to counter and defeat them. The planetary militias across the sector were at length brought back to something approaching their former strengths, such that some even called for a campaign of eradication against any remnants of the alien invasions, or the reconquest of those worlds lost to xenos activities.

To date, such a generalised campaign has been impossible to muster, for the Pandaemonium has waxed strong and the sector is beset by as many internal travails as external ones. Nevertheless, a small number of high-ranking officers, in particular those who hold both aristocratic and military rank, cleave to such schemes and dream of the glories that may one day be theirs, regardless of the blood that must be shed to achieve it.

THE DEAD OF AEONS

While the void is filled with the taint of countless alien civilisations, still more are known only by the ruins left behind long after their extinction. It is said that the Imperium is built upon the dust of uncountable alien empires, the foundations of its hive cities sometimes driven literally into soil littered with the tombs of long-lost civilisations. For most, this makes for a troubling fact of life, one they choose to ignore as they focus on far more immediate threats. For others, it represents yet another hazard to the very soul of Mankind. For every Inquisitor of the Ordo Xenos dedicated to keeping harmful knowledge out of the hands of those that would misuse it, there is another who believes he can wield the wisdom of long dead xenos to combat extant alien foes. While some Inquisitors desire to destroy all trace of previous xenos civilisations in the region, others seek them out, and so the endless cycle of factional division within the Inquisition continues.

The Askellon Sector appears to be as strewn with ancient ruins as any other region, although no true study has ever been made into the exact nature of the many dead xenos empires. Indeed, so far as the Ordo Xenos is concerned, most of these predecessor cultures died out long, long before the coming of Mankind to the region during the distant Dark Age of Technology; in fact, many probably rose and fell millions of years before Mankind's birth. Many exist as little more than sedimentary layers in the ground beneath Askellian cities, but a few are known by more substantial ruins or by other artefacts that have somehow survived the long aeons. Accounts of the very earliest phases of the sector's settlement are all but lost, yet some savants have come to suspect that perhaps one of these predecessor cultures still existed at the time the first colony-arcs arrived and Askellon's settlement began. If true, some theorise that a great war must have been fought to wrest the stars from the alien empire's possession. Others wonder if some manner of accommodation was reached, some compact with the abominations of the dark void that, in theory, may still bind the Lords of Askellon to this day.

Some might think that extinct civilisations are of little or no danger to the sector, but time and again this has been proven utterly untrue. Those who would plunder ancient tombs put themselves in great peril, and not just of misadventure and injury. Within the long-sealed interiors of such places lurk all manner of invisible hazards, from deadly microbial strains sealed aeons ago, to the mind-bending and spiritually-compromising psychic residue that can burn an intruder's sanity in the blink of an eye. Within the forgotten depths of such places might be found ancient alien tomb goods, and it is often these that intruders seek, for collectors at the very highest tiers of the sector's ruling classes pay more for them than most can imagine. This is the basis of the Faceless Trade, the Askellian market in forbidden and proscribed items such as alien relics plundered from long-lost tombs or more recently-wrought weapons or artefacts created by alien hands.

The greatest threat to any would-be plunderer of ancient alien tombs is that the occupants might not be as dead or as extinct as they first appeared. Ordo Xenos archives detail numerous incidents of seemingly dead occupants re-awakening and slaughtering entire parties of explorers. Some have gone on to threaten entire regions of space as alien overlords, with whole armies of re-animated servants and soldiers seeking to re-establish themselves in a galaxy they regard as theirs for the taking.

Of particular interest to those steeped in the lore of Askellon is how the Pandaemonium might have affected other cultures. Many assume that only Mankind has been blighted by the Warp storms, a few even suspecting that something in the region or something about the earliest human settlers might have somehow brought it into being. A few have theorised that the storm might have waxed and waned in far older eras, possibly devastating alien empires before Mankind could first encounter them or opening new passages for others to flourish and menace humanity in future times. Such theories can never be proven, but they occupy entire cadres of xeno-savants and explorers, as well as others who have no business holding knowledge of such things.



THE FACELESS TRADE

"A fool and his sanity are soon parted, so I've often said..."

—Margrave Khoraliz, Faceless Trader and former Chartist Captain

Throughout the length and breadth of the Imperium are men and women who would possess that which is most forbidden to them, and there are men and women likewise determined to avail them of such items. While some collectors content themselves with objets d'art from Mankind's distant antiquity, or tomes of ancient and often outlawed philosophies, others seek out items of spiritual significance. A few crave items wrought by the hands of heretics and blasphemers, while others desire the relics of long-lost alien empires. The more singular the artefact, the higher the price it can command, and the higher the risk in trading and possessing it, for to do so is to transgress against the most fundamental laws of the Imperium. In the Askellon Sector, there are many willing to break such laws, for the ruling families making up the Lords of Askellon have long considered themselves a class apart from the Imperium at large and only loosely subject to its laws. As the Pandaemonium closes ever tighter about the sector and the Adeptus Terra appear to abandon Askellon to its fate, even these ties grow ever less binding. It is perhaps an irony of the cruellest kind that even as the region's damnation grows ever closer, its rulers seek to abandon themselves to ever greater transgression, as if deliberately averting their attentions from the horrifying fate closing inexorably around them.

The market in xenos artefacts is an especially illicit one, for any caught engaged in it in any capacity at all, whether buyer, seller, supplier, or broker, is guilty of a crime usually punishable by death or worse. The trade in these and other proscribed items is rarely spoken of openly, and so is known by a thousand euphemistic titles the galaxy over. In the Askellon Sector, it is known as the Faceless Trade, a reference to the fact that none ever admit to engaging in it, yet it continues nonetheless. The scale of the trade varies enormously, and Ordo Xenos Inquisitors have long suspected that the sector lies at the heart of a network that stretches far out into the trackless Wilderness Space surrounding it, exploiting stellar charts that may even pre-date the Imperium.

THE CERULEAN PACT

This smuggling group originated as an ancient agreement amongst several explorers who discovered a cache of items of possible xenos nature, all adorned in deep blue colours. Sensing profit, they gathered them for sale across the sector. Riches abounded, but within a generation all of those involved were mysteriously slain. By then, though, the group was well established in the Faceless Trade. As centuries passed, the original meaning was forgotten, and trade in any items deemed not just illegal but dangerously forbidden was often called a Cerulean Deal or "blue bartering." Few, if any of those currently conducting such forbidden trading know of the origin of the name, but still dab dark blue marks inside their wrists as a way to identify each other.

SOLOMON LOK

Lok was the veteran Inquisitor whose taskforce uncovered the doom of the Adeptus Mechanicus research station on Beta Anphelion IV, where captive Tyranid specimens escaped their control and multiplied into a world-engulfing swarm. Valiantly battling the aliens, Lok was able to alert the Imperium before making his last stand, and was presumed killed either in the fighting or the ensuing Exterminatus. There are dark suspicions in the Ordo Xenos that Lok was martyr to the Radical theories of his superior, Inquisitor Lord Varius, who engineered the disaster as an experiment in anti-Tyranid warfare.

What abominable alien empires might be marked upon such charts remains a secret known only to the most senior of the Faceless Traders, and Ordo Xenos Inquisitors estimate from recovered examples that several dozen uncatalogued sources exist. These range from technological relics of unfathomable function wrought from gleaming alloys to primitive icons carved from stone and stained with the blood of aeons of sacrificial offering. Some are plainly mechanical, while others can only be appreciated as art. Some are clearly weapons, while others are imbued with xenos-born psychic taint so heavy that to touch them is to invite insanity. Many are small in size and might even be worn openly as jewellery, eliciting a thrill of transgression in the wearer, although risking death should an agent of the Emperor knowledgeable in such matters lay eyes upon them. Others take the form of armaments of wildly exotic form and function, the wielding of which may be as dangerous to the bearer as to his enemies.

No Inquisitor can say how many private collections of xenos artefacts exist across the Askellon Sector, but some place it at several thousand at least. Such an estimate is based on a combination of pre-cognitive projection, readings of the Emperor's Tarot, and evaluation of investigative archives. The majority of these collections are likely to be little more than a dozen objects secreted away and viewed only by the owner and his closest associates. Others, however, might be far larger, taking the form of vaulted mausoleums within which might be housed many hundreds of utterly priceless and damnable objects. Access to such places is likely to be determined by status and bloodline, with only the most highly-ranked of the Lords of Askellon permitted even to know of their existence, let alone to view their contents.

Many such items might appear at first glance as entirely innocuous and harmless. A tiny bauble wrought in the form of some long-extinct alien beast once handled by a sentient being might function as a beacon which its creators can detect across light years of space, causing them to home in on a potential food source. Items worn as jewellery have on more than one occasion been known to meld with the wearer's flesh, insinuating into the body before changing the wearer into some hideous simulacrum of the species that created it. Others might be hives for ravaging alien viral strains that, when inadvertently activated, could wipe out entire planetary populations.

THE ORDER OF THE TOOTHED GEARS

Few know much of the origins of this Faceless Trading group, for it maintains high levels of secrecy. The Order appears to be primarily composed of exoteks and outcast Tech-Priests, and is obsessed with alien technologies. While most Faceless Traders dabble at some level with such devices, the Order's members go beyond mere trading and delve into blasphemous levels of study and veneration, leading some Inquisitors to brand it more a cult than criminal enterprise. Toothed agents scour the fringes of Askellon for the latest finds, while in turn selling or bartering away uninteresting items to eager collectors. The senior leaders often replace body parts with xenos mechanisms or implant alien power sources into their flesh to support inhuman weaponry, but also trade in proscribed knowledge of their finds with those uncaring of the source. While not as widespread as the Trade Sable or as vicious as the Edge Syndicate, the Order is rising in power as more and more caches of impossibly ancient xenos devices are unearthed across Askellon.

This danger goes a long way to explaining something of the astronomical value certain individuals place on items brought before them by the Faceless Trade. Life at the highest echelons of the sector's aristocracy can lead some especially bored noble scions to seek out the most outrageous pastimes; in many cases, the more dangerous to themselves and to others, the better and more valued it is. In many cases, however, it is the simple fact of transgression that makes such items so desirable. A noble scion might deliberately stand before a thousand lesser-ranked sons and daughters of the aristocracy openly carrying an item as valuable as some entire planets. Every noble in attendance would know of the crime and be utterly stunned, even seduced by the display, yet none would utter a word, to the bearer or to any figure of authority. Such things are part and parcel of life on the very edge of the Pandaemonium for the lords of the sector, and as long as they crave the fruits of the Faceless Trade, there will ever be smugglers, brokers, and traders willing to charge them for it.

The Trade Sable, the Cerulean Pact, the Edge Syndicate, the Ivory Masks, and others groups deal in satisfying this craving. Bartering with alien races and excavating lost ruins, they make available many items that should have been safely lost and forgotten.

Rivalries between these groups is intense and bloody, with new territories and specialities carved up between them like the carcass of some gigantic beast between voracious predators. From season to season, as new delights are uncovered and new fashions emerge, the power of these traders rises and falls, as each seeks to dominate the desire for the illicit taste of the alien.

It is not only nobles who covet such objects, although their wealth certainly grants them access to more than their share. Many walks of life host their own outcasts who would seek power in forbidden places and knowledge from hidden sources. From hereteks to fallen savants, many are the fools who would seek to gain possession of alien power, and who find that power possessing them.



THE VAXIAN AFTERMATH WARS

“Do not welcome the stranger, for many who have done so have given succour to abomination.”

—from The Apocrypha of Saint Talon

In the annals of the Inquisition, the Vaxi Atrocity stands as a cautionary tale of the doom that can befall a region when the most highly-ranked servants of the Emperor set aside their mutual duties and allow hubris to dictate their actions. The Atrocity itself has been debated endlessly in such Askellian circles, its causes analysed over and over so they might never occur again. Some savants have even gone so far as to suggest the entire calamity might have been engineered by hidden xenos intellects, seeing the far-reaching influence of the Eldar in the still-unfolding events of the Atrocity. Most such theories are dismissed as fanciful musing at best, or the death-rants of fallen traitors at worst, yet still they refuse to fade away. Certainly, Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos have known for generations that the Eldar are capable of engineering events far into the future for their own sakes, their Farseers able to unravel the twisted threads of unfolding future and to re-knit them according to their own unknowable schemes. Might the Atrocity have been intended to weaken the sector in order to turn the attentions of some hungering void-born horror away from the Eldar and towards Mankind? Arguments rage endlessly over these and other myriad forces—perhaps even from within the Inquisition itself—that might have had a hidden hand in launching the terrible event, or guided it to results that few can fully understand. In truth, no sane mortal can say, though many still make such claims. Many savants have dedicated themselves to studying the ebb and flow of cause and effect in the wake of the Atrocity, for it was to affect the region for many years to come.

The most notable of the events that followed the terrible event are known in the circles of the Inquisition as the Aftermath Wars. As a great many of these wars were fought against various xenos strains and factions, they are of particular note to those Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos operating in the Askellon Sector, many of whom stand guard for more such ramifications, even many years after the event.

INQUISITOR LICHTENSTEIN

Lichtenstein's deeds during the ferocious civil war between Inquisitors on Karis Cephalon have seen him branded Excommunicate Traitoris, heretically Radical if not outright insane. An open seeker and user of daemonic lore, Lichtenstein believes that only by utilising the tools of the Warp can he save humanity from the death-worshipping machine-race whose rise he has long been studying, and whose threat he is convinced he alone understands. Whether he will have the chance to confront this enemy before he himself is destroyed by vengeful Witch Hunters remains to be seen.



THE PORTAL RAIDS

In 731.M41, soon after the Atrocity, an Imperial Navy long range patrol squadron engaged in a three-year sweep of the outermost systems of the Asphodel Depths Sub-Sector came upon a string of ruined settlements across a dozen of the settled moons of the Phobetor system. No bodies were found, and by the damage suffered to the hab structures it was evident that the Eldar were responsible for the attack. The commodore in command of the patrol—Abin Kybras—cared not which strand of the alien culture had carried out the attacks, though his suspicions were that it was the “Dark” Eldar, for this particular sub-faction was known for launching raids upon human worlds for no apparent end than to take prisoners and to spirit them away to their home dimension for no reason any sane man could fathom.

The patrol's report was logged via long range astropathic communion, and the squadron continued its lonely mission. As it penetrated the very edge of the trans-sector Wilderness Space, however, it found ever more evidence of Dark Eldar activity and, following these, determined a pattern. It was clear that the attacks were following the sub-aetheric Warp conduit leading to the Aventine system, a route known as Celaeno's Descent. By this point, it was estimated that the aliens must have carried away tens of thousands of the Emperor's subjects, and it became increasingly obvious that each attack represented an escalation in scale and daring. Worlds that should have been capable of defending themselves were falling, for their defence forces had been stripped in the months preceding the Vaxi Atrocity and left the worlds defenceless. With those defence forces reduced to bones now bleaching upon the irradiated murder-plains of Vaxi, entire sub-sectors were laid bare to the attentions of the Dark Eldar.

It was then that a dire realisation hit home, and Kybras ordered his fleet to abandon its mission and make for Aventine. The drives were worked far beyond tolerances despite the protestations of the Enginseers, and three months later the patrol set in at Aventine. There they discovered the system's outer worlds, none of them highly populated, but each one a productive sub-domain, colony, or mining operation stripped as bare as the first worlds they had found. Aventine itself was under attack, not by any space-born force, but one which travelled from world to world by way of its own trans-dimensional means. Aventine's capital was under attack, and there was nothing the squadron could do to stop the vile aliens dragging its population through their swirling portals.

The commodore knew his duty, and though his office required him to remain stoic, he knew he was showing mercy in issuing his next order. The squadron might have had insufficient crew to launch a defence of the city below, but it could certainly intervene, as well as granting a quick death to those who would otherwise not receive any such fate. Minutes later, the skies of Aventine were split by the black entry containers of a hundred orbital plasma warheads. Each detonated with the power of a star, burning to ashes every last alien within a hundred miles as well as the captives they were attempting to drag through their dimensional portals.

That day, Commodore Kybras demonstrated that Mankind could be every bit as cold-hearted as the cruellest of Dark Eldar, if the Emperor so willed it. That it might have poisoned Aventine's populace against the Imperium and lead to the rise of even greater threats would be a menace for another day.

THE CYCLOPIA BUSH WARS

Less than a year after the tragedy at Aventine, Imperial commanders across the Cyclopia Sub-Sector reported a heavy upsurge in Ork activity, each on a world that had come under attack by these barbarous aliens within the last century or so. In each of these original instances, the Ork attacks had been repulsed, but only at a high cost in lives to the Imperium and only after very heavy fighting indeed. With the vast bulk of planetary defence units redeployed to Vaxi (and now destroyed), only second line defence forces remained, and these were woefully understrength and outnumbered by the Ork invaders. Over the course of the next month, a vicious bush war developed across a dozen worlds in the sub-sector.

The threat was rarely so great as to threaten the complete collapse of any single warzone, but ever grave enough that Imperial forces were constantly on the defensive and never allowed to muster a credible counter attack. The enemy was of a type referred to by Adeptus Astra Militarum tacticae adepts as "Feral Orks"—greenskins that for whatever reason were not possessed of the usual range of ramshackle yet highly destructive weapons, vehicles, and other strange equipment often encountered in their hands. Instead, these Orks wielded primitive weaponry, along with what items they could scavenge from the battlefields of previous generations or from defeated enemies. Where these invaders came from or how they had reached the worlds in question, none of the commanders on the ground knew, a critical weakness that ultimately led to their doom.

Had the Askellon Sector's military command been in any fit state, formalised procedures would have been set in motion to eradicate the Ork presence rising across the sector. Experienced commanders with sufficient clearance would have known or been able to ascertain that the Orks were the result of the bizarre manner in which their species spreads across the galaxy. Each time the Orks fight, their bodies shed microscopic spores which lodge upon the ground and much later develop into subsequent generations. In areas where the greenskins have won dominance, these creatures are integrated into the pre-existing Ork culture. Where they appear upon ground where the Orks have been defeated, they carry on the war, ignorant of the earlier defeats of their forebears but still driven by deep-rooted biological imperative to avenge them. The only way to avert such an infestation in the aftermath of an Ork invasion is to set the ground to fire with constant eradication sweeps, a duty innocently neglected by the second line defenders left on to hold their worlds.

Inevitably, the defenders were overwhelmed. Across each of the affected worlds the beastly Orks rose up as one having reached a critical mass of numbers and raw, savage bloodthirst. The worlds fell in an orgy of death, a million and more defence force troops slaughtered by the primitive savages. It would be over a decade before the sector was able to mount an effective campaign of reconquest after having restored something of its previous strength, but by then those worlds had very little worth reclaiming, and the effort of scouring the soil of alien spores meant that any such campaign was judged highly unlikely to succeed.



THE ASKELLIAN INCURSION

Like much of the Imperium, Askellon has ever been affected by the appearance of Space Hulks, each spat from the turbulent Warp into systems occupied by the Emperor's faithful, and invariably infested by all manner of alien threats. Space Hulks are a tremendous hazard to the Imperium's worlds but by ancient convention, when they are detected, they must be investigated rather than destroyed outright, if such a thing is even possible given their vast scale. The reason for this prescription is simple—many Space Hulks are impossibly ancient conglomerations of human, and sometimes alien, vessels lost to the Warp over the long millennia before being spat out once more by the unknowable tides of the Empyrean. They may contain fragments of utterly priceless Standard Template Construct technology otherwise lost to Mankind, from which new and blessed iterations of ancient devices can be wrought. They sometimes even consist of entire warships which can be salvaged and returned to service in the glorious Imperial Navy. Still more, however, are host to dangerous lifeforms such as Genestealers, which spread their genetic taint across the stars by infecting those sent to investigate the Space Hulks. Others still are vast, Warp-born cathedrals to the terrible power of the great Gods of Chaos.

Later in M41, at a time when the armies of Askellon were still reeling from the losses of the Vaxi genocides, not one but dozens Space Hulks appeared within its borders. This event coincided with a massive increase in Warp storm activity nearby, leading some Warp-seers to claim that the Pandaemonium was gorging itself on the souls of those slain during the genocides, though most dismissed such claims as the ravings of madmen. Regardless, the sector's resources were so depleted that even a single Space Hulk would have been a challenge to deal with in the prescribed manner. As it became apparent that multiple systems were reporting their appearance, deep dread settled over the sector's high commanders. Worse still, it was evident that the appearance did not follow some random pattern born of the ebbs and flows of the tides of the Sea of Souls. Rather, each of the reported Space Hulks had appeared along a Warp route that, if projected along known empyreal conduits, would see them converge in the sector's core region. Clearly, some dark intellect or intent was at work. Across Askellon, every possible force that could be mustered was deployed in response.

At the Ferrom system, an entire army group was raised from the massive worker population, issued las carbines drawn from emergency stocks many centuries old, and ferried in the cargo holds of bulk haulers to the Space Hulk that had appeared out-system. Entire companies of these worker-soldiers were crammed into shuttles rated to hold a tenth of the number of passengers and fired across the void to board the vast hulk. For ten days, shuttle after shuttle deployed company after company until at length a hundred thousand and more soldiers were scouring the dark tunnels with orders to engage any enemy they encountered and to report any unusual finds as soon as they were made. No such reports were ever made, for as one, the vox-feeds and tacticae relays fell silent. Those remaining attempted frantically to raise the boarders, and while the links were determined to be functional, no data was being passed along them. Increasingly fearful, the overseers of the mission debated a dozen and more responses to the situation, but an hour later, the decision was made for

them. With a burst of light of no hue known to sane minds, the Space Hulk was dragged back into the Empyrean. At the moment of translation, every soul on board cried out in such anguish that every psyker within several light years felt their pain, many suffering seizures, some even perishing. Of that hundred thousand strong army, not a trace was ever discovered.

At the Myros Kappa system, a Space Hulk dove out of the Immaterium perilously close to one planet, destabilising its moons and setting off punishing tectonic upheavals. Stricken by tidal waves, earthquakes, and constant storms, the world's primary settlements were subsequently abandoned, and tens of thousands of Departmento Munitorum serfs perished along with vital Astra Militarum war materiel. Eight days later, it vanished uninvestigated, all nearby resources diverted to desperately evacuate any survivors.

Far worse occurred at Menoetius-Delta. The Space Hulk that emerged in that system did so not at its outer edges, but far in-system. Menoetius-Delta was host to a subsistence-level society that had never truly taken its place in the sector and, thanks to the Space Hulk, never would. Three days after it was detected, the gigantic conglomeration of metal and rock smashed into Menoetius-Delta, triggering an extinction-level event that rendered the surface nigh uninhabitable to Mankind. It was later estimated that approximately fifty million souls went to the Emperor's Side when the Space Hulk collided with Menoetius-Delta, and the same number perished in the years that followed as its ecology collapsed. No mission was ever launched to evacuate survivors, and it is likely their descendants live there still, eking out a miserable and short life beneath the churning black clouds, the light of the star of Menoetius merely a myth passed down through the generations.

Of all the Space Hulks that appeared within Askellon's borders that year, only a single one was met with anything approaching a successful response. At the Hulee system's outer fringes, a Space Hulk was codified *Assassin of Pride* and it was investigated not by some ad hoc local force, but by a rapidly deployed Kill-team of the elite Deathwatch. Who or what called these Adeptus Astartes to deploy here remains unknown, and the alien hunters made no account of their mission to any of the Ordo Xenos Inquisitors operating in the Askellon Sector at that time. All that is known is that the Kill-team must have been successful in its operation, and that when the black-clad Space Marines departed they were carrying a cargo of obviously high import, which they took with them when they left in their strike cruiser. Furthermore, in the immediate aftermath of the *Assassin of Pride* boarding operation and removal of the mysterious cargo, every single Space Hulk still within Askellian space abruptly fell back into the Immaterium.

Following this burst of activity, the Pandaemonium began an unprecedented period of relative quiescence, and the Immaterium strangely becalmed for several years, during which Eldar activity peaked markedly. It was not to last, and soon after the Pandaemonium began the turbulent cycle in which it is now engaged, a cycle so all-consuming that some say it may never end.

When word of this mass Space Hulk incursion reached the ears of certain savants, they simply nodded sagely to themselves. To such as they, who have been declared mad by their peers for seeing the hidden hand of the Eldar or some other xenos strain in the Vaxi Atrocity, every woe that befalls Mankind is a potential doom wrought by the hand of the alien. One day, no doubt, they shall be proved correct.



CHAPTER II: TO SCORN THE ALIEN

The Imperium stretches across the galaxy, and humanity can be found on millions of worlds. This rightful dominance is made manifest through magnificent paintings and holos in temples and cathedral halls, assuring all within the Imperium of its eternal conquest. Those with broader experiences know this to be a horrid lie. Imperial-controlled space is filled with untold gaps, from minor species lording over but a few linked systems to larger empires covering huge swaths of space, each festering like maggots in a corpse. Outside its porous borders, alien races both known and unknown also eat away at the fringes of occupied systems. There can be no peace or accommodation between the alien and humanity, and the struggle to prevent extinction rages everywhere—a struggle that humanity, despite the sermons of preachers and exhortations of military commanders, may not win.

To fight for Mankind's survival, players have access to new options for their Acolytes, including powerful weapons, vehicles, and talents for overcoming the alien menace. Players and GMs can also work together to create Explications—new means for Acolytes to conduct extended research against xenos or other threats. This allows Acolytes to gain greater understanding for an alien culture, its relics, and the dangers it poses to Mankind, and determine new means to combat them. Lastly, there are new xenos-related Radical offerings, ranging from alien mercenaries, specialists in xenos technologies, pirates, and even elite warriors that Inquisitors and their Acolytes can employ to combat the Enemies Without.

ERADICATING XENOS

"The alien might appear friendly, or even useful. Lies! Never forget there can only be one rightfully dominant species—Mankind!"

—Duke Arvin Olliva, beginning the 9th Askellian War of Purgation

Taught from birth to fear the alien, it is no wonder that for many of the Imperium these beings represent a terrifying nightmare. While dangers from other men are a routine part of life, and daemonic horrors are threats almost none are even aware of, many know the galaxy is filled with alien menaces. To stand against the alien, be it on battlefields, forgotten ruins, or derelict starships, is to fight for humanity's survival as a species.

In this section, players find new character creation options to counter this threat. Acolytes can begin their lives on vicious death worlds, verdant garden worlds, or mysterious research stations. They may have experienced earlier service in the Imperial Navy or a Rogue Trader's fleet, defending the Imperium or expanding its borders. Acolytes may even have lived as hereteks, skirting the edges of acceptable studies with illicit technologies or alien relics. For some, the call of speed and excellence in vehicular operations bestows the new role of Ace. New reinforcement characters are also available, ranging from deadly assassins to aliens willing to ally with humans, should the payment and cause be sufficient.

NEW HOME WORLD: DEATH WORLD

Natives from worlds where there can be no respite from predatory flora and fauna; here only the most wary live for another day, often breeding survivors unparalleled in the Imperium.

“Throw your gear over there. You know how to shoot, right? Head over to the East Wall and help them repel the leech hawks. Oh yeah, welcome to Kurn.”

—Malachi Quarry, Kurn Campboss

Death worlds represent the harshest environments the Imperium has to offer that nevertheless require human occupation. Though the kinds of threats to the natives vary greatly, all of these planets share one important characteristic: human life is often short. Those who live on and survive these planets are some of the grittiest and, in some cases, battle-hardened citizens of the Imperium. Death worlds are not strictly limited to having deadly flora and fauna; in some cases the danger lies in unpredictable weather or stellar phenomena that render the planet horribly unsuited for normal habitation. Therein lies the difficulty for its inhabitants, for these worlds might contain essential resources or occupy a strategic location, and thus the Imperium has deemed that no sacrifice is too great to maintain a hold on them.

LIFE ON A DEATH WORLD

On paper, planets classified as death worlds should not be inhabited by humans. Often, however, something about these locations requires an ongoing physical presence even though life on the surface is not for the faint of heart or for the weak of body. Everyone must pull his own weight and support the larger population, or else all face imminent destruction.

DEATH WORLD RULES

A character from a death world applies the following benefits during character creation:

CHARACTERISTIC MODIFIERS

+ Agility, + Perception, – Fellowship

FATE THRESHOLD

2 (Emperor’s Blessing 5+)

HOME WORLD BONUS

Survivor’s Paranoia: While a death world character is Surprised, non-Surprised attackers do not gain the normal +30 bonus to their Weapon Skill and Ballistic Skill tests when targeting this character.

HOME WORLD APTITUDE

Fieldcraft

WOUNDS

A death world character starts with 9+1d5 wounds.

RECOMMENDED BACKGROUNDS

Adeptus Arbites, Adeptus Mechanicus,
Adeptus Ministorum, Imperial Guard

RANDOM SELECTION

If using Table 2–1: Random Home World from page 31 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, a death world can be generated on a roll of 01–15 with an odd result.



The threats on these planets vary tremendously, from aggressive predators to weather abnormalities, but that does not stop humanity from thriving against the odds. Individual roles and adherence to guidelines are crucial to the survival of any death world outpost or colony. As a result, life is often regimented, and punishment for ignoring assigned tasks is very harsh. Those unable to perform the more physical tasks provide support for those who can. No effort is wasted, and anyone capable but unwilling is dealt with severely. On worlds where lack of support from others is a death sentence, the worst punishments can be simple banishment; should the offender survive, he assuredly would hesitate before repeating his error.

While it would be easy to stay in protected habitats, often the need for the planet's resources requires that those who live there engage its deadly environments directly. In many cases, braving the world's threats means protecting the crews harvesting mineral or biological resources. For others, it means making sure that defence systems and other technologies remain operational despite the damaging effects of the planet. Whatever the reason, life is often very short and therefore tenuous. That reality comes with the understanding that the duty to the settlement, facility, or base outweighs the wants or needs of any single individual.

DEATH WORLD CHARACTERS

People hailing from death worlds are scarred individuals, both physically and emotionally. The ever-present spectre of death haunts them and can create a sense of detachment that stands in the way of strong interpersonal connections. For most of them, someone near and dear to them has perished: in front of them, in their arms, or, in extreme cases, by their own hands. As a result, they tend to be fiercely loyal to the group or larger body they serve, especially when the survival of that group is at risk, but also lean away from individual attachments lest those people be lost.

Death world natives are pragmatic and realistic. Many exhibit little tolerance for indirect options, and often rush to action before fully considering all possibilities. Some call this hot-headed behaviour reckless. Very few death world natives, however, do this out of a passionate need. They see a direct solution and move to execute with as little loss of community resources and lives as possible. Because survival is instilled as a daily practice from birth, they are notoriously difficult to kill. *Astra Militarum* tithees from these worlds are renowned as some of the fiercest fighting troops the Imperium puts on the battlefield. Though some also have specialty skills in the terrain of their home world, the combination of resourcefulness, physical skill, and sheer determination make them capable warriors on any battlefield.

As befits such hostile environments, death world natives also make excellent Arbitrators, as their practical mindset and grit enable them to survive the deadly violence of that position. Those aligned with the *Adeptus Mechanicus* or the *Adeptus Administratum*, already fairly pragmatic in nature, also thrive as their technological and logistical skills are perpetually in need. For all of them, the understanding of self-sacrifice for the larger well-being as well as the rapid thinking processes born from grappling with imminent death allow them to find effective solutions quickly when time is of the essence.

SAMPLE DEATH WORLD: KVARAN IX

Located midway between the Rubicon and Cyclopia Sub-Sectors, Kvaran IX is a strategic world as well as a source of high-grade promethium. While the planet appears suited for human life, all inhabitants must wear environmental suits when outside of the domed cities to protect against a still-undetected airborne threat. Unprotected respirations soon lead to brutal, unprovoked violence against anyone nearby, including their own flesh. The limited medicae facilities of the mining and refining camps have been utterly unable to isolate the cause, and desperate pleas for support from the Askellian Magi Biologis have so far been unsuccessful.

NEW HOME WORLD: GARDEN WORLD

Living amidst natural splendour where brutal industry is largely absent; those who live on these planets often mirror the serenity and calm surrounding them.

“It was a world so utterly peaceful and calm, that after they replaced my eyes I was eager for combat again.”

–Colonel Isimo Francon,
concerning the recovery camps on Ardruin

Garden worlds hold a unique position within the Imperium, in that they are one of the few kinds of planets with minimal technological development. Tithes from these planets are often lower than usual or are entirely non-existent, as many are lightly populated and may have no readily available resources. Instead, garden worlds offer the Imperium a multitude of idyllic settings, ranging from recuperative locales to private estates, in exchange for protection. They are tranquil environments, though worrisome considerations still dangle like loose threads on a beautiful tapestry. Some are rumoured to have been ancient terraforming experiments from the Dark Age of Technology, and could be unstable. Others are believed rediscovered after abating Warp storms, and so could disappear again without warning. Still more are thought to be the lost homes of alien species, and woe to any living there should the xenos return or reawaken.

LIFE ON A GARDEN WORLD

The vast majority of garden worlds are named for their unparalleled beauty and largely undeveloped surface. Though they have all the amenities the Imperium has to offer, they do not sacrifice the peaceful surroundings to accommodate more people. Many of these worlds are places of refuge and respite, while others are monasteries or training facilities.

GARDEN WORLD RULES

A character from a garden world applies the following benefits during character creation:

CHARACTERISTIC MODIFIERS

+ Fellowship, + Agility, – Toughness

FATE THRESHOLD

2 (Emperor’s Blessing 4+)

HOME WORLD BONUS

Serenity of the Green: A garden world character halves the duration (rounded up) of any result from **Table 8–11: Shock** or **Table 8–13: Mental Traumas** (see pages 287 and 288 of the **DARK HERESY CORE Rulebook**), and can remove Insanity points for 50xp per point rather than the normal 100xp.

HOME WORLD APTITUDE

Social

WOUNDS

A garden world character starts with 7+1d5 wounds.

RECOMMENDED BACKGROUNDS

Adeptus Administratum, Adeptus Astra Telepathica, Adeptus Ministorum, Rogue Trader Fleet

RANDOM SELECTION

If using **Table 2–1: Random Home World** from page 31 of the **DARK HERESY CORE Rulebook**, a garden world can be generated on a roll of 70–85 with an even result.

Regardless of their use, the basics of living engender the development of a mindset or lifestyle that supports what the world delivers. Healers develop new methods to aid the afflicted. Scholars and priests research or meditate on their texts and relics. Even some of the martial orders have recognised the need for contemplation and reflection to better hone their impressive combat skills. Each of these outlooks, as well as many others, develops into a micro-culture that essentially becomes the commodity of the planet.

Compared to the majority of other planets in the Imperium, garden worlds move at a different pace. While not necessarily slower in speed, the sense of urgency, or in some cases panic, found elsewhere rarely exists here. On most of these worlds, value is placed on being thorough and contemplative in all actions, weighing all possibilities and seeking the best from those available. Most natives have a relaxed flow to their lives, usually due to methodical planning and preparation. Since there is often very little internal or external conflict on these worlds, major changes in their schedules or plans seldom occur.

Though most of these planets are firmly part of the Imperium, others are privately owned or cater to other clientele. These worlds are often on the fringes of lawful sector authorities, and can exist outside the blessings of Terra. Those living here might hold much more relaxed views concerning Imperial Law, and lifetimes of dealing with the rich and powerful can hone their social skills to preternatural levels.

GARDEN WORLD CHARACTERS

Though the mindset of the community determines the much of their behaviour, many garden world natives exude an almost eerie and unearthly sense of calm. They are for the most part methodical, but approach problem-solving in a more holistic way, utilising both hard analysis and intuition to complete their objectives.

They sometimes constitute some of the Imperium's finest envoys and orators, having an innate ability to put people at ease and to connect with others. Garden worlders are open people and expressive but are equally skilled at keeping their emotions under control temporarily to achieve necessary goals. They do not relish this, however, and most make a point of finding a way soon after to process the emotional content before it finds new and unhealthy ways to manifest.

With these skill sets, garden worlders make for exceptional military analysts, healers, and diplomats throughout the Imperium. The Adeptus Administratum frequently recruits from these worlds—and though the tithes for psykers are normally low on garden worlds—the quality of the recruits from these planets ensures that very few of them escape notice from the Scholastica Psykana. The Adeptus Ministorum has also found exceptionally talented scholars and priests on these planets and often maintains permanent bases there to find new clergy. Rogue Traders who frequent such worlds often take the finest to become part of their crews, where their skills in calm discussion can aid in negotiations.

SAMPLE GARDEN WORLD: PHANUEL TERTIUS

Though the influence of the Jenin Rogue Trader Dynasty has waned, the legacy of its former greatness remains on Phanuel Tertius. Settled over two millennia ago and thought lost to the Pandaemonium, recent probes by Navigator Houses rediscovered the planet and established connection with the colony. Cut off from planned development, it has been redesignated as a healing and rejuvenation centre for Askellon's most grievously wounded. Jenin's forces have begun minor exploration efforts, though expeditions have been repeatedly lost in the spiralling mountains lining both polar regions.

NEW HOME WORLD: RESEARCH STATION

Labourers who spend generations devoted to study and gathering data; they shed little light upon the ignorance that dominates the Imperium, but still aid in its survival.

“Send the last tonnages of recordings from batch four to Adept Gaffner for transcription, reconsecrate and re-anoint the scanners, and then begin recording batch five immediately.”

–Subaltern Hieronymous Molg, Datascribe

The Imperium and the Adeptus Mechanicus have many research stations across the stars to collect data in an often vain attempt to better control Mankind’s surroundings. The aims of such stations vary, with researchers studying planetary storm patterns, dissecting captured xenos corpses, charting the stability of Warp entry locations, or probing the remains of ancient civilisations. Research stations provide a stable base of operations to Tech-Priests, scribes, adepts, servitors, and the small armies sometimes necessary to support them in these often remote locations. Most researchers never live to see any conclusive results. Once committed to a station, few ever leave, and their tasks are passed on through generations without end. Useful results might never occur, or be lost in the impossible depths of Imperial bureaucracies, but sometimes glimmers do emerge and catch the eye of those looking for aids in defending Mankind.

LIFE AT A RESEARCH STATION

Research stations are found throughout the Imperium in almost every situation, locale, or environment. Though many are on otherwise inhabited planets, they are invariably isolated or secluded from the general population, making contact only to restock supplies or take on replacement staff. Most social interactions at any given facility are bound with scripted and rote language, the original meanings of which might be long lost.

RESEARCH STATION RULES

A character from a research station applies the following benefits during character creation:

CHARACTERISTIC MODIFIERS

+ Intelligence, + Perception, – Fellowship

FATE THRESHOLD

3 (Emperor’s Blessing 8+)

HOME WORLD BONUS

Pursuit of Data: Whenever a research station character reaches Rank 2 (Trained) in a Scholastic Lore skill, he also gains Rank 1 (Known) in one related or identical Forbidden Lore skill specialisation of his choice.

The GM is the final arbiter of whether the two specialisations are related.

HOME WORLD APTITUDE

Knowledge

WOUNDS

A research station character starts with 8+1d5 wounds.

RECOMMENDED BACKGROUNDS

Adeptus Administratum, Adeptus Astra Telepathica, Adeptus Mechanicus, Mutant

RANDOM SELECTION

If using Table 2–1: Random Home World from page 31 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, a research station can be generated on a roll of doubles (11, 22, etc.).

Control and predictability govern daily life at a research station, which can include extended families of expert fabricators who spin and polish massive crystalline lenses, or of brute haulers transferring the vats of ink necessary to transcribe daily findings. All understand that the security and the progress of the station's research program require very strict scheduling to ensure optimal results. Time not spent on duty, such as for meals or sleep, is measured and monitored. Sites like these are very similar to manufactorums or forges, in that the master timetable dictates every quality of life. While this can vary considerably, there is generally one constant: regardless of individuals' wants and needs, the research always takes priority over them.

Whatever the project is, everyone—from the lead Tech-Priests and administrators down to the lowliest scribes and indentured labourers—believes that their efforts contribute to the continued greatness of the Imperium. They believe this despite the fact that, unknown to most working at them, some stations dance precariously on the thin line between sanctioned research and abominable tech-heresy.

RESEARCH STATION CHARACTERS

Though Tech-Priests and scholars are often the core of these stations, there are also guards, codifiers, and support staff who make sure that the station as a whole runs smoothly. Regardless of what a person's role is within the strata of the facility, virtually everyone claims understanding of the basic nature of the work. This comprehension is often poor at best, however, with little or no bearing on any real functions within, due to the gossip and hearsay prevalent on any world or merely mirroring the stagnating technological understanding across the Imperium. Information is commonly mangled and distorted not only from one generation to the next, but also from one research assignment to the next.

Instilled in all of them is a drive to make sure that the work continues; they are all in a perpetual state of analysis regarding their tasks and the time it takes to accomplish them. As a result, they are incredibly focused and punctual, and largely dispassionate about anything save their own specific assignments. This segmentation of tasks, however, often makes the project as a whole largely undecipherable, as those who began the experiments are often long dead and the purpose of the research has either been diffused or lost entirely. In its stead is a misplaced reverence for the hypothesised outcome, and researchers eliminate anything that contradicts that desired result, regardless of what is actually found.

While the Machine Cult and the Imperial Guard both have significant numbers on many stations, other agencies provide staff and also draw personnel from them. The Adeptus Astra Telepathica operates many facilities to study the tides of the Warp, and no matter the type of research, the massive transcription and data sorting required can lead many to positions within the Adeptus Administratum. The dark and remote locations, as well as some of the highly dangerous researches, also generate the deformed and shunned mutant. Some of these might in turn become subjects for research, a future only slightly better than the torch.

SAMPLE RESEARCH STATION: DELTA-BETA-TAU-3

Delta-Beta-Tau-3 is a mobile station located in the Thule Sub-Sector. Nominally, it is a jointly run facility of the Navis Nobilite and the Adeptus Astronomica, officially tasked with studying the Pandemonium and the Warp routes of Askellon. Since its inception, no one other than the Navigator houses and those of the Adeptus Astronomica have been allowed aboard, but numerous unmarked ships have been seen providing cargo of some sort to the station outside of the usual supply drops. Attempts to follow these craft have resulted in numerous missing ships and fatal accidents for the pursuers.



NEW BACKGROUND: HERETEK

Questers in a galaxy dominated by rote dogma and superstitious ignorance; unconcerned with permission, sanction, or personal safety, they rabidly seek knowledge regardless of the means or dangers involved.

“These primitive greenskinned beasts seem to be able to recover from even the most grievous of wounds. I simply must obtain a live sample for further study.”

—From the journals of Heretek Reylan Arn (deceased)

Not all roads to knowledge are illuminated by the Emperor’s Light or constructed by the Tech-Priests of the Adeptus Mechanicus. Despite the many laws that forbid it, there are those who travel alternate avenues to enlightenment. They do not heed the warnings that faith and obedience, not alien knowledge or foreign technology, can save them from doom. For Hereteks, the potential rewards of fashioning unconsecrated technologies, reading from ancient and forbidden texts, of tracing the secret designs of older races, and of studying the bizarre creations of alien minds far outweigh any risks. Their galaxy is a series of treasure chests, and they eagerly seek to pick locks and lift lids to discover the marvels and terrors found within.

ROLE WITHIN THE IMPERIUM

Citizens of the Imperium are taught that any knowledge or technology from a source other than the blessed forges of the Adeptus Mechanicus is not to be trusted, or even acknowledged. A Heretek knows that this is a lie. There is a vast galaxy beyond the realm of humanity, one teeming with life and populated by untold other races, each with civilizations, achievements, and technology of its own. Even dead races leave a legacy in their ruins, awaiting discovery and use by those willing to uncover and study it. Mankind itself has riches from the Dark Age of Technology, unlawful under the dictates of the Machine Cult but filled with wonders impossible to imagine. To a Heretek, the temptation to uncover such hidden knowledge and devices is too great to ignore.

The life of a Heretek is often short. Because he has a curious mind and a willingness to ignore the restraints of the dogma of the Imperium, such an explorer throws caution to the wind. He might book passage on ships of dubious provenance to the fringes of Imperial space, defile a sacred bolter pattern by attempting to improve its design, or enter forbidden caverns that legends say contain ancient evils. Particularly bold individuals attempt to break into secure vaults in order to secure some small bit of alien technology. Risk is the order of the day, for once a Heretek sets upon the path of discovery, little can dislodge him from it, and more often than not, those forbidden destinations do indeed contain ancient, and deadly, wonders.

HERETEK RULES

A character with the Heretek background applies the following benefits:

STARTING SKILLS

Deceive or Inquiry, Forbidden Lore (pick one),
Medicae or Security, Tech-Use, Trade (pick one)

STARTING TALENTS

Weapon Training (Solid Projectile)

STARTING TRAIT

Mechanicus Implants (see page 137 of the
DARK HERESY Core Rulebook)

STARTING EQUIPMENT

Stub revolver with 2 extra clips of Expander bullets or Man-Stopper rounds, 1 web grenade, combi-tool, flak cloak, filtration plugs, 1 dose of de-tox, dataslate, stablight

BACKGROUND BONUS

Master of Hidden Lore: When a Heretek makes a Tech-Use test to comprehend, use, repair, or modify an unfamiliar device, he gains a +20 bonus if he has one or more relevant Forbidden Lore skill specialisations at Rank 1 (Known) or higher.

BACKGROUND APTITUDE

Finesse or Tech

RECOMMENDED ROLES

Chirurgion, Desperado, Sage, Seeker

The risk a Heretek takes also comes in the form of being discovered by those who do not tolerate such dangerous curiosity. To knowingly ignore the Laws of the Machine Cult and edicts of the Imperium is to invite swift and final judgement, but not all who are caught in their heresy are immediately executed. Some are tortured until they reveal their sources, then allowed to serve the rest of their miserable lives as lobotomized servitors under the control of the Martian Tech-Priesthood. A few might be found by an Inquisitor of the Ordo Xenos, and have their lives become dangerous beyond even their imagining.

HERETEK CHARACTERS

Hereteks come from many different walks of life. Some were scribes who toiled away in Imperial libraries and chanced upon a stray reference that grabbed their attention. Some may have served in the Astra Militarum, witnessed the power of alien weapons, and wanted that power for themselves. There are even Hereteks who have had peaceful encounters with aliens and found themselves questioning the wisdom of ignoring the wonders of these beings and their technology.

No matter what the differences in their backgrounds, all Heretek are obsessively curious and willing to do whatever it takes to expand their knowledge of forbidden technology. This can make them useful, if not openly tolerated, when under the control of an Inquisitor of the Ordo Xenos. Operating outside of Imperial law gives Heretek unique access to knowledge that more dogmatic servants of the Emperor could never pursue. As Acolytes, Heretek enjoy a measure of safety while continuing to explore forbidden lores and mysterious devices. They may live on only by the will of their new master, but they do gain a greater freedom of movement and access to resources undreamt of when they operated independently.

The personal information networks that Heretek can form can be highly valuable—especially if they have direct connections to sources of forbidden or alien technology. Inquisitors can use such networks to secretly uncover plots against Mankind, but think nothing of terminating them if humanity profits. If that means his Heretek cease to be useful and are discarded, the Inquisitor cares not. Like all Acolytes, Heretek know this, and thus walk a fine line. They must feed their master uncovered information and secure technology that can further the Inquisitor's goals. At the same time, they must also ensure that their Inquisitor feels a larger reward awaits should he allow them to continue their work, even if that means keeping secrets from their master. In this way, the relative freedom and openness Heretek gain by joining the Inquisitor's warband is replaced by the need to once again operate in secret. Their path remains the same: filled with pursuits that carry the ever-present threat of death.

SAMPLE HERETEK BACKGROUND: THE BONE COLLECTORS

Askellian tech-lore holds that the enigmatic Eldar race makes use of a unique organic material to create many of their items, including weapons, art, and even spaceships. This sect of Heretek operating in the Asphodel Depths secretly studies any wraithbone artefacts they can gather, from Faceless Traders or even on the remains of fresh battlefields. Some reclusive Bone Collectors have claimed they have somehow replicated the psychic technology necessary to grow and shape wraithbone, or at least have shown enough promise to attract the attention of those seeking experts in such alien technologies.



NEW BACKGROUND: IMPERIAL NAVY

Carrying the Emperor's Divine Will across the stars; they are the officers, pilots, and crewmen of the Fleet who live and die in space as the Imperium's Shield against any who would threaten its borders.

"First salvo clearing the atmospheric barrier now. The xenos scum will be dealt with—perhaps even more completely than we had hoped."

—Master of Ordnance Quinlan Falkirk,
during the scouring of Brynlan III

The Imperium is made of untold of worlds across a vast galaxy, each separated by more space than it would seem possible to defend; in truth, it is impossible. It is the job of the Imperial Navy to fly in the face of this impossibility and carry the Emperor's Truth, and His troops, to where they are needed most. For all living aboard the vessels of the Navy, life is a never-ending series of wars, broken up only by the horrors of travelling through the Warp to the next battlezone. Though brutal, it is a life of duty, filled with a sense of purpose that comparatively few humans in the galaxy ever have the privilege to know.

ROLE WITHIN THE IMPERIUM

Without the Imperial Navy, the Emperor's domain would be impossible to maintain. It would surely have been reduced to nothing but a handful of systems, capable of little more than holding its own against rampaging xenos. With the Navy, Mankind sails across a sea of stars as one of the most far-reaching, diverse, and powerful races in the galaxy, its vessels acting as a tangible extension of the Emperor's Might.

The ships of the Imperial Navy have a wide range of functions, from transporting supplies, munitions, and the armies of the Astra Militarum to acting as purely offensive warships capable of engaging and destroying entire enemy fleets. Mighty as their weapons and engines might be, the living heart of each vessel is its crew. The many officers, ratings, and labourers who fill these gargantuan vessels guide them to their destinations, keep them in good repair, deploy their thunderous armaments, and lead them to victory after victory in the name of the Emperor. As humans are a more easily acquired and replaceable resource than blessed technology, Imperial ships featured little or no automation. Even the smallest Naval vessels thus require crews numbering in the thousands, all needed to man the colossal weapons, engines, and other systems that keep their ships combat ready.

Such ships truly are living cities, massive hives surrounded not only by enemy ships but the remorseless enemy of space itself. From ragged clans who live amidst the gigantic weapon batteries they hereditarily clean and load to proud officers commanding from gleaming bridges, those of the Imperial Navy are battle-ready, displaying hardened resolve forged on the anvil of conflict.

IMPERIAL NAVY RULES

A character with the Imperial Navy background applies the following benefits:

STARTING SKILLS

Athletics, Command *or* Intimidate, Common Lore (Imperial Navy), Navigate (Stellar), Operate (Aeronautica *or* Voidship)

STARTING TALENTS

Weapon Training (Chain *or* Shock, Solid Projectile)

STARTING EQUIPMENT

Combat shotgun *or* hand cannon, chainsword *or* shock whip, flak coat, rebreather, micro-bead

BACKGROUND BONUS

Close Quarters Discipline: An Imperial Navy character scores one additional degree of success on successful Ballistic Skill tests he makes against targets at Point-Blank range, at Short range, and with whom he is engaged in melee.

BACKGROUND APTITUDE

Offence *or* Tech

RECOMMENDED ROLES

Ace, Chirurgeon, Hierophant, Warrior

IMPERIAL NAVY CHARACTERS

Even the lowliest crewman aboard a ship in the Imperial Navy is likely to be exposed to experiences that no planet-bound citizen would ever have. Daily life revolves around preparing for and fighting wars, and in many cases, that means combating alien threats to human worlds. In the blackness of space, gunners and interceptor pilots engage with enemy starships. In the skies of a million planets, Thunderbolt fighters and Vulture gunships dogfight with alien aircraft or strafe ground formations. In landing bays, underdeck taprooms, and ornate officer's lounges, stories are told of the wretches fought in the Emperor's Name, and of the villainous menaces from inhuman aliens to unclean rebels.

The relentless losses in combat force naval ships to continually seek out new crew. For this reason, each planetfall includes skimming from the elite of planetary defences as well as mass impressments to fill the ranks below decks. Those who survive combat, both warriors and those skilled in healing the injured, might dedicate themselves to hunting down and destroying the foul wretches who have dared stand against their Emperor. This could include single-minded pursuits—no matter official orders—against an entire alien species or a specific enemy commander, until honour and blood are satisfied.

Naval personnel are also more inured to the horrors of space travel, such as dealing with unexpected hull breaches, leaking plasma vents, or even daemonic manifestations whilst in the Sea of Souls. This can include rough familiarity with technological operations, enough to maintain a crippled system until proper tech-rites and anointments can be provided. Depending on their duties, they might also be skilled in operating vehicles from cargo loaders to elite aerospace fighters, or in navigating routes across systems or across planetary surfaces.

Imperial Naval crew live within military structures, and though these vary from sector to sector and even ship to ship, all demand discipline and duty. Those in command are skilled at ordering and inspiring those under them, as well as supporting those above. For some, exhorting their fellows to greater efforts in the name of the Emperor is an even larger part of their lives than merely cleaning dockyards or loading supplies.

Most members of the Imperial Navy are foremost combat veterans, though, having faced bloodthirsty pirates in frantic boarding raids, long range bombardments, or more personal aerial combat. Many have seen and fought aliens, something few—if any—Imperial citizens could imagine happening. Some have studied the tactics and manners of these foes, and can provide valuable insights into localised threats or even weaknesses of specific xenos species. Better still, they have lived through combat, and stand ready to defend humanity again—perhaps in more shadowy wars few can ever know take place.

SAMPLE IMPERIAL NAVY BACKGROUND: *TRIUMPH OF JUNO*

This *Sword-class* frigate patrols the rimward fringes of the Stygies Cluster Sub-Sector, and has seen its fair share of combat with Eldar pirates and Ork raiders. Its armsmen are renowned throughout Battlefleet Askellon for their skills at repelling boarders, and it even carries a small complement of attack boats for offensive actions. Few speak, though, of the mysterious personage who comes aboard periodically to recruit men and women to her cause. Most suspect that their captain has some secretive connection to her organisation, or that the stern-faced individual was herself once part of the *Triumph's* crew.



NEW BACKGROUND: ROGUE TRADER FLEET

Explorers and privateers under the command of a legendary Rogue Trader; venturing into uncharted reaches to claim new worlds in search of profit and glory, they also face new terrors and dangers.

"This fleet has travelled all over this galaxy, and I've seen things I can't describe—alien things that lead to nightmares and death. But you know what else they lead to? Riches, mate, riches."

—Perrin Fisk, Cargo Master of the
Rogue Trader vessel *Golden Nebula*

Armed with their prized Warrant of Trade, Rogue Traders command starships throughout the Imperium and—most importantly—outside its borders into Wilderness Space. Those serving aboard these fleets have lives unimaginable for even those who also travel the void. Where others might crave the comforting drudgery of forging munitions or assembling ration packs, these men and women journey to distant and unexplored worlds with no protection or law other than what they bring with them. Some might desire only to spread the Emperor's Light into these dark reaches, or are obsessed over the violent extermination of alien races wherever they may be found, but for most, exploiting the riches from newly discovered planets and ancient civilisations dominates all else. Many die unknown and unmourned in these efforts, but through them Mankind expands even further across an ever-hostile galaxy.

ROLE WITHIN THE IMPERIUM

Rogue Traders are sanctioned operatives of the Imperium, granted rights to explore, conduct trade with humans and aliens alike, and claim new systems in the Emperor's Name. Their fleets may contain only a few vessels, or several, depending on the successes and the power of their dynasty. No matter how many or few ships, these fleets always need crew.

Rogue Traders, and thus their fleets, are unique and often idiosyncratic, and this can be reflected in those who serve under them. As such, they can often perform a variety of functions for Imperial agencies. Many feature impressive armaments and might operate in conjunction with Imperial Navy ships in defending against xenos invasions or pacifying rebellious worlds. Some fleets explore alongside the Adeptus Mechanicus to discover archaeotech and quest for fabled STC patterns.

Others are constellations of floating cathedrals, with the crews more concerned with spreading salvation and converting the souls of those lost humans found under newly discovered stars than mere profit. These fleets often travel with devout contingents from the Missionarus Galaxia, and can even lend their fury in Wars of Faith against heretics and heathens. At any time, and for the proper payment, the ships can even act as transport for personages of importance, from mere system lords to Inquisitors—especially when discretion is necessary. Like the power their master wields due to his Warrant, there are few limits as to the roles a Rogue Trader's crew can take on.

ROGUE TRADER FLEET RULES

A character with the Rogue Trader Fleet background applies the following benefits:

STARTING SKILLS

Charm *or* Scrutiny, Commerce, Common Lore (Rogue Traders), Linguistics (pick one alien language), Operate (Surface *or* Aeronautica)

STARTING TALENTS

Weapon Training (Las *or* Solid Projectile, Shock)

STARTING EQUIPMENT

Laspistol *or* autopistol (fitted with Compact weapon upgrade), shock maul, mesh cloak *or* carapace chestplate, auspex, chrono

BACKGROUND BONUS

Inured to the Xenos. A character from a Rogue Trader Fleet gains a +10 bonus to Fear tests caused by aliens and a +20 bonus to Interaction skill tests with alien characters.

BACKGROUND APTITUDE

Finesse *or* Social

RECOMMENDED ROLES

Ace, Desperado, Hierophant, Seeker

While most on board perform the harsh labour necessary to keep the plasma drives fed and the hull plating sealed, like on any other Imperial vessel, many members of the crew on a Rogue Trader's ship are more flexible in their duties. As these ships often operate outside of Imperial rule and support, those aboard must encompass a wide range of specialities, from combat expertise to engine repair, from stellar navigation to negotiation with alien races, from command to proselytism. Each new world represents new challenges and opportunities, and so the men and women of Rogue Trader fleets must be prepared for everything from friendly natives to torpedo salvos. Such flexibility, both mental and physical, is a necessity given the nature of their missions. It also makes them ideal for service in a greater cause than simply increasing their master's wealth.

ROGUE TRADER FLEET CHARACTERS

Service in a Rogue Trader fleet often is a hereditary one, with families serving their master's dynasty for endless generations. Some might even be part of the dynasty, perhaps being groomed for a captaincy one day or relegated to lesser duties as lessons in showing proper respect. These hereditary crew could be born aboard their ships, or taken aboard during visits to family holdings or colony worlds across the galaxy. Other clans might originate from those rescued from pirate attacks or from planets overrun by ravenous xenos creatures, where the survivors might require generations of service to repay the debt owed their saviours.

The personnel in these fleets often follow in the mould of their master. Should their leader be obsessed with conquest, they might further their martial abilities and study the tactics used in both stellar and planetary war. Those aboard ships devoted to exploration and seeking out the treasures of uncharted space could delve into forgotten datavaults of crumbling Warp route parchments or become experts in tracking the paths of xenos raiders. Similarly, crew working alongside fiery preachers might discover within themselves an eagerness to spread the Word of the Emperor wherever they go. The deadly nature of politics within Rogue Trader dynasties can lead some to darker but still necessary skills in assassination and secretive death.

Many, though, take on their master's zeal for riches, glory, and independence where both trading and dealmaking is foremost in every situation. Even the lowliest of deckhands can share this spirit when their fleet sails under the command of a suitably driven Rogue Trader. Familiar with making their own way and following their own lead rather than merely obeying outside dictates and laws, they can easily attract an Inquisitor's attention. All also have experiences with the unusual and alien that are exceptionally valuable as well. Though they are perhaps less inclined to perfectly obey their new master's orders, they can achieve much that a more tractable citizen could not.

SAMPLE ROGUE TRADER

FLEET BACKGROUND:

THE BOUNDLESS ENDEAVOUR

Rogue Trader Eliza Diamonde was exploring far spinward of Thaur when Eldar raiders ambushed and crippled her ship, *The Boundless Endeavour*, and left the crew for dead. Only the unexpected arrival of a nameless Inquisitor saved them. Diamonde now supplies the mysterious individual with fast passage to wherever he requires, any information she gathers in her voyages, and the pick of her crew as he demands. Though most taken never return after they depart with him, it is still considered a high honour to be chosen. Diamonde, though, has begun to wonder if the Inquisition had a hand in arranging the ambush and the lifetime of debt she owes him.



NEW ROLE: ACE

Expert drivers, pilots, and operators, skilled at communing with the machine spirits of vehicles of all kinds; utilising their craft like an extension of their own bodies, they push the machine beyond normal limits to ensure no heretic or alien escapes proper retribution.

“Don’t worry—that gap has a good five centimetres of clearance.”

—Peria Strehoff, during a speeder-carriage pursuit

In the Imperium, vehicles—like all machines—are much more than simple utilitarian devices to serve humans. Each is a sacred artefact of the Machine God, imbued with a spirit and a purpose. Those who excel in the operation of vehicles must understand this. To obtain the best results from any vehicle, the operator must honour and placate its spirit, and always treat it with the due respect. The difference between a merely skilled driver and a true Ace is a nigh-preternatural ability to commune with the spirit of a vehicle, allowing it to almost predict his actions, rather than respond to them. Some say such an ability cannot be taught, but is a gift from the Ommissiah.

Although there are many skilled pilots and drivers in the Imperium, Aces are those of singular aptitude, whose seemingly impossible feats of manoeuvring set them apart. Such skills are in high demand across the Imperium, from Lightning Strike Fighter pilots of the Imperial Navy, to Imperial Guardsmen racing their Leman Russ tanks into the heart of enemy forces, to bike-mounted gangers in the depths of hive cities, to noble feudal warriors mounted atop reptilian beasts barded in plate. What these disparate individuals have in common is a peerless affinity for operating vehicles, one which—quite understandably—often lends itself to an air of bravado.

THE ROLE OF THE ACE

The Ace has an innate skill for utilising vehicles and mounts, and hones these abilities over a lifetime in the saddle or cockpit. An Ace may constantly seek to push himself to his limits in order to further improve, braving terrain, weather, and other situations that appear impossible to others. As an Acolyte, an Ace receives many such opportunities, from swooping an Imperial Navy Valkyrie between the spires of a hive city in pursuit of heretics to racing through impenetrable jungle in a stolen Wildcat buggy in search of forgotten ruins. When an Inquisitor’s warband does require the use of vehicle, it is often in dangerous or extreme conditions, making the talents of an Ace invaluable.

For an Ace, there are few situations that cannot be solved with the appropriate application of a vehicle. A sealed vehicle allows passage through dangerous locations or inhospitable environments, ensuring that the Acolytes can travel wherever necessary in the prosecution of their duties. A rapid vehicle makes certain that no heretic or alien escapes retribution, while heavy armour and weaponry mean no foe can stand against the warband in battle. With the right vehicle—and operator—no place is beyond the warband’s reach, and no enemy beyond its power.

ACE SPECIAL RULES

An Ace character gains the following benefits:

ROLE APTITUDES

Agility, Finesse, Perception, Tech, Willpower

ROLE TALENT

Hard Target *or* Hotshot Pilot

ROLE BONUS

Right Stuff: In addition to the normal uses of Fate points (see page 293 of the DARK HERESY CORE Rulebook), an Ace character may spend a Fate point to automatically succeed at an Operate or Survival skill test involving vehicles or living steeds with a number of degrees of success equal to his Agility bonus.

An Ace’s skill and the demands of life as an Acolyte often call for death-defying stunts and feats of vehicular acrobatics. Although such manoeuvres might appear boastful and unnecessary to the ignorant, an Ace might undertake them without even considering the impressive spectacle he creates. However, an Ace is just as likely to realise the awe his abilities create in onlookers, and might enjoy showing off. Whether from a simple desire to stretch his own abilities or sheer vanity, an Ace is sure to attempt ever more difficult and impressive actions. Although some Aces specialise in walkers or other ponderous craft, many crave the thrill of speed, becoming addicted to the adrenaline of a high-speed habway chase or an aerial dogfight. Some Aces even escalate matters to such ends when another means of resolution seems possible—perhaps to the chagrin of fellow Acolytes.

In addition to his skills at operating vehicles, an Ace is intimately familiar with the inner workings of his craft, second only to a properly ordained Tech-Priest. An understanding of a vehicle and its abilities and limitations, from the integrity of its hull and support frame to the output of its plasma furnace, allows an Ace to get the most from his craft. Consequently, an Ace, especially an Acolyte serving without a dedicated support crew, might develop a knowledge of machines that the priests of the Adeptus Mechanicus would consider dangerous, even blasphemous.

ACE CHARACTERS

Vehicles are used across the Imperium for a variety of purposes, and an Ace could come from almost any world or Adeptus. The Imperial Guard is well-known for its use of vehicles, from Chimera personnel transports to Baneblade super-heavy tanks, and a skilled tank Ace might come to the attention of an Inquisitor—much to the disappointment of his commanding officers.

An Ace of an aerial bent might hail from Rogue Trader fleets or a career in the Imperial Navy. Such a pilot might be a master of dogfighting in voidfighters, inserting elite troops behind enemy lines with his Valkyrie assault carrier, or piloting interplanetary system ships. Other voidborn might also be blessed with an affinity for spaceworthy shuttles, from the redoubtable Arvus Lighter to the blessed Aquila Lander.

Those hailing from forge worlds are quite at home amongst machines. Perhaps the greatest Aces of all are the Princes of the Titan Legions, empathically bonded to the towering god-machines they direct in battle. Aces steeped in the ways of the Machine God are sure to treat the vehicles they use with even more reverence than others, knowing that any time lost due to the ritual anointments and benedictions of an engine repays itself thrice over with improved performance.

It is possible that an Ace's experience is not with vehicles at all, but living mounts. An Ace from a feral, feudal, or death world might be a skilled tamer and rider of beasts of all sorts. Such abilities can be useful far beyond his home world, as steeds of all kinds are used throughout the Imperium, from the Rough Riders of the Astra Militarum to the equines of the nobility, whose breeding is undertaken with as much care as that of their masters.

SAMPLE ACE: O BENIA BHERIN

Commander Obenia Bherin, a decorated and accomplished Valkyrie pilot in the Imperial Navy, was shot down by Eldar raiders while on a mission to drop a Militarum Tempestus squad. Aware of the unspeakable fate awaiting her comrades, Bherin pulled herself from the wreckage and, along with the survivors, stole one of the Eldar's own sleek, barbed gravitic vehicles. Adapting to the alien controls, Bherin used the xenos craft to deliver and support the squad and complete the mission. Her skill, quick action, and unconventional approach impressed the Inquisitor who had—unbeknownst to her—ordered the mission, and Bherin found herself serving in a war of a different sort.



ACE SAMPLE PATHS

Acolytes often need to be stealthily inserted into cult lairs or dropped into raging combat, and it is up to their pilot to ensure they not only arrive safely but also are extracted in dangerous situations when things have gone badly. Often this means expert manoeuvring to land at precise locations and providing ranged support to aid in pickups in the midst of hostile firefights. A player fashioning an Ace into the cool, reliable pilot who the warband counts on in such situations should hone not only his vehicular operation but also his ranged marksmanship.

RECOMMENDED ADVANCES:

Characteristics: Agility, Ballistic Skill, Perception
Skills: Command, Navigate (Surface), Operate (Aeronautica), Stealth, Tech-Use
Talents: Hull Down, Independent Targeting, Iron Jaw, Jaded, Marksman, Nowhere to Hide, Push the Limit

While transporting personnel and goods is an essential part of many piloting duties, for some the joys of solitary scouting and operations are more rewarding. This type of character can be found mounted on one-man bikes or steeds he has personally broken in, ranging ahead to reconnoiter enemy positions and pitting his skills in the saddle against any foes he encounters. A player wishing to develop an Ace character along this path can create a formidable fighter and tracker not only on poorly-developed worlds but also in the depths of underhives and alien ruins.

RECOMMENDED ADVANCES:

Characteristics: Agility, Perception, Strength
Skills: Dodge, Navigate (Surface), Operate (Surface), Scholastic Lore (Beasts), Survival, Trade (Agri)
Talents: Combat Master, Hard Target, Hull Down, Keen Intuition, Quick Draw, Skilled Rider

NEW REINFORCEMENT CHARACTERS

When conducting missions on the behest of Ordo Xenos Inquisitors, Acolytes might find themselves calling upon support from aliens or those who hunt them. These new reinforcement characters allow players to take on the role of aliens who would fight alongside humans for pay or for their own inscrutable reasons, as well as deadly killers who disguise themselves as almost anyone, including inhuman xenos beings.

CALLIDUS ASSASSIN

Influence Minimum: 60

Influence Cost: 11

Peer (Officio Assassinorum) talent lowers Influence Cost by 2

Members of this temple are devoted to the arts of deception and specialise in missions of infiltration and disruption. Using falsified faces and altered flesh, they penetrate enemy organisations until the perfect moment of assassination is at hand. Mere death is often only the beginning; using their disguised forms, they can adopt the persona of their fallen targets and lead armies astray or violent uprisings to dissolution. This can effectively destroy entire forces with but a single kill in a manner that might never be known. Often, their presence is only revealed many months later, when a carefully murdered corpse is uncovered. The unique disciplines and drugs used as part of Callidus training have been found to be most effective on the female form, and thus members of this temple are almost exclusively women.

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per) +20, Charm (Fel) +20, Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +20, Intimidate (S) +10, Parry (WS) +10, Security (Int) +20, Stealth (Ag) +20, Survival (Per) +10, Trade (Chymist) (Int) +20

Talents: Ambidextrous, Assassin Strike, Blademaster, Catfall, Combat Master, Constant Vigilance, Counter Attack, Cover-Up, Deathdealer (Melee), Deny the Witch, Exotic Weapon Training (Neural Shredder, Phase Sword), Face in a Crowd, Killing Strike, Temple Assassin, Two-Weapon Master (Melee, Ranged), Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged), Unarmed Specialist

Temple Assassin: A Callidus Assassin has supreme physical and martial training, allowing her to re-roll any Acrobatics or Athletics tests. Additionally, she has a number of additional Reactions each round equal to her Agility bonus (6) that can only be used to make Evasion tests. She can still only attempt to Evade a given attack once. At the GM's discretion, this talent also allows her to attempt Evasion tests when they might not otherwise be possible, letting her Dodge massive explosions, a descending Warlord Titan's foot, or an invisible psychic attack.

Traits: From Beyond, Unnatural Strength (2), Unnatural Toughness (2)

Gear: Callidus helmet (includes preysense goggles, micro-bead, rebreather, and respirator), 4 doses of polymorphine, 4 reloads for neural shredder, magnoculars, personal medi-kit, pict-recorder, synskin bodyglove, vox-caster

Fate Points: 2

CALLIDUS ASSASSIN					22
H 3 01-10	AR 3 11-20	AL 3 21-30	B 3 31-70	LR 3 71-85	LL 3 86-00
WS	BS	S	T	AG	INT
65	70	45	44	64	51
PER	WP	FEL	IFL		
58	55	65	48		
HALF 6	FULL 12	CHARGE 18	RUN 36	THREAT 31	
NEURAL SHREDDER			CLASS PISTOL		
RNG 20M	RoF S/-/-	DMG 2D10+5 (E) [†]			
PEN 0	CLIP 8	RLD 1 FULL	WT 3 KG	AVL NU	
SPECIAL: RELIABLE, SHOCKING, SPRAY					
POISON BLADES			CLASS MELEE		
RNG 18M	RoF —	DMG 1D10+6 ^{SB} (R)			
PEN 1	CLIP —	RLD —	WT .5 KG	AVL 1/R	
SPECIAL: RAZOR SHARP, TOXIC (4)					
PHASE SWORD			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1D10+10 ^{++SB} (R)			
PEN ++	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 2 KG	AVL NU	
SPECIAL: BALANCED, FELLING (4), PROVEN (5)					



Polymorphine: This exotic drug, when combined with the extensive Callidus training, allows the assassin to change her flesh to adopt the appearance of almost any human or even a humanoid alien. It can be used to adopt a specific appearance so long as the user has seen and studied the target, or that of a more general disguise when detailed change is not necessary.

The drug requires 2 Full Actions (or 5 minutes in narrative time) to activate and for the transformation to complete. While a polymorphine transformation is underway, the user gains the Fear (1) trait. The drug's effects lasts for 2 hours, but the user can return to her natural form before then through a Challenging (+0) Willpower test. Using the drug again within 2 hours of the last application inflicts 1 Fatigue.

A non-Callidus temple character can only assume shapes that approximate his own, as he lacks the surgical implants necessary for radical transformations. He must make a Very Hard (-30) Willpower test to control the drug's effects. Failure means the transformation is botched; the user suffers 1 Fatigue for each degree of failure and becomes an abhorrent amalgam of his current and desired form for the next 30 minutes.

Once successfully applied, polymorphine grants the user a +20 bonus for Opposed Interaction tests in situations where the adopted appearance would be desirable. For example, the guise of a renowned Imperial Guard general would be useful for gaining access to a bunker, while that of a mutant leader would not.

† *Damage inflicted from a neural shredder ignores armour, is reduced by Willpower bonus instead of Toughness bonus, and is always applied to the Head location. It cannot be applied to vehicles, terrain, or similar objects lacking a Willpower characteristic.*

†† *Damage from a phase sword ignores armour and force fields, and enemies cannot Parry an attack made with this weapon.*

KROOT MERCENARIES AND ORK FREEBOOTAS

Players can also use the following NPCs from this book as reinforcement characters. All have any appropriate Weapon Training talents associated with their standard weapons.

KROOT MERCENARY

A Kroot Mercenary reinforcement character uses the rules from the NPC profile on page 102, and has 2 Fate points.

Influence Minimum: 40 **Influence Cost:** 4
Peer (Kroot or Tau) talent lowers Influence Cost by 2

ORK FREEBOOTA

An Ork Freeboota reinforcement character uses the rules from the NPC profile on page 87, and has 2 Fate points.

Influence Minimum: 45 **Influence Cost:** 5
Peer (Orks) talent lowers Influence Cost by 2

SSLYTH MERCENARY

A Sslyth Mercenary reinforcement character uses the rules from the NPC profile on page 120, and has 2 Fate points.

Influence Minimum: 45 **Influence Cost:** 6
Peer (Dark Eldar) talent lowers Influence Cost by 2

ROGUE TRADERS AND ELДАР RANGERS

Players can also use the following NPCs from the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook as reinforcement characters. All have any appropriate Weapon Training talents associated with their standard weapons.

ELДАР RANGER

An Eldar Ranger reinforcement character uses the rules from the NPC profile on page 413 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, and has 2 Fate points.

Influence Minimum: 55 **Influence Cost:** 7
Peer (Craftworld Eldar) talent lowers Influence Cost by 2

ROGUE TRADER

A Rogue Trader reinforcement character uses the rules from the NPC profile on page 399 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, and has 2 Fate points.

Influence Minimum: 50 **Influence Cost:** 5
Peer (Rogue Traders) talent lowers Influence Cost by 2



XENOS ARMOURY

“You need to stop worrying. I know exactly how this thing works.”

—Last words of Aken Linz, Faceless Trade smuggler

Surrounded, outnumbered, and accosted from all angles throughout the galaxy, humanity exists on a knife’s edge in the face of the alien menace. Be they brutish Orks, secretive Eldar, evasive Kroot, or the remnants of numerous unknown, extinct alien civilisations, the Askellon Sector has long had to face a plethora of non-human threats. The Ordo Xenos stands against these dangers, all of its Inquisitors and their Acolytes well versed in the strange and terrible technology the alien uses to tear down the works of Mankind.

This section covers equipment used across the Askellon Sector by those within the Ordo Xenos and their agents, as well as a myriad of xenos technologies from all manner of alien races. Additionally, it contains rules for new vehicle types as well as Xenos Relics—ancient and alien devices that can date from the early days of the Askellon Sector.

Unless specified otherwise, using each weapon in this section without penalty requires possession of its singular Exotic Weapon Training talent. Additionally, ammunition for alien weaponry such as Eldar shuriken catapults or Kroot rifles has an Availability the same as its weapon, rather than one level more Available as normal. At the GM’s discretion, openly displaying xenos weapons or gear can depress a warband’s Subtlety.

ARMOURY IMPERIALIS

Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos and their Acolytes utilise a plethora of peculiar devices to achieve their aims. Many are extremely dangerous, and often seen as bordering on the heretical.

ADAPTIVE LOGIS-ENGINE

Many heretically advanced alien species use arcane encryptions and mechanical systems far beyond the understanding of the Adeptus Mechanicus. Nevertheless, Explorator Tech-Priests of Core Theta have recovered archaeotech devices from Askellon’s past that can defeat the alien and show the superiority of the Omnissiah. The Adaptive Logis-Engine uses intrusion machine spirits, chem dispensers, electromagnetic pulses, and other forceful means to break into alien networks and make them accessible to the agents of the Imperium.

To operate an Adaptive Logis-Engine, an Acolyte must place it onto the alien computer, lock, or other interface device that he wishes to crack, and make a Hard (–20) Security (Int) test. If successful, the engine accesses the alien device, and the character treats it like any other cogitator or electronic lock for the purposes of additional tests. An Adaptive Logis-Engine takes 5 minutes to access a basic alien system, less 30 seconds for each degree of success on the user’s Security test (to a minimum of 30 seconds).

MODIFYING AND REPAIRING XENOS EQUIPMENT

The inner workings of most xenos equipment remain a complete secret to humanity. Simply figuring out how one works is difficult enough, let alone repairing or modifying such unknowable technology. To repair and modify xenos equipment, a character must first make a Hard (–20) Forbidden Lore test, and the Specialisation for the Forbidden Lore must be the same as the alien race that constructed the item (if this is unknown, then the item cannot be repaired or modified—it is simply too alien!). Note that he can benefit from assistance from another Acolyte on this test, as per page 25 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook. He then repairs/modifies the item using the rules on page 142 or 162 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook. There is a base –20 penalty on the test, due to the alien nature of the item, but a +5 bonus on the attempt for every degree of success on the Forbidden Lore test. For example, an Acolyte who wishes to add an expanded magazine to a standard shuriken catapult would first need to make a Forbidden Lore (Xenos–Craftworld Eldar) test before attempting the modification.

DESOLEUM POWER BLADE

This blade is a small but lethal power weapon that attaches to an easily concealable, spring-loaded wristband. It is popular among gang leaders and assassins alike.

This blade is a power weapon and thus requires the Weapon Training (Power) talent. It has the Compact modification (see page 162 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook).

DIGI-WEAPON

Impossibly advanced, the digi-weapons of the enigmatic Jokaero slip easily onto a user’s fingers like rings and fire either with a simple press of a button or by squeezing the band. The weapons themselves vary immensely and never seem to completely run out of ammunition, a facet of their design that remains a mystery to the Adeptus Mechanicus.

Table 2–1: Armoury Imperialis on page 44 lists the most common digi-weapon, which incorporates the profile of a laspistol. Other digi-weapon types can include ones incorporating the profile of a flamer, grav pistol, inferno pistol, needle pistol, plasma pistol, or others at the GM’s discretion, by using that weapon’s damage, penetration, and weapon qualities. The rate of fire, range, and clip size are always set to the values listed in Table 2–1: Armoury Imperialis (see page 44), no matter the weapon’s normal values. Digi-weapons are worn as rings and do not prevent the hand from performing other tasks. They take one hour to recharge between shots, cannot be modified, and always have an Availability of Near Unique.

FIRESPRITE NEEDLER

A design common to assassins and those who wish to remain discreet, and thus popular on Snope's World, the firesprite uses an integral forearm mounting. Possessing a prodigious rate of fire, the weapon often drains its ammunition reserves—kept in a magazine under the forearm—within a few seconds.

The firesprite needler has the Compact, Forearm Weapon Mounting, and Silencer modifications (see pages 162–164 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook).

FLARE SHIELD (MAGNUS-PATTERN)

Well known for its force fields, Cerix Magnus retains many templates from before the Compliance. The flare shield, originally designed to protect the forge world's vehicles, is one such device, and Inquisitors with strong ties to the Tech-Magi of that planet sometimes gain access to this excellent form of protection.

A flare shield has a protection rating of 25, which is doubled against weapons with the Blast or Spray qualities. If the shield overloads, it inflicts 1d10 Energy damage to the wearer that ignores Toughness bonus and Armour.

GHOSTBLADE

In the aftermath of Imperial Compliance, Core Theta's Magi took it upon themselves to create a facsimile of the mysterious phase swords of the Callidus Assassin Temple. Never able to truly replicate the design, and lacking an example to study, the final weapon is dangerous to both its user and victim.

When a ghostblade overheats, it is damaged and counts as a regular sword until repaired. Its weight includes the backpack power supply.

GRAVITON GRENADE

Exceptionally rare, graviton grenades are often only used by elite Adeptus Mechanicus forces or powerful Inquisitors as a last resort to defeat both heavily armoured enemies and their vehicles.

GRAVITON HAMMER

A somewhat unusual melee device, this weapon is the result of near-heretical experimentation on Core Theta to incorporate graviton technology into personal combat. Many are passed down from Inquisitor to Inquisitor as a rite of ascension for Acolytes within the Askellon Sector.

The graviton hammer is a two-handed weapon.

HOLO-SPECTUS

Consisting of a powerful launching tube, a long-range pict-recorder, and a holographic display, the holo-spectus allows its user to survey a large area to plan movements, seek out targets, or even find his bearings. Aimed skyward, the compact launcher blasts the fist-sized recorder several hundred metres vertically into the air, where it floats on tiny grav plating, feeding what it sees to a three-dimensional holographic display on the base-unit. As the user turns on the spot, so does the floating recorder, allowing the user to see kilometres in every direction. With a simple flick of a switch, the recorder zeroes in on the base unit and returns to the launcher in a matter of seconds.

Successfully firing a holo-spectus into the air requires a Challenging (+0) Tech-Use test, after which the user gains a visual representation of the area below the hovering pict-recorder out for several kilometres. The control interface allows the Acolyte to zoom and highlight parts of the holographic display, and turning on the spot causes the recorder above to turn, allowing the Acolyte to survey the area around him in great detail, which grants a +20 bonus to Navigate (Surface), Survival (Tracking), and Scrutiny tests. The recorder can stay airborne for 5 hours before its power cell is exhausted.



INTEGRATION CANNON (THETA-PATTERN)

Another of Core Theta's eccentric designs, the cannon uses the principals of graviton weaponry, but with a wildly different effect. It projects a pulsing orb of gravitic energy that shatters on contact.

A second later, the rapid mass increase draws anything nearby towards the centre, crushing it in a gruesome manner.

After being fired, the cannon creates a gravitic anomaly within the area of its Blast quality that persists for 1d5 rounds. Whenever a character begins his turn in this area, he must make a Hard (-20) Dodge (Strength) test. If he fails, he is Immobilized until the end of his turn and suffers a single automatic hit to a randomly determined location for 4d10+4 Impact damage with penetration 8.

QUILLGUN (BINARY-PATTERN)

Originally created to fire toxins tailored for specific Askellian xenos threats, the quillgun would be a rare and highly sought-after weapon for Inquisitors and Rogue Traders alike if not for a clerical error that saw Selvanus Binary manufacture this weapon in enormous numbers. The esteemed dart gun now floods the Faceless Trade, where outlaws and smugglers use readily available chemicals to capture valuable specimens for sale, slavery, and other unscrupulous ends.

When Acquired, the quillgun comes with one clip each of Ataractic and Venenum rounds, the only types of ammunition it can use. The weapon has the Silencer modification.

SILVER SHIELD

Coated with a rare variant of the peculiar substance used to make Vouxian mirrorcloth fabric, this elegant shield has a perfect mirror finish that turns away energy attacks in the same way that mirrorcloth reflects light. Its defensive qualities were discovered by accident, and analysis from many within the Askellian Tech-Priesthood has still not revealed how it achieves this without the aid of any actual field technology. Some of Vouxis Prime's Ivory Guard modify their shields to incorporate small braziers, to better light their way when patrolling the endless tunnels beneath the surface.



Table 2-1: Armoury Imperialis

NAME	CLASS	RANGE	RoF	DAM	PEN	CLIP	RLD	SPECIAL	WT.	AVAILABILITY
Adaptive Logis-Engine	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4kg	Extremely Rare
Desoleum Power Blade	Melee	—	—	1d10+3 E	5	—	—	Power Field	2kg	Very Rare
Digi-Weapon	Pistol	3m	S/—/—	1d10+2 E	0	1	—	Reliable	0.5kg	Near Unique
Firesprite Needler	Pistol	30m	—/4/8	1d10+2 R	2	16	2 Full	Inaccurate, Toxic (2)	1.5kg	Extremely Rare
Flare Shield	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3kg	Extremely Rare
Ghostblade	Melee	—	—	1d10+5 E	6	—	—	Felling (4), Razor Sharp, Overheats	6kg	Extremely Rare
Graviton Grenade	Thrown	SBx3	S/—/—	1d10+7 I	7	1	—	Blast (3), Concussive (3), Graviton	1kg	Near Unique
Graviton Hammer	Melee	—	—	2d10+5 I	7	—	—	Concussive (3), Graviton	8kg	Near Unique
Holo-Spectus	Pistol	600m	S/—/—	—	—	1	—	—	6kg	Very Rare
Integration Cannon	Heavy	100m	S/—/—	4d10+4 I	8	6	3 Full	Blast (5), Concussive (0), Inaccurate	65kg	Near Unique
Quillgun	Basic	120m	S/—/—	†	†	3	Full	†	6kg	Very Rare
Quillgun (Ataractic)	—	—	—	—	0	—	—	Concussive (5), Reliable	—	Very Rare
Quillgun (Venenum)	—	—	—	1d10+1 I	3	—	—	Reliable, Toxic (4)	—	Scarce
Silver Shield††	Melee	—	—	1d5+1 I	1	—	—	Defensive	5kg	Extremely Rare
Stasis Cage	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6kg	Extremely Rare

† These attributes and additional special qualities are dependent on ammunition type.

†† Provides 4 AP to the Body and Arm wielding the shield (this is doubled to 8 AP against weapons that cause Energy damage), which stacks with existing armour.

STASIS CAGE

The Stasis Cage is a fast and portable method of holding xenos creatures for further study. Consecrated for use during one of the many Askellian Purgation Wars against a now-forgotten alien race, many still exist for use by Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos, elite bounty hunters, and Faceless Trade hunters.



A Stasis Cage generates a field large enough to hold anything with a Size trait of 7 or lower that does not possess the Incorporeal trait for five hours (if using the battery pack), or indefinitely if connected to a power source. A creature inside cannot take any actions, and characters outside cannot attack or interact with anything inside. The cage itself is compact and unfurls into a flat circular plate three metres across. It activates via a small remote mechanism; once active, it can hover with its captive two metres above ground and can be pushed or towed as desired.

ELDAR ARTISTRY

Masters of technology before mankind first left the surface of Holy Terra, the Eldar produce equipment that far outclasses the wargear of lesser races. Be they from craftworlds or pirate fleets, dark webways or garden worlds, their equipment possesses a beauty and elegance that echoes the tragic history of their once-mighty empire.

AGONISER

A weapon capable of inflicting unrelenting torment, the agoniser usually takes the form of a barbed whip made from an unknown xenos material. Rare even in the hands of the most Radical Inquisitors or their most vicious of Acolytes, it overloads a target's nervous systems with each cruel lash, inflicting gruesome neural damage regardless of the target's size or protection.

When a character suffers Critical damage from an attack with a Best craftsmanship agoniser, his Perception characteristic is also permanently reduced by 1d5.

CLONE FIELD

Clone fields project a series of perfect holographic duplicates in order to confuse and distract opponents. Each duplicate moves in perfect synchrony, shifting and moving as enemy blades and bullets pass harmlessly through.

The wearer of an active clone field doubles his degrees of success on successful Dodge tests. Once per round, a character wearing an active clone field may re-roll a failed Dodge test. Finally, a character wearing an active clone field gains one extra reaction each round that he can only use to perform the Evasion reaction.

ELDAR PLASMA GRENADE

Vastly superior to the crude and unstable designs of the Adeptus Mechanicus, these grenades deliver a focused blast of intense heat and electromagnetic interference that leaves surviving foes disoriented. A cache of these grenades is a rare find, and single grenades often go for extravagant prices in Faceless Trade dens.

ELDAR POWER SWORD

A sleek, elegant weapon that puts the designs of any Askellian forge world to shame, an Eldar power sword's keen balance and lightweight grip makes it an excellent duelling blade. It is often seen as a sign of status amongst Rogue Traders as well as Ordo Xenos Inquisitors in the sector to possess one, either as a gift from alien partners or as spoils from battle.

HARLEQUIN'S KISS

Very few within the Askellon Sector have witnessed the horrifyingly destructive power of the Harlequin's Kiss, but the weapon's reputation is well-known. The signature weapon of the inscrutable Harlequins, the weapon takes the form of a long tube protruding from the forearm. When struck against a target it expels a strand of monofilament that quickly finds any exposed flesh or armour breach.

Once it penetrates the flesh, the alien filament unspools, liquefying organs and shredding internal machinery in seconds. Rare by Eldar standards, let alone the Imperium's, it is a weapon of high prestige, even among those that frown upon the use of xenos technology.



SHIMMERSHIELD

The shimmershield's jewel-encrusted outer shell conceals a potent force field that extends out from the wielder to protect both him and his nearby allies.

The shimmershield has a protection rating of 30, and its protective field extends in a 5 metre radius. It protects everyone inside against ranged attacks that originate from outside the field's area of effect, but not from those ranged attacks that originate from within its radius or from melee attacks.

SHARDCARBINE

A more compact version of the basic splinter rifle, this weapon is often used in boarding actions to capture fresh slaves, and also features prominently in some of the xenos mercenary bands that operate in Askellian space. Though it has a shorter range, the shard carbine makes up for this with greater firepower.

SHURIKEN CATAPULT

The standard armament for the citizen-soldiers of Eldar craftworlds, like all shuriken weapons they use gravitic accelerators to fire slices of plasti-crystal at tremendous velocities. The hail of razored discs can slice apart limbs before a target knows it is under attack.

SHURIKEN CANNON

The most powerful portable shuriken weapon, these cannons can rip apart light armour. They are very useful in decimating entire groups, as each burst unleashes a horrific volley of firepower.

SHURIKEN PISTOL

Relatively common for Eldar weaponry, many in the Faceless Trade carry one of these pistols to both impress and intimidate. Members of the Cerulean Pact especially admire shuriken pistols as a sign of their prowess in smuggling Eldar devices.

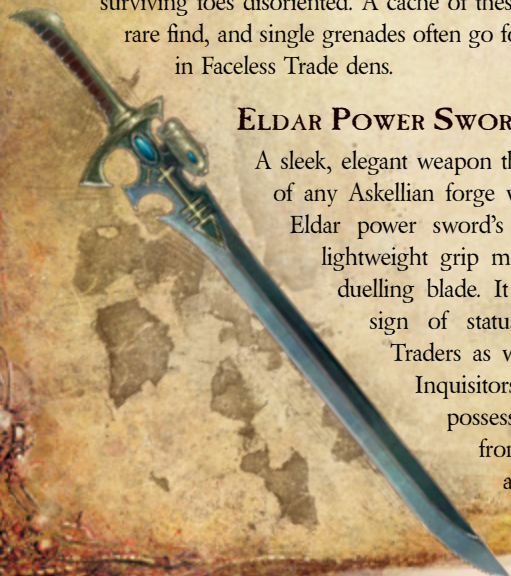
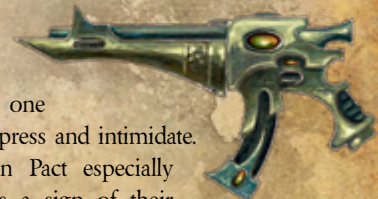


Table 2–2: Eldar Artistry

NAME	CLASS	RANGE	ROF	DAM	PEN	CLIP	RLD	SPECIAL	WT.	AVAILABILITY
Agoniser	Melee	3m	—	1d10+3 E	6	—	—	Flexible, Power Field, Tearing, Shocking	2kg	Extremely Rare
Clone Field	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.5kg	Near Unique
Eldar Plasma Grenade	Thrown	SBx3	S/—/—	1d10+8 E	8	1	—	Blast (4), Shocking	0.5kg	Very Rare
Eldar Power Sword	Melee	—	—	1d10+5 E	4	—	—	Balanced, Power Field	1kg	Extremely Rare
Harlequin's Kiss	Melee	—	—	1d10+8† R	10	—	—	Felling (4), Tearing	1kg	Extremely Rare
Shardcarbine	Basic	60m	S/3/5	1d10+2 R	3	150	2 Full	Storm, Toxic (1)	3kg	Extremely Rare
Shimmershield	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1kg	Near Unique
Shuriken Cannon††	Heavy	60m	—/—/10	1d10+6 R	4	200	2 Full	Razor Sharp, Reliable	18kg	Extremely Rare
Shuriken Catapult	Basic	80m	S/3/10	1d10+4 R	3	120	Full	Razor Sharp, Reliable	2.5kg	Extremely Rare
Shuriken Pistol	Pistol	30m	S/3/—	1d10+4 R	3	60	Full	Razor Sharp, Reliable	1.2kg	Very Rare
Splinter Cannon††	Heavy	110m	—/—/10	1d10+5 R	4	300	3 Full	Tearing, Toxic (4)	5kg	Extremely Rare
Splinter Pistol	Pistol	30m	S/3/—	1d10+2 R	3	120	2 Full	Toxic (1)	1.5kg	Very Rare
Splinter Rifle	Basic	80m	S/3/5	1d10+2 R	3	180	2 Full	Toxic (2)	2kg	Extremely Rare

† The wielder's Strength bonus is not added to the damage inflicted by a Harlequin's Kiss.

†† This weapon grants the firer the Auto-Stabilised trait when in use.

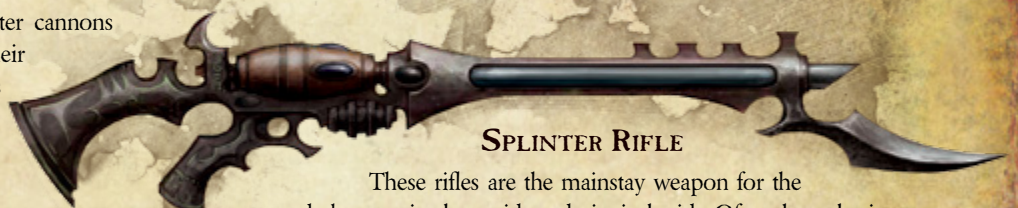
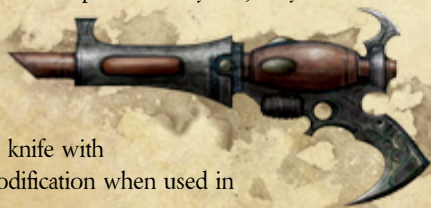
SPLINTER CANNON

Large yet still relatively lightweight, splinter cannons can puncture personal armour to ensure their payload of venomous ammunition tortures flesh, to the delight of their users.

SPLINTER PISTOL

Often found with both sadistic Eldar slavers and those hunting them, these pistols are the smallest type of splinter weapon, but are still as cruel and deadly as any other. Firing slivers of poisoned crystals, they ensure painful deaths.

Many splinter pistols have bladed attachments, and as such each counts as a knife with the Mono weapon modification when used in melee combat.



SPLINTER RIFLE

These rifles are the mainstay weapon for the dark xenos in slave raids and piratical raids. Often the only signs of assaults from such users are the remnants of the bloodsoaked splinter-crystals littering now-empty settlements or colonies.

Many splinter rifles have cruel bladed or spiked metal attachments, and as such each counts as a spear with the Mono weapon modification when used in melee combat.

ORKY KNOW-WHATS

In stark contrast to the refined equipment of the Eldar, Ork technology is perhaps the most crude and haphazard known to man. Ork weapons are heavy, brutal, and often defy any

rational explanation for how they operate. Orks see none of these things as drawbacks, and in fact take the most enjoyment from weapons that have the largest kick, that make the loudest noise, or that produce the most smoke.

BIG CHOPPA

Big choppas go a step beyond the basic choppa design, often incorporating all manner of whirring saws, unstable energy fields, and sharpened metal “teef” bolted into the blades. They are most often used by Ork Nobz, who proudly swing their big choppas against friend and foe alike with wild abandon.

A big choppa is a two-handed weapon. At the GM’s discretion, it can have the Power Field quality; if it does, it should also have the Overheats quality.



BIG SHOOTA

The largest shoota used by most Orks, big shootas spray crude bullets and shell casings in all directions, much to the delight of their owners. So long as they are loud and impressive, few greenskins care if they actually hit their targets.

BURNA

A terrifying weapon of surprising sophistication—at least by Ork standards—it combines a highly volatile flamer with a dangerous short-ranged cutting torch. Useful for everything from herding squigs to carving holes in hull plating, burnas fulfil a variety of roles within Ork society.

The burna has two profiles (one for melee and one for ranged combat), and requires two hands to use in either mode. Its weight includes the backpack fuel tank.



Table 2–3: Orky Know-Whats

NAME	CLASS	RANGE	ROF	DAM	PEN	CLIP	RLD	SPECIAL	WT.	AVAILABILITY
Big Choppa	Melee	—	—	2d10 R	2	—	—	Tearing, Unbalanced	10kg	Extremely Rare
Big Shoota	Basic	120m	—/—/10	1d10+6 I	2	60	2 Full	Inaccurate, Unreliable†	6kg	Very Rare
Burna (Melee)	Melee	—	—	1d10+5 E	5	—	—	Power Field, Unwieldy	8kg	Very Rare
Burna (Ranged)	Basic	20m	S/—/—	1d10+4 E	2	6	Full	Flame, Spray, Unreliable†	8kg	Very Rare
Choppa	Melee	—	—	1d10+1 R	2	—	—	Unbalanced	1kg	Rare
Rokkit Launcha	Basic	150	S/—/—	2d10+5 X	6	1	Half	Blast (2), Inaccurate, Unreliable†	6kg	Very Rare
Shoota	Basic	60m	S/3/—	1d10+4 I	0	30	Full	Inaccurate, Unreliable†	4kg	Rare
Slugga	Pistol	20m	S/3/—	1d10+4 I	0	18	Full	Inaccurate, Unreliable†	2kg	Rare
Stikkbomb	Thrown	SBx3	S/—/—	2d10+5 X	2	1	—	Blast (2), Unreliable†	1kg	Rare

† When used by an Ork, this weapon loses the Unreliable special quality.



CHOPPA

The Choppa is the quintessential Ork weapon and takes on many different forms, from massive hatchets, to heavy machetes, to rudimentary analogues of chainswords. Virtually every Ork owns a choppa of some description, and its above-average lethality makes it more than just a simple melee weapon.

For any non-Ork character with a Strength bonus of 3 or less, a choppa requires two hands to wield.

ROKKIT LAUNCHA

Little more than an oversized warhead stuck to a basic launching mechanism, these crude ballistic weapons embody an Ork's innate need to make things blow up. Wildly inaccurate and packed with enough explosives to wreck heavy vehicles, most Orks find the simple act of firing one an exhilarating experience and actually hitting the target an almost secondary consideration.



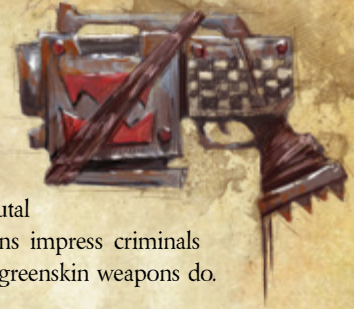
SHOOTA

Aside from the more specialised equipment such as burnas and rokkit launchas, the majority of Ork ranged weaponry encompasses a collection of solid projectile weapons referred to as shootas. Superficially similar to autoguns, shootas hurl heavy hand-made slugs capable of punching a fist-sized hole into a target. Luckily, Orks are anything but accurate, and they mostly enjoy the noise these weapons make when fired.



SLUGGA

Though relatively small, these pistols are as filled with dakka as any other Ork weapon. Gang leaders and Faceless Traders sometimes carry them as signs of their brutal combat skills, for few weapons impress criminals and heretics alike as much as greenskin weapons do.



STIKKBOMB

Stikkbombz consist of explosives attached to the end of short rods and act like frag grenades. As crude as any other Orky invention, some boyz end up using their stikkbombz as clubs, since the weapons' large size makes them surprisingly effective at cracking skulls.

A stikkbomb counts as a truncheon when used in melee combat. If a character fails a Weapon Skill test to use it this way with 3 or more degrees of failure on the test, the stikkbomb immediately detonates.



KROOT HUNTING GEAR

Even those well-versed in xenos cultures consider this strange avian race a mystery. Kroot display a level of technical proficiency with their equipment that contradicts their primitive nomadic existence. Askellian observers note a wide variety of complex energy weapons in the hands of Kroot mercenaries, yet have found no evidence of how they make them, or why they seem so beyond the capabilities of the Kroot that wield them.



KROOT RIFLE

This rifle, perhaps the signature weapon of the entire race, does little more but add to the mystery of just how advanced the Kroot really are as a species. In stark contrast to other weaponry the Kroot use, it seems almost primitive—a simple device festooned with totems and fetishes that also doubles as a bladed staff. The rifle's ammunition is anything but, however, and fires bolts of plasma (or in some cases, high-density sniper rounds) over long distances. Easily the most common Kroot weapon in the Askellon Sector, a Kroot rifle still fetches a good price for traders.

A Kroot rifle counts as a staff with the Mono weapon upgrade when used in melee combat.

PHOTON GRENADES

A more efficient type of Imperial photon flash grenade, the Kroot use photon grenades to overwhelm their enemies. Combined with the grenades' shrill screeching, the blast blinds opponents and leaves them easy victims for assault.



A character within the blast radius of a photon grenade that detonates who lacks eye protection must make a Challenging (+0) Agility test or be blinded for a number of rounds equal to his degrees of failure.

PULSE CARBINE

Few examples of a pulse weapon exists outside of Kroot hands in Askellian space, making the weapon's details yet another aspect of their enigma. Each pulse carbine contains an integrated grenade launcher, making it capable of firing photon grenades as well as the standard plasma pulse rounds.

PULSE PISTOL

These pistols, like all pulse weapons, feature gyroscopic stabilisation to aid in marksmanship. Few Kroot use them, however, favouring the brutality of their own knives and bladed rifles instead, to the puzzlement of the Askellian Magi Xenologis.



PULSE RIFLE

The Askellian Machine Cult regard pulse weapons with disdain for their heretical designs, yet many seek them out to discover the methods the weapons use to contain and fire their distinctive plasma pulses. The rifle version is seen both in the hands of xenos hunters and in the guarded displays of hive nobles eager to impress fellow collectors of alien artefacts.

Table 2-4: Kroot Hunting Gear

NAME	CLASS	RANGE	ROF	DAM	PEN	CLIP	RLD	SPECIAL	WT.	AVAILABILITY
Kroot Rifle	Basic	110m	†	†	†	†	†	—	6kg	Very Rare
Kroot Rifle (Pulse Round)	—	—	S/2/—	1d10+5 E	1	6	2 Full	—	—	—
Kroot Rifle (Sniper Round)	—	—	S/—/—	1d10+7 R	5	1	Half	Accurate	—	—
Photon Grenade	Thrown	3xSB	S/—/—	—	—	—	—	Blast (12)	0.5kg	Very Rare
Pulse Carbine	Basic	60m	S/—/3	2d10+2 E	4	24	Full	—	6kg	Extremely Rare
Pulse Carbine (Photon Grenade)	—	60m	S/—/—	—	—	1	Half	Blast (12)	0.5kg	Very Rare
Pulse Pistol	Pistol	40m	S/2/—	2d10+2 E	4	16	Half	—	3kg	Extremely Rare
Pulse Rifle	Basic	150m	S/2/4	2d10+3 E	4	36	Half	—	8kg	Extremely Rare

† These attributes are dependent on ammunition type.

XENOS WEAPONS

CACHE D-216-98

Discovered in M39 by a team of Askellian Explorators on a dead world rimward of Aventine, the cache designated D-216-98 began as simply another collection of scarcely understood xenos weaponry. In the decades since, adepts on Core Theta have received reports of similar caches scattered across the sector. The weapons's creators remain a mystery, though Tech-Magi and xenos scholars now believe they are the work of a species ancient and malevolent beyond compare. Inquisitors with Eldar contacts are especially concerned, as more and more of these items are found in raids against Faceless Traders, and whisper of the dead race that might awaken to destroy Askellon—the Necrontyr.

ABLATIVE PROJECTOR

The most common weapon found within cache D-216-98, the ablative projector emits a glowing emerald beam that reduces flesh, armour, and anything else it touches to atoms within seconds.

CASCADE LANCE

Originally thought to be an ornate staff for melee combat, an accidental (and devastating) activation revealed it also fires a tightly focused beam of exotic particles with enough power to melt tank hulls and reduce living creatures to ash.

A cascade lance requires two hands to wield when it is used as a melee weapon.

CONCUSSION BEAMER

This compact weapon appears to utilise a form of anti-matter that none of the Askellian Tech-Priests can fathom. The near-invisible blast of energy explodes violently on contact, and can tear targets in half with a single burst.

MOLECULAR BLADE

Featuring an oddly shaped blade that extends from either side of the grip, a molecular blade appears to flicker in and out of reality, and corrodes anything it hits.

RESONANCE ARC

Instead of an expected exotic particle beam, when the adepts of Core Theta first managed to activate this device, it instead emitted a single arc of lightning that danced across the laboratory. Tech-Priests and servitors alike were killed before the arc dissipated, leaving behind shattered bionics and scorched skeletons.

When a character using a resonance arc rolls a 9 or 10 for damage, or kills a target, a bolt of electricity arcs from the original target to a randomly selected target within 5 metres, inflicting an additional automatic hit with the weapon's profile on the new target's Body location. This extra hit can result in further additional hits as the arc leaps from target to target.

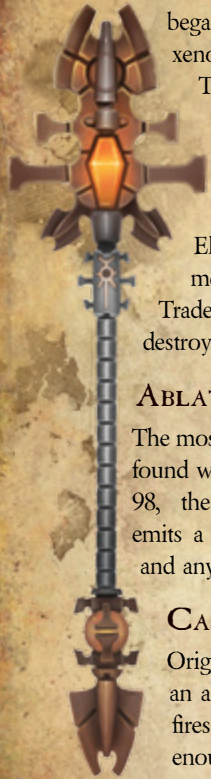


Table 2–5: Xenos Weapons Cache D-216-98

NAME	CLASS	RANGE	ROF	DAM	PEN	CLIP	RLD	SPECIAL	WT.	AVAILABILITY
Ablative Projector	Basic	100m	S/2/–	1d10+8 E	5	–	–	Reliable, Vengeful (9)	10kg	Extremely Rare
Cascade Lance (Melee)	Melee	–	–	1d10+6 E	8	–	–	Concussive (1), Power Field	6kg	Near Unique
Cascade Lance (Ranged)	Basic	15m	S/–/–	1d10+12 E	10	1	Half	Proven (5), Reliable	6kg	Near Unique
Concussion Beamer	Pistol	30m	S/3/–	2d10+5 X	4	–	–	Concussive (1), Reliable	4kg	Near Unique
Molecular Blade	Melee	–	–	1d10 R	5	–	–	Corrosive, Razor Sharp, Tearing	15kg	Near Unique
Resonance Arc	Basic	75m	S/–/–	2d10+3 E	3	–	–	Shocking, Reliable	20kg	Extremely Rare

ARTEFACTS OF THE LOST RACES

Compliance brought many changes to Askellon, and not just to its human inhabitants. The few species that had endured millennia of Mankind's settlement there went into hiding as the Imperium's influence swelled. Of those few, most no longer exist and joined the dead species that rose and fell long before man's arrival. Agents of the Ordo Xenos, in concert with the Askellian Adeptus Mechanicus, have made great strides in cataloguing the types of alien equipment across the sector, but even they have only scratched the surface of the nearly endless array of terrifying devices.

Repairing or modifying these weapons requires the Forbidden Lore (Xenos-Lost Races) skill.

AKVRAN CUTTER

Scant records remain of the Akvrani, although Askellian scholars have long debated whether their annihilation occurred before or during Compliance. Few Akvrani artefacts remain; the Akvrans cutter is one of the more common, a grenade that sends out a planar shockwave leaving little but severed torsos in its wake.

GULDANIRI BILE PROJECTOR

Although little evidence of their civilisation remains, the weapons of the Guldaniiri continue to terrorise Low Worlds across Rubicon. Their bile projectors fire bursts of a concentrated caustic liquid powerful enough to melt flesh and armour alike. Popular with the Faceless Trade, these weapons are dangerously easy to find, something many Ordo Xenos Inquisitors find troubling.

HAVATIAN RINGBLADE

A subterranean and secretive species that existed on but a few Thule Sub-Sector planets, the Havat only appeared a few times in Askellian history. Most know of the xenos from the ringblade, a strange chakram with a corrosive liquid core. Both a melee weapon and a grenade, some believe the Havat used the liquid within the ring to create and maintain their underground civilisation.

A character may use a Havatian ringblade as a melee weapon or as a grenade. If used as a grenade, it explodes on impact and is destroyed.

KYAIRES RIVEBLADE GRENADE

Records indicate that the Kyaire left Askellian space only a few hundred years after the Imperium's arrival during one of the grand Purgation Wars to cleanse the sector of aliens. Xenos tales hold that they relied on launcher-style weaponry that used a variety of highly potent rounds, some of which still survive to this day in concealed vaults along the Cyclopa Sub-Sector.

Table 2-6: Artefacts of the Lost Races

NAME	CLASS	RANGE	ROF	DAM	PEN	CLIP	RLD	SPECIAL	WT.	AVAILABILITY
Akvrans Cutter	Thrown	3xSB	S/-/-	2d10 E	6	1	-	Blast (3). Concussive (3). Proven (4)	1kg	Extremely Rare
Guldaniiri Bile Projector	Basic	60	S/-/-	3d10 E	-	10	3 Full	Blast (2). Corrosive. Toxic (2)	11kg	Very Rare
Havatian Ringblade (Melee)	Melee	-	-	1d10+4 R	3	-	-	Razor Sharp	1kg	Extremely Rare
Havatian Ringblade (Ranged)	Thrown	3xSB	S/-/-	1d10+6 X	6	1	-	Blast (2). Corrosive	1kg	Extremely Rare
Kyaires Riveblade Grenade	Thrown	3xSB	-	1d10+6 R	10	-	-	Razor Sharp	1kg	Very Rare
Neural Catalyser	Pistol	35m	S/-/-	2d10 X	-	-	-	Concussive (3). Overheats	3kg	Extremely Rare
Talonblade	Melee	-	-	1d10+3 R	4	-	-	Razor Sharp. Tearing	1kg	Very Rare
Xenarch Death-Arc	Basic	100m	S/3/6	1d10+3 E	0	90	Full	Inaccurate. Shocking	10kg	Very Rare

NEURAL CATALYSER

Seemingly made from pure crystal, the neural catalyser has no moving parts, trigger, power source, or any clear indications of how it functions. Fired by squeezing the grip, the catalyser sends a stream of energy that tears not at the body, but the mind. Samples have been discovered across the sector, leading many to wonder at the extent of whatever (hopefully) dead race created the weapons.

Damage inflicted by a neural catalyser ignores armour, and is reduced by the target's Willpower bonus instead of its Toughness bonus. Whenever a hit from a neural catalyser inflicts damage on a target (after reduction for Willpower bonus), the target also suffers 1d5 Willpower damage.

TALONBLADE

Crafted from the cruel talons of a still-unknown species, these blades are growing in use across the Asphodel Depths, worrying many Ordo Xenos Inquisitors. They are prized by hunters and pitfighters alike for their perpetual sharpness and the ugly wounds they produce.

XENARCH DEATH-ARC

The death-arc of the distant and possibly extinct Xenarch species unleashes a crackling bolt of energy that, once it hits, forms a conduit between the gun and its victim. The longer the exposure, the more electrical energy the gun channels into the target.

When a character wielding a Xenarch death-arc would inflict multiple hits from a single attack using this weapon, he instead resolves a single hit against the first hit location he struck as part of the attack. This hit inflicts 1d10+3 additional Energy damage for each hit he would have inflicted beyond the first.

JOKAERO WEAPON MODIFICATIONS

Baffling creatures, the Jokaero often appear as docile apes but are actually intuitive masters of technology. While meaningful communication with them is nearly impossible, they can take a pile of scrap and turn it into a dangerous weapon, a suit of power armour, or starship components—all with seemingly no effort. How or why they do this remains a mystery, but anyone lucky enough to hold the service of a Jokaero Weaponsmith has a doorway to many powerful, if random, devices.

USING A JOKAERO WEAPONSMITH

A Jokaero is a Service as per page 178 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, with an Availability of Extremely Rare and requiring an Influence of 50 or higher. An Acolyte can give a weapon to a Jokaero for modification, rolling up to four times on Table 2-7: Jokaero Modifications and applying all the results. The weapon's owner can ignore or re-roll results inapplicable to that weapon (such as Fluid Action on a melee weapon). If one or more results come up as Aesthetic Alteration, however, discard the other results and reduce the warband's Subtlety by 1d5 to represent the unearthly new appearance. Each weapon takes twenty-four hours to modify and the results are permanent (even if they are of no use). The Jokaero, for unknown reasons, refuse to modify the same weapon twice.



Table 2-7: Jokaero Modifications

D100 ROLL	MINOR POWER
01–17	Aesthetic Alteration
18–20	Accurate
20–22	Balanced
23–25	Compact
26–28	Custom Grip
29–31	Deactivated Safety Features
32–34	Fire Selector
35–37	Fluid Action
38–40	Forearm Weapon Mount
41–43	Silencer
44–46	Melee Attachment
47–49	Modified Stock
50–52	Mono
53–55	Motion Predictor
56–58	Pistol Grip
59–61	Proven (3)
62–64	Quick Release
65–67	Razor Sharp
68–70	Reinforced
71–73	Reliable
74–76	Good Craftsmanship
77–79	Storm
80–82	Suspensors
83–85	Targeter
86–88	Tox Dispenser
89–91	Twin-Linked
92–94	Vengeful (9)
95–97	Vox-Operated
98–100	Best Craftsmanship

NEW VEHICLES

In their efforts to enact their master's wishes, Acolytes must move across the worlds of Askellon in all manner of craft. So too do their enemies, such as Faceless Traders who hide in the shadows, moving proscribed xenos artefacts across the sector by any method they can afford.

AIRCRAFT IN DARK HERESY

Piloting an aircraft is significantly more complex than driving a ground vehicle. Many pilots can spend years in perfecting the art of aerial manoeuvres and learning how to push their machines to the limits. The following rules provide the means for using aircraft in DARK HERESY.

Flying uses the same rules for driving ground vehicles (see page 250 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook). Flying vehicles use Altitudes as described on page 249 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook (Low, High), with an Altitude of Ground below that of Low for takeoff and landing. If a flyer also has the Skimmer vehicle trait, then it can also fly at the Hovering Altitude. If noted in its rules, a flyer can also venture above High Altitude into the new Altitude of Orbital and enter the airless space surrounding a planetary body.

NEW VEHICLE TRAIT: FLYER

The following rules apply to a vehicle with the Flyer vehicle trait:

- Flyers must move at least their Tactical Speed every turn; a flyer moving less than this descends by one level of Altitude at the start of the pilot's turn.
- As a general rule, a flyer can only turn 45° (instead of 90°) each time it moves its own length in distance. It can turn more than once during a given Movement action, provided it moves a sufficient distance each time.
- Flyers can have their Altitude changed via the Tactical Manoeuvring action, altering their Altitude by one level higher or lower. Altitudes can be increased only when using a Full Action in this way.
- Flyers ignore ground terrain while airborne (except in the case of mountains, hive cities, or other exceedingly tall features).
- Flyers that go Out of Control while airborne immediately descend by one Altitude level and turn in a three-dimensional random direction using the Scatter Diagram on page 230 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook. This can result in a ground crash (see below).
- Unless it is already at ground level, a flyer that is destroyed automatically crashes (see below).
- Firing on an airborne flyer incurs a -20 penalty to Ballistic Skill tests on top of any other penalties. Flyers at High or Orbital Altitudes cannot be targeted by ground forces unless a weapon or user has a special ability allowing for this.
- A flyer that crashes for any reason is treated as a skimmer crashing from a height of 10 metres or higher, as described on page 256 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook.



FLYING AN AIRCRAFT

A pilot must have Operate (Aeronautica) skill before using an aircraft, but standard flying does not require any Operate tests once airborne (in the same manner as driving a ground vehicle in normal operation). A pilot can use applicable vehicle combat actions as listed on page 251 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, along with the two new aerial manoeuvres below:

AERIAL MANOEUVRE: LOCK ON

Type: Half Action

Subtype: Movement

The pilot attempts to get behind his adversary. As part of this action, the pilot makes an Opposed Challenging (+0) Operate test against a single enemy craft. If he succeeds, and is able to end his movement so that his craft is able to target that craft, then he and each other character aboard his craft gains a +20 bonus to Ballistic Skill tests against that opponent. If he scores 3 or more degrees of success higher than the opponent, he can also immediately fire any pilot-controlled weapons at that enemy as a Free Action. Other enemies, however, gain a +10 bonus to Ballistic Skill tests against the pilot's craft until the start of the pilot's next turn.

AERIAL MANOEUVRE: TIGHT TURN

Type: Full Action

Subtype: Concentration, Movement

As part of this action, the pilot makes a Challenging (+0) Operate test. The vehicle moves its Tactical Speed, following the standard combat movement restrictions. If he succeeds on the test, he may turn the vehicle make a 90° each time it moves its own length in distance (instead of only 45°) and may increase or decrease the flyer's Altitude by one level.

AELURUS HEAVY TRIKE

Used on numerous Askellian worlds, the Aelurus is a sturdy vehicle with reinforced wheels to pull it through a wide variety of off-road terrain. Lightly armed and armoured with modular construction, models with cargo, passenger, and even smuggling variants exist across the sector.

AELURUS HEAVY TRIKE		WHEELED
FRONT: 12	SIDE: 12	REAR: 10
CRUISING SPEED: 80 KPH		TACTICAL SPEED: 18 M
MANOEUVRABILITY: +0	SIZE: ENORMOUS	AVL: AV
CARRYING CAPACITY: 2	INTEGRITY: 12	THREAT: 12
CREW: DRIVER		
VEHICLE TRAITS: BIKE, RUGGED, WHEELED		

Modular Design: Although normally designed to carry both the driver and two passengers, the Aelurus' design allows for alternate configurations, enhancing the vehicle's flexibility. Some trikes remove the two passenger seats to carry an extra 200kg of cargo (three times the norm), others replace the cargo area completely with a third passenger seat, and those operating in dangerous areas even add light weapons such as pintle-mounted linked autoguns.

TWIN-AUTOGUNS		CLASS BASIC
RNG 100M	RoF S/3/10	DMG 1d10 + 3 (I)
PEN 0	CLIP 150	RLD 2 FULL
SPECIAL: TWIN-LINKED		WT 10 KG
AVL SC		



AQUILA LANDER

The Aquila Lander mostly finds itself transporting dignitaries to and from the surface of planets, but it is not uncommon for warbands to secure one for personal transport. Not a fighter by any means, the Lander still enjoys the significant armour that keeps its often-important passengers safe.

AQUILA LANDER		AIRCRAFT
FRONT: 24	SIDE: 24	REAR: 20
CRUISING SPEED: 2200 KPH		TACTICAL SPEED: 1200 M
MANOEUVRABILITY: +10	SIZE: IMMENSE	AVL: VR
CARRYING CAPACITY: 10	INTEGRITY: 25	THREAT: 25
CREW: PILOT		
VEHICLE TRAITS: ENCLOSED, ENVIRONMENTALLY SEALED, FLYER, SKIMMER		

WEAPONS

An Aquila Lander has one of the following hull-mounted weapons:

AUTOCANNON			CLASS HEAVY	
RNG 300M	RoF S/3-	DMG 3D10 + 8 (I)		
PEN 6	CLIP 48	RLD 2 FULL	WT 40 KG	AVL VR
SPECIAL: RELIABLE				
HEAVY BOLTER			CLASS HEAVY	
RNG 150M	RoF -/-/6	DMG 1D10 + 8 (X)		
PEN 5	CLIP 120	RLD 2 FULL	WT 40 KG	AVL VR
SPECIAL: TEARING				
MULTI-LASER			CLASS HEAVY	
RNG 150M	RoF -/-/5	DMG 2D10 + 10 (E)		
PEN 2	CLIP 100	RLD 2 FULL	WT 35 KG	AVL VR
SPECIAL: RELIABLE				

Aerospace Vehicle: An Aquila Lander can reach Orbital Altitude.
Ceramite Hull: Designed to leave and re-enter the atmosphere very quickly, the Aquila's ceramite plating makes it more resistant to heat-based weaponry. Attacks made against it with weapons with the Melta quality do not benefit from that quality.

ARVUS LIGHTER

One of the ubiquitous landing craft in the Imperium, the Arvus Lighter is a workhorse design that makes up for its lack of armaments with its versatility. Able to shift heavy loads of cargo, carry passengers to and from space, and in rare situations act as an assault boat, the Arvus Lighter is a reliable and rugged design that any pilot is happy to see.

ARVUS LIGHTER		AIRCRAFT
FRONT: 22	SIDE: 20	REAR: 20
CRUISING SPEED: 1600 KPH		TACTICAL SPEED: 1000 M
MANOEUVRABILITY: -15	SIZE: MASSIVE	AVL: RA
CARRYING CAPACITY: 10	INTEGRITY: 25	THREAT: 25
CREW: PILOT		
VEHICLE TRAITS: ENCLOSED, ENVIRONMENTALLY SEALED, FLYER, RUGGED		

Aerospace Vehicle: An Arvus Lighter can reach Orbital Altitude.
Cargo Hauler: Designed primarily for carrying cargo to and from orbit, an Arvus Lighter can carry several tonnes of additional equipment, small gun emplacements, and even light vehicles. If not lifting cargo, it doubles its carrying capacity for cramped-but-manageable transportation.
Ceramite Hull: Designed to leave and re-enter the atmosphere very quickly, the Arvus Lighter's ceramite plating makes it more resistant to heat-based weaponry. Attacks made against it with weapons with the Melta quality do not benefit from that quality.



SENTINEL

Common around spaceports, military depots, and anywhere else cargo must be moved, loaded, or stored, the Sentinel provides a durable and flexible moving platform. Equipped with a large hydraulic lifter, it can move bulky items quickly and efficiently, and defend itself in dire situations. More than just a workhorse, the Sentinel's modularity allows for quick conversion to scout or combat roles, allowing its operator to keep watch over vital or sensitive material.

SENTINEL		WALKER
FRONT: 15	SIDE: 15	REAR: 15
CRUISING SPEED: 45 KPH	TACTICAL SPEED: 10 M	
MANOEUVRABILITY: +10	SIZE: ENORMOUS	AVL: AV
CARRYING CAPACITY: 0	INTEGRITY: 20	THREAT: 18
CREW: DRIVER		
VEHICLE TRAITS: ENHANCED MOTIVE SYSTEMS, OPEN-TOPPED, WALKER		

WEAPONS

A Sentinel can be equipped with one of the following hull-mounted weapons:

POWERLIFTER		CLASS MELEE
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 2D10 + 8 (I)
PEN 4	CLIP —	Wt 45 KG
SPECIAL: CONCUSSIVE (2), PRIMITIVE (8), UNWIELDY		
AUTOCANNON		CLASS HEAVY
RNG 300M	RoF S/3-	DMG 3D10 + 8 (I)
PEN 6	CLIP 30	Wt 40 KG
SPECIAL: RELIABLE		
HEAVY FLAMER		CLASS HEAVY
RNG 30M	RoF S/-	DMG 1D10 + 5 (E)
PEN 4	CLIP 10	Wt 45 KG
SPECIAL: FLAME, SPRAY		
LASCANNON		CLASS HEAVY
RNG 300M	RoF S/-	DMG 5D10 + 10 (E)
PEN 10	CLIP 30	Wt 55 KG
SPECIAL: PROVEN (3)		
MULTILASER		CLASS HEAVY
RNG 150M	RoF -/5	DMG 2D10 + 10 (E)
PEN 2	CLIP 100	Wt 35 KG
SPECIAL: RELIABLE		

Armoured Sentinel: Some Sentinels sacrifice speed in favour of an enclosed cockpit and heavier armaments. An Armoured Sentinel increases its Front armour to 25, loses the Enhanced Motive Systems vehicle trait, but gains the Enclosed vehicle trait.

Powerlifter: A Sentinel equipped with a powerlifter is capable of carrying a considerable amount of equipment in a single load, up to 3,000kg at a time, and lift/tilt up to 6,000kg. Picking up or setting down objects requires a Full Action.



SKERAB WALKER

Built from a template that pre-dates Compliance, the mighty Skerab thunders across dozens of Askellian planets. Known as Harvesters on Kalto and Earthmovers on Vouxis Prime, each multi-story walker plods along on six powerful legs, striding over fields and quarries alike. The Skerab is so large that its crews are more akin to families, and generations live out their entire lives on and around their Skerab, teaching their children how to operate it just as their fathers did before them.

SKERAB WALKER		WALKER
FRONT 35	SIDE 35	REAR 35
CRUISING SPEED: 10 KPH		TACTICAL SPEED: 5 M
MANOEUVRABILITY: -30	SIZE: TITANIC	AVL: CM
CARRYING CAPACITY: 50	INTEGRITY: 45	THREAT: 2
CREW: DRIVERS (3), COMBINE OPERATORS (10+), ENGINEER, TECH-ADEPTS (3), ATTENDANT AND IMPLANTED SERVITORS (10+)		
VEHICLE TRAITS: DAMAGE CONTROL, WALKER		

WEAPONS

Harvesters mount a single ventral combine harvester array:

COMBINE HARVESTER ARRAY		CLASS MELEE
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 8D10 + 8 (R)
PEN 6	CLIP —	RLD —
WT 2 MG		AVL CM
SPECIAL: FELLING (8), INACCURATE, RAZOR SHARP, UNWIELDY		

Earthmovers come with two digging shears:

DIGGING SHEAR		CLASS MELEE
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 6D10 + 4 (R)
PEN 12	CLIP —	RLD —
WT 1 MG		AVL CM
SPECIAL: CONCUSSIVE (6), INACCURATE, UNWIELDY		

Titanic Behemoth: Skerab Harvesters dwarf almost everything on a planet's surface, each one more akin to a small village than a simple vehicle. Over 500 metres across and several stories high, GMs might treat a Skerab Harvester less as a vehicle and more as a mobile hab block.

Unavoidable Attack: Anything with the ill fortune to end up underneath an active Skerab Walker suffers a single automatic hit from its combine harvester array or digging shear. Due to the massive scale of the Skerab, a character cannot use an Evasion reaction to avoid this hit. If the target is Massive (Size 7) or larger, the array shuts down after inflicting the hit to avoid damaging the blades. It takes the crew an hour of repairs and cleansing rituals to restart the blades.

WILDCAT TRANSPORT BUGGY

Notorious for its association with the Faceless Trade, the Wildcat is designed to outrun pursuers rather than fight them head on. It features four wheel-housings that each turn independently of one another, allowing for greater manoeuvrability for any driver skilled enough to handle the tighter corners. Each Wildcat has a turret ring capable of mounting several types of weapons, and many outlaws modify their Wildcats to carry extra cargo containers for smuggling and contraband.

WILDCAT TRANSPORT BUGGY		WHEELED
FRONT: 18	SIDE: 15	REAR: 15
CRUISING SPEED: 120 KPH		TACTICAL SPEED: 15 M
MANOEUVRABILITY: +15	SIZE: ENORMOUS	AVL: RA
CARRYING CAPACITY: 0	INTEGRITY: 15	THREAT: 18
CREW: DRIVER, GUNNER		
VEHICLE TRAITS: ENHANCED MOTIVE SYSTEMS, OPEN-TOPPED, WHEELED		

WEAPONS

One hull-mounted autogun with a forward facing arc:

AUTOGUN		CLASS BASIC
RNG 100M	RoF S/3/10	DMG 1D10 + 3 (I)
PEN 0	CLIP 60	RLD FULL
WT 5 KG		AVL AV
SPECIAL: —		

One pintle-mount with one of the following:

HEAVY STUBBER		CLASS HEAVY
RNG 100M	RoF -/8	DMG 1D10 + 4 (I)
PEN 3	CLIP 80	RLD 2 FULL
WT 30 KG		AVL RA
SPECIAL: —		
FLECHETTE CANNON		CLASS HEAVY
RNG 60M	RoF S/2/-	DMG 1D10 + 2 (R)
PEN 2	CLIP 30	RLD 3 FULL
WT 35 KG		AVL RA
SPECIAL: CRIPPLING (2), TEARING		

Shielded Cargo: Wildcat buggies in service to Faceless Traders often feature special hidden storage areas coated or glazed with a substance that confuses prying scanners. Anyone attempting to scan for shielded cargo suffers a -30 penalty to that test. A Wildcat with such a shielded cargo has an Availability of Very Rare (instead of Rare).

Speed Booster: In addition to its already formidable speed, all Wildcats come equipped with a capacitor coil capable of overcharging the vehicle's engine for a short period of time. As a Half Action, the driver may activate the booster. For the next six rounds (30 seconds), the Wildcat's Cruising Speed and Tactical Speed increase to 120 kph and 15m, respectively, and the Wildcat's Manoeuvrability becomes -20. After use, the capacitor takes 1 hour to recharge, during which time it cannot be used again.

XENOS RELICS

The influences of ancient xenos civilisations touch almost every Askellian planet in some way. From the highest worlds of the Grand Processional to the most distant Low Worlds, the scattered remnants of once-vast empires reach out from the dust, hinting at glories and tragedies long past. Often finding little more than the shells of ancient buildings or sometimes the timeworn bones of extinct species, occasionally a naïve explorer or fortune seeker might come across something equal parts wondrous and terrible, an object that might enthral the masses, or sentence entire planets to their doom.

This section describes only a few of the many Xenos Relics that litter Askellon. Each is unique or extremely singular in form, and Acolytes do not acquire them via the usual methods of Availability and Requisition. Instead, they must locate, contain, or wrest them from the hands of forgotten vaults, cultists, and Faceless Traders, often as the major plot for a campaign or Inquest (as described in the **DARK HERESY** supplement **ENEMIES WITHIN**). Their rules include additional narrative effects and suggestions for other ways they can be used, but Game Masters are encouraged to alter them as desired. GMs are also encouraged to create their own Xenos Relics; there are innumerable other items of ancient design—such as the Crystal Simulacra, the Massless Rings, or the Eyes of the Andar—ready to become the basis for new investigations.

THE ÆTHERIC CUBE

The device known as the Ætheric Cube appears several times throughout Askellian history, and almost always connected to pleasure dens and the disappearance of important political figures. Described as roughly the size of a man's head, the cube apparently expands outwards to form a sort of scaffold large enough for someone to enter. Said to suspend its user within a field of glowing energy, reports state that the cube creates an artificial reality within the user's mind. It is seemingly benign—those that claim to have used the device report its power to enact any desired fantasy—but some texts indicate that former users lay trapped within this dreamlike world, and that, without warning, the cube itself has closed with people still inside.

HUNTING FOR THE RELIC

Numerous groups seek out the Ætheric Cube, for a variety of reasons. Many nobles yearn for the device because of its reported ability to create a perfect fantasy world, but just as many seek the cube in the hope of finding others thought lost within the device. The Sameen Cabal, a collection of Ordo Xenos Inquisitors with extreme Istsvanian leanings, also search for the device as they claim it took the life of their leader. More disturbing are the tales of Harlequin troupes, and the toll they reap on Faceless Traders for any information on the box's whereabouts.

USING THE RELIC

Activating the Ætheric Cube transforms the device into a larger empty scaffold with open sides roughly three metres tall and wide. Stepping inside activates the device, instantly suspending the user a few feet off the ground in a golden energy field. The cube creates whatever soothing reality the user desires, and an Acolyte can use this to both remove Fatigue and heal from injury.

Each hour of use counts as 24 hours of complete rest. However, when the character attempts to leave the illusory field he must make a Willpower test, with a -10 penalty for each hour he spent inside (-10 for 1 hour, -20 for 2 hours, etc.). If the character fails, he gains 1d5 Insanity Points for every degree of failure. If he fails by 4 or more degrees of failure, the Ætheric Cube collapses with him still inside. Someone else can attempt to reactivate the cube in the hopes of finding the lost character, but must make a Willpower test in the same way to escape once he finds his comrade. The GM could also use the device as part of an Acolyte's interrogation, or to allow characters to rapidly study some esoteric subject matter without disturbance.

ALREEN'S DIAMONDS

Despite numerous data purges, many know Imperial Compliance was not as peaceful as official histories record. One name scrubbed from history is that of General Alreen, who led a coalition of worlds with unsurpassed adeptness, though if these forces were fighting for or against the nascent Imperium is still debated. After Alreen's defeat, the burgeoning Cult of the Machine in Askellon discovered that her forces coordinated their attacks across the vastness of space through the use of crystalline xenos devices that allowed instantaneous communication to every other crystal.

Testing also found that each time one of these small, roughly spherical items was used, every other crystal broadcast its location as a small burst of indecipherable static. To their horror, the Tech-Priests discovered that there were many more crystals than first thought, and that some were broadcasting as far away as the dreaded Halo Stars. Worse, repeated activations showed the signals getting closer and closer.

HUNTING FOR THE RELIC

A small coalition of Askellian Tech-Priests and Ordo Xenos Inquisitors now sift through any rumours that may lead to undiscovered crystals, but they dare not use the diamond-like items in their possession to locate any others for fear of who (or what) might control the crystals located outside the sector. In the millennia since Askellian Tech-Priests first identified the crystals, any they failed to collect have scattered across the sector. Faceless Traders place a high value on the crystals, as their actions are far easier without the need for astropathic choirs.

USING THE RELIC

Using one of Alreen's Diamonds is no more complicated than using a vox-caster and a message sent from one crystal to another arrives almost instantly, regardless of distance. The difficulty lies in the fact that every other crystal acts as a receiver, so anyone who has his own can listen to any message sent through the network. Ultimately, a single stone is not much of a threat, but the potential doom the crystals represent for the entire sector is what makes them so dangerous, and why any warband would want to locate and isolate as many as possible. Alternatively, Acolytes might wish to gather crystals specifically to learn of the unknowable alien horrors that exist outside of Askellon, and GMs might want to play up these risks and the dangers that might result from using one.



CRANIAL LEECHES

These alien grub-like creatures have been linked to many mysterious deaths and heretical actions across the sector, when individuals have acted against all previous accord or rationality. Legends have that some grotesque species grows the leeches, which detach and seek out sentient life as their prey. Others hold that the leeches are bioengineered weapons from some unknown race that either departed Askellon long ago, or uses the leeches as part of advance forces. Most tales relate that once a leech implants itself inside cranial tissue, either slowly insinuating itself under skin or forcibly burrowing through eyes or other soft entry points, its host falls under alien domination or is easily manipulated by any around him.

HUNTING FOR THE RELIC

Some accounts have the leeches originating along Thule's trailing edges, from one of the many worlds still unexplored in Wilderness Space there. Many believe, though, that they are grown in vats and sold through the Faceless Trade, and several Inquisitorial actions have been made to find and destroy these sources or gain control of them for use in interrogations. While some raids have been successful, the continued appearance of the leeches across the sector indicates other sources still remain.

USING THE RELIC

A leech can be applied to a character's skin, and requires roughly 5 minutes to agonisingly make its way into a brain and spread its tendrils across neural tissue. The host becomes highly suggestible, and carries out any instructions without hesitation unless he makes a Hellish (-60) Willpower test. He might also begin acting oddly at the GM's discretion, performing actions that could represent the orders of his alien masters.

Removing an implanted leech (without damaging the host) requires 6 degrees of success on an Extended Very Hard (-30) *Medicae* test. For every degree of failure, however, the leech causes 1d10 Impact damage on its host's head location, which cannot be reduced for any reason. If there is no concern for the host's well-being (or continued life), a leech can be forcibly removed with no test required. Removed leeches die within seconds, no matter the means used, and cannot be used again.

FARNOV'S DOORWAY

When Ordo Xenos Inquisitor Deynisia Farnov claimed to have located a stable doorway out of the Askellon Sector, free from the machinations of the Pandaemonium, none of her peers believed her. When she failed to appear for a special cabal gathering some twenty years later, a number of her most trusted Acolytes entered her personal villa to find the truth. What they found were the remnants of a madwoman. Unreadable alien screeds covered every wall, pages of diagrams and equations cluttered the hallways, and at the centre of Farnov's study lay a gruesome tableau, a stone archway covered in wires and tubes, all connected to the bodies of several dead xenos species, including what appeared to be an Eldar psyker. Only a single piece of text remained legible, scrawled hastily in blood: "Keep them out!" In the decades since, every Acolyte involved vanished without explanation, and outside of Farnov's diagrams no sign remains of the strange gateway she reportedly discovered.

HUNTING FOR THE RELIC

Many readily dismiss Farnov's findings and the madness she left behind, but several outspoken Inquisitors believe that not only is Farnov's Doorway real, but that it also relates to several other mysterious artefacts known throughout the sector. Acolytes in service to these Inquisitors have sought out locations with reports of the desiccated remains of aliens, especially Eldar corpses, for fear that whoever holds the doorway might be using the bodies to power the device.

USING THE RELIC

The doorway appears to operate in the same manner as an Eldar webway portal, but uses living psykers as its power source. Acolytes with the Forbidden Lore (Psykers) can perform a Very Hard (-30) Tech-Use test to implant a psyker into the device via the various glowing cables it contains; the psyker immediately suffers 1d5 Energy to the head location, ignoring armour and Toughness bonus, for each degree of failure on the test. Once connected, a Hellish (-60) Tech-Use test is needed to open the doorway, with a +10 bonus for every psyker connected after the first. It remains open for 10 seconds for every level of combined psy rating the connected psykers possess (for example, if the connected psykers possess a combined psy rating of 5, the doorway would stay open for 50 seconds). Any psykers removed during the doorway's operation suffer 2d10 Energy damage, which cannot be reduced for any reason, and the device immediately shuts down.

Once the doorway shuts down, all remaining connected psykers also suffer 2d10 Energy damage to the head location, ignoring armour and Toughness bonus. Stepping through the doorway sends the Acolyte to another doorway of similar design on a completely different planet, perhaps in a different sector, so players must be certain about stepping into the unknown. While the doorway is open, travel is possible in both directions. The GM may use the doorway to bring in adversaries, especially alien ones, or instead feature the doorway as something the Acolytes must fight to keep closed.

THE HELM OF ZACHARIAH

A rare Inquisitor who made no secret of his affiliations or his power, Jedrek Zachariah was notorious for his interrogation methods. One of the Askellon Sector's most successful Inquisitors, Zachariah exposed hundreds of xenophilic cults in his time, and personally put over a thousand Faceless Traders to the sword. Word spread that Zachariah used some form of sorcery to extract information from captives, and some reported that the Inquisitor employed an arcane device of alien origin—a type of helm that linked him to a prisoner, and gave him full access to his mind. When agents of the Ordo Hereticus came to question Zachariah, the Inquisitor made the odd choice to fight them, dying in a hail of las-blasts and plasma fire. The battle burnt his palace to the ground, but rumours persist that the alien helm survived, whisked away during the conflict by some of his surviving followers.

HUNTING FOR THE RELIC

Thanks to his reputation, many groups now seek the Helm of Zachariah, as well as any of the late Inquisitor's living followers. Numerous members of the Askellian Ordo Hereticus seek the device in an effort to put the entire Zachariah affair behind them, and a number of forge worlds, including Core Theta, have expressed a theory that the device might be a rare type of alien psybernetic enhancement. Various criminal organisations across the sector also seek the device, and elements of the Faceless Trade offer a high price for any information that might lead to the helm's origins or the hope that similar devices might exist.

USING THE RELIC

The Helm of Zachariah is a heavy and uncomfortable helmet not designed for human physiology, and features a series of twisted threads that extend out from the helmet to the interrogation subject. Once active, the user gains both the Telepathic Link and Terrify powers from the Telepathy discipline at an effective psy rating of 4, but the powers can only be used on the other person connected to the helm. Unfettered access to another being's mind is unusual for even true psykers, and thus the user gains 1 Insanity point for every degree of success or failure on any Focus Power test made whilst using the helm. Use of the helm cannot trigger Psychic Phenomena or other Warp-based perils.

THE REMAINS OF NARWIL V

Core Theta's oldest records speak of a small Explorator fleet that set off in the aftermath of the Horus Heresy in an attempt to gather technology lost during the war. Little remains of what it found, but there was mention of a massive alien crypt floating with the crumbling debris that was once Narwil V. Inside the edifice, there were twelve oddly-shaped repositories, but no sign of whatever had resided in them. Many of Core Theta's Tech-Priests assume the items had some role in the planet's destruction, but some of the Ordo Xenos reject this as too simplistic a theory, and hypothesise that the alien devices have even more terrifying power.

HUNTING FOR THE RELIC

The Tech-Priests of Core-Theta have the largest stake in finding the items, and investigate any instance of sudden population decrease, or where moons or even planets have been discovered reduced to orbiting rock. Despite the Magi of the Adeptus Mechanicus's normal disdain for working with others, they might even join forces with Ordo Xenos Inquisitors in searching for these alien objects, as their theoretical power is simply too vast to ignore.

USING THE RELIC

The only clue to the function of these items seems to be the remains of the planet around which the stone crypt was located floating amidst the other rocky debris. Based on the complex, angular cases in the crypt, many theorise all twelve had been assembled together to form one singular, destructive device. Others contend the items summoned terrors from the Immaterium or other dimensions, forces that may have devoured the users. It is possible, though, that it could be some form of stasis beam or teleportation device, one the natives of that world used to escape their fate.

Attempts to closely study and measure the form of a Remain could lead to gaining Insanity points due to its unnatural shape, especially when a character attempts to activate it. GMs can have a Remain take on the effects of a weapon, cause Psychic Phenomena, or even create Warp breaches to release daemonic entities. Multiple Remains should increase these effects, or even cause new ones as the items meld together into shapes that seem to branch into more dimensions than normal reality can withstand.



THE WOUNDED STAFF

The Wounded Staff holds a reputation among many Askellian Inquisitors as a catalyst for conflict. A witch weapon of Eldar design, legends dating back many millennia relate that the staff contains the collected souls of an entire craftworld lost during the Fall. Sought by numerous bands of Dusk Viper Corsairs as well as other unidentified Eldar forces, Inquisitors within the sector have tried to locate the staff either to attempt to harness its psychic energies or simply destroy it. Agents of Faceless Trader cartels often attempt to acquire it as well, leading to many smuggler deaths as the Eldar suddenly appear to mercilessly attack anyone at the slightest rumour of involvement with the item or clues to the staff's location.

HUNTING FOR THE RELIC

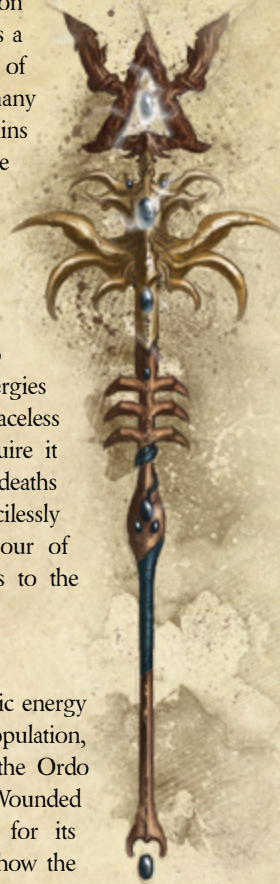
Such a concentrated source of psychic energy presents a threat to any human population, and many Askellian Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos fear the capabilities of the Wounded Staff. For them, this is not just for its potential as a weapon, but also for how the souls contained within the alien device might attempt to whisper and enthrall citizens of the Imperium.

Most Faceless Traders care little about these risks, though, and see the staff as the item that could allow them to retire on their own private planet, assuming they can sell the legendary item without drawing the deadly ire of the Dusk Vipers or worse. A number of Inquisitors with closer ties to the Ordo Hereticus also report that numerous Slaanesh cults seek out the staff, although the reasons why remain unclear except to those well versed in the cryptic lore concerning the Eldar species.

USING THE RELIC

Although it mimics the form of more typical Eldar witch weaponry, the Wounded Staff is extremely dangerous to even approach, let alone use. The first time a character moves within 5 metres of the staff, he must pass a Hard (-20) Willpower test or gain 1d10 Insanity points; for a psyker, this test is Arduous (-40) instead. If a psyker causes any Psychic Phenomena within 20 metres of the Wounded Staff, he automatically received the Perils of the Warp result, and rolls twice on **Table 6-3: Perils of the Warp** (see page 197 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**), applying both results.

It can be used as a force staff (see page 159 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**), but while wielding it, the user gains the Enemy (Eldar) (4) talent. Eldar characters fighting him gain a +20 Weapon Skill bonus when fighting that character as well. The staff could also be part of a scheme to trap Eldar raiders, or as a bargaining tool to ensure their cooperation in joint efforts.



THE ZEHNN OBELISK

A stone block nearly six metres tall, the Zehnn Obelisk first appeared in an ancillary narthex within the Basilica of Valerius Risen on Juno. Materialising out of nowhere, many weeks elapsed before the basilica's head scholar, Deacon Yennif Zehnn, learned of the stone's presence, by which time a crowd several thousand strong was spilling out into the streets. Over the following weeks, Deacon Zehnn and his team took copious notes of the wondrous item. They described in great detail the stone's glossy translucent texture, its inner light that glowed brighter the closer someone approached, and the etchings across its entire surface that included multiple alien languages and even some older Askellian dialects. Most disconcerting to them, though, was the way the stone hovered nearly a metre off the ground, held in place by four heavy chains that tugged at its bulk whenever it rose too quickly.

Their study abruptly ended one day, four weeks after the obelisk's appearance. It suddenly vanished, unleashing a wave of energy that appeared to annihilate everyone nearby and leaving only equipment and clothing behind. Since then, Askellian records show the stone reappearing at random places across the sector. Sometimes it sits ominously for days, other times for mere minutes, but the object always draws a crowd, and leaves many missing in its wake.

HUNTING FOR THE RELIC

Zehnn's notes give a good account of the stone's appearance, but reveal nothing of its purpose. Additionally, the way the stone vanishes and reappears at random across Askellon, combined with the length of time it takes to move from one part of the sector to another, makes tracking it down next to impossible. Unlike their approach to most relics of alien origin, many within the Askellian Ecclesiarchy make every effort to find the Zehnn Obelisk, as they see the stone's first appearance within the sector's greatest cathedral as a sign of its religious importance.

The Ordo Xenos seeks the obelisk both because of the potential danger it represents and because of the multiple alien texts carved into its surface. This last aspect is the most troubling, as Zehnn's original notes talk of how the text changed every few days, and never repeated itself in either content nor language.

USING THE RELIC

The Zehnn Obelisk has no known function. Those that have encountered it mostly used it as a source of information on alien texts, but even several large-scale attempts to work out what all the text means has yielded few significant results. An Acolyte with the Linguistics (Xenos Markings), Scholastic Lore (Cryptology), Scholastic Lore (Numerology), Trade (Cryptographer), or Trade (Linguist) skills can use the stone to research alien languages that might aid in other investigations, but the text on the obelisk shifts without warning, making any tests to read the text Hard (-20). When the stone disappears, it sends a shockwave out 1d10 metres. Anyone within the radius must pass an Ordinary (+0) Agility test or vanish with only their clothing and gear left behind. Where they reappear, if at all, is up to the Game Master.

TO HUNT THE ALIEN

“Aim for the heart—no, the other heart!”

—Graythan Khoress, Ordo Xenos Battle-Savant

To guard the Imperium against the predations of the alien, Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos and their Acolytes must study their enemies, developing unique techniques to overcome them. Often, xenos utilise strange and deadly vehicles, requiring servants of the Emperor to make use of their own craft in order to combat them.

The following new talents are available to all Acolytes who meet the prerequisites. Acolytes can select these new talents in exactly the same fashion as those in the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook, by paying the xp cost determined by the talent's tier and the character's number of matching aptitudes.

TALENT DESCRIPTIONS

The following presents each new talent, including its effects, prerequisites, and aptitudes.

AMBASSADOR IMPERIALIS

Tier: 2

Prerequisites: Fellowship 35, Intelligence 35

Aptitudes: Perception, Social

Whether from serving in the fleet of a Rogue Trader or dealing with xenos mercenaries on frontier worlds, the Acolyte is experienced in dealing with alien and the most divergent of non-Imperial cultures, able to avoid the subtle faux pas that can so easily cause a negotiation to deteriorate into bloodshed.

The character reduces any penalty to Interaction skill tests for dealing with xenos or non-Imperial NPCs by 20. In addition, once per encounter, he can reroll a failed Interaction skill test when interacting with such an NPC.

ARCHIVATOR

Tier: 2

Prerequisite: Int 40

Aptitudes: Knowledge, Perception

Whether through years of experience or specialised training, the Acolyte is a master of mining information from the Imperium's countless archives. From delving into deep info-crypts to searching mouldering librarium stacks and deciphering ancient tech-slabs, the Acolyte can uncover knowledge thought long lost.

When making a Scholastic Lore or Forbidden Lore test utilising sources of recorded information of any sort, such as cogitators, tomes, info-nets, and data-slates, the character can reroll a failed test once with a -10 penalty. In addition, tests to perform research or find information in these circumstances take half the usual time.

FIELD VIVISECTION

Tier: 2

Prerequisites: Ballistic Skill or Weapon Skill 40, Forbidden Lore (Xenos-Any), Rank 2 in the Medicae skill

Specialisations: Ranged, Melee

Aptitudes: Ballistic Skill or Weapon Skill, Knowledge

The Acolyte is well-versed in the blasphemous anatomy of his xenos foes, and uses this knowledge to utmost effect, both in the laboratory and on the battlefield.

Each time this talent is taken, the character selects the Specialisation that matches the Characteristic and Aptitude pair (Ballistic Skill or Weapon Skill) used in purchase. When using the Called Shot action with a melee or ranged attack (depending on the Specialisation) against a target for which the character has the appropriate Forbidden Lore (Xenos) skill, he makes a Medicae (WS) or Medicae (BS) test in place of the normal Weapon Skill or Ballistic Skill test.

GRENADIER

Tier: 1

Prerequisite: Ballistic Skill 35

Aptitudes: Ballistic Skill, Finesse

The Acolyte knows that grenades and other explosives are amongst the most effective ways to bring down marauding alien beasts, or to quickly thin out hordes of lesser xenos monstrosities.

When the character misses with a thrown weapon or weapon with the Blast quality, he may reduce the distance it scatters by a number of metres up to half his BS bonus.

HOTSHOT PILOT

Tier: 2

Prerequisites: Rank 2 in Survival or any Operate skill, Agility 35

Aptitudes: Agility, Tech

When the situation calls for it, the operator stretches the bounds of his abilities, displaying impressive feats of manoeuvring. This experience has also taught the Acolyte how to recover from what might become fatal mishaps for a less skilled operator attempting such manoeuvres.

When the Acolyte succeeds on an Operate test (or Survival test in the case of a living steed), he may voluntarily suffer 1 level of Fatigue to add a number of degrees of success equal to half of his Agility bonus. When the Acolyte fails an Operate test (or Survival test in the case of a living steed), he may voluntarily suffer 1 level of Fatigue in order to reduce the degrees of failure by an amount equal to his Agility bonus, to a minimum of 1.

HULL DOWN

Tier: 3

Prerequisites: Rank 2 in Survival or any Operate skill

Aptitudes: Agility, Fieldcraft

The Acolyte remains aware of his foes at all times in combat, carefully angling his vehicle or steed at each moment to present a narrower silhouette to all attackers, as well as taking the best advantage of any intervening terrain to gain cover.

When the character takes a vehicle combat action with the Movement subtype, his vehicle or steed counts the value of its Size trait as being one lower for purposes of attack modifiers and the benefits of cover until the start of his next turn.

LEAPING DODGE

Tier: 1

Prerequisite: Agility 35, Rank 2 in the Dodge skill

Aptitudes: Agility, Defence

The Acolyte has become practiced at escaping weapons that cover an area to deadly effect, from flamers to strange xenos devices. When he would make an Agility test to avoid attacks from weapons with the Spray quality, he may make the test using his Dodge (Ag) skill instead.

LEXOGRAPHER

Tier: 2

Prerequisite: Rank 3 in Linguistics (Any)

Aptitudes: Intelligence, Knowledge

From years poring over dusty tomes and examining ancient ruins on forgotten worlds—and perhaps even speaking face-to-face with inhuman beings—the Acolyte has become an expert in deciphering lost human languages as well as those of xenos.

The character can attempt any Linguistics skill in which he is not trained as an untrained skill test as if it were not a Specialist skill.

PUSH THE LIMIT

Tier: 3

Prerequisites: Rank 2 in Survival *or* any Operate skill, Tech-Use

Aptitudes: Perception, Tech

Whether through study, practice, or sheer intuition, the Acolyte is aware of the limits of his vehicle or steed, and knows how to push it to those limits and beyond. Although overtaxing a beast or executing wheel-tearing turns can provide a great advantage in combat or pursuit, a single wrong move can prove catastrophic, injuring the pilot or even ripping his vehicle apart.

Once per round, the character may add +20 to an Operate test (or Survival test in the case of living steeds); however, if he fails the test by 4 or more degrees of failure, immediately roll 1d5 on Table 7-32: **Motive Systems Critical Hit Effects** on page 257 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook** and apply the result. If he is riding a living mount, roll 1d5 on Table 7-18: **Impact Critical Effects – Leg** on page 239 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook** and apply the result.

SKILLED RIDER

Tier: 1

Prerequisite: Rank 2 in any Operate skill

Aptitudes: Agility, Fieldcraft

Often, the best way to overcome the heretic is with merciless speed, and so many Acolytes make extensive use of vehicles and mounts in their pursuit of humanity's enemies. Whether the character has used his prized bike until it feels like an extension of his own body, or he has the experience necessary to instantly adjust to the strange mounts and vehicles found across the Askellon Sector, moving to or from the saddle or pilot's seat is second nature.

Whenever the character would be thrown from or tossed about within his vehicle, he makes an Ordinary (+10) Agility test. If he succeeds, the character may choose to either land safely on his feet or retain in his original position in the vehicle. In addition, once per round the character can attempt an Ordinary (+10) Agility test to Mount or Dismount a vehicle as a Free Action.



WEAPON INTUITION

Tier: 3

Prerequisite: Exotic Weapon Training (Any)

Aptitudes: Intelligence, Finesse

In the prosecution of his duties against the alien, the Acolyte wields the most arcane and rare weapons the Adeptus Mechanicus can craft, and perhaps even takes up the very armaments of the xenos to better combat it. From years of experience, the character can quickly discern the firing mechanisms and balance of even the strangest weapons, regardless of its origin.

The character reduces the penalty for using a weapon without the proper training by 10.

XENOSAVANT

Tier: 2

Prerequisite: Rank 3 in Forbidden Lore (Xenos-Any)

Aptitudes: Intelligence, Knowledge

In his study and prosecution of the xenos threat, the Acolyte has become well-versed in the ways and forms of the myriad alien races that menace humanity.

The character can attempt any Forbidden Lore (Xenos) test in which he is not trained as an untrained skill test as if it were not a Specialist skill.

EXPLICATIONS

“This specimen is certain to advance our research by years. Our comrades gave their lives in the cause of important work—the Emperor knows this.”

—Adept Ichabod Xherin, after the Yanth Massacres

IN DARK HERESY, Acolytes must often conduct research in order to further their investigations, from unearthing a noble’s tainted bloodline to discerning the planet of origin of an unsettling xenos statuette. Under most circumstances, a simple skill test of the appropriate Scholastic—or sometimes Forbidden—Lore is sufficient to uncover such information. This might represent a brief referral to a tome in the Acolyte’s possession, a few hours in the mouldering stacks of a great librarium, or even consultation with other experts. However, some research tasks require a consistent, concerted effort. This might be a single Acolyte spending many days, even weeks poring over Administratum records, or an entire warband working together to comb the data-stacks of a restricted info-tomb. These focussed, long-term research tasks are called Explications, and serve to illuminate the nature of a particular threat facing humanity and how best to combat it.

Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos and their Acolytes often undertake such focussed research in order to better understand the nature of an alien foe. Although such knowledge is undoubtedly dangerous, it can prove necessary. Some xenos monstrosities are all but immune to ordinary weapons, and only by uncovering the weaknesses of a creature’s particular blasphemous biology can the warband hope to defeat it. In other cases, an alien foe might conceal itself from sight, manipulating humans or otherwise enacting its plots through psychic, chemical, or other means. Only by discerning the alien’s true nature can the Acolytes root it out and destroy it.

The rules for Explications are not limited to the study of xenos enemies. Acolytes might conduct such focussed studies to identify the nature—or even the true name—of a Daemon, to uncover the secret history of an ancient cult, or to trace the buyers alien relics linked to outbreaks of violent uprisings.

In addition to the narrative implications of providing the information the Acolytes need to complete their investigation and prosecute the enemies of Mankind, Explications can provide tangible mechanical benefits when confronting their foes.

PREPARATION

There are several steps the Acolytes must take before beginning an Explication. Unlike a simple Lore test to determine what an Acolyte knows about a topic, or what he can discover by briefly consulting a source, an Explication represents involved, time-consuming research drawing on numerous sources and with the intent of finding specific information to a specific end. Before beginning, the warband must narrow the subject of the Explication and decide on an objective, gather or determine what resources they plan to use, and nominate a lead researcher.

SELECT SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVE

Before the warband can begin an Explication, the Acolytes must have a clear notion of what it is they seek, and a particular reason for doing so. The subject of an Explication is either a particular topic the Acolytes want to know more about or a specific question to which they seek the answer. The subject of an Explication should not be overly broad, but precisely how narrow it must be depends on the specific situation that prompted the Explication, the Acolytes’ existing knowledge of the matter, and their goal. For instance, “xenos activity in the Askellon Sector” is far too broad to be the subject of an Explication, whereas “Eldar Corsair attacks in the Stygies Cluster” could work, but gathering and comparing such information would be of very high complexity.

OBJECTIVES

After choosing the subject of their research, the Acolytes must define an overall goal for the Explication. Even with a very broad subject, an objective is needed to guide the Acolytes’ research. As their studies progress and the Acolytes learn more about their foes, they can further narrow their goals, as necessary. The following categories cover most objectives the Acolytes might have, and determine what mechanical benefits the group gains from success; however, if none of these objectives fit the Acolytes’ goal, the Game Master and players can work together to define a new category and its effects. The Acolytes should state a more specific goal within the category, if possible. For instance, an aegis objective might be “develop a preventive antidote for splinter weapon venom,” while “translate the hieroglyphs of the ruins earlier found deep underground on Pellene” would be a communication objective. As the Explication advances and additional information comes to light, the Acolytes can reassess and narrow their objective, or launch into new, related Explications.

Eradication: Through study of the enemy’s biology, preferred armour, or other methods of defence, the Acolytes aim to prepare weapons and approaches to lay low and exterminate their foes.

Aegis: By understanding the nature of the enemy’s weaponry and preferred methods of attack, the Acolytes can better defend themselves against the strange attacks of a nonhuman foe.

Detection: Some enemies, whether due to innate abilities, esoteric technology, or mere skill, are particularly adept at evading retribution. To track such foes, the Acolytes must understand the nature of the foe.

Communication: Some potential threats to Mankind are not so clear-cut. In some cases, Acolytes—particularly of a more Radical bent—might seek to learn an alien or non-Imperial culture’s language or customs, or otherwise find a way to communicate.

Comprehension: Sometimes, a xenos is so ill-understood that the warband must further investigate its nature and intentions to simply judge the threat it poses to Mankind. Only then can they determine how to proceed.

DETERMINE COMPLEXITY

Once the Acolytes select a subject and define their objective, the GM selects an appropriate complexity for the Explication, as shown on Table 2–8: **Explication Complexity**. This reflects both the actual complexity of the sought after information, the difficulty in uncovering or locating it, and objective’s nature. The complexity gives the Acolytes an idea of the time commitment involved, so that they can better plan how to pursue the research without neglecting any investigations they are currently conducting. While some Explications might be directly tied to the Acolytes’ current investigation, or even an Inquest (see the **DARK HERESY** supplement **ENEMIES WITHIN**), others might be conducted alongside adventures that are unrelated (or seemingly so), or during downtime.

The time increment for a given complexity indicates how frequently the Acolytes make a skill test to determine whether they have made progress towards completing the Explication. The base difficulty is merely a recommendation for the GM when setting the difficulty for a skill test to progress the Explication. As always, the final difficulty should account for all appropriate situational modifiers. Total DoS is the recommended number of degrees of success the Acolytes must obtain on skill tests to complete the Explication, although the GM might modify this number, and might choose to keep it hidden from the Acolytes.

If the players feel the complexity stated by the GM is too large for the time and resources they have available to commit to the Explication, they can narrow their subject or reduce their goals in order to arrive at a more manageable level of complexity.

GATHER RESOURCES

An Explication requires the Acolytes to make use of a wide range of research materials, and might require travelling to several planets in order to access tomes and data-slates, and speak with experts or witnesses. Before beginning the Explication, the Acolytes should determine the nature of their primary research tools and obtain them. Depending on the complexity of the Explication and the nature of the subject, this step could require considerable travel, even danger. Beyond mere Requisition tests, gathering resources could form the basis for encounters or even brief adventures, depending on the Explication’s complexity. Although these resources provide them with what they need to begin the Explication, the need for additional resources might arise during the Explication.

NOMINATE LEAD RESEARCHER

Optionally, the Acolytes can select a lead researcher for the Explication. In addition to being the primary character to attempt skill tests to progress the Explication (see page 66), the lead researcher chooses a single Common Lore, Scholastic Lore, or Forbidden Lore skill in which he has at least Rank 1. Other skills may be available at the GM’s discretion. For purposes of advancing the Explication, all characters in the warband can offer assistance on tests using this skill as if they had training in it, even if they do not (see page 25 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook). This represents the lead researcher giving the other Acolytes basic instruction in the lore—as it pertains to the topic at hand—such as pointing them toward useful sources, and otherwise guiding and leading the group’s research.

EXAMPLE

In the course of an investigation, an unknown xenos beast attacked the warband, resulting in a difficult battle. The creature was highly resistant to harm, and the Acolytes wish to develop a toxin before attacking the alien’s nest, where they believe scores more are about to emerge from their cocoons. The GM determines this requires an Explication with an Eradication objective with a Taxing complexity. The PCs nominate Tech-Priest Biologis Ahvir Ophret as their lead researcher so that they benefit from his ranks in Scholastic Lore (Chymistry). Finally, the Acolytes decide they need to procure a fully equipped chymistry laboratory to study the specimen and develop a suitable toxin.



Table 2–8: Explication Complexity

COMPLEXITY	TIME INCREMENT	BASE DIFFICULTY	TOTAL DOS	EXAMPLE
Drudging	One day	Challenging (+0)	14	Perform a thorough necropsy on an unknown but somewhat familiar alien organism.
Taxing	One week	Difficult (–10)	12	Develop a toxin (or antidote) for use against a particular alien species.
Convolutd	One month	Hard (–20)	10	Trace the origin of a particular machine spirit.
Involved	Four months	Very Hard (–30)	8	Determine the function of a mysterious weapon.
Formidable	Eight months	Arduous (–40)	7	Analyse the purpose of a damaged alien device.
Labyrinthine	One year	Punishing (–50)	6	Translate the runic language of a dead species.

CONDUCTING THE EXPLICATION

An Explication essentially consists of a number of skill tests by one or more Acolytes, with progress leading to Breakthroughs that, in turn, lead to the successful completion of the Explication. However, the GM and players should work together to describe the Acolytes' research methods, using this as a roleplaying opportunity. Whereas one Acolyte might spend his time in the data-stacks of a Machine Cult temple, another might draft correspondence to his contacts across the sector, and another might consult the Emperor's Tarot.

Researching an Explication is a time-consuming affair, and time is a luxury seldom available to Acolytes with uncounted heresies to uncover and purge. Because of this, although an Explication can be the focus of the action during a game session, this is not necessary. Acolytes can pursue an Explication in periods of narrative time and downtime between encounters and events in a session, or even between sessions, with the players making any necessary rolls either at the end of the session or the very beginning of the next session. The length of downtime necessary to make progress on an Explication depends on the complexity and the GM's discretion. The players should also make note of relevant activities their characters performed between sessions, as the GM can decide these may gain benefits to skill tests undertaken at later times.

MAKING SKILL TESTS

Whether the Explication is the focus of the warband's activities or is something a single Acolyte is pursuing during downtime, the process is the same. At the end of the time period specified for the Explication's complexity (see Table 2-8: **Explication Complexity**, on page 65), a single Acolyte makes a skill test using an appropriate Investigation skill. This is most likely a Common Lore, Scholastic Lore, or Forbidden Lore skill, but others might be possible with the GM's permission, such as a Charm test to convince a scholar to share his own findings on the topic, or a Scrutiny test when subjecting a xenos relic to closer examination. Although only a single Acolyte makes a skill test, others can give assistance, at the GM's discretion (see page 25 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**). Usually, the lead researcher attempts the skill test, but the GM may allow a different Acolyte to sometimes do so if the players offer a compelling reason.

It is important to note that, although a character can only attempt the relevant skill test once the requisite time increment has passed, the research does not need to be performed consecutively. For instance, an Acolyte working on an Explication of Convoluted complexity tests after one month. This can be broken up into several research periods, such as one week of downtime, a few days of downtime here and there, and roughly two more weeks of downtime, or any other combination. Also note that the time increment does not require the Acolyte to devote all his waking hours to the Explication, only that he is able to commit the bulk of his time to it; that is, he is not engaged in an unrelated, active investigation or other activities that take up a great deal of time or concentration. Depending on just how much time the character commits to actively researching, the GM may apply additional modifiers to the skill test.

MAKING PROGRESS

If the Acolyte succeeds on the skill test, the warband has made progress in its research. Each degree of success on the skill test counts toward the total the Acolytes must accumulate to complete the Explication. In addition, each time the Acolytes obtain 4 or more degrees of success on a skill test to progress an Explication, they reach a Breakthrough, as explained on page 67.

If the accumulated degrees of success equal or exceed the required total, the Acolytes successfully complete the Explication. If not, one of the Acolytes can attempt another skill test following the appropriate time increment.

LOSING PROGRESS

If the Acolyte fails the test, he and the rest of the warband spend the time researching, but without making any notable progress. However, if the Acolyte fails the test with degrees of failure greater than the Intelligence bonus of the lead researcher, the warband loses degrees of success equal to the difference from its accumulated total. This represents setbacks ranging from wasted time studying unrelated information to reaching inaccurate conclusions. At the GM's discretion, this kind of major setback might require the Acolytes to spend time greater than the standard increment before attempting another skill test.

BREAKTHROUGHS

If the Acolyte scores 4 or more degrees of success on a skill test to progress the Explication, the warband experiences a Breakthrough. A Breakthrough is a significant advance in the warband's research that provides immediate benefits, even though the Acolytes might have not yet reached their ultimate goal. A Breakthrough should provide a helpful narrative result, such as a part of the information the Acolytes are seeking to discover. For instance, if the objective of the Explication is to translate the inscription on an ancient xenos monolith, the Acolytes might discover the meaning of one particularly important—or worrisome—hieroglyph. In addition, a Breakthrough provides a mechanical benefit. The GM and players should work together to tie these two facets together and explain how the Acolytes' research so far, and the Breakthrough in particular, assists them in upcoming challenges.

BREAKTHROUGH BENEFITS

When the Acolytes reach a Breakthrough, all members of the warband gain a benefit during the next encounter or session pertaining to the subject of the Explication, in addition to the narrative effects. If the warband reaches multiple Breakthroughs before the next relevant encounter or session, the bonuses are cumulative, to a maximum of three Breakthroughs. At the GM's discretion, these benefits might also apply to allies with whom the Acolytes share their findings.

Eradication: Characters gain a +5 bonus to WS and BS tests on attacks during the next encounter, or an encounter of the warband's (or Game Master's) choice, with enemies relevant to the subject of the Explication.

Aegis: Characters gain a +5 bonus to Evasion tests during the next encounter, or an encounter of the warband's (or GM's) choice, with enemies relevant to the subject of the Explication.

Detection: Characters gain a +5 bonus to Perception tests (including skill tests) against the subject of the Explication during the next session, or a session of the warband's (or GM's) choice.

Communication: Characters gain a +10 bonus to Linguistics and Interaction skill tests to communicate with the subject of the Explication during the next session, or a session of the warband's (or Game Master's) choice.

Comprehension: Characters gain a +10 bonus to Investigation skill tests related to the subject of the Explication during the next session, or a session of the warband's (or GM's) choice.

HASTENING RESEARCH

Explications can take a great deal of time, even when Acolytes focus their attention on them. Sometimes the matter which the warband is researching is urgent, and the Acolytes must find the information they seek quickly in order to avert some disaster. With sufficient willpower and recaf, the Acolytes might push themselves to their limits, either focussing exclusively on the Explication, or going without sleep or other necessities in order to pursue the Explication and other endeavours concurrently.

The lead researcher and any other Acolytes offering assistance in the research can voluntarily suffer one or more levels of Fatigue in order to reduce the time increment before the next skill test by one step per level of Fatigue, as shown on Table 2-8: *Explication Complexity* (see page 65). A time increment reduced below one day halves the time for each additional step, to a minimum

of six hours. For example, Acolytes working on an Explication of Convolved complexity could suffer two levels of Fatigue in order to make the skill test after one day, rather than one month. Until after the next skill test (i.e., while they are researching), the Acolytes cannot recover Fatigue or damage by resting without losing this benefit. However, as long as the Acolytes continue to research consistently, they do not gain additional Fatigue between skill tests. In addition, the Acolytes suffer a -10 penalty to skill tests to advance the Explication for each step by which they reduce the time increment.

Some research tasks simply require a certain amount of time, and the GM may set a minimum time increment.

EXAMPLE

With the nest of xenos monsters ready to emerge at any time, the warband decides that all of the Acolytes should assist Ophret in his research, and so they all suffer 3 levels of Fatigue in order to make a skill test after only six hours of work. The base difficulty of a Taxing Explication is Difficult (-10), and the warband's haste adds a -30 penalty. However, the GM agrees that all three other Acolytes can assist, adding a +30, and that the well-stocked laboratory adds an additional +10 bonus, allowing Ophret to test based solely on his ranks in Scholastic Lore (Chymistry). With such an urgent situation, Ophret spends a Fate Point to use his Role Bonus as a Sage, automatically passing the test with 5 degrees of success and leading to a Breakthrough! When the Acolytes are finally ready to storm the nest, they will receive a +5 bonus on all their attacks against the alien filth.



ENDING THE EXPLICATION

Although it is impossible to know everything on a given subject, an Explication does reach a natural conclusion when the Acolytes learn the information or achieve the goals they initially set out to. This occurs when the total degrees of success gained on skill tests to advance the Explication reaches the requisite number set by the GM based on the Explication's complexity. In addition to the narrative effects of reaching their goal, completing it provides a permanent rules benefit to characters who learn the results.

EXPLICATION BENEFITS

Upon successfully completing an Explication, the warband receives a permanent bonus relevant to the subject of the Explication. Table 2-9: Explication Benefits offers examples and suggestions of benefits, but the results are ultimately at the discretion of the GM. Explications of higher complexity should provide correspondingly greater benefits.

The players and GM should work together to determine a benefit based on the narrative, the Acolytes' motivation and goal, and the relevant skills and talents of the PCs. For instance, if the warband includes an Acolyte with the Trade (Chymist) skill, they might seek to develop an alternate effect for weapons with the Toxic quality to have against a certain type of xenos, such as paralysis instead of additional damage. Similarly, if the warband's research determines that a particular xenos beast is vulnerable to a particular material, the Acolytes might only gain the corresponding bonus when using ammunition or melee weapons laced with the right compound.

EXAMPLE

After twelve more hours and two more skill tests, the Acolytes obtain an additional Breakthrough and—barely—enough degrees of success in total to complete the Explication. During the last Explication time increment, one of the Acolytes stops assisting in order to Requisition weapons with the Toxic quality for the group, making the final skill test a bit more difficult for Ophret. In the end, the Acolytes develop a potent toxin keyed to the biology of this new xenos threat. By introducing it into the main nutrient artery of the aliens' nest, they hope to destroy the bulk of the creatures before they awaken. In addition, the group loads this toxin in their weapons with the Toxic quality, increasing its value by 2. Between this and the +10 bonus to attacks gained from two Breakthroughs, the Acolytes have a decided advantage against any active creatures they encounter in the nest!

Table 2-9: Explication Benefits

OBJECTIVE	EXAMPLE BENEFITS
Eradication	Called Shots against the subject gain Vengeful (9) or Felling (2), weapons with the Toxic (X) quality improve that value by 2 against the subject
Aegis	Acolytes treat their Armour points on all locations as 1 higher against attacks from the subject, Acolytes gain a +5 bonus to Evasion tests against the subject's attacks
Detection	Awareness tests and Tech-Use tests to detect the subject's presence gain a +20 bonus, Acolytes add +1 to Initiative in combat against the subject
Communication	NPCs of the subject species or type increase their starting Disposition by +10, Interaction skill tests targeting the subject gain a +10 bonus, the cost of the relevant Peer talent is reduced by 100xp (to a minimum of 100xp)
Comprehension	Relevant Lore tests gain a +5 bonus, the cost of relevant Lore skill is reduced by 100xp (to a minimum of 100xp), the Acolytes gain 1 to 4 Influence points depending on complexity of Explication

THE RADICAL PATH

“Of course I believe in Mankind’s absolute right to rule the galaxy. But just as the grox and other lesser beasts can find useful service, so can the xenos. And just as the canid that bites its master’s hand must be put down, the xenos that opposes Man must be exterminated.”

—Imperial Commander Ionca Haryn

The Imperium teaches that the xenos is anathema to Mankind, that humans and aliens cannot share the galaxy, and that xenos must be exterminated at every turn. To most Imperial citizens, this is the holy truth, and they are content with it—and with the fact that they will never lay sight on an alien. Yet, for citizens on backwaters and frontier worlds, for Rogue Traders and Explorators—and for Inquisitors and Acolytes—things are not always so clear-cut. Although many xenos are ravening monstrosities beyond all reason, and others pledge nothing but death to Mankind, some can prove useful, both in the battle against these alien foes, and even against other threats to humanity.

Some Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos believe that not all aliens represent a threat to Mankind. Others accept that all aliens are competitors for humanity’s dominion over the stars, but maintain that lesser dangers can be useful tools in the wars—both overt and secret—against the hungry xenos that seek to tear down the Imperium. A wide spectrum of beliefs is evident amongst Inquisitors, and indeed amongst those worthies of the Imperium with the authority and power to dare contemplate such beliefs, from Arch-Magi of the Adeptus Mechanicus who study xenos technology to Rogue Traders who count aliens amongst their crew. Puritan Inquisitors decry them as Radicals—or heretics—and the common citizen would be shocked and horrified at such tolerance of blasphemous xenos. Yet the common masses cannot, and must not, understand the true gravity or necessities of the Inquisition’s work.

RADICAL APPROACHES

Inquisitors and Acolytes who recognise that the ends justify the means might turn to experts and specialists who study the xenos outside the strictures of the Imperium. Although aliens are universally hated and feared throughout the Imperium, these individuals are in a unique position of understanding the xenos—at least as much as any human mind can comprehend the alien. With this understanding, the fear lessens. For some Inquisitors and Acolytes, this simply means turning their hatred toward destruction, unburdened by fear. For others, without fear, the hatred is not so strong and pure as it might have been. For those able to tolerate them, xenos allies and related services can offer great benefits.

These services can aid in a warband’s work in many ways. Xenos often possess unique abilities, which might be useful in battle, in tracking a foe, or in more esoteric ways. Many of the alien species that threaten Mankind are fearsome enemies, stronger or faster than humans, or resistant to all but the most potent weapons. In such cases, the best option for defeating them might lay in enlisting the aid of other aliens. On another level, in order to uncover and deal with alien plots, one must understand the minds and goals of the enemy. The aid of another xenos in translating the inhuman thought processes of its ilk can be invaluable.

Table 2–10: Radical Tools

TYPE	AVAILABILITY
Dark Eldar Raiders	Near Unique
Eldar Corsairs	Extremely Rare
Exotek	Very Rare
Pirate Band	Scarce
Xenator	Rare
Xenoarcanist	Very Rare
Xenologist	Very Rare
Xenos Bounty Hunter	Extremely Rare
Xenos Mercenary	Extremely Rare

RADICAL METHODOLOGIES

The following involve calling on the services not only of the xenos itself, but of those who consort with or study aliens. Utilising such retainers and services is certain to earn an Inquisitor or Acolyte the label of Radical, should peers of a more Puritan mindset learn of their actions.

These services are obtained using a Requisition test, just like other services. However, whereas obtaining medical treatment, food, and transportation often occurs “off camera,” the use of these services should never be a simple matter of rolling dice. After all, even making contact with an alien or xenophile is likely to be a considerable undertaking in itself. This offers a great roleplaying opportunity and an important development in the story, whether for the entire warband or an individual Acolyte doing so without the knowledge of his fellows. Xenos are uninterested in the currencies of the Imperium, and even the humans described below are likely to demand much more than mere money for the risks they take. The descriptions of some alien support entries include suggestions on the expenses or requirements, and GMs are encouraged to come up with suitable costs, some of which could even form the basis for small adventures in their own right.

Table 2–10: Radical Tools lists a selection of services and Availability ratings. As always, the Game Master should modify the Availability of a service to suit the location, the current situation, and the particular resource called upon. By their very nature, these resources are few and far between, and are likely to simply be unavailable in some locations, or require the Acolytes to follow a complicated web of contacts before finally achieving their goal. If the Player Character has an appropriate Peer talent, its bonus applies to the Requisition test. Conversely, the penalty for a relevant Enemy talent applies—an Inquisitor with a reputation for exterminating xenophiles is going to have difficulty obtaining the services of a xenoarcanist.

In addition, the GM should modify the Requisition test based on the difficulty and scope of the task for which the services are desired. Acolytes can also attempt appropriate Forbidden Lore (Xenos) tests to determine how to find and acquire services, or how best to approach aliens and their associates, gaining a +10 bonus to the subsequent Requisition test for each degree of success.

A SELECTION OF XENOS OFFERINGS

The following entries describe just some of the services Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos or their Acolytes might find in the Askellon Sector. These entries are very broad, and GMs and players are encouraged to further detail the specific services the Acolytes may call upon in play. Each entry describes the most likely way the service might be employed, but GMs and players should not feel constrained by these. Of course, convincing a resource to provide additional services might require a more difficult Requisition test or good roleplaying.

Hiring a service does not always result in the successful completion of a task, which should depend on a number of factors, including the needs of the story. It is important that Acolytes not simply hire others to complete their work for them, but rather to provide some assistance in reaching a goal. Each description includes one way to implement the asset in the game, but the results are ultimately at the GM's discretion.

DARK ELДАР RAIDERS

Although the distinction is clear only to the most well-versed in such prohibited knowledge, the Dark Eldar are entirely different from the Eldar Corsairs of the Dusk Vipers. Acolytes seeking to enlist the aid of either group would do well to know the difference, as enlisting the services of the Dark Eldar is amongst the most dangerous bargains one might enter into. The Kabal of the Crimson Serpent has selected the Askellon Sector as its hunting ground, and it is this group the Acolytes might contact. The Kabal commands great resources, but the more asked of it, the higher the cost in slaves and souls. An Acolyte approaching the Kabal must be prepared, as it is said the Dark Eldar can smell fear, and are as likely to kill a human who approaches them as hear him out.

The Kabal of the Crimson Serpent can provide numerous services for those who can stomach dealing with them. The Kabal can deliver slaves of nearly any species from across the galaxy, attack a colony or other vulnerable target, or instil terror in the warband's enemies. In exchange, the depraved aliens expect payment in living souls, which they might be willing to take from amongst their target, as long as the facilitator provides them with useful information or some other advantage. Dealing with the Kabal is dangerous, and at the GM's discretion, if the Requisition test results in 4 or more degrees of failure, the Dark Eldar decide to mark the Acolytes for their cruel attentions instead.

NPC profiles for Dark Eldar can be found one page III.

ELДАР CORSAIRS

The actions of the Dusk Vipers and other Eldar Corsairs are enigmatic and unpredictable. Although they undeniably view humans as vastly inferior, they have shown a willingness to cooperate with them on numerous occasions, although undoubtedly to their own inscrutable ends. Although the size of the Dusk Vipers' fleet is unknown—and the Eldar pirates would never divulge the truth to a human—it is certainly a potent force, perhaps even a match or more for Battlefleet Askellon. Although enlisting the Corsairs' aid can be greatly beneficial, simply making contact with the elusive aliens is a feat in itself, and negotiating a deal seems to rely as much on an Eldar captain's mood as the particulars of the task and payment.

Eldar Corsairs can attack a void-based target, such as a ship or space station, whether Imperial or alien. Their advanced technology and millennia of practice ensure high efficacy. Additionally, the Corsairs could provide transportation through the webway, although only humans who have earned their grudging respect are welcome aboard Eldar ships.

For more on the Dusk Vipers, see page 411 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook.

EXOTEK

Exoteks are Askellian hereteks specialising in technology of non-Imperial origins within the sector. Although this largely includes xenos technology, it can also include forbidden archaeotech, or devices with an unclear origin from the sector's ancient origins. Indeed, the line is often blurred, as it appears that during the Dark Age of Technology humans adapted alien technology and built devices inspired by or incorporating aspects of it, and the converse occurred in some cases as well. Exoteks might be known by many terms, and by the very nature of their work, each is unique. Some specialise in the technology of a particular Askellian alien species, living or dead, while others delve into whatever items of exotic provenance they can acquire. Some are outcasts from the Martian Priesthood, or even Tech-Priests conducting secret experimentations behind closed doors. Others are self-taught, or arrivals from non-Askellian—or even non-Imperial—space.

Acolytes are likely to seek an exotek out with a specific task in mind, such as identifying the purpose or origin of a mysterious technological artefact. In addition, an exotek can repair a xenos device or weapon, or modify it to allow for use by humans, such as by adding a physical trigger mechanism where none existed, or adapt it to utilise an Imperial power source or ammunition supply. These modifications, especially where ammunition is concerned, might have unintended side effects or modify the weapon's attributes (usually for the worse), at the GM's discretion.



PIRATE BAND

Pirates and even some unsanctioned traders operating on the fringes of the Askellon Sector and in Wilderness Space can come into contact with aliens on relatively peaceful terms. The nature of such interactions vary from infrequent, tense meetings in order to trade goods, with violence never more than a sidelong glance away, to working partnerships, and even crews consisting of human and xenos living and raiding alongside each other. Others simply come into contact with aliens as competitors and rivals or even in open conflict, taking alien weapons and other treasures as spoils.

Pirates and other outlaws and outcasts who treat with aliens can provide a number of services for Acolytes. In addition to their skills as raiders and brigands, they might arrange introductions with xenos allies, broker trade deals or sell goods, or serve as guides through Wilderness Space or even to xenos holdings beyond the sector. For each degree of success on the Requisition test, a pirate band adds +10 to the character's next Requisition test to obtain xenos services or equipment.

In addition to providing specimens of flora and fauna from across the Askellon Sector and beyond, xenators can serve as guides to death worlds and Wilderness Space. They might also provide information about certain xenos and their traits or weakness, although are generally loath to reveal such secrets. The GM should modify the Requisition test based on the rarity and deadliness of the creature sought.

XENOARCANIST

Xenoarcans are experts and scholars of Askellian xenos lore, learned in matters that most would shudder to contemplate. They are a highly varied group, and while some traverse the sector leading excavations of ancient xenos ruins, others seclude themselves in hive spires, gaining their knowledge from ancient texts and dataslates. Although some xenoarcans are sanctioned to perform their studies by the Quorum Primus of the Askellian Adeptus Mechanicus, or one of the myriad branches of the Adeptus Administratum, even these walk a dangerous line. Many more conduct their research in secret, or at least conceal the true extent of their explorations and investigations. Even a glancing study of the alien can soon lead to an overwhelming desire for evermore forbidden knowledge, with scholars turning to the Faceless Trade to obtain the xenos artefacts needed for their research.

A xenoarcans can provide the Acolytes with information about alien races, both living and dead. The GM should use the degrees of success on the Requisition test as a guide to how relevant and extensive the information is. If necessary, treat the xenoarcans as having Intelligence 45 and three ranks in the relevant Forbidden Lore (Xenos) skill.

XENATOR

Xenators are men and women who deal in alien creatures of all types. These individuals can range from semi-legal traders and trainers of wild animals for highborn collectors to loathsome criminals and heretics dealing in outright forbidden specimens, smuggling dangerous creatures onto the worlds of the Imperium. Their number even includes exotic game hunters and others who deal with strange creatures on uncivilised and unexplored worlds. Some are slavers dealing in sentient aliens, which can command a high price for gladiatorial events and other illicit pastimes of the nobility—or for far darker uses by hereteks and cults.



XENOLOGIST

Xenologists are experts in alien biology and related forbidden knowledge, from outlawed gene-sculptors, to blasphemous surgeons, to universariat anatomists. Although some operate within authorised parameters, the line between sanctioned study—the better to discover the alien’s vulnerabilities—and heresy is razor-thin. Some might go too far in their work, while others are blatant heretics, flouting Imperial law and Ecclesiarchy doctrine with blasphemous experiments conducted in concealed facilities. From genetic recombination to surgically grafted xenos-human hybrids, or other abominations, these profane acts undeniably require a sophisticated knowledge of the alien, one which can also be of great use to servants of the Throne.

A xenologist can provide a number of services, from consultation on matters of alien physiology to surgical procedures. Acolytes might turn to a xenologist to tailor a poison for a particular alien, to develop an antidote for a xenos toxin or inoculation against an alien virus, or to remove a xenos parasite. A xenologist is equivalent to excellent medical care (see page 179 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**), with the addition of rank 3 in the relevant Forbidden Lore (Xenos) skills, Scholastic Lore (Chymistry), and Trade (Chymist).

XENOS BOUNTY HUNTER

Many xenos races are well-suited to the art of tracking, whether due to cultural conditioning, inherent abilities, or some combination. Kroot trackers, Rethari bloodhunters, and bounty hunters from a dozen other races (including even Eldar Rangers), might hire their services to Inquisitors and Acolytes to track down a target and bring it back, dead or alive. These aliens can travel beyond the bounds of the Imperium, to places where few, if any, humans can pass and retain their lives.

A xenos bounty hunter could be sent to find a heretic fleeing justice in Wilderness Space, or even a particular alien with whom the warband has crossed paths in the past. To determine whether the bounty hunter achieves its goal, add 1d5 to the degrees of success on the Acolyte’s Requisition test and compare the result to the target’s Influence bonus or the first digit of its Threat Rating, whichever is higher. The GM should modify the difficulty of the Requisition test based on the difficulty of the assignment, and whether the target must be brought back alive.

XENOS MERCENARY

Xenos mercenaries are amongst the most feared soldiers in Askellon, from the fearsome and resilient Orks to the skilled and adaptable Kroot, and from the many-limbed Has’reel to the chitinous Varitoren. While some xenos mercenaries operate independently, others operate in large bands or small armies. More

rarely, xenos of multiple species come together to form a single fighting unit with a wide variety of abilities. Against human targets, xenos mercenaries make ideal terror troops, as even heretics and mutants are often unprepared for an onslaught of aliens. Xenos mercenaries might be able to fight in environments inhospitable to humans, or shrug off wounds that would slay a man, and many wield strange and fearsome weapons.

The payment required depends on the nature of the aliens in question, from weapons and ammo, to rare metals, to human blood.

Xenos mercenaries can attack a target or group at the Acolytes’ behest, or fight alongside them. The GM should modify the Requisition test based on the quantity of mercenaries being hired, the nature of the target, and the aliens’ willingness to work for humans. For instance, hiring a single mercenary to accompany the Acolytes might add a +30 bonus, while hiring one specifically to attack a Dark Eldar Kabal might inflict a –20 penalty. As a guide to the abilities of certain mercenaries, the GM can use appropriate NPC and Reinforcement Character profiles, such as the Kroot Mercenary and Ork Freeboota on pages 102 and 87, the Sslyth on page 120, and the Ork Boy and Kroot Shaper on pages 86 and 102.



THE CONSEQUENCES OF RADICALISM

Although alien warriors and weapons can provide great advantages for a warband, there are consequences to consider—even beyond the moral implications. Few within the power structures of the Imperium are tolerant of aliens, and to treat with aliens or bring them onto Imperial worlds is—with few exceptions—a most dire violation of Imperial law. Although an Inquisitor is, in theory, beyond the reach of any but his peers, in truth, the balance of politics and power in the Imperium—and the determination of his enemies—can prove his undoing.

An Acolyte is even more vulnerable. At the very least, exposure as a Radical is sure to cost an Acolyte some esteem in the eyes of his peers and the aid of important allies—and possibly turn them against him. Depending on the nature of the infraction and who learns of it, Radicalism might lead an Acolyte straight to the pyre. Even invoking his master's name and authority might be insufficient to stay the hand of Imperial justice. After all, an Acolyte caught violating Imperial law or the edicts of the Adeptus Ministorum is clearly, in the eyes of others, a heretic. Claiming to be a servant of an Inquisitor is doubtless simply another heresy, as what Inquisitor would employ the services of a blasphemous apostate? Radical Acolytes, and even Inquisitors, whose actions are discovered might soon find themselves facing dangerous new enemies within the mighty institutions of the Imperium. In addition to the direct dangers to the Acolytes, this puts them in a difficult situation. Acolytes must question whether fighting back against those who seek to enforce the laws and teachings of the Imperium might make them the heretics their enemies already believe them to be.

For many groups, the decision of whether or not to utilise these services or work with alien allies could be a major focus of gameplay. It is a contentious issue, blasphemous throughout the Imperium, and it is unlikely that all members of the warband hold the same views on the matter. Some Acolytes might need to convince others of the necessity of such a course of action, and such discussions could be quite tense if any of the Acolytes are of a more traditional mind set.

It is also possible that an Acolyte in an otherwise-Puritan warband might take it upon himself to engage in Radical actions, whether for his own benefit or to further the warband's aims. Concealing his actions from the rest of the warband could provide an interesting challenge for the character and twist in the narrative, although the consequences for discovery could be dire. As long as all players are comfortable with such intra-party conflict, secrets and confrontations between Acolytes can add exciting drama and challenges to a campaign.


RADICALISM AND SUBTLETY

Subtlety is of great importance for Acolytes engaged in Radical actions. A high Subtlety score can help the warband ensure its illicit actions go unnoticed by more traditionally minded Imperial servants, whether by avoiding notice completely or even disguising themselves as members of a criminal or heretical group.

However, should their Radicalism be discovered, it should greatly reduce the warband's Subtlety if they do not act quickly to contain the problem. Aliens and their devices are all but unseen amongst most worlds of the Imperium, and news of the presence of either is certain to spread quickly. Openly wielding xenos weapons or fighting alongside alien mercenaries cannot but draw attention to the Acolytes, and warbands that hope to preserve their Subtlety must take measures to conceal such tools and allies.

As with other causes of Subtlety loss, the amount of the reduction for Radical actions is a random amount determined by the GM. Generally, flagrant use of xenos devices or cooperation with aliens should be worth a large amount, unless the Acolytes act quickly to reduce the impact. Such actions should reduce the warband's Subtlety by 1d5 or 1d10, with a modifier if appropriate. Of course, this assumes witnesses or other ways for the information to spread, which is why Radical Inquisitors and Acolytes generally try to keep their actions hidden from sight. When the warband would already lose Subtlety for an event, the GM might simply increase the amount lost. For instance, if the GM determines that the warband would normally lose 1d5 Subtlety for a particular combat or occurrence, he might increase the loss by 3.





CHAPTER III: THE PROMISE OF XENOCIDE

For as long as humanity has existed in Askellian space, it has contended with the presence of alien races. Many of these were long dead before the first colony ships arrived during the Dark Age of Technology, leaving only irradiated glass or toppled ruins to mark whatever greatness they once had. Others were eradicated as the colonists spread across the region, and with the rise of the Imperium and establishment of the sector, this became an ongoing crusade to purge the taint of the alien from Askellon. Alien species were destroyed one after another, many before even leaving their own world.

Yet this righteous quest could never be fully achieved. Several species withdrew rather than face the Emperor's mighty armies, returning to other systems only to shirk away when challenged again. Others, such as the brutal Orks or wily Eldar, have proven themselves puissant and have withstood repeated wars of extermination. A few have insinuated themselves into human society as mercenaries for hire. Even those thought extinct millennia ago still poison the sector through the relics and weaponry they left behind. Man is ever weak, and the temptations of these artefacts—as well as devices from species still living—are enough to drive thriving trade in such blasphemous goods across Askellon. Even on worlds where all are certain no alien taint exists, such items can spread xenos corruption as surely as a full scale invasion. It falls to the Ordo Xenos to face these threats, and ensure Mankind does not become yet another species fallen to xenocide.

This chapter delves into worlds where alien contamination runs high, even where humans are unaware of this threat. Forraliss is a serene garden world, yet while Faceless Traders hunt for xenos artefacts amidst its green fields, few know that there are aliens also seeking out these relics of their faded past. Gregorn's aliens are more obvious, for Orks are ever unsubtle in their rampages on this feral world. On the research station occupying P3482XW, only dead remains exist of an unknown species, but this does little to diminish its dangers. Even Vouxix Prime, one of the Grand Worlds, is not immune from alien threats deep within its subterranean hives, while the death world of Yanth is so filled with hazardous life that it is difficult to distinguish aliens from the lethal native species. Even xenos races are threatened by other aliens; Eldar factions dominate the mysteries of the webway and have kept it free of human activity, but an ancient menace is rising again and has begun to walk once more in this shadowy realm.

Game Masters gain investigation templates for developing new adventures and campaigns in these locations, plus tips for running xenos NPCs. As Acolytes operating under the aegis of Ordo Xenos Inquisitors often must travel to other worlds, this chapter contains GM guidance for passage through the Warp as well as realspace travel. GMs can also use new xenos civilisation and relic generators to create alien threats and subplots, with tips on xenos clues and leads to ensure Acolytes face suitably challenging menaces of the Enemy Without.

ASKELLON AND THE XENOS MENACE

*“To know the alien is to know it must be exterminated from our worlds.
The only good alien species is one made extinct.”*

—Magos Biologis Quarnso Beta

Game Masters can use aliens to offer a wide variety of challenges and opportunities for Acolytes in **DARK HERESY** adventures, allowing for investigations and plots that can stretch gameplay into new directions. With non-human enemies, Acolytes face opponents with unfathomable motivations, terrible weaponry, and possibly entire armies and fleets to call upon. Unlike secretive heretics, xenos characters might be arrogantly sure in their power or care so little for mere humans that the Acolytes might be caught in clashes so mysterious or large in scale that they only glimpse a portion of the grand events unfolding around them.

THE WORLDS OF ASKELLON

Each of the locations in this chapter includes new rules for using it as a home world as part of character creation, as well as a location-unique investigation template for the Game Master. This allows it to be used as both a setting for adventures as well as an integral part of an Acolyte's history.

HOME WORLD RULES

The new home world rules included as part of each location are designed to replace the Home World Bonus used in creating a new Acolyte. This allows a player to pick a specific home world within the Askellon Sector rather than the archetypal setting, such as using Gregorn instead of the standard feral world rules from page 32 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook. This can be particularly useful when the warband is adventuring on that planet, and either a new player joins the group or a player's existing character does not survive and he requires a replacement.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATES

An investigation template is a short adventure outline that features the inhabitants and themes for each of the worlds in this chapter. A Game Master can insert a template into an ongoing campaign to offer a variation on the current investigative focus, or provide an alternate type of adventure as a change of pace for the warband. Each template could also be expanded into a full adventure on its own, or launch a new campaign to more fully immerse the Acolytes into the heresies each world contains.

Game Masters can also introduce alien characters in more traditional Hereticus or Malleus-themed adventures. Such NPCs could be secretly sponsoring or motivating heretical cults, seeking to subvert the Imperium from within to weaken their hated foes, or simply for their own amusement. It is even possible the aliens could be responsible for unleashing daemonic threats, either by accident or as part of malignant designs. Acolytes might find allies in xenos NPCs, though, in situations where common enemies put both races in peril. Daemons (and those who would summon them) can make for menaces that drive these alliances, as can other alien races threatening xenocide against the galaxy. Aliens can also appear as mercenaries, or be part of a loyal NPC's retinue, to provide opportunities for clashes with Acolytes of a Puritanical mindset. Worse yet, the Acolytes' Inquisitor might order them to work with a "trusted" xenos to further an investigation, or perhaps simply to gauge their reaction to the situation.

Sometimes, actual alien presences are not necessary to create xenos-themed adventures. Alien devices alone can drive many investigations, from smugglers dealing in dangerous relics, to hereteks dabbling in unknown technologies, to powerful noble collectors of the outré and forbidden. While Askellon has its share of wars against alien invaders, many fear the perils from those species safely dead and buried are far greater. Even in death, the Enemy Without can still threaten Mankind from beyond the grave.

FORRALISS

"The air was the cleanest I had ever breathed, and I knew at that moment I had found a planet unlike any other I had ever set foot upon. And it would be mine for the taking."

—Rogue Trader Maxellian Vor

Recently discovered by humans, Forraliss is quickly becoming a destination for the Imperial elite in the Askellon Sector. An immaculate garden world, it hides a deep secret beneath its pristine surface and is home to far more than the recent colonists who have come to call it home.

With its perfectly blue skies, vast untouched forests, crystal clear lakes, majestic mountains, and year-round temperate climate, Forraliss is a world of beauty crafted as if from the mind of an artist. Many are awestruck upon first laying eyes on this gem, unable to speak as they search for words to describe what they are witnessing. Painters and authors sponsored by wealthy patrons flock to the planet, inspired by its grandeur, to compose their works. Master sculptors from Vouxis Prime have used the beauty of the world to inspire their works on many occasions, when they could gain access to the world. The faithful of the Imperial Cult believe this to be a paradise, given to them by the Emperor's guiding hand while the unscrupulous and undesirable see the planet as an untapped resource, waiting for exploitation.

Dark secrets lie beneath the surface of this pristine planet, however, secrets that can spell doom for those who now call Forraliss home. This world once belonged to the Eldar, and they are intent on retaking what was once theirs. Advance forces of these aliens have arrived and established hidden outposts across the planet, enabling them to observe the human colonists and any others who trespass on their ancient grounds.

AT THE DAWN OF MANKIND

Forraliss was once known as Geelsynal to the Eldar who came to this part of space tens of thousands of years ago. A young world, barren but brimming with primordial life, the Eldar used their vast technology to terraform the planet into a paradise, a Maiden World. This process would take thousands of years to complete but the Eldar were a patient race, intent on establishing viable colonies for future generations.

Millennia after their initial seeding, the Eldar returned to Geelsynal. By then, the planet was the paradise it still is today and a colony was quickly established. This settlement was dedicated to knowledge, founded by a group of Eldar seers who wished to study the arts of wraithbone crafting and other pursuits away from their brethren. While the depredations of the Eldar grew in other parts of the galaxy, those few on Geelsynal, numbering only in the thousands, lived in peace and harmony with their planet. Wondrous constructs of sweeping wraithbone spanned areas of the planet and delved deep beneath the surface. In a grand cavern under the world's largest mountain, a webway portal allowed the seers and their servants to maintain connections with the Eldar homeworlds, supplying their wares and innovations back to their kin. This eventually led to their undoing.

HOME WORLD: FORRALISS

Players can adopt Forraliss as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Forraliss follow the garden world rules (see page 28), but with the following new Home World Bonus instead of the usual one:

HOME WORLD BONUS

The Perfect Host. A character from Forraliss scores an extra degree of success on successful Charm and Deceive tests.

When the Fall came, terror erupted from the webway. The birth of Slaanesh echoed throughout the known universe, and the webway amplified this greatly. The Eldar of Geelsynal attempted to bar the portal and make their escape in ships by collapsing the mountain down around the cavern. Many of the seers died in the escape from the planet, but in the end they managed to bury the webway and flee. Over the next ten thousand years, the world reclaimed the lands that had been coveted by the Eldar, and all traces of their time on Geelsynal faded away. In their haste, however, the Eldar left behind a number of hidden caches of artefacts, buried deep in long abandoned workshops.

FORTUITOUS TIDES

Over the ensuing millennia, Geelsynal faded in and out of accessibility due to the Pandaemonium's activity. The few ships that did discover the world went to great lengths to hide its existence, intent on preserving its beauty and luxury for themselves.

Forty-five years ago, while travelling rimward at the edge of the Asphodel Depths, Rogue Trader Maxellian Vor's ship, *The Indomitable Will*, was thrown off course and battered by particularly strong Warp currents. His vessel rode the turbulent waves, finally translating to realspace in an area not recorded on the local charts. A gleaming planet loomed before the ship and Vor made his way towards it, anxious for a place to use as a port of call to effect much needed repairs.

The world the Rogue Trader found was unlike any he had ever set foot on in his century and a half of exploration. Pristine conditions, temperate climates, abundant water, and more covered the unclaimed planet. Maxellian Vor claimed Forraliss, named for his daughter Forra, in the name of the Emperor and the Imperium.

Over the next decade, Vor kept Forraliss to himself, with only his crew privy to its whereabouts. The world became his personal retreat, a place for him and his trusted crewmembers to spend when they were not conducting the Emperor's business. Vor explored areas of the planet when he had the opportunity, always intent on uncovering this paradise's secrets. After a dozen expeditions did not yield anything of value, Vor then turned his attention towards colonisation.

NEW ENDEAVOURS

Foraliss was not to be a standard colony world for the Imperium. Maxellian Vor is always concerned with profit above all else, so to make sure that the world was a source of constant revenue, he decided to create a colony that would cater to the rich and powerful of Askellon. A world as luxurious as Foraliss would command a great deal of prestige and power as a pleasure world where the nobility and other wealthy individuals could travel. A colony was established to cater to these people, and within less than twenty years Foraliss became one of Askellon's most sought after—yet still obscured enough to intrigue the elite—destinations.

While primarily a pleasure planet, there are economic opportunities on Foraliss. Even though the fertile soil was prime for agriculture, Vor did not want to turn his hidden gem into another overly farmed agri-world. Instead, he focused on the large herds of shaggy beasts that were indigenous to the planet—the rothal. The Rogue Trader quickly established a number of ranches far from any settled areas (as to not disturb his high-paying customers) and began exporting rothal throughout the sector.

The Rogue Trader established his four ranches across the southern half of the largest continent, allowing the herd animals a great deal of freedom to roam and graze. The tens of thousands of animals housed across these locations provide a smell that most find intolerable, and visitors to the ranches regularly wear rebreathers. The local workers find this amusing and have grown almost immune to the stench (and all other smells in addition). The attached processing plants are able to skin and process the beasts for food exportation in minutes, with very little waste. These massive machines are very dangerous and it has been reported that a number of accidents have taken place here, a fact that Vor considers minor compared to the profits the rothal bring to him.

It was also discovered that the large, docile fish known as kallaida, found in many of the lakes and streams, produced delicious eggs that soon became a favourite of travellers to Foraliss. Unbeknownst to them though, these eggs contained an addictive element. The Rogue Trader's Magos-Biologists discovered this fact after an incident where a patron lashed out at a number of staff over quantities of the delicacy. Vor began to regulate the amount produced, quickly driving up the price as well as guaranteeing a steady customer base. Unknown to Vor, one of his henchmen has begun selling the eggs on his own in an attempt to establish his own power base. If this trade takes off as he plans, it will allow him to separate from the Rogue Trader and establish his own way.

FORALISSIAN KALLAIDA

These fish grow to between 1 and 4 metres in length and thrive in lakes and streams on Foraliss's main continent. A striking, blue-green colour dominates their body from head to tail. The fish is very docile, feeding primarily on plants and algae as well as other fish. The highly addictive property of their eggs greatly concerns many residents of the world, however. Some worry that this interaction with human physiology is a deliberate modification, left by xenos ages ago who tampered with the creatures.

ROTHAL (TROOP)

These creatures are a prime export of Foraliss. A valued source of meat, their milk is also considered a wondrous tonic to soothe stomach ailments.

ROTHAL (TROOP)					30
H	4	WS	BS	S	5
01-10	4	23	—	40	
AR	4	T	AC	INT	
11-20	4	48	28	10	
B	4	PER	WP	FEL	
31-70	4	30	21	—	
LR	4	IFL			
71-85	4	—			
LL	4				
86-00	4				
HALF	8	FULL	16	CHARGE	32
RUN	48	THREAT	7		
CLAWS			CLASS MELEE		
RNG	—	RoF	—	DMG 2D10+5 ^{SB} (R)	
PEN	0	CLIP	—	Wt	8 Kg
		RLD	—	AVL	RA
SPECIAL: —					

Skills: None

Talents: Thunder Charge

Traits: Quadruped, Size (6), Unnatural Strength (1)

FORRALISS CURATOR

Maxellien Vor hand picks Forraliss workers from his crew. Due to the secretive nature of the world, the Rogue Trader knew that he must rely on his people to run the day-to-day affairs. However, soon many of his administrators turned to their own agendas. The world's deliberately remote nature is conducive to smuggling and illicit dealings that could not be carried out elsewhere in Askellon.

FORRALISS CURATOR (TROOP)					9
H 3 01-10		WS 35		BS 38	S 25
AR 3 11-20	6	AL 3 21-30	T 31	AC 33	INT 30
B 3 31-70		6	PER 28	WP 24	FEL 27
LR 3 71-85	6	LL 3 86-00	6	IFL	—
HALF 3	FULL 3	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 3	
CONCEALED LASPISTOL			CLASS PISTOL		
RNG 30M	RoF S/2/-		DMG 1d10+2 (E)		
PEN 0	CLIP 30	RLD HALF	WT 1.5 KG	AVL CM	
SPECIAL: CONCEALED, RELIABLE					

Skills: Charm (Fel), Commerce (Int)

Talents: Jaded

Gear: Dataslates, flak cloak, lucky native stones

Going Blue: Any Curator can also be used as a Cerulean Pact smuggler, or accomplice to these Faceless Traders. In such cases, the NPC could be equipped with Eldar or other xenos gear as well as the Forbidden Lore (Xenos-Craftworld Eldar) skill.

THE RETURN

Travel to and from Forraliss is steady, but limited to a select clientele that Maxellian Vor and his trusted advisors fully control. Due to these restrictions and the world's continued obscurity, standard Imperial Navy ships do not monitor the planet. This has worked out well for smugglers and other individuals who have discovered Forraliss and begun using the world for their own ends. These circumstances have also proven fortuitous to the Eldar, who have returned to their former world to reclaim pieces of the past.

Whispered rumours that few take seriously say Eldar have come to Forraliss seeking relics of their time here. A small contingent arrived recently and has supposedly taken up a remote position. Utilising their superior technology, they have established an outpost in a series of caves deep in the mountains. From here, they are conducting their search for their lost artefacts.

These Eldar are possessed by a vision that drives their designs. Portents tell of the destruction that can be wrought with Eldar technology in the hands of lesser races, and they are determined to prevent that here. If prevention requires the extermination of the humans on the planet, so be it. Many inhabitants have reported strange lights in the sky at night, as well as shadows at the corner of the eye always gone when looked at directly. A pervasive feeling of being watched has made a number of recent visitors anxious about their stay on the world, potentially hurting future tourism.

LOST LEGACIES

The sweeping vistas and beautiful landscapes are not the only things Forraliss holds. There are long lost, hidden parts of the planet unknown to humans that hold great danger and riches.

THE GEELSYNAL WEBWAY PORTAL

Deep within the planet, the webway portal which once connected the Eldar world of Geelsynal to the rest of the empire still exists, buried inside a vast cave mere kilometres from the human settlements on Forraliss. At times, the portal fluctuates, opening for moments. This is all that is needed for unwelcome visitors to enter realspace, as the portal is damaged and no longer connects to the greater Eldar webway, but directly into the madness of the Warp.

At times, visitors have spoken in hushed whispers of strange dreams and nightmares filled with darkness and alien technology. This information is not widely spread, for fear of the Inquisition and being branded a heretic.

THE CRYSTAL VAULT

On an island in the Northern Sea, a solitary mountain rises above the waves. Deep inside, unknown to all on Forraliss, is an ancient vault containing artefacts from dozens of races. This is the location of the treasures that Eldar and Dark Eldar alike are desperate to find, but have so far been unsuccessful.

The entrance is invisible to not only to the naked eye, but also all known scanning devices. To anyone looking at the mountain, it is nothing but sheer rock. The only way to open the door to the passages leading deep into the mountain requires an ancient, wraithbone key that has been lost for millennia. This key, it is said, reveals the entrance to the complex within, where the Vault lies at its heart. None of the Eldar have uncovered any information about the key as of yet, though the search continues.

THE FIVE HUNDRED

Ancient legends of the Eldar tell of a vast collection of Wraithguard slumbering in a long-lost cavern. These legends have made their way to other races, and the tales of an unstoppable army able to be controlled by an individual with the proper tools has proven quite popular among the unsavoury and power hungry.

THE EBON STAR

Eldar spirit stones are used to trap the souls of the dead, saving them from eternal destruction at the hands of Slaanesh. At times, large stones are created to contain particularly powerful individuals upon their deaths. The Eye of Night was created to hold the soul of a Farseer of great strength, allowing him to live on after death. This great gem vanished thousands of years ago, a fact that distressed the Eldar greatly. Some believe the Dark Eldar, whose dark arts tortured and twisted the soul within, took it. Stories of a cursed gemstone, black as night, have circulated throughout the Askellon Sector for many centuries, and there are some who believe this to be the long lost spirit stone.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: DISASTROUS DEALINGS

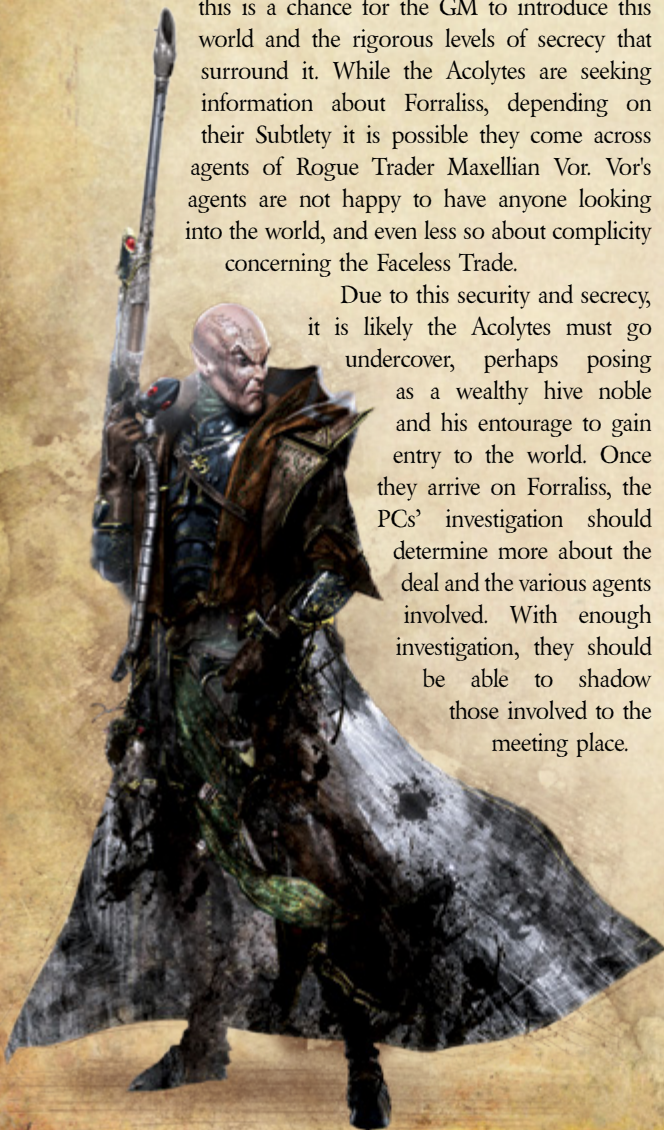
Overview: Word reaches the Acolytes of an important Faceless Trade deal involving the Cerulean Pact and priceless Eldar relics. They might learn this through well-placed informants, a captured smuggler or fence, or possibly from their Inquisitor who of course has his own intelligence network across the sector and even amongst alien races. The deal is to occur in a remote corner of Forraliss, but the Eldar hidden on there have also learned of the deal and plan on disrupting it and claiming the items. GMs can work this adventure into any trip to Forraliss, or have information come up about the smugglers and their shipment while dealing with contacts elsewhere in Askellian space.

ACT I: SECRETS BEST LEFT HIDDEN

After learning about the deal, the PCs must determine the whereabouts of the transaction and its nature. Depending on the GM's desires, the deal could involve the smugglers meeting decadent collectors who are travelling to Forraliss to buy items discovered there, or smugglers carrying the items found elsewhere in Askellon to visiting collectors already on that world. The smugglers could also have Forraliss Curators amongst them, eager for greater wealth. If they have no information on Forraliss yet,

this is a chance for the GM to introduce this world and the rigorous levels of secrecy that surround it. While the Acolytes are seeking information about Forraliss, depending on their Subtlety it is possible they come across agents of Rogue Trader Maxellian Vor. Vor's agents are not happy to have anyone looking into the world, and even less so about complicity concerning the Faceless Trade.

Due to this security and secrecy, it is likely the Acolytes must go undercover, perhaps posing as a wealthy hive noble and his entourage to gain entry to the world. Once they arrive on Forraliss, the PCs' investigation should determine more about the deal and the various agents involved. With enough investigation, they should be able to shadow those involved to the meeting place.



ACT II: RECLAIMING THE PAST

After determining more about the exact nature of the deal, the PCs embark on a search of the surrounding areas to find where the smugglers reside and conduct their operations. This can provide additional information about the planet, and can also lead to discovering more of the world's past and its ties to the Eldar. Once the Acolytes determine the location for the deal—this can perhaps be the smugglers' base of operations—they can plan their next course of action to apprehend or eliminate both parties.

While preparing to move against the smugglers and buyers, a small group of Eldar Guardians (or Dusk Viper Corsairs) arrives under the cover of darkness and attacks, throwing plans into disarray for the PCs. The characters must decide if they should intervene against a superior Eldar force or attempt to follow the Eldar after the raid. In the end, the Eldar capture the leader of the smugglers as well as all of the artefacts. If the PCs remain hidden through the attack, they can track the Eldar back to their hidden outpost in the mountains, setting up a daring raid for Act III.

ACT III: ENDGAME

After locating the Eldar outpost, the PCs need to eradicate the xenos menace and their weaponry before either can cause any destruction. The compound is in mountain caves with many sub-chambers and tunnels, with a number of security measures around their complex, giving the GM an opportunity to blend skill tests and action as the PCs try to gain entry. Once the PCs have reached the heart of the complex, they have a final confrontation. The Eldar within should be adjusted to offer the Acolyte's a serious fight, and could include Rangers, Dire Avengers, or even a Warlock.

It is up to the GM and the party's attitudes toward xenos to determine how this plays out. This most likely leads to a battle to overcome the Eldar and destroy the artefacts. Alternatively, the PCs can try negotiations to resolve the situation, always a very delicate process with these arrogantly proud aliens. The GM must also decide if having any xenos technology fall into the hands of the PCs is something he wishes to happen. Prior to or during any fighting, the Acolytes might attempt to free the smugglers and bring them onto their side. If this is successful, this can provide both a valuable source of information in the future and access to the smugglers' network of contacts.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS:

- The loss of a number of alien artefacts could cost the smugglers in the sector greatly, earning the PCs their ire. Elements of the smuggler's enterprise could look for retribution against the PCs.
- If the Acolytes take possession of any of the artefacts, Eldar Corsairs or even the Dark Eldar could become aware of this, eager to reclaim the items for their own ends.
- One of the devices in the collection could have an interaction with the buried webway portal on the planet, exposing the world to greater dangers from the damaged connections the portal has with the Warp. A series of chain reactions could begin that the PCs must stop before the entire planet is overtaken by horrible Warp entities.

DARK ECHO AKA RESEARCH STATION P3482XW

“The past holds many answers to conquering the future.”

—Magos Kiralon Burla, Administrator of P3482XW

The world known to the Cult Mechanicus as P3482XW is a recently revealed, volcanic planet in the Thule Sub-Sector. Cut off from discovery by localised Warp storms for some time, the planet’s sudden reintroduction to the sector just under a century ago has caused a stir amongst Rogue Traders, Explorator Fleets, and others who seek out riches amongst Askellon’s uncharted reaches. This world is not sought after for any known life or resources, but for the lack of such things. P3482XW, commonly known as Dark Echo, is a barren world—home only to sprawling ruins of a long-lost, unknown, and utterly alien civilisation.

The planet has only the barest traces of an atmosphere, barely breathable for humans. Tectonic shifts produce daily quakes ranging in scale from slight tremors to long upheavals that topple features across an area. Magma flows and other volcanic activity are also present, as the world undergoes changes reminiscent of a planet in the final throes of life.

The Adeptus Mechanicus was the first to lay claim to the planet, establishing a research station on the southern continent to investigate the remnants of this lost species. This region is doubly practical, as it is both relatively stable and home to high concentrations of the alien ruins. While Askellon’s rulers recognise the claim of the Adeptus Mechanicus, they are not willing to let a find of such a potentially valuable nature go completely unchecked. To “assist” the Tech-Priests there, agencies on Juno have dispatched a contingent of Astra Militarum and other support personnel to the world to aid in any capacity as required. In reality, they are there to monitor what the Cult of the Machine finds and report back on any discoveries.

ECHOES OF THE PAST

The complex the Adeptus Mechanicus installed is a pre-fab base of a type dropped onto countless worlds across the sector. It covers nearly a square kilometre with all its various buildings and warehouses, and was set over the site of a large section of ruins that extend many dozens of kilometres underground. Conversations and other sounds echo throughout the caverns below, lending an unnatural and disturbing feel to the area that lead the Guardsmen assigned there to begin adopting its more common name. The Tech-Priests, adepts, and their numerous servitors are unfazed by this, and only the others stationed here are bothered by it.

The base comprises three primary areas: the research labs, the habitat section, and the equipment storage facilities. The labs are the largest of the three sections and are heavily guarded by sentry guns crewed with integrated combat servitors; the Tech-Priests are well aware of the spies in their midst, and go to great lengths to conceal what they have found until they can determine its value.

While most of the research areas consist of standard rote data collection stations, repair altars, and Omnissian shrines, there are several facilities devoted to esoteric branches of study. Here, Tech-Priests immerse themselves in specialised quests some would deem skirting the bounds of tech-heresy, or delve into areas forbidden on more established forges.

HOME WORLD: DARK ECHO

Players can adopt Dark Echo as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Dark Echo follow the research station rules (see page 30), but with the following new Home World Bonus instead of the usual one:

HOME WORLD BONUS

Dark Obsession: To live and work on this station is to become consumed with gathering information, resulting in rigid mentalities inured to the actual reality of the subject. If faced with a Fear-causing subject or situation for which a character from Dark Echo possesses the associated specialisation in the Forbidden, Common, or Scholastic Lore skills, he gains a bonus equal to ten times his ranks in that skill.

The final section is for equipment storage and consists of five warehouses. Large machines for excavation, ground scanning, and other processes are housed here in four of the sheds. The fifth (and largest) warehouse is off limits to all non-Machine Cult personnel and is heavily shielded with genetic-signature locks. What is inside is a mystery despite attempts at infiltration. Disquieting rumours, though, hint of a maniple of fearsome battle automata—worrisome if true, as none can imagine what the Adeptus Mechanicus has found here that would require such militant firepower.



MAGOS KIRALON BURLA

The head of the Martian Priesthood’s presence on P3482XW is Magos Kiralon Burla, a xenoarchaeologist based on Core Theta who has been studying lost civilisations for centuries. Burla has been responsible for uncovering secrets of many of the long-dead species littering Askellian space. When the first investigators set foot on the planet, the tales of the ruins spread quickly. Burla’s network of informants soon returned word of their findings to the Magos, and he had a full team dispatched toward the planet within a month.

Burla quickly established the research station on the surface. The Magos left all of the details of the set-up of the base to his underlings and immediately entered the ruins to begin his analysis of the cryptic symbols and glyphs covering the ancient detritus. Not a day goes by without Burla venturing deep underground personally with a team of servitors to study the mysterious symbols. It has become more than a quest for knowledge to him; it is now an obsession.

MAGOS KIRALON BURLA (MASTER) 30

H ^{1 3} 01-10 9	WS 45	BS 40	S 39
AR ^{1 3} 11-20 9	T 54	AC 31	INT 60
AL ^{1 3} 21-30 9	PER 40	WP 45	FEL 28
B ^{1 3} 31-70 9	IFL 46		
LR ^{1 3} 71-85 9			
LL ^{1 3} 86-00 9			

HALF 3	FULL 6	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 20
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PLASMA PISTOL CLASS PISTOL

RNG 30M	RoF S/2/-	DMG 1d10+6 (E)
PEN 6	CLIP 10	RLD 3 FULL
WT 3 KG		AVL VR

SPECIAL: MAXIMAL, OVERHEATS

OMNISSIAN AXE CLASS MELEE

RNG —	RoF —	DMG 2d10+7 ^{+SB} (E)
PEN 6	CLIP —	RLD —
WT 8 KG		AVL ER

SPECIAL: POWER FIELD, UNBALANCED

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Common Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus) (Int) +20, Command (Fel) +20, Interrogation (WP) +10, Intimidate (S) +10, Scrutiny (Per) +30, Tech-Use (Int) +20

Talents: Luminen Shock, Mechadendrite Use (Utility), Prosanguine, Weapon Tech

Traits: Machine (3), Mechanicus Implants

Gear: Combi-tool, heavy robes, portable vox, sacred unguents

Servitor Flock: Burla is constantly surrounded by four specially programmed servitors, whom he treats with something approaching parental concern. They are an equal mix of combat and repair patterns (see page 396 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook), and enter a rage per the Frenzy talent (see page 127 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook) should their master suffer damage.

SETTING THE TONE OF DARK ECHO

The ruins scattered across the planet and beneath the research station present an interesting challenge to Game Masters. Getting the proper tone to adventures on this planet is crucial to making the players feel the unsettling vibes that this planet invokes.

GMs should consider the complex beneath the station (and the station itself) as disturbing as possible. Strange lights and sounds, technology flickering on and off, a general sense of unease—all of these things can help to set the mood for the planet. Psychically attuned characters should feel an overwhelming presence of loss and anger, representations of the long dead aliens and their frustration at being unable to stop the disaster that claimed them.

The ruins are alive with inhuman presence, as the hidden technology that preserves the trapped consciousnesses of the aliens amplifies and extends their energy. GMs should feel free to use visions and flashes of ancient beings and locations they have never seen to confound and place the players on edge as they explore Dark Echo.





THE ENDLESS RUINS

The ruins of P3482XW are found all across the planet. Some are concentrated in large areas, denoting what might have once been cities. Others are scattered in strange, outlying locations that puzzle all who investigate them. But of all the ruins, the expansive underground complexes are the most fascinating, and draw the most speculation on their purpose and, more importantly, their long-lost creators.

The caverns and ruins beneath the research station extend for many kilometres, deep into the planet's interior. The ruins under the station have the hallmarks of those found throughout the world—deep brown coloration and a uniform construction to the walls and flooring, markings in the same unknown xenos writing, and no trace of any actual technology or power sources.

The colour extends throughout all of the materials, possibly indicating the ruins were all quarried or grown from the same source. Each wall, floor, and other intact structure is nearly frictionless, with perfectly uniform blocks comprising all major areas. All archways and hallways are built with exactly the same measurements and angles, adding to the strange uniformity of the complex; many speculate that whoever or whatever built this complex was intent on everything being exactly the same.

There are exhausting symbols covering many of the walls, all done in the same, unknown script. Some walls are filled with runic marks, while others simply have a few characters. There does not seem to be any pattern to why and where the more detailed writings reside, based on the layout of the complex. Tech-Priests have catalogued thousands of databanks full of the writing so far and have yet to be able to decipher any of it.

What disturbs the researchers the most is the lack of any type of identifiable power source anywhere in the ruins. Everything appears to be from a primitive era based on the lack of technology, but the level of geometry and calculations needed to craft something of this size indicates a highly advanced society. If that is the case, though, they are at a loss as to why there are no other relics from this dead civilisation. Nothing resembling furniture, tools, vehicles, or any other implement has been found anywhere across the planet.

WHISPERS IN THE DARK

For the Guardsmen stationed on the planet, the ruins are a haunted and foreboding place filled with troubled spirits. The Adeptus Mechanicus adepts, of course, scoff at the superstitions of these primitive humans and insist that whatever lived here has been gone for many millennia. The Guardsmen, in turn, do not care what the Tech-Priests claim, as they believe the Machine Cultists are also filled with troubled spirits, and stubbornly insist humans are not alone in the caverns.

The Guardsmen claim to see strange lights moving through the tunnels, and say that certain runes glow with a soft hue at times, as if the glyphs were struggling to make themselves readable. All these claims have been dismissed by the Tech-Priests, since auspex readings have shown no anomalous results and the vid captures of the areas also reveal nothing.

Unbeknownst to all, something does indeed lurk deep in the ruins under the Dark Echo station. An alien intelligence seeks to be reborn, to once again spread itself through the stars and to subjugate all that it comes across.

The aliens who once called this world home faded long ago, destroyed by probing too deeply into their planet. They unearthed a disaster upon their world that they could not contain, never understanding what they had unleashed but knowing it predated even their ancient civilisation. Some of the species made it offworld and to other systems, but whatever became of them or how they travelled is unknown. The majority chose to remain, working feverishly to find a way to preserve their history and culture as well as stave off the coming apocalypse.

In the end, a select few had managed to unlock a form of transference that would allow them to place their consciousness into specially crafted items. Along with this intelligence, they were able to transfer the sum of their knowledge to these devices, serving as massive repositories of their achievements. However, the aliens were a proud and jealous species, not apt to share their knowledge with others. To them, this knowledge was theirs and theirs alone, and it would serve them in the future when they rose from the ashes. Only those who were part of their species, or were made into part of their species, could be permitted access to their guarded knowledge.

THE THREAT EMERGES

Without the Machine Cult's knowledge, a relic hunter named Kanjir Ix had come to the planet shortly before the Dark Echo station was constructed. Dropped onto the planet by a group of Faceless Traders, Ix had plans to explore the ruins and be picked up at a later date. The coming of the Adetpus Mechanicus and other Askellian forces changed these plans. Forced to go deeper into the underground ruins to avoid detection from the initial teams, the explorer stumbled upon an area that Tech-Priests have never found. Within this chamber, an obsidian box rested upon a pedestal, glowing alien runes surrounding it. When Ix touched the box, he was immediately knocked unconscious, allowing the malignant intelligence within to do its work.

When the explorer awoke, he was no longer human, but something more. The alien consciousness had rewritten his DNA, shaping it to be closer to the original form the being once possessed and granting him flesh-weapons to help spread the infection. The box containing the alien has fused with Ix, spreading across his body and integrating alien technology into it. Not all had gone as planned though. The alien presence has been unable to completely manifest itself, due to degradations in its transferred consciousness over the long millennia but also complications with the unfamiliar human genome. Ix has become more like a feral beast, lashing out in fits of madness, as it is unable to control itself. Now driven by an all-consuming hunger, it must find a new, more suitable host for itself and its still-entrapped alien brethren.

FIGHTING THE INFECTED

Whenever one of the Infected inflicts Critical damage on a character with a melee attack, the injured character must make an immediate Challenging (+0) Toughness test to prevent the alien mentality from taking over his body. If the character fails, he suffers 1d10 points of Toughness and Intelligence damage per day. Any character may spend several hours to make a Very Hard (-30) Medicae test to thwart this biomechanical invasion. If the character succeeds, the infection is excised. If the character fails, the infection remains, but the character may attempt the treatment again. If the character fails with three or more degrees of failure, the infection has reached an incurable state; the limb that suffered the Critical damage must be amputated for the patient to be cured.

If either characteristic reaches zero, the tainted character lapses into a coma for 1d5 hours. Once he awakens, he is now under the control of the alien consciousness, and can now infect others in the same manner.

Before the infected hunter could begin his new task, the constant geological activity on the planet caused a collapse of a nearby tunnel system, trapping him inside. This only increased the alien's madness, as it fought frantically to free itself. Now, after many long years, the creature has managed to find its way out of the collapsed area, and it is ready to begin its mission. Before it can proceed to the surface, there is something located deeper into the ruins that the alien must discover. With only flashes of memory and fragments of knowledge to go on, it moves slowly downwards, desperately searching for this lost item. Once it has this key component, it can then fully begin the process of reclamation.

So far, Kanjir Ix has encountered and infected only a few servitors and scouts who were exploring a nearby tunnel system. The newly infected bend to their master's will and are found at his side as he proceeds further into the dark caverns filled with alien structures, searching for something that still eludes him.

KANJIR IX, INFECTED LEADER (MASTER) 60

H ¹ 01-10	8	WS	BS	S 7
AR ¹ 11-20	8	35	30	50
AL ¹ 21-30	8	T 7	AG	INT
B ¹ 31-70	8	50	38	45
LR ¹ 71-85	8	PER	WP	FEL
LL ¹ 86-00	8	30	45	05
		IFL		30

HALF 3	FULL 3	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 35
CLAWED TENTACLES				CLASS MELEE
RNG —	ROF —	DMG 1d10+9 ^{2+SB} (I)		
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —	WT —	AVL —
SPECIAL: FLEXIBLE, SNARE (I)				

Skills: Athletics (S) +10

Talents: Iron Jaw

Traits: Dark-sight, Natural Armour (1), Touched by the Fates (1), Unnatural Strength (2), Unnatural Toughness (2)

Gear: Integral micro-bead, skinsuit remnants

Apex Infector: Ix is the primordial source of the biomechanical plague spreading throughout Dark Echo, and so any character encountering him must follow the infection rules from the Fighting the Infected sidebar.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: LOST CONTACT

Overview: When all contact with the Dark Echo station is lost, the PCs are dispatched to discover what has happened to the base. They arrive to find many Tech-Priests and Guardsmen gone, leading the Acolytes to explore the ruins in hopes of locating the missing individuals. Below the station are ancient horrors and inhuman flesh, and the PCs must work to eliminate both in order to leave the station alive.

ACT I: SOMETHING AMISS

The PCs are instructed or asked to investigate P3482XW, a remote research station which has not responded to any Astropathic messages for several weeks. This could come from their Inquisitor, an important relative of one of the Astra Militarum stationed here, or even as part of a furtive binaric message from a Tech-Priest who cannot officially request aid through his own organisation. When questioned, officials claim there is no problem; Warp storms in the area often cut off contact and there is no cause for disturbing the work there. Deeper probing shows, though, that there are worries no one admits to, and that the Acolytes should venture to the planet to find answers.

The Acolytes are able to travel to the planet and land without incident, but upon their arrival, Adept Canthus, Burla's second-in-command, demands to know why they have come. He informs them that their Astropath was caught in a minor quake and is not well enough for his duties, but that all else is fine. If the PCs demand to speak to the Astra Militarum, he relents and shows them to the barracks where they are housed. Most of the Guardsmen are out on patrol far from the base, but a few are recovering from injuries from the same quake inside. They are uneasy, and the Acolytes can use social skills to get them to speak about the strange things that happen here on base and in the surrounding ruins, especially that most have noticed fewer and fewer servitors in the station.

ACT II: DRAWN TO DARKNESS

Attempting to learn about the missing servitors leads the PCs to find they had all been programmed for scouting missions deep into the ruins below the base. The Acolytes likely seek out the underground ruins to follow the assigned scouting routes; Canthus protests heavily for this unauthorised intrusion, but the Acolytes should easily override his efforts. After some time descending into the dimly lit tunnels, the PCs come across Magos Burla, his servitors, and several Guardsmen.

The Magos is surprised to find the PCs in his ruins and his attitude (for a Tech-Priest) is very terse, if not outright hostile, toward them. During the discussions between the Acolytes and the Magos, two other Guardsmen arrive, saying they cannot locate the rest of their squad. The Magos simply insists that they became lost in the tunnels, while investigation shows that something has attacked them. Blood and drag marks can be found, indicating that foul play is involved.



As the PCs delve deeper into the ruins, the GM should use this opportunity to heighten the sense of unease and foreboding present on the planet. Other Guardsmen can go missing in the midst of the exploration, practically vanishing into nearby darkened tunnels. The group discovers the dead remains of several utility servitors after suitably tense scenes within the seemingly haunted ruins, and can see there is indeed something terrible happening in the caverns. The bodies are barely human anymore; they have been infected and the alien biotechnology is very visible across their flesh. During the analysis of the bodies, however, one suddenly comes to life and attacks the group.

ACT III: ANCIENTS AWAKEN

After dealing with the servitor, the Acolytes and surviving NPCs come to a large chamber that was previously undiscovered. Burla is instantly consumed by his desire to study this new find, heedless of any dangers. Within the chamber, a series of pillars pulse with alien light, their runes illuminating the room. At the base of one of these pillars, the infected relic hunter Kanjir Ix stands, working to activate what appears to be some form of machine. The missing servitors (a suitable mix of utility and combat patterns) are all here, now fully infected, as are any Guardsmen lost earlier (though they are only unconscious). The infected immediately move to protect their master from any threats, such as the Acolytes. The activations of the alien machine is also causing new quakes, making the combat a race against time before the chamber collapses or lava erupts within.

Depending on how the battle is going, the GM can have other infected servitors arrive, or even have some of the unconscious Guardsmen wake up to aid the warband. Magos Burla cares nothing for the battle raging around him and moves toward the pillars in hopes of unlocking their secrets, and might have his own servitors attack anyone who dares disturb him. Ix himself seeks only to activate his mysterious devices, but as the Acolytes eliminate his defenders, he instead escapes through a crack in the alien walls. If the pillars are destroyed in the battle (either deliberately or from stray gunfire), Burla is (logically) furious with the PCs. It is possible that the Acolytes may have made not one but two new Nemeses in this adventure.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Magos Burla has become secretly infected, and seeks to spread the contagion beyond Dark Echo. The Acolytes could find evidence of this alien corruption on other Askellian worlds or even the Magos himself in a new, more threatening form.
- Ix has managed to take control of some of the defence systems in the station, and the Acolytes might return to find themselves under attack from a plethora of powerful mechanisms.
- Another quake occurs during the exploration, trapping the group underground and forcing them to find new pathways. This could lead to discovering other relics from the alien species, or even clues as to the true cause of the horrid calamity that eradicated that species so long ago.

GREGORN

“S’a good place. Lotsa fings tryin’ ta kill you, lotsa fings ta kill. Big fings dere. Like, really big. Umies dere to fight, too. Dey got no dakka—not any more, anyways. Just stickas. Back when, dey wuz s’posed to have mega dakka, but da Orks put a stop ta dat, hur hur hur.”

—Septikk da Blagga, Blood Axe Nob

Gregorn is a savage, feral planet, a world replete with steaming jungles, colossal beasts, and volcanic activity on a vast scale. Its proud, peculiarly mannered, and primitive human population clings grimly to the planet’s ever-shifting tectonic plates like fleas embedded in the hide of a raging beast, beset on all sides by warlike rival tribes, bizarre megafauna, and the depredations of brutal and cunning xenos mercenaries.

The world swings pugnaciously through a tight orbit around its middle aged yellow star, in a manner resembling an apex predator pacing tirelessly within a cage. It is one of the lesser known worlds of the Cyclopa Sub-Sector, a primitive and little regarded outcast in a region which seeks to portray itself as a mercantile and manufacturing hub in Askellon. While the planet has a formal tithe rating based upon the theoretical export of timber and foodstuffs, it has no actual planetary governor or Adeptus Administratum presence. No sub-sector commander has seen fit to allocate resources to collect its tithe for millennia; this is largely due to adverse local Warp conditions which impede reliable shipping. As such, Gregorn sees little interaction with the rest of Askellon. Indeed, it is suspected to be one of a number of potential bases for rampaging xenos pirates in recent decades, though the Askellian Navy has notably failed to bring these miscreants to battle.

Gregorn’s landmass sprawls messily across the surface of the world in a handful of continents that grind and crash against each other like hastily anchored boats upon a stormy sea. Where the land masses meet, gigantic mountain ranges are thrown up, each range a nursery for dozens of ever-erupting volcanoes, magma flows, and collapsing calderas. The constant tectonic upheaval stirs up rich and fertile minerals from kilometres beneath the planet’s surface; at the edge of each lava field, dense rain forests loom hungrily, awaiting the inevitable cooling of the soil like vultures clustering around a dying traveller, voraciously poised for their opportunity to strike.

The world is warm, with tiny polar ice caps. Most of the continents exist in the tropical band of the northern hemisphere, with the world resembling a blue-green orb dotted with black volcanic regions and flickering orange rivers of fire visible even from orbit. The skies are heavy with silicate dust, but these are regularly cleared away by great storms, with their black rain eagerly devoured by the steaming forests. These fecund jungles fill virtually all available land on the planet and smother the ground in a green blanket hundreds of metres deep. Freakish behemoths lumber within these verdant depths; herbivorous saurids and pachyderms the size of heavy landers mutely chew the cud alongside colossal armoured ungulates and hirsute multi-tonne beasts which nibble delicately at leaves a dozen meters from the forest floor.

Deadly predators of great size and ferocity lurk there too, living engines of destruction taking a variety of forms. There are great carnidons, scaled bipedal beasts with teeth the length of a human forearm and who mass nearly that of a superheavy tank,

HOME WORLD: GREGORN

Players can adopt Gregorn as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Gregorn follow the feral world rules (see page 32 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**), but with the following new Home World Bonus instead of the usual one:

HOME WORLD BONUS

Manners are All: A character from Gregorn has a highly ingrained sense of honour and custom. Should he discover that another character has lied to him (such as by winning an Opposed Scrutiny versus Deceive test), he gains the Hatred talent against that character.

yet move through the forests without disturbing a single twig. There are mora, towering flightless avians five times the height of a man, with cruel, hooked beaks that can scissor a hunter apart in a heartbeat. These beasts battle hideous gulas, abhorrent predatory pack animals who scour all life from their path and scavenge the dead where they lie. Gregorn’s feral human inhabitants war with these great beasts and others on a constant basis, precariously maintaining dominance and survival.

A single enormous crater almost sixty kilometres wide mars the landscape. For leagues around, barren deserts are littered with the debris from this impact site; nickel-iron ore, rusted, pitted metal, and a thick coating of radioactive dust and black glass. The natives avoid this blasted landscape; though they are primitive, a combination of tribal superstitions and natural caution correctly trains each generation that the area is both cursed and lethal.

THE GREEN MENACE

Within the ruined realm abutting the great crater lies a ramshackle collection of low shanties, which belch and steam noxious effluent. These shacks surround a succession of rough orbital landing strips, pits, rough circular dirt tracks, foundries, and scrapyards. Within this battered selection of dwellings resides a portion of one of the many small but highly mobile Ork mercenary clans.

These aliens have had a presence here for as long as any human alive on the world can recall. The details of their arrival are lost to time, but ancient legends among the native Gregornians is that the Orks descended to the world in fire and smoke, bringing misery and death to all.

Ork numbers on Gregorn can vary substantially. At any one time there are always a few hundred, but this changes rapidly as new warbands visit the world, travelling via a variety of vessels, tellyportas, and unreliable bubblefield-shielded Roks or asteroids. Currently, the greenskin population is dominated by the infamous Blood Axe clan, whose militaristic members plague Gregorn and its surrounding stars, raiding and killing across the sub-sector as the mood takes them. Under the leadership of the quixotic and unpredictable warlord Kaptin Gen’ral Kakkbad the ‘Eadbita, this portion of the wider Blood Axe clan has gone from strength to strength, absorbing and assimilating smaller Orkish settlements and tribes under its banner.



Kakkbad has been tremendously successful, having achieved much at a comparatively young age and commanding thousands of Ork boyz. While his rise is a cause for some concern among Imperial authorities, his disparate forces' raiding activities have not yet reached a frequency and level where a coherent military response is required by the ancient Askellian ordinances governing Naval deployment. Among the planetary governors and merchant fleet officers who are subject to greenskin attack, this indolent official response is a scandalous indictment of the waning capabilities of Battlefleet Askellon.

The Ork warlord visits Gregorn with his entourage on a regular basis, finding the planet's exotic selection of vicious predators much to his liking. Here, he hunts, fights, and holds court accompanied by a train of lesser warlords, alien mercenaries, and sycophants, drawn by his presence and the promise of a good scrap. In particular, Kakkbad has strong alliances with a large number of piratical Freeboota Krews who see much to admire in the warlord's ambition and sheer naked avarice.

Like all of his clan, Kakkbad enjoys a conflicted relationship with the Imperium, finding as much within it to admire as to hate; he is drawn to its brutality, violence, and cruelty, repelled by its discipline and obsession with order. Kakkbad and his inner circle crudely ape Imperial military dress and mores, giving each other comically inaccurate military ranks, employing bizarre and meaningless military acronyms and even occasionally saluting each other. Such behaviour is relatively typical within the Blood Axe clan, but Kakkbad, controversially, extends his admiration for "Umie" militarism beyond the norm by indulgently tolerating the presence of a small band of human mercenaries.

ORK BOY

The Orks of Gregorn are broadly representative of their species: huge, cheerfully violent, and thirsty for conflict. Even hunched over (the habitual Orkish posture) each stands the height of a man, and weighs far more. Possessing long, heavily muscled ape-like arms and a massive torso, an Ork's tiny red eyes glitter with empty, happy malice. The average greenskin is almost the perfect warrior: adaptable, fearless, heedless of injury and inured to the fear of death. The Blood Axe Orks of Gregorn often sport camouflaged livery and bedeck themselves with any accoutrements that they feel enhance this military theme, such as mirrored sunshades, bandoliers of ammunition, and interesting berets or helmets.

ORK BOY (TROOP)					13				
H	5	WS	38	BS	24	S	5		
AR	5	AL	44	T	5	AC	29	INT	25
B	8	PER	29	WP	30	FEL	25	IFL	—
LR	6	LL	6						
HALF 2		FULL 4		CHARGE 8		RUN 12		THREAT 10	
SHOOTA					CLASS BASIC				
RNG 60M		RoF S/3/-		DMG 1d10+4 (I)					
PEN 0		CLIP 30		RLD 1 FULL		WT 4 KG		AVL RA	
SPECIAL: INACCURATE, UNRELIABLE									

Skills: Athletics (S), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S)

Talents: Crushing Blow

Traits: Unnatural Strength (1), Unnatural Toughness (1)

Gear: Flakk armour, improbable item of human military headgear, small pouch full of Ork teef

ORKISH WEAPONS

Simply put, Ork weapons should not work. Poorly engineered, constructed of second rate, hastily scavenged materials, and built with no care whatsoever for user safety, they should jam or misfire every time. In fact, while certainly not paragons of reliability, they work well enough—when wielded by Orks. For millennia, Tech-Priests have been aware that Orkish weapons work far less reliably (if at all) when operated by non-Orks. Various theories have been advanced to explain this, including the suggestion that Orks somehow exude a low level psychic effect that renders their weaponry usable. This view is controversial, though, as no concrete evidence of the existence of such a phenomenon has been found.

All normal Ork ranged weapons (and some melee ones as well) have the Unreliable quality. When such a weapon is used by an Ork, though, it loses this quality.

ORK NOB

Filling a position in Orkish society roughly analogous to that of officers in human militaries, the average Nob has not risen to his station by virtue of any particularly impressive feat of intellect or politicking. He has, instead, battered his way to the top, striding over the corpses of less brutal and aggressive rivals. Larger, stronger, and (most importantly) louder than normal Orks, Nobs on Gregorn are typically found commanding small groups of Boyz in battle, mobbing together with their peers into elite units or simply squabbling among themselves for pre-eminence.

ORK NOB (ELITE)					20
H ⁻ 01-10 6		WS 43	BS 26	S 6	
AR ⁻ 11-20 6	AL ⁻ 21-30 6	T 6	AG 35	INT 29	
B ³ 31-70 9		PER 32	WP 33	FEL 31	
LR ¹ 71-85 7	LL ¹ 86-00 7	IFL	—		
HALF 3	FULL 6	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 15	
SLUGGA			CLASS PISTOL		
RNG 20M	RoF S/3/-	DMG 1d10+4 (I)			
PEN 0	CLIP 18	RLD 1 FULL	WT 2 KG	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: INACCURATE, UNRELIABLE					
CHOPPA			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+7 ^{I+SB} (R)			
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 1 KG	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: UNBALANCED					
STIKKBOMB (4)			CLASS THROWN		
RNG 18M ^{3+SB}	RoF S/-/-	DMG 2d10+5 (X)			
PEN 2	CLIP 1	RLD —	WT 1 KG	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: BLAST (2)					

Skills: Athletics (S), Command (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S) +20

Talents: Crushing Blow

Traits: Unnatural Strength (1), Unnatural Toughness (1)

Gear: Flakk armour, improbable item of impressive human military headgear, large pouch full of Ork teef

Waaaaargh!: Once per encounter, as a Half Action, a Nob may scream the traditional Orkish yell of defiance and aggression. The bigger the Nob, the bigger the result. He makes a Challenging (+0) Command test; if he succeeds, a number of other Orks equal to his Strength bonus within earshot are inspired to new heights of fury. Each of these Orks becomes immune to the effects of Fear until the end of his next turn and may immediately make a Charge or Standard Attack action as a Free Action.

FREEBOOTA

Freebootas are piratical Orks motivated by a desire for profit, adventure, and of course violence. They are mercenary in every sense of the word, caring little for who they work for so long as their employer can provide ceaseless conflict and the opportunity for plunder. They have been known to hire themselves out as enforcers and killers for emissaries of other species, and possess an unusual understanding of the myriad financial motivations of other races, combined with a gift for extorting funds from them when the time is right. Typically better equipped than other Orks on Gregorn, with a fondness for powerful, heavily customised weapons of unpredictable effect, bands of Freebootas have occasionally been engaged as agents and servants by powerful and eccentric Imperial figures, including Rogue Traders and, it is rumoured, Askellian Inquisitorial agents.



FREEBOOTA (ELITE)					17
H ⁻ 01-10 5		WS 41	BS 26	S 5	
AR ⁻ 11-20 5	AL ⁻ 21-30 5	T 5	AG 32	INT 31	
B ³ 31-70 8		PER 29	WP 32	FEL 28	
LR ² 71-85 7	LL ² 86-00 7	IFL	—		
HALF 3	FULL 6	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 14	
SAWN-OFF SNAZZGUN			CLASS BASIC		
RNG 50M	RoF S/4/8	DMG 2d10+2 (X)			
PEN 1d5	CLIP 40	RLD 2 FULL	WT 10 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: GITFINDA (PHOTO SIGHT), INACCURATE, OVERHEATS, UNRELIABLE					
KUSTOM CHOPPA			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+6 ^{I+SB} (R)			
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 1 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: —					

Skills: Athletics (S), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S) +10, Commerce (Int), Survival (Per)

Talents: Crushing Blow, Technical Knock

Traits: Unnatural Strength (1), Unnatural Toughness (1)

Gear: Bosspole boasting his victories, looted armour, piratical garb, pouch full of bloody Ork teef, squig perched on shoulder



A SAVAGE INHERITANCE

Holding their ground against the depredations of the Orks and the encroachments of the various great beasts of the deep forests are the human natives of Gregorn. Clearly the descendants of some lost pre-Imperial civilisation, the tribal human population of Gregorn takes the form of a number of different small kingdoms, each headed by a single royal family of ancient lineage. These rulers can vary from tribe to tribe in brutality and customs, but all seem to share a common thread of devotion to the survival of their peoples above all else. In even the most barbaric of settlements, there are oral histories replete with tales of brave royals defending terrified tribespeople from attack by rival clans, creatures, and beasts.

While their technological level is primitive, the Gregornians are culturally sophisticated, and have produced a society which is of great interest to scholars of ancient human civilisations. Several scribes have noted that their very language is replete with calques and loan-words similar to the High Gothic patterns common on many high Askellian societies.

Although most tribes have lives that resemble those of hunter-gatherers, the central control exerted by the royal families permits communal projects for the betterment of all. Invariably this takes the form of the construction of great fortresses and towers which the native population can flee to in the event of attack, while the royals and nobles war with attackers. These fortresses—the majority of which are constructed of simple blocks of volcanic stone carved and wedged into place—are of a sufficient number and quality that humanity on Gregorn can be said to be mostly free of the threat of immediate extinction.

Gregornian culture is militaristic and violent. Young Gregornian nobles prove their mettle by hunting the most deadly predators of the deep jungles, using their deadly three metre nasharn spears, weapons made of an almost impossibly strong and flexible native wood. Uniquely, nasharn spears can be strung with gulas-gut and converted into huge and powerful bows; even more astonishingly, they can be unstrung and instantly re-used as spears without affecting their shape or strength in the least.

GREGORNIAN WARRIOR

While some terrible calamity of the past has clearly reduced their technological base to the equivalent of a Stone Age civilisation, this has had the unexpected side effect of toughening the Gregornian natives to the keenness of a fine flint blade. Natural selection has ensured that only the strongest, toughest, and most robust survive to raise offspring, ensuring that the planet's human defenders are born warriors.

GREGORNIAN WARRIOR (TROOP)					12
H 4 01-10	8	WS	BS	S	
AR 3 11-20	7	38	34	45	
AL 3 21-30	7	T	AG	INT	
B 3 31-70	7	40	37	30	
LR 3 71-85	7	PER	WP	FEL	
LL 3 86-00	7	35	30	31	
		IFL			
HALF 3	FULL 6	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 8	
NASHARN BOW					CLASS BASIC
RNG 40M	RoF S/--	DMG 1d10+1 (R)			
PEN 1	CLIP 1	RLD HALF	WT 2.5 KG	AVL SC	
SPECIAL: —					
NASHARN SPEAR					CLASS MELEE
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+5 ^{1+SB} (R)			
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 2.5 KG	AVL SC	
SPECIAL: PRIMITIVE (8)					

Skills: Athletics (S), Dodge (Ag), Survival (Per)

Talents: None

Gear: Bone-helm, full suit of scaled lizard-hide armour, quiver of 15 arrows

LEGENDS OF THE DEEP JUNGLE

The ancient human population of Gregorn has a rich tradition of storytelling, with legends passed down over hundreds of generations. While many of these tales are clearly simple, instructive fables designed to teach children practical methods of survival on the harsh world, others contain complex moral codes governing standards of conduct, particularly among the higher-caste warriors of the royal and noble bloodlines.

From birth, those born into these bloodlines are taught that they are inheritors of an ancient legacy, destined to defend the world and its people. This code requires nobles to employ certain, almost ritual, phrases of greeting for various castes, in order to acknowledge their lineage. Thus, royals and nobles alike are much given to courtly and formal modes of address, depending upon the perceived status and seniority of their interlocutors. Woe betide the traveller who inadvertently uses the wrong title for an individual. Offence given—even entirely unintentionally—is met with formal challenges to combat, which can be to first blood, maiming, or death according to the Gregornians' bafflingly complex gradations of societal customs.

Aside from these honour codes and formal rituals of etiquette, there are earthier and more colourful legends passed from storyteller to storyteller amongst the lower castes. There are dozens of these stories, but key among Gregornian myth-cycles is the tale of the Iron Kings, the legendary precursor rulers who founded the various royal families and tribes in ages past. This tale tells that in ancient days the ancient Kings walked the land in gigantic suits of iron armour, striding taller than trees. It is said that they were so mighty that they harnessed the power of the sun, casting spears of golden-white sunlight before them that could fell even the greatest giant carnidon with a single blow. The tale tells of great, epic battles fought between the various kings over slights real and imagined; of lost cities and castles within the deepest jungles where heroes once undertook great quests. The tale describes how the world was humbled before the might of the Iron Kings, and how they chose to populate the forests with beasts from among the stars so as to keep their blades keen. Packs of gulas—now regarded as so deadly that entire clans move miles to avoid them—were said to have been hunted for mere sport by these ancient lords.

The tale ends in blood and fire. At the height of the age of the Iron Kings, a glowing light from the sky fell to the south, searing the sky in its path and sending up a vast cloud that covered all the land in darkness for years on end. After the darkness came the creatures of darkness: Orks. Creeping across the lands in tens, then hundreds, then thousands, they were at first hunted by the Iron Kings for sport in the manner of beasts, but the greenskins eventually overwhelmed them in long battles lasting hundreds of years. For every Ork burned by white hot light, ten more stepped into his place. Eventually all of the Iron Kings were pulled down and torn apart, their bodies rent and battered, their armour used to create foul weapons for the Orks to despoil and ruin yet further.

Those few Imperial scholars who have negotiated the minefield of Gregornian etiquette in order to hear this tale regard it of crucial importance in determining the history of the vanished pre-Imperial culture that once ruled here. Some even believe it might hold the secrets to ridding the world of the greenskins once and for all.

GULA

Gulas feature in many of the legends of the Gregornian peoples; as hideous and savage beasts of the deep jungle, they are exemplars of the native megafauna. They are, as near as can be determined, mammalian; gigantic carnivorous pack hunters that resemble a bizarre, sickening hybrid of hyena and warthog. Gulas possess huge, distended jaws capable of splintering a human rib cage like a bundle of twigs, a striped and befouled hide, hoof-like shelled feet, and tiny black eyes which glisten with a bestial malignity. Aggressive, bloody minded, and always hungry, the average gula stands two metres high at the shoulder and weighs over a tonne. This places the species mid-tier in terms of size and lethality among the beasts of Gregorn; however, given that they run in packs of up to twenty, they pose a threat to all but the largest predators.

GULA (TROOP)					32			
H	6	WS	43	BS	—	S	6	44
AR	6	T	6	AC	39	INT	12	
AL	6	PER	32	WP	19	FEL	04	
B	6	IFL	—					
LR	6							
LL	6							
HALF 10		FULL 20		CHARGE 30		RUN 60		THREAT 14
CRUSHING BITE					CLASS MELEE			
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1d10+6 ^{SB} (I)				
PEN 2		CLIP —		RLD —		WT —		AVL —
SPECIAL: —								

Skills: None

Talents: Sprint

Traits: Brutal Charge (3), Deadly Natural Weapons, Quadruped, Size (6), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (2), Unnatural Toughness (2)



INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: THE GREAT HUNT

Overview: The Acolytes are drawn into an investigation into the activities of an unusually organised band of alien pirates and their mysterious human ally. Their investigations lead them inexorably to the savage feral world of Gregorn, where they must confront a brutal and cunning Ork warlord on his home ground.

ACT I: THE BEAST RISES

A band of Orks operating from a small and ramshackle fleet within the Cyclopia Sub-Sector has been targeting Imperial outposts and merchant vessels. While this is not unusual, this has been done in a manner that has methodically isolated key trade routes heading to the great forge worlds of Cerix Magnus and Selvanus Binary. This has garnered the attention of the PCs' Inquisitor, and the Acolytes are diverted from their existing activities to conduct an investigation into the matter. A small Rogue Trader vessel has been especially commissioned to allow them to travel throughout the sub-sector.

Interviewing the badly injured and traumatised survivors, examining the Ork remains, and viewing the pict and vox captures of the attacks gains information to better understand these brutal aliens. In the course of their investigations, the Acolytes also discover that human corpses wearing the livery of an infamous mercenary company led by the mysterious crime lord Jonah Mascherari can be found alongside the corpses of the dead Orks. During the course of their investigation, the Acolytes are also attacked by hired thugs; clearly someone does not want them to succeed in their quest. Ultimately, however, their researches reveal that Mascherari is a frequent visitor to the feral world of Gregorn, and that is where their quest must lead them.

ACT II: FALLING IN FLAMES

The Acolytes journey to Gregorn, but their ship is ambushed in orbit by a notorious Freeboota vessel and boarded. The PCs must evade the greenskin boarders and fight their way from the slaughter aboard their vessel's bridge as the command crew is overwhelmed. The Acolytes flee the burning vessel as the remainder of the crew desperately attempt to maintain control of the ship, likely escaping in a saviour pod to the surface of Gregorn. They crash land in an apparently endless jungle wilderness, where they must rely upon their wits and skills to navigate the lethal environment and evade (or subdue) Gregorn's fearsome predators.

Eventually, the Acolytes encounter Gregorn's human population, but must negotiate the social minefields of their peculiarly formal modes of address and ritual etiquette without causing offence. If handled properly, the Acolytes gain the respect of the natives and obtain their assistance in tracking down the Orkish settlement that squats like a malignant green tumour in the heart of Gregorn's southern continent.

ACT III: BREAK THE BEAST

The Acolytes have located the lair of the infamous Blood Axe Ork Warlord Kakkbad. Surrounded by dozens of Boyz and Nobs, with crime lord Mascherari lurking at his side, the Warlord's position seems unassailable. Within the camp is clear evidence of higher technology, even including Imperial vox systems that the PCs would need if they ever wish to escape this world. The PCs need to find a way to cripple or destroy this Ork outpost and stop the warlord from inflicting further raids, and have many ways to attempt this feat.

The Acolytes might pose as members of another mercenary band and stir up conflict between Mascherari and greenskins. The PCs could attempt an assassination, or to sneak in and overload the unstable Ork "plazma reakta" that powers the settlement. A diversion to draw the Orks away from the camp, such as a gula stampede, might also lessen the greenskin's might so that the remainders, can be more easily attacked. Capturing Mascherari is also desirable, in order to discover how he knows so much to direct his Ork ally in such devastatingly effective attacks.

Any actions the Acolytes make hopefully include the aid of the Gregornian natives, who are eager to help rid their world of the hated greenskins. If the PCs can stealthily use the vox, they might be able to call for support from the orbiting Rogue Trader as well (should the Game Master decide he has managed to regain control of his ship). The conflict should be violent and explosive, as befits any clash with Orks, but the GM should ideally allow Mascherari to make an escape so he can become an ongoing Nemesis for the Acolytes across Askellian space.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS:

- The Acolytes discover evidence that Mascherari is far more than a simple crime lord. Perhaps he is a sinister cultist in thrall to the Ruinous Powers that lurk within the Warp, or is the slave of some subtle xenos race which seeks to eradicate humanity and Orks alike. Worse yet, he could be the agent of another Inquisitor, one whose agenda involves turning aliens against man for his own sinister purposes.
- The Rogue Trader insists on payment in kind for his aid; once their time on Gregorn is over, the PCs must act as his bodyguards for a suitable duration. Their Inquisitor allows this service, and assigns the Acolytes to carefully gather information on the Trader's suspicious activities.
- Within the sweltering depths of Gregorn's jungles, the Acolytes discover ancient technologies from before the Imperium's arrival in Askellon. These cause acquisitive and brutal emissaries of the Adeptus Mechanicus to flock to the world like moths drawn to a flame.



VOUXIS PRIME

“On this day of remembrance we raise another 300 statues, one for each year of suffering. May they stand tall until our bones are but dust!”

—Lapidariax Aeliana Septima IX

Vouxis Prime is a world as much a benefactor as it is a victim of the unpredictable Pandaemonium. Now sitting along the Grand Processional, it has become a valuable location for many of the passages between the Rubicon and Cyclopia Sub-Sectors. Most know it, though, for the massive statuary; its surface is covered with towering sculptures, while its people live in endless subterranean cities that cut deeper into the crust with each passing generation. Famed across Askellon and beyond for the exquisite craftsmanship of its people, it is a world that saw terrible conflicts and devastation mould its populace.

A MINOR BEAUTY

Pre-Compliance Vouxis Prime bears almost no resemblance to the world's current condition. Originally a verdant Low World with a small and peaceful population, the natives of Vouxis Prime enjoyed limited relations with other planets and generally kept to themselves. People from nearby systems visited to enjoy the lush environment, or to trade for the planet's abundant resources, but beyond that the world held no real significance.

The Imperium's arrival did little to change the status quo. Still far removed from the politics of Juno or the teeming billions of Desoleum, Vouxis Prime gained the title of garden world and met their tithes with a high level of enthusiasm. The population welcomed the Emperor's leadership, and took pride in their quick and seamless integration into the greater Askellon Sector, even if few knew any details of the wider Imperium other than to serve it.

For thousands of years Vouxis Prime remained the same. Far from important Warp routes and lacking major industry, the populace was content with their inconsequential role. With no xenos threats, no voracious native life, and a virtually non-existent history of mutation, many of its citizens lived their entire lives with little thought of the rest of the sector or the Imperium. For this isolated world, life was essentially perfect, right up until the moment the Pandaemonium made its presence felt.

THE WAR ABOVE

As unpredictable as it is inscrutable, the Pandaemonium flared violently as M38 came to a close. Filling the skies above Vouxis Prime with terrifying displays of light, the infernal Warp storm left the small world untouched but its population petrified. Nothing in its history matched this sort of event, and planetary leaders had no idea what to do. When the vicious storms vanished after a few panic-filled years, the citizenry breathed a sigh of relief that things had returned to normal. This proved premature, however, as the Great Storm had also left behind a terrible gift in the form of the Space Hulk *Tide of Ruin*. The vessel slowly drifted towards the garden world for three months, time enough for the ranks of the Vouxian Guard and planetary defence force to swell. By the time the *Tide of Ruin* arrived the people were ready, or so they thought.

HOME WORLD: VOUXIS PRIME

Players can adopt Vouxis Prime as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Vouxis Prime follow the hive world rules (see page 38 of the *DARK HERESY CORE Rulebook*), but with the following new Home World Bonus:

HOME WORLD BONUS

Art from Below: A character from Vouxis Prime starts with the Blind Fighting talent and Trade (Sculptor) as a Rank 2 (Trained) skill.

Surprisingly, the *Tide of Ruin* brought not one group of conquering xenos but two, both of whom ignored the natives in their continued attempts to annihilate one another. The invading forces made planetfall far from any populated areas, so the Vouxian Guard remained on standby for when one or both sides decided to attack. That attack never came, and within a few weeks the *Tide of Ruin* moved on before vanishing back into the Warp.

For months the two alien armies battered each another, and cautiously the people of Vouxis Prime scouted out their new foes. One they identified as Orks, the crude beasts cutting through the forests and mountain ranges as they tore at every nearby resource in their efforts to destroy their enemies. No one could identify the other xenos race, their forces shrouded in endless banks of poisonous fog and billowing smoke from the destruction they brought upon their Ork enemies.

Confident that inaction would lead to defeat, the planet's leaders pushed the Vouxian Guard right at the two warring armies. The results were disastrous, and the few survivors returned with little more than tales of defeat. Despite the devastating intervention, both alien armies seemed more interested in their own war, and the lack of retaliation gave the Vouxian Guard time to regroup.

Soon enough, the Vouxian leaders noticed how both invading armies were spreading out and consuming resources at an ever-increasing rate. They knew that eventually the major Vouxian cities would become battlegrounds, and lacking the means to fight effectively, the leaders looked not to the stars for salvation, but to the planet itself for a solution.

Whilst the two warring species fought bitterly, the Vouxian population dug down and created a system of underground habitats. The world's greatest artisans and sculptors turned their skills towards greater and greater living quarters, and the Vouxian Guard transformed themselves into a workforce that could carve out mass swaths of living space in very little time. Soon the underground cities rivalled the surface dwellings in both scale and beauty, and the world's population all but abandoned the surface world. This last-ditch attempt at survival proved to be the act that saved Vouxis Prime, but also the one that destroyed it.

As the War Above raged, traditional Vouxian society disappeared. The dim and dark network of underground passageways replaced the endless gardens and perfect weather. The master carvers and sculptors became the new ruling class as frightened citizens now relied on their expertise to maintain their subterranean dwellings. The world's history fragmented, and the destruction of the War Above went unrecorded. Many who study these terrible events estimate that the war lasted 300 years, and that the resulting devastation turned the once-flourishing planet into a rocky wasteland. The two alien forces exhausted themselves and stripped the surface clean, in the end destroying one another in a series of cataclysmic battles that flattened the planet's uninhabited surface cities. The war had left Vouxis Prime in ruins.

It took another century for the people to return to the surface, and by this time not a soul lived that remembered life outside the underground cities. To these people the surface was as alien to them as any other planet. Nevertheless, the concepts of sunlight and open sky seemed of little interest to the emerging population, as from the moment they stepped into the light they encountered something far more distressing: fields upon fields of massive Ork idols, as far as the eye could see.

Debate rages over why the Orks built so many effigies to their heretical gods, but the prevailing theory states that in the latter stages of the War Above the remaining Ork leaders turned to superstition and their basest instincts to help bring about victory. Given that both races annihilated one another, it remains a mystery whether this strategy actually proved successful.

However, for the frightened and timid population none of that mattered. For decades the master sculptors had shepherded their civilisation's very survival as they led the enormous projects to carve cities into the planet's crust. As they carved, they had also created statues to the Emperor and their heroes, appeals for aid in these dark times. The Ork idols were the highest order of blasphemy to the emerging Vouxians, an insult to both the Emperor and to their leaders. At that moment, almost as one, the people of Vouxis Prime found a new purpose and vowed to replace each misshapen effigy with a hundred perfect works, a goal that would eventually make the world renowned across the sector.

A WORLD INVERTED

Today, Vouxis Prime is closer to a hive world, only in reverse. Rather than massive hives with spires that stretch into the sky, the cities of Vouxis Prime head downwards far into the planet's crust. The planet's leaders—the most skilled of all sculptors—reside at the bottom, living in the most opulent caverns and carved manors. The poorest live on the ruined surface in the continent spanning slums that rise scarcely more than a few stories from the dry and dusty ground.



Modern Vouxian society revolves around statuary. The people kept their vow to clear the Ork idols, and spent the millennia since they emerged constructing untold millions of stone effigies across the planet's surface. Most rival Warlord Titans in scale and some even reach the clouds; many of the world's most famous creations are so tall that their upper features can only be seen from orbit. These statues dwarf the surface slums, and many lose their homes to make room for new works. Anyone not directly involved in the creation of new statues either lives aboard the enormous Skerab Earthmovers that move the raw material, toils away in the forges needed to craft and repair the melta-chisels that turn cold stone into soaring sculpture, or works in the capital of Davidius shipping commissioned stonework all across the sector.

The Vouxian people take their sculptures seriously, and measure each piece's worth in the lives taken to create it. Citizens gather in the millions and stand waiting for days to witness the unveiling of a famous sculptor's latest work, and political dominance rests both on the crowd's size and how long witnesses stay to view the statue. Thousands die from heatstroke, starvation, and the press of the crowd, and the more casualties a statue causes, the greater its majesty. Failing to draw a large enough crowd or even failing to hold a crowd's attention can signal the end of one's career and force a prominent sculptor to the surface slums.

Vouxis Prime's obsession with statuary is not relegated to just local affairs either. The purity and detail of Vouxian statues places them in high demand among many of the sector's most powerful nobles, and there are areas of Juno littered with statues of Praefectrix Anastasia XX, all from nobles trying to impress her or garner her favour. In fact, few worlds across the Grand Processional or the Tributaries entirely lack some form of prominent Vouxian statue, and the world maintains a good relationship with the Askellian Ecclesiarchy by supplying endless renditions of the Emperor, as well as of famous saints.

In the end, the War Above and the Pandaemonium turned Vouxis Prime from an obscure footnote in Askellian cartography into one of the sector's most prominent worlds.

THE IVORY ORDER

The only Vouxian citizens who escape the toils of mining are those belonging to the Ivory Order, Vouxis Prime's defence force. Celebrated as expert urban fighters and adept at navigating dark passageways that twist endlessly below the surface, the Tunnelmen of the Ivory Order make for excellent shock troops as well as decisive defenders thanks to their silver shields, a weapon unique to Vouxis Prime. An essential part of their training is in using their shields to create nearly impassible defensive walls, allowing the Tunnelmen to advance on their foes from behind walls of silver.

Their other defining feature are the hand-carved white masks that completely cover every soldier's face. As Tunnelmen rise through the ranks, they replace their previous masks with new ones of greater craftsmanship. Lower-ranked masks have only basic details, whereas Ivory Order commanders—who are often as skilled in carving as they are in battle tactics—craft masks that wondrously depict great Askellian saints or revered Vouxian sculptors. Combined with their cream and silver uniforms, the Tunnelmen of the Ivory Order stand in stark contrast to the Vouxian Guardsmen of the pre-War Above era.

IVORY ORDER TUNNELEMAN (TROOP)					12
H ⁴ 01-10 8		WS	BS	S	
AR ⁴ 11-20 8		30	40	35	
AL ⁴ 21-30 8		T	AG	INT	
B ⁴ 31-70 8		40	40	40	
LR ⁴ 71-85 8		PER	WP	FEL	
LL ⁴ 86-00 8		45	35	25	
		IFL			
		—			
HALF 4	FULL 8	CHARGE 12	RUN 24	THREAT 8	
LASPISTOL				CLASS PISTOL	
RNG 30M	RoF S/2/-	DMG 1d10+2 (E)			
PEN 0	CLIP 30	RLD HALF	WT 1.5 KG	AVL CM	
SPECIAL: RELIABLE					
SILVER SHIELD				CLASS MELEE	
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d5+4 ^{1+SB} (I)			
PEN 1	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 5 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: DEFENSIVE					

Skills: Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag), Navigate (Surface) (Int) +20, Survival (Per), Trade (Sculptor) (Int)

Talents: Blind Fighting, Double Team

Gear: Imperial Guard Flak Armour, filtration plugs, micro-bead, photo-contacts, stablight

Solid Silver: Tunnelmen of the Ivory Order often form a solid wall of shields when defending tunnels and narrow passageways. Three or more Ivory Order soldiers may form a shield wall if adjacent to one another, gaining a +10 bonus per Tunnelman to Willpower- and Toughness-based tests.

EMERGING EMINENCE

Despite their newfound resolve, there is little doubt that Vouxis Prime's desolate landscape would have doomed the world's vast population to a slow and agonising death if not for the continued machinations of the Pandaemonium. Like with much of their history during the War Above, no one recalls when the event occurred, only that by the time the people returned to the surface, their planet's position in Askellian prominence had changed, and that the Vouxis system now sat directly on the Grand Processional.

However, not only did the people find their planet counted among the most important worlds in the sector, their closest Processional neighbour turned out to be Kalto, the sector's most important agri-world. Vast food resources flooded in from Kalto, supplementing the miserable fungus farms and blindfluke schools that had sustained the population for generations. Some called it simple luck, or the whim of the Pandaemonium, but representatives of the Askellian Ecclesiarchy point to this event as proof of the Emperor's Grace.

RISING UP

Although the War Above devastated the surface of Vouxis Prime, the world is far from barren. City-sized quarries replace its once-grassy plains, and the capital of Davidius stands taller than any of the world's long-dead forests. The world beneath the surface holds its own stories and mysteries, including the Cavern of Nore and the vitally important Fount Argentum.

DAVIDIUS

The capital city of Davidius exists as the only major above-ground structure that is not some form of statuary. Nearly symmetrical and built from the same off-white stone present in all facets of Vouxian life, Davidius is the one place where the master sculptors gather to discuss important matters and receive nobles from other Grand Worlds. These gatherings never last long, however, as the sunlight and fresh air does not agree with Vouxians.

Davidius is also Vouxis Prime's only spaceport, featuring two massive landing pads capable of tending to hundreds of shuttlecraft, cargo lifters, and all manner of other commerce. It is from here untold quantities of commissioned statues leave the world for their eventual resting places in cities and grand halls all across the Askellon Sector. The spaceport also serves as the lifeblood of the Vouxian people, where thousands of bulk freighters filled with consumables arrive daily from Kalto.

CAVERN OF NORE

The Cavern of Nore is an object of fear and trepidation. Discovered during the War Above by Ignatius Nore, the world's first Lapidarius Primus, the Vouxian people first saw the cavern as a safe haven. Extending for kilometres both in width and in height, Lapidarius Nore declared that the cavern would form his new capital and directed the Ivory Order to scout out its boundaries and locate any weaknesses. However, instead of a vast living space the Tunnelmen discovered a mighty statue at its centre—one not carved by human hands.

Impossibly tall, and stretching into the darkness of the caverns ceiling, the alien statue clawed at their minds and assaulted their artistic sensibilities with its unnatural angles and its rough yet meticulous carving style. Each hand featured four clawed fingers, the feet seven taloned toes, and if it had a head they dared not find it. The Tunnelmen fled the statue, and soon after Nore ordered the cavern sealed. The statue remains, and a palpable sense of dread fills the tunnels leading to its domain. Only the very foolish ever attempt to reach it, and most never return.

THE FOUNT ARGENTUM

Nobles across the Askellon Sector all know of mirrorcloth, the exquisite substance found only on Vouxis Prime, but almost no one knows of its origins and the place known as the Fount Argentum. Like the Cavern of Nore, the people of Vouxis Prime discovered the Fount Argentum whilst expanding their network of underground cities during the War Above. Struck by a blinding light, the workers first thought they had inadvertently reached the surface, but instead found a small, naturally occurring well no more than a few metres across filled with a silvery liquid so pure that it reflected all light.

Immediately recognising its aesthetic potential and how the liquid might enhance the white stone that made up most of Vouxis Prime, the explorers drained the well and for a brief period of weeks the greatest Vouxian nobles created frescos and carvings coated in gleaming silver. They even discovered a way to weave it into clothing. The liquid quickly ran out, but a year later the well refilled. Again they drained the well, and the wealthiest enjoyed a few days of silvery extravagance until supplies ran dry. Then, exactly one year later, the well filled up again. This continued, but over time those administering the well began to notice that with each refill, the liquid's surface was slightly lower than the year before. Immediately instigating a rationing system, the administrators took care to drain the well slowly, ensuring that it emptied only the day before the refill. This act only increased the substance's scarcity popularity among Vouxian nobles, where any amount of mirrorcloth denoted a person of great significance. More recently, the administrators began offering tiny quantities of mirrorcloth to the nobles of other worlds, where its rarity and lustre fetches astronomical prices.

Why the well exists, why it refills so consistently, or what the silvery substance even is remain a mystery, but various theories exist. Some believe it is the ichor of some great subterranean beast, whereas others claim it is the lifeblood of Vouxis Prime itself. Whatever the truth, the Fount Argentum's overseers exist as perhaps the most secretive and close-knit group on the whole planet, and continue to resist any and all attempts to drill further into the crust to find the well's source. Almost cult-like in their rituals, the overseers ensure that the silver substance remains one of the Askellon Sector's rarest commodities.

THE MISSHAPEN

When the Orks arrived on Vouxis Prime they brought not only their unrelenting desire for conflict but also their brutish belief system. Many speculate that as the War Above stretched the Ork's resources, they turned to their worship of Gork and Mork in an ever more desperate attempt to gain favour and crush the aliens that sought to consume them. Despite this change in behaviour, or perhaps because of it, the Orks staved off defeat long enough to ensure mutual destruction, leaving nothing behind but discarded equipment, carcasses, and thousands upon thousands of Ork idols.

Nevertheless, Orks remain on the surface of Vouxis Prime to this very day. A notoriously hardy species capable of surviving catastrophes that might end lesser civilisations, the brutish aliens endured in tiny numbers, eking out an existence from the blasted ruins of Vouxis Prime's former gardens. Their obsession with idols still consumes them, and they coat their green skin with coloured powders pounded from the broken rocks that make up the surface. They still raise their twisted effigies, and seem more focused on their blasphemous xenos religion than in conquering the planet.

The Vouxian people do not refer to them as Orks, choosing the term "Misshapen," as it best encapsulates their opinions of Ork idols. To the sculpture-focused society the Orks are nothing more than vandals who exist only to destroy their great works of statuary and hinder their progress towards sculpting the perfection of the human form. Clashes with the Misshapen only occur when the Ivory Order marches with instructions to tear down more Ork idols, but the aliens lack the numbers to truly fight back, often retreating to begin construction on more idols somewhere else.

MISSHAPEN ORK BOY

Caked in dust and grime, the Misshapen exist on the fringes of Vouxian civilisation, only revealing themselves when they wish to topple some grand statue or steal equipment. Wielding only the most basic weaponry, these primitive greenskins seem to lack the fighting spirit that most other Orks exhibit, almost as if their defeat and near-annihilation during the War Above somehow broke their will to fight.

The people of Vouxis Prime classify higher forms of the Misshapen into three broad categories: Thugs, better armed and more ready for combat than with simple destruction; Vandals, who appear to be the most technically minded of all Misshapen; and Brutes, the idol-obsessed leader caste.

MISSHAPEN ORK BOY (TROOP)					14
H ⁻ 5 01-10		WS	BS	S	5
AR ⁻ 5 11-20	AL ⁻ 5 21-30	T ⁵ 40	AC	INT	45
B ² 7 31-70		PER	WP	FEL	20
LR ⁻ 5 71-85	LL ⁻ 5 86-00		IPL		—
HALF 2	FULL 4	CHARGE 8	RUN 12	THREAT 10	
HUGE CHOPPA			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+8 ^{3+SB} (I)			
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —	WT —	AVL —	
SPECIAL: UNBALANCED					

Skills: Athletics (S), Intimidate (S), Survival (Per)

Talents: Bulging Biceps, Crushing Blow, Devastating Assault, Hardy, Iron Jaw, True Grit

Traits: Brutal Charge (2), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (1), Unnatural Toughness (1)

Gear: Crude hammers and chisels, tattered flakk armour, various small fetishes to Gork and Mork

The Misshapen Hordes: The profile listed above represents the basic characteristics and equipment of a Misshapen Ork. GMs can choose one of the following modifications for each Misshapen Ork (see page 47 for rules on Ork weapons):

- Misshapen Thug: Replace huge choppa with a shoota.
- Misshapen Vandal: Replace huge choppa with a burna.

MISSHAPEN ORK BRUTE

Even larger and more destructive than the other Orks on Vouxis Prime, Misshapen Brutes dominate the scattered greenskins that roam the devastated surface of the planet. They also display a crude cunning, and arrange ambush attacks on statuary raisings to disrupt the placement of new human effigies. Like all Misshapen, they also create new idols to Gork and Mork where possible, often from the rubble of Vouxian statues fallen to time or Orkish hammers. Few Brutes venture underground, even though their hated human foes live there, for those who do enter the dark tunnels below the surface are rarely ever seen again.



MISSHAPEN ORK BRUTE (ELITE)					13
H ⁻ 7 01-10		WS	BS	S	7
AR ⁻ 7 11-20	AL ⁻ 7 21-30	T ⁷ 50	AC	INT	25
B ³ 10 31-70		PER	WP	FEL	20
LR ¹ 8 71-85	LL ¹ 8 86-00		IPL		—
HALF 4	FULL 8	CHARGE 12	RUN 24	THREAT 22	
SLUGGA			CLASS PISTOL		
RNG 30M	RoF S/3/-	DMG 1d10+4 (I)			
PEN 0	CLIP 18	RLD 1 FULL	WT 2 KG	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: INACCURATE, UNRELIABLE					
CHOPPA			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+8 ^{1+SB} (R)			
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 1 KG	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: UNBALANCED					

Skills: Athletics (S), Command (Fel) +10, Intimidate (S) +10, Survival (Per)

Talents: Bulging Biceps, Crushing Blow, Devastating Assault, Hammer Blow, Hardy, Iron Jaw, Thunder Charge, True Grit

Traits: Brutal Charge (2), Fear (1), Size (5), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (2), Unnatural Toughness (2)

Gear: Crude hammers and chisels, tattered armour plating, various fetishes to Gork (or possibly Mork)

WHAT LIES BENEATH

Aside from the scattered remnants of the Misshapen, the War Above annihilated virtually every living thing on Vouxis Prime's surface. Yet rumours persist that other things live within the crust, a race of slowly waking creatures that grow numerous as the cities extend farther underground. In Vouxis Prime's southernmost regions there are many stories of nightmares that abduct people without a trace, and tales of fiends that stick to the shadows and cling to ceilings as they lie in wait. Some even speak of abominations that blend into the world around them, shifting to invisibility before striking out with lashing tendrils.

The ruling sculptors dismiss many of these claims, but aggressive shifts in political discourse, especially in the area where the Fount Argentum reportedly lies, has the authorities on edge with the fear that these monsters might be undermining Vouxian society from within. Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos are even more worried that these tales could indicate the presence of one of the most terrifying of all xenos threats—the Tyranids. Efforts to quietly eradicate this menace are underway, but many fear it could be too late for the planet.

VOUXIAN STALKER

Man-sized with four large arms and two very fast legs, the Vouxian Stalker is a lethal predator that attacks with blinding speed. Equipped with extremely sharp claws, it is said the creature can rip a man limb from limb in a matter of seconds. Many argue that the Stalker is a myth, but as the frequency of attacks grows, many more wonder just how many exist deep within the world's seemingly endless tunnel networks.

VOUXIAN STALKER (ELITE)					20						
H ⁴ 01-10		13		WS	BS	S ⁸	65	20	45		
AR ⁴ 11-20	13		AL ⁴ 21-30	13		T ⁹	AC ⁸	INT	50	40	35
B ⁴ 31-70		13		PER	WP	FEL	60	45	05		
LR ⁴ 71-85	13		LL ⁴ 86-00	13		IFL	—				
HALF 8	FULL 16	CHARGE 24	RUN 48	THREAT 16							
RENDING CLAWS					CLASS MELEE						
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1D10+16 ^{8+SB} (R)							
PEN 5		CLIP —		RLD —		WT —		AVL —			
SPECIAL: RAZOR SHARP											

Skills: Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +10

Talents: Combat Master, Devastating Assault, Hard Target, Leap Up, Lightning Attack, Preternatural Speed, Step Aside, Swift Attack

Traits: Dark-sight, Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear (1), From Beyond, Multiple Arms (4), Natural Armour (4), Unnatural Agility (4), Unnatural Strength (4), Unnatural Toughness (4)

Brood Telepathy: Stalkers use a form of telepathic link which functions clearly and without restriction (such as intervening objects) for up to one kilometre.

VOUXIAN SHADE

Many believe the Vouxian Shade is a remnant of the War Above or perhaps something the disastrous conflict unleashed upon the world. Said to have two enormous sweeping claws, a mouth full of writhing tentacles, hooked tendrils strong enough to pull a man into feeding range, and skin that can change colour in a heartbeat, the Shade—if real—represents a real threat to remote underground hab blocks and isolated civilians.

VOUXIAN SHADE (MASTER)					24						
H ⁶ 01-10		16		WS	BS	S ¹²	65	—	65		
AR ⁶ 11-20	16		AL ⁶ 21-30	16		T ¹²	AC ¹⁰	INT	66	50	31
B ⁶ 31-70		16		PER	WP	FEL	45	48	05		
LR ⁶ 71-85	16		LL ⁶ 86-00	16		IFL	—				
HALF 12	FULL 24	CHARGE 72	RUN 72	THREAT 55							
RENDING CLAWS					CLASS MELEE						
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1D10+18 ^{8+SB} (R)							
PEN 5		CLIP —		RLD —		WT —		AVL —			
SPECIAL: RAZOR SHARP, TOXIC (2)											
SCYTHING TALONS					CLASS MELEE						
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1D10+14 ^{2+SB} (R)							
PEN 3		CLIP —		RLD —		WT —		AVL —			
SPECIAL: TOXIC (2)											

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Athletics (S) +20, Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +30, Survival (Per) +20

Talents: Assassin Strike, Catfall, Combat Master, Devastating Assault, Hard Target, Leap Up, Lightning Attack, Preternatural Speed (included in Charge rate), Sprint, Step Aside, Swift Attack

Traits: Dark-sight, Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear (2), From Beyond, Multiple Arms (4), Natural Armour (6), Size (6), Unnatural Agility (5), Unnatural Perception (4), Unnatural Senses (20), Unnatural Strength (6), Unnatural Toughness (6)

Chameleonic Scales: Able to completely vanish, even when in the open, Shades can make Stealth tests even when in the open and when being observed. They also ignore the Size penalties to Stealth tests, and tests to detect them suffer a -30 penalty.

Flesh Hooks: A Shade often launches hooked tendrils to grab at its prey from afar. As a Half Action, a Shade may make an Ordinary (+0) Weapon Skill test against a target within 10 metres. If the creature succeeds, it initiates and gains control of a grapple against the target (see page 221 of the DARK HERESY CORE Rulebook). Whenever the Shade uses the Grapple action and wins the Opposed Strength test, it pulls the target 1 metre closer to itself per degree of success it scored on the test in addition to any other effects of the Grapple action.

Memory Devourer: Many speak of the Shade's ability to use its maw of wriggling tentacles to devour a person's brain, thereby learning all his secrets. When a Shade devours the brain of an enemy, it gains access to all of the victim's recent memories.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: FROM THE SHADOWS

Overview: The Acolytes discover a sudden shift in the purity of the sector-renowned statuary of Vouxis Prime, indicating a potential inhuman contamination. This template puts an emphasis on investigation along with frantic close-quarters combat against lethal adversaries. It can be introduced at the start of a campaign by the Acolyte's master as a potential lead, or during a campaign where the Acolytes notice or receive word of a series of potentially alien-influenced works.

ACT I: TOPSIDE

The Acolytes, in the course of carrying out the wishes of their master, either come across or are directed towards a batch of newly acquired Vouxian statuary. The noble who commissioned these works is unhappy with his purchases, as they have a bestial appearance with hunched shapes or even clawed arms. Alternatively, the Acolytes might learn that a series of small effigies displaying blasphemous representations of the Emperor and Askellian saints have begun appearing across the Rubicon Sub-Sector.

The Acolytes retrace the items to Vouxis Prime and arrive at the capital of Davidius, a monolithic port with hundreds of thousands of people and spacecraft in constant motion. Here, in the course of investigating the statues, the Acolytes must find and secure local aid to investigate the offending statues' region of origin using the information given to them by the noble, identify the name of the master sculptor that created the bizarre statues, and then secure transport to this location.

ACT II: UNDERSIDE

The Acolytes arrive in Vouxis Prime's southern regions, an area said to house the Fount Argentum, and descend into the vast underground city of Antamyna. Here the Acolytes must be careful with their questions, as the population in this area is highly agitated over recent sightings of creatures they call Shades and Stalkers. The Acolytes might also notice an unusual abundance of Ivory Order infantry, who seem overzealous in their attempts to keep the populace away from an area that is cordoned off from the rest of the city. Either from their investigations whilst at Davidius, or from asking around the local citizenry, they learn that the statues are the work of Master Sculptor and former Fount Argentum administrator Vaalé Agnusum. The Acolytes also learn of the litany of apprentice sculptors he has driven away in recent months.

Interrogation leads to the discovery that Agnusum believes he is receiving messages from the Emperor, and that he is making the sculptures as a result of these whispers. The Acolytes soon learn that Agnusum has isolated himself within the area cordoned-off by the Ivory Order, and they must find a way inside this area, preferably in a manner that avoids conflict with the soldiers.

ACT III: XENOCIDE

Deeper inside the city, the Acolytes enter Vaalé Agnusum's realm. They find empty halls lined with effigies, all displaying an obvious regression in their stone forms. The first look mostly human, but the further they explore the more the signs of inhuman influence become apparent—snarling faces, claws, extra arms—until the statues themselves lose all resemblance to the blessed shape of humanity. Agnusum is found carving a new figure whilst mumbling incoherently. Psyniscience tests and other investigation reveals he is a latent psyker, and something has overcome his mind with alien imagery to the point that he is incapable of rational thought. Searching his studio reveals hidden tunnels leading to a larger cavern, filled with partially eaten bodies.

There is little time for further searching as one or more Stalkers appear, carrying other insensate Vouxians. The Acolytes might fight the creatures, flee to gain reinforcements, or attempt to block the cavern with explosives. The encounter could take place in little or no lighting, with uncertain footing or even the danger of cavern collapse should heavy firepower be used. Further investigation might find others in the Vouxian leadership knew of the Stalker presence, and perhaps arranged for the creatures to eliminate the Acolytes to end any unwanted inquiries.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Unable to secure effective transport, the Acolytes are forced to make their way on foot to Antamyna but are soon assaulted by a mob of Misshapen Orks.
- The Acolytes uncover evidence of a Faceless Trader searching or selling (supposed) Stalker chitin, claws, and ichor.
- The Acolytes come across an Ivory Order squad under orders to find and capture a Shade alive, providing them with allies or a source of conflict when their missions conflict.



YANTH

"The insects were gigantic; one of them batted a Chimera over like it was nothing. We hid under a tree to try and avoid them, and then the tree ate Jones!"

—Sgt Kellin Areis, Cadian 478th

Located in the Stygies Cluster, Yanth is a world where nearly everything living on it is utterly hostile. A standing Imperial warning beacon is in place near the world, warning anyone who approaches to stay away. In the past, many gave Yanth a wide berth, valuing their own lives more than any exploration of the planet. However, recent discoveries on the world have made it a much more appealing destination, danger or not.

DEADLY BEAUTY

Yanth is a world covered with dense jungles. From the smallest island to the largest continent, every square metre of the world is filled with thick vegetation. The temperatures are sweltering and rainfall is abundant, helping these plants to grow and thrive. Sweeping vistas break up the jungle with waterfalls, gigantic trees, and many other features, providing breath-taking views. Deep below the canopy of leaves, thousands upon thousands of species of flora grow in a complex ecosystem unseen elsewhere in Askellian space. There are few permanent settlements on Yanth, as the voracious flora and fauna can rapidly destroy anything that attempts to intrude upon their lands.

The plant life of Yanth is largely carnivorous, subsisting on the varied species of insectoid life that also call Yanth home. Trees use creeping tendrils to snare prey and pull it back to waiting maws for digestion, while overgrown bushes unleash deadly barbs to poison and stun anything that gets close before consuming it with microbes capable of melting the hardest carapace. Alongside many of the rivers that flow across the continents, latticework patches of vines and other vegetation cast sweeping nets to grab any creatures that come to the rivers for water.

The never-ending struggle between the plants and insects for dominance of the planet is a hallmark of the world's ecosystem. Many of the insects feed off of the plant life and in turn, the plants feed off of the insects. One cannot exist without the other, though, for long; as one side becomes ascendant, the other evolves even greater capabilities and resurges to continue the conflict.

THE INSECTOID MENACE

While there are some forms of mammalian and reptilian life on Yanth, the primary fauna are various insect species. Many of these reach gargantuan sizes, far larger than would be expected based on planetary conditions such as oxygen levels. They are the apex predators of Yanth and are the overwhelming cause of death, even for the ever-vigilant natives who have learned from birth to be constantly wary of everything around them.

HOME WORLD: YANTH

Players can adopt Yanth as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Yanth follow the death world rules (see page 26), but with the following new Home World Bonus instead of the usual one:

HOME WORLD BONUS

Craftsmaster: A native of this world is instructed from birth on how to turn his surroundings into sustenance, medicines, weapons, and shelter. A character from Yanth gains a +20 bonus to Crafting special uses of the *Medicae* and *Survival* skills, and halves the time needed for completion.

RENDER

There are many forms of insects that vie for dominance across the planet, but the most feared is known as the render. This beast dwarfs a tank and is covered in an impenetrable exoskeleton capable of deflecting even lascannon shots. A render has two rows of razor sharp claws that run along the bottom of its body, allowing it to move at great speeds. Its maw is packed with interlocking rows comprising of hundreds of teeth that enable it to burrow through the ground and process even hard rock through its mouth. Renders are highly sensitive to vibrations and can lurk underground, rearing up instantly through the dirt and rocks to snatch a creature on the surface.

RENDER (ELITE)					30
H ⁴ 01-10	8	WS	BS	S ⁸	8
AR ⁴ 11-20	8	48	14	55	
AL ⁴ 21-30	8	T	AC	INT	
B ⁴ 31-70	8	45	48	33	
LR ⁴ 71-85	8	PER	WP	FEL	
LL ⁴ 86-00	8	33	40	35	
			IFL		
			—		
HALF 16	FULL 32	CHARGE 48	RUN 96	THREAT 25	
RAZORED CLAWS					CLASS MELEE
RNG —	ROF —	DMG 2D10+12 ^{2+2+SB} (I)			
PEN 3	CLIP —	RLD —	WT —	AVL —	
SPECIAL: TEARING					

Skills: Acrobatic (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Stealth (Ag)

Talents: Crushing Blow

Traits: Dark-sight, Deadly Natural Weapons, Natural Armour (4), Quadruped (6), Size (7), Unnatural Senses (20), Unnatural Strength (3)

In addition to the renders, there are thousands of other deadly species that make their home on this death world. These range in size from no bigger than a bolter shell to monsters large enough to bat aside Chimera tanks with ease. The skies are also home to flying predators, and even the seas are filled with insects adapted to living below the deep ponds or gliding along the surfaces on striding limbs.

ENVELOPER

Envelopers have two sets of wings for flight, but their highly adhesive spray makes them truly deadly. Their webbing shoots forth from openings behind their forward mandibles, and can hit targets at far distances. Natives have nicknamed them stickyflies, and immediately attempt to shoot down any they see before the insects can fire their entangling webs. Once trapped, heavy-duty solvents and acids are often required to free anyone webbed.

ENVELOPER (ELITE)					13	
H ³ 01-10		5		WS	BS	S
AR ³ 11-20		5		35	30	45
AL ³ 21-30		5		T	AG	INT
B ³ 31-70		5		25	65	13
LR ³ 71-85		5		PER	WP	FEL
LL ³ 86-00		5		20	40	09
				IFL	—	
HALF 16	FULL 32	CHARGE 96	RUN 96	THREAT 19		
WEB BLASTS					CLASS BASIC	
RNG 20M	RoF S/—		DMG 1D10 (I)			
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —	WT —	AVL —		
SPECIAL: SNARE (1)						
MANDIBLES					CLASS MELEE	
RNG —	RoF —		DMG 1D10+4 ^{SB} (R)			
PEN 1	CLIP —	RLD —	WT —	AVL —		
SPECIAL: RENDING						

Skills: Acrobatic (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Stealth (Ag)

Talents: Preternatural Speed, Swift Attack

Traits: Deadly Natural Weapons, Flyer (4), Multiple Arms (4), Natural Armour (3 All), Quadruped (6), Size (5)

RAZORCLAW BEETLE

The razorclaw beetle is a half-metre sized flyer with talons so sharp they have been known to take off a man's head without even slowing the creature as it speeds past. Often, the first sign of a razorclaw attack is the screams of victims and witnesses as detached limbs fall to the ground and are rapidly devoured by carnivorous flora.

RAZORCLAW BEETLE (TROOP)					15
H ¹ 01-10		3	WS	BS	S
AR ¹ 11-20		3	35	—	20
AL ¹ 21-30		3	T	AC	INT
B ¹ 31-70		3	25	55	33
LR ¹ 71-85		3	PER	WP	FEL
LL ¹ 86-00		3	20	25	10
			IFL	—	—
HALF 10	FULL 20	CHARGE 60	RUN 60	THREAT 25	
SLICING CLAWS			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1D10+5 ^{3+SB} (I)			
PEN 5	CLIP —	RLD —	WT —	AVL —	
SPECIAL: FELLING (2)					

Skills: Acrobatic (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Stealth (Ag)

Talents: Preternatural Speed, Swift Attack

Traits: Deadly Natural Weapons, Flyer (8), Natural Armour (1), Quadruped (6), Size (3)

THE CALL OF THE WILD

With everything poised to kill, Yanth would seem to be a world devoid of visitors. That could not be further from the truth, however. On an early expedition to the death world, a Magos Biologis team discovered something extraordinary about the planet—a number of the native plants possess powerful healing properties. This remarkable discovery has made Yanth a prime destination for Rogue Traders, Askellian Chirurgeons, and many less savoury individuals. Several permanent settlements have been established across the planet, devoted to processing and gathering these useful species. After generations of living on these heavily fortified facilities, inhabitants have become inured to life on the death world, and some natives are rumoured to have trained the larger insectoid fauna to act as steeds across land and air.

Out of the millions of plant species (most of which are exceptionally toxic), the Askellian Tech-Priesthood has identified four particular ones that offer very useful properties. They tend to grow in the most remote and dangerous locations on Yanth, perhaps adapted to growing only where natural defenders of terrain and hostile fauna exist to protect them. The Disciples of the Ommissiah dispatched hundreds of servitors to harvest these plants, with very few returning. Attempts to relocate these flora to other settings or growing-vats have proven unsuccessful, which has also led to further studies of Yanth's unique biosphere.

CRAFTING AND APPLYING YANTHIAN DRUGS

Those Acolytes wishing to craft these native drugs can do so using raw plants harvested fresh on Yanth. These follow the *Medicae* crafting rules for Natural Drugs from page 97 of the *DARK HERESY* Core Rulebook, and call for a Difficult (–10) *Medicae* test. The Trade (Chymist) skill can be used alternatively, and grants a +10 bonus to the test. If successful (at least 4 extended test successes), the Acolyte generates 1d5 doses, plus one extra dose for every total degree of success.

These drugs have basic forms, such as pastes or unguents, and so no sample of the final product is required as part of this crafting action. Due to their nature, applying them (no matter their source) requires a Challenging (+0) *Medicae* test.

The Adeptus Mechanicus is currently re-evaluating its procedures for dealing with this operation, a process that has taken many years as they weigh all their options. In that time of indecision, many other groups have swept in to claim the flora for themselves. At least seven different Rogue Trader operations (including agents of Maxellian Vor and Hesiah Luftius) have attempted to harvest the plants, and two separate smuggling outfits have also begun to make regular trips to Yanth. Conflicts between the groups have been rare so far, but all involved are expecting an escalation of violence at any time as the price of the plants reaches new heights on the various black markets in the sector.

ABSOLLA ROOT

This blood red root is part of the massive Absolla tree, and is found in the northern most areas of Yanth's main continent—where many render colonies thrive. The tree is a deadly predator in its own right, with lashing vines and an insatiable appetite for any creatures that come near it. Once ground into a thick paste the root has remarkable regenerative properties, and when applied to wounds it removes 2d5 points of ordinary damage.

WINDRETH VINES

Growing only on the cliffs of the Windreth Falls, the bright purple vines are a beautiful sight to behold. They grow in geometric patterns across the sheer cliff face and resemble massive, intricate designs crafted by an artist. Seekers of the vines must contend with the plant's unreachable nature as well as hives of envelopers, who nest and lay their eggs in tunnels behind the obscuring vines. The fluids within the vines can be extracted to create a potent elixir that melds ruined flesh, removing 1 point of Critical damage per degree of success on the application test.

HYPOLETTA SEEDS

The Hypoletta plant is a large, slow-growing bush found on the southern continent, near the banks of lakes. It thrives on the mineral deposits found in the otherwise poisonous waters, which also contain a species of gigantic, amphibious insects uniquely adapted to the lethal environment. The plant's seeds are used to create a potent anaesthesia useful in treating combat injuries. Crushed and treated with the lake water, the gases released double the number of degrees of success gained in a First Aid test.

DUSK LEAF

Not all plants on Yanth are used solely for beneficial medical purposes. The dusk leaf is little more than a dark purple weed, but is part of a sector-wide smuggling trade. When dried and ground, the resulting substance can be smoked or injected in a careful ritual, giving an unearthly, sensory-expanding experience that is a part of several cult rituals. It is Addictive, and each dose grants the Unnatural Senses (20) trait for 1d5 hours. It can also be taken without the normal application test for Yanthian drugs, but if so the GM can require the user roll on **Table 5-3: Hallucinogenic Effects** from page 146 of the **DARK HERESY Core Rulebook**.

SOLE SURVIVORS

Within the thick tree canopies of the Yanthian jungle, something not native to the world has survived and even thrived for countless years. Moving from tree to tree, blending in with the vegetation, a group of survivors have made this harsh climate their home. These tenacious survivors are the alien Kroot, and have existed on Yanth for many years.

Kroot are avian humanoids found on a variety of planets across the galaxy. They have vestigial beaks, and their bones are very light, almost hollow. This allows them to move quickly through the trees and jump distances not possible for most humans. Their skin is dry and rough, ranging in colouration from browns and greens to bright oranges. Their heads are topped with a tight mass of quills, which serve as part of their advanced sensory system. Kroot physiology allows them to absorb traits and abilities from creatures that they eat, providing an interesting evolutionary adaptation. This has allowed the Kroot to thrive on many different worlds.

The Kroot species is thought to have originated on Pech, a world located in the Eastern Fringe of the galaxy. They spread to a number of nearby worlds over time and eventually came in contact with an emergent civilisation known as the Tau Empire. The Kroot allied themselves with the Tau to help combat a growing Ork menace in their area of space, and have been a valuable part of the growing Empire ever since.

How these wayward aliens came to Yanth is unknown, but speculation is that one of their gigantic Warspheres may have crashed on the planet long ago. No signs of this wreckage have ever been found, but since Yanth claims all that touches its surface, this is not surprising.

The Kroot of Yanth make their lairs in the canopies of Deondel trees, one of the few non-carnivorous plants on the planet. The leaves of these trees are very dense, providing adequate cover from both the climate and predators. The Kroot are highly vigilant and always in motion, scouring all areas of their camps for any signs of intrusion. Many areas of their new home are decorated with grisly trophies of their time on the death world, including heads of most of the deadliest predators that stalk the planet. To the Kroot, these displays prove that they are superior and deserving of their place in the ecosystem.

A wizened Shaper, known to his people as Ennuk, leads the Kroot tribe. Once part of a larger council of Shapers, Ennuk is the only surviving member. His strategies have kept the small band alive for decades, all the time using the local fauna as the basis for further genetic development for his flock. Ennuk realised long ago that Yanth could provide a never-ending source of new evolutionary growth, and sees no point in leaving the death world any time soon.

He has met with various Imperial and alien agents, many of whom eagerly seek out Kroot guides for exploring Yanth, or even as mercenaries to fight elsewhere in Askellon. All of Ennuk's followers return back to him eventually, though, sharing any newly-gained genetic enhancements with their Shaper to continue the development of their people.



KROOT TRAITS

The Kroot have a number of abilities and traits unique to this species, reflecting their carnivorous avian heritage.

EATER OF THE DEAD

Kroot metabolism is highly advanced and allows them to recover from even the most serious of injuries—as long as they are able to satisfy their voracious appetites with copious amounts of meat. To represent this, once per encounter as a Full Action, this creature may devour a large quantity of raw flesh (such as that of a corpse) to remove 1d10 damage (removing Critical damage first).

HYPERACTIVE NYMUNE ORGAN

The Kroot's nymune organs are hyperactive, storing vast amounts of energy. The Kroot's metabolism is thus sped up, improving his raw muscle speed, reflexes, and reactions. Once per round, a creature with this trait can suffer one level of Fatigue to make an additional Reaction.

KROOT LEAP

Kroot are skilled at making long jumps from tree to tree, an ability that is also useful in combat. When making a Charge action, the Kroot can ignore obstacles between him and his target by making a Running Vertical Jump (see page 247 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook), so there is enough room to land next to the target.

KROOT SHAPER

Kroot Shapers lead their tribes both in battle as well as guiding their evolutionary pathways. By selecting the species the Kroot consumes, Shapers can determine what genetic traits are gained.

KROOT SHAPER (ELITE)						18
H	4	WS	BS	S	6	
01-10		50	36	45		
AR	4	T	AG	INT		
11-20		44	53	33		
B	2	PER	WP	FEL		
31-70	6	54	40	28		
LR	4	IFL				
71-85						
LL	4					
86-00						
HALF 5	FULL 10	CHARGE 15	RUN 30	THREAT 14		
KROOT RIFLE						CLASS BASIC
RNG 110M	RoF S/2-	DMG 1d10+5 (E)				
PEN 1	CLIP 6	RLD 2 FULL	WT 6 KG	AVL VR		
SPECIAL: —						
BEAK						CLASS MELEE
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d5+6 ^{SB} (R)				
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —	WT —	AVL —		
SPECIAL: PRIMITIVE (7)						

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +20, Survival (Int) +30

Talents: Furious Assault, Leap Up, Sprint, Swift Attack

Traits: Eater of the Dead, Hyperactive Nymune Organ, Kroot Leap, Natural Weapons (Beak), Unnatural Perception (2), Unnatural Strength (2)

Gear: Bandolier of 30 pulse rounds, hide armour, assorted fetishes and talismans

Elite Mercenary: A Kroot Shaper can alternatively be equipped with any combination of the weapons from the Kroot Hunting Gear list on page 49, such as a pulse rifle or photon grenades.

KROOT MERCENARY

Those seeking out reliable combat support can find Kroot for hire across Askellian space. Though these aliens can often bring unwanted attention, they can often be found in the employ of crime lords, Imperial militaries, and even Planetary Governors.

KROOT MERCENARY (TROOP)						12
H	4	WS	BS	S	6	
01-10		42	33	40		
AR	4	T	AG	INT		
11-20		41	52	26		
B	4	PER	WP	FEL		
31-70		44	30	19		
LR	4	IFL				
71-85						
LL	4					
86-00						
HALF 5	FULL 10	CHARGE 15	RUN 30	THREAT 14		
KROOT RIFLE						CLASS BASIC
RNG 110M	RoF S/2-	DMG 1d10+5 (E)				
PEN 1	CLIP 6	RLD 2 FULL	WT 6 KG	AVL VR		
SPECIAL: —						
BEAK						CLASS MELEE
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d5+6 ^{SB} (R)				
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —	WT —	AVL —		
SPECIAL: PRIMITIVE (7)						

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +20, Survival (Int) +30

Talents: Furious Assault, Leap Up, Sprint, Swift Attack

Traits: Eater of the Dead, Hyperactive Nymune Organ, Kroot Leap, Natural Weapons (Beak), Unnatural Perception (2), Unnatural Strength (2)

Gear: Bandolier of 30 pulse rounds and 4 sniper rounds, chunks of meat, totem pouch

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: RELICS OF THE PAST

The Acolytes must survive the dangers of a death world after a mission goes wrong, but they also discover an ancient threat previously unknown. The mission might be part of tracking a group of smugglers whose trade in dusk leaf leads the PCs to the drug's source planet, or Faceless Traders who are dealing in the deadly insects of Yanth—any of which could ruin another world's ecosystem. Alternatively, the Acolytes might be tracking rumours of alien mercenaries used in several rebellions, or even seek the aliens out for their Inquisitor's use. This adventure calls for not only plenty of combat action with native flora and fauna, but also social negotiation, investigative work, and excellent piloting skills if the PCs are going to leave the planet alive.

ACT I: SURVIVING THE WILD

The Acolytes make their way to Yanth, but encounter difficulties while landing or even simply while airborne in search of their quarry. They might be attacked by flocks of razorclaw beetles that rip open the hull, or fly through acidic spore clouds that corrode hullmetal. The PCs must act quickly to bring the ship down without loss of life to a location that would allow them the best chance of survival. The landing cripples the ship, and could also result in injured PCs if any did not properly prepare for impact (or were attacked by the insectoid airborne threats).

Once the ship is on the ground, the Acolytes take stock of their supplies, tend to any wounded, and plot out how they can survive until rescue arrives or they can make their way off planet themselves. Auspex scans or other searches of the surroundings reveal anomalous signs not far from their crash site—metals and residual power levels beneath the surface, possibly the remains of another, more salvageable vessel. The PCs set forth from the crash to find whatever is causing these readings, but must contend with the flora and fauna of Yanth. With danger lurking at every turn, the Acolytes fight their way deeper into the bush, hoping to find something that can lead to their rescue.

ACT II: LIFE IN THE JUNGLE

The Acolytes encounter a pack of Kroot during their trek. This could occur as the comparatively lumbering PCs stumble upon carefully-hidden Kroot lying in wait to attack other prey, and trigger a clash. Alternately, the Acolytes could come to the rescue of a Kroot about to fall to an enveloper's grasp, and use this as a way to get the alien's support. The aliens might even come to their aid as the PCs are about to be devoured by a pack of Renders or are facing some other overwhelming threat.

The PCs have to determine whether these aliens can be trusted, and possibly negotiate with their leader for mutual assistance. If a deal is reached, the Kroot take the PCs back to their encampment and offer some aid. The Kroot provide food (though it is likely to be something the Acolytes find highly unappealing) and also primitive—but highly effective—medical aid.

The Kroot can offer some aid in the warband's search, though, but refuse (perhaps through deliberate misunderstandings of the questions) to discuss anything further on their coming to Yanth. They do not know anything concerning what the Acolytes seek but, depending on how successful the PCs have been in social dealings, a Kroot guide might be provided to aid them—payment being perhaps any corpses the Acolytes leave, including their own of course. After leaving the Kroot encampment, the PCs travel toward the source of the readings, taking them to the deepest part of the jungle.

ACT III: THE BURIED PAST

When the Acolytes reach the source of the readings, they find an opening heavily overgrown with vegetation that leads deep into the ground. Making their way into the hole, they discover a massive cave complex that contains the wreckage of an alien spacecraft. The ship has been buried here for centuries and could be Ork, Eldar, or some other species as the GM desires.

Inside the ship, the PCs can find a variety of xenos technology and relics, most of which have long fallen into disrepair. Some aspects of the ship do still function, including powerful comm relays (which can be used to call for assistance from orbiting ships) but also potent internal defences. The Acolytes must overcome these defences to call for aid, but the action draws the attention of more of Yanth's ferocious predators, as well as weakening the already torn hull and surrounding rock. Any recovered relics might form the basis for future investigations, as similar items are also showing up in Faceless Trade deals across the sector.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- The Acolytes' ship is fired upon during descent by dusk leaf smugglers lurking on the planet, and the PCs must contend with hostile humans as well as alien menaces. The smugglers could also provide a means of escape from the planet through their Arvus Lighter and orbiting transport ship.
- The Kroot are hostile and refuse to help the Acolytes, as similarly garbed humans betrayed or enslaved Kroot here not long ago. Skilful negotiations to gain the aliens' assistance are required, but this can reveal a wider conspiracy of alien slavers across the sector.
- The ship holds a secret—something lives within, perhaps another human who stumbled upon it long ago, or even a surviving alien of the ship's crew. Yanth's hyper-evolving life and the leaking ship's energies have twisted it into a huge, insectoid creature that does not take kindly to intruders.

XENOS OF THE WEBWAY

"They travel the stars without the horrible necessities of the Immaterium. I would sacrifice half of Askellon to hold that secret in my hands."

—Kakistin Dostern, Heretek Lord of the Brass League

There exists a shadowy realm between the harsh dimensions of realspace and the roiling madness of the Warp. This is the webway, a series of labyrinthine passageways used for both travel and existence. The Eldar currently control and inhabit most of this domain, though their legends hold that it was created and bequeathed to them aeons ago by a race they called the Old Ones. The Eldar use it to travel from star to star and world to world, via portals—some so small they barely fit a single figure, others so large that entire starships pass through comfortably.

Webway travel even allows emergence directly onto planetary surfaces, allowing Eldar to rapidly appear and leave anywhere a portal exists. The system once intertwined the galaxy, but when the prideful Eldar fell and Slaanesh was born, the Warp-eruption shattered many of the passages. Eldar still rely on it for interstellar voyages; they could travel through the Warp, but to do so would be to invite the attention of She Who Thirsts. Thus the Eldar and the webway are co-dependent, and perhaps each can only exist with the support of the other.

Only the Harlequins, enigmatic even by Eldar standards, might know the entirety of the webway, through a unique map kept in the Black Library. This repository of lore concerning Chaos and other dark arts is perhaps the most secretive location in the galaxy, and many have given their souls in the attempt to breach it.

Much of the webway is now dark and crumbled, however. Many tunnels are lost, and along the outer reaches, barbed cities fester like cankers where the dark kin gather for cruelty and screams born of it. These Eldar are the cruel, sadistic half of that ancient species. Where other Eldar fight for the survival of their race, these crave only the pleasure of inflicting pain and suffering. These cruel creatures are slavers and torturers, thriving on the chaos and darkness they inflict. Long ago, they discovered that such actions were their only means of staving off the predations of Slaanesh, but for most this has become an ingrained part of their existence.

Other creatures exist in the webway, be they ones who somehow evolved there or who were imported for sport, and now make it their hunting grounds. Most worrisome to the Eldar of both factions are growing instances of their ancient foes stirring in the webway. Creatures of metal, their eyes and weapons glowing with unearthly emerald energies, have been sighted. Though their armoured shells are layered with the patina of millions of years, it has not lessened their deadliness and implacable hatred of all that lives. It is only a matter of time before enough rise from their great sleep to threaten anew, something that would imperil not only the Eldar but all life in the galaxy.



CRAFTWORLD MIANDROTHER

"Our path is clear, yet the way is shadowed."

—Farseer Mandr'thiel

Drifting silently through the void, Craftworld Miandrothe haunts the Askellon Sector, striking without warning and leaving no trace. While the Askellian authorities know all too well of the Eldar Corsairs that plague shipping and outposts across the sector, the presence of a mighty craftworld within Askellon's bounds remains unknown to the Imperium. However, with each passing year, Miandrothe becomes more active, striking at targets across the sector for reasons known perhaps only to Farseer Mandr'thiel. If this continues, it is inevitable that Askellon realises it has more to worry about than Eldar raiders and pirates.

Miandrothe is an awesome sight—though only a handful of humans have ever seen it. Many kilometres long, it is much more a city than a vessel. The elegant, swooping architecture supports a chain of vast domes and spires of wraithbone. Within, thousands of chambers provide everything the inhabitants might need in their long lives, entire cities of splendid, techno-organic architecture, with psychic Bonesingers ever shaping and adding to the living ship-state as needed.

Unless some pressing matter requires it, Miandrothe often drifts for many decades between the stars. When it does move, this is invariably to keep its distance from the swelling storm front of the Pandaemonium. The gulfs between Askellian systems are vast, and provide space for even craftworlds to exist undetected—alongside horrors perhaps unknown even to the ancient Eldar.

PHANTOMS IN THE VOID

Miandrothe's children do not risk their lives lightly in forays onto Imperial worlds. Farseer Mandr'thiel orchestrates missions only when she determines that the importance outweighs the danger, for to lose even a single Eldar life is a great blow to the craftworld—and a true tragedy, should the victim's soul stone go unrecovered. The purpose of these missions is not to weaken the Imperium's hold on the Askellon Sector or to damage its worlds—at least, this is not the ultimate goal. To the Seers of Miandrothe, humanity is less a concern than the ancient enemies that threaten them once more. When the Eldar do attack Imperial worlds, it is not because they view humanity as an enemy, or out of hatred. If Miandrothe wanted to damage Askellon, it could do so on a scale far beyond mere raids and sabotages. Destruction of Imperial worlds and human deaths are but a consequence of far weightier matters.

To the lords of Askellon, there is no pattern or logic to these attacks, furthering the belief that these are simply the actions of opportunistic raiders. In fact, there is no single pattern to be found, as the Eldar of Miandrothe face many threats and challenges.

The Eldar see much further afield than humans, and their acts are based as much on the far future and the events of the wider galaxy as on the here and now—yet they also remain mired in the distant past. A number of Askellon's worlds were claimed countless aeons ago by the Eldar, and wrought to idyllic perfection through unfathomable technologies. Though the Eldar of Miandrothe now have only their craftworld as home, they nonetheless have reason to visit these ancient worlds of their race—reasons that often bring them into conflict with human interlopers.



The presence of these maiden worlds is only the smallest of Miandrothe's concerns, however. Other worlds draw their attention for much more dire reasons. The stain of ancient evil lies yet upon many of Askellon's worlds, and terrors dormant since before life evolved on Holy Terra even now stir beneath the dust of aeons. It is such threats that draw the Eldar to risk their own lives in conflict against humans, who are little more than bystanders caught in the midst of wars that began countless millennia ago.

DARK PATTERNS

The Eldar of Miandrothe are responsible for innumerable activities in Askellian space. Humans, though, are completely oblivious to all but a scant few, which they attribute to Eldar raiders, human pirates, native beasts, or even natural causes. Recently, a band of Striking Scorpions stealthily arrived on Pellene to catastrophically sabotage a mining operation, killing thousands and irreparably damaging excavation machinery before it could penetrate further into the planet's mantle. In the aftermath, Pellene's Deep Guard blamed the incident on mutant rebels—just as the Eldar intended.

Miandrothe's activities are not always in opposition to the Imperium. In a number of cases, the xenos have attacked malefic cults worshiping the Dark Gods or even the Pandaemonium, eliminating them before the Imperium even knew of the gestating threat. Similarly, the Eldar have increasingly targeted the Faceless Trade in xenos objects—and not only those smugglers dealing in Eldar artefacts, such as the Cerulean Pact. Certain other items, recovered from ancient tombs and alien ruins across the sector have stirred the Eldar into action. Their merciless purges include the Traders themselves, prospective customers, and anyone else unfortunate enough to be involved—leaving no witnesses and no survivors. Many of these events have gone unnoticed, while the Arbitrators continue to investigate others, and simply ascribe some to the actions of rival smugglers.



Even as the rulers of Askellon's worlds struggle to keep their psyker populations in check, they receive unexpected and unknown assistance from the Eldar, who strike at certain psykers for reasons of their own. Why the Eldar would risk discovery in order to eliminate a dozen psykers on a particular world, or a single witch on another, while leaving yet other planets to overflow with wyrds, none can say. Even stranger are Miandrothe's dealings with nobility across the sector. Though few have any inkling of just who or what the visitors were, several houses have met with the Children of Isha under peaceful conditions. Others, however, have known only sudden and unexplained deaths and disappearances in their bloodlines, some spanning through the generations.

The Eldar have laid low many more victims as well, all without revealing the craftworld's presence. However, many missions have required the elimination of witnesses to ensure continued secrecy. When an entire colony or hab-block disappears, it does draw some attention from the sector authorities, but such is preferable to any humans suspecting, let alone learning, of Miandrothe.

Over the centuries, savants, aether-scribes, Astropaths, and Adeptus Mechanicus Magi have begun to outline disturbing patterns of unexplained violence, pirate attacks, sightings of alien travellers, and other mysterious activities on a number of worlds shortly before the Pandaemonium cut off access to these planets. Although a number of theories have appeared, none have been able to say whether these incidents were intended to forestall this fate, hasten it, or for some other end. That these incidents largely trace back to the Eldar is yet unknown—perhaps in part due to the untimely and unexplained deaths of many of these scholars.

WITHOUT WARNING OR TRACE

To accomplish their objectives without revealing the craftworld's presence, the Eldar of Miandrothe rely on speed and stealth.

While all Eldar are possessed of agility far beyond that of any human, and are therefore preternaturally adept on both counts, certain warriors are particularly well-suited to such assignments. Rangers are often tasked with missions ranging from reconnaissance to assassination, and reports of them on planets as diverse as Thaur and the asteroids of Port Aquila have drawn the attention of Inquisitors. For tasks warranting heavier armour and weaponry, Striking Scorpion Aspect Warriors and Windrider Guardians often take to the field. Although the Seers of Miandrothe are hesitant to risk the lives of any Eldar in battle, their powers of foresight help ensure that no Eldar gives his life without due cause. Further, the alacrity and skill of these warriors are such that most skirmishes pass without so much as an injury to the Eldar involved.

The Corsairs of the Dusk Vipers often assist their craftworld brethren, as the fates—and best interests—of all Eldar are closely entwined. The Dusk Vipers serve as scouts and informants, but also provide a fighting force that does not reveal the craftworld's presence for missions deemed impossible to accomplish unseen and unheard. In some cases, Eldar from the craftworld fight alongside the Corsairs, trusting that human ignorance means the distinction goes unnoticed.

While the institutions of Askellon are ignorant of Miandrothe's presence, this does not mean that certain individuals are not aware. Miandrothe yoked its fate to that of Askellon long ago, and in the countless human generations since, many have had opportunity to witness the Eldar's deeds or learn of their presence. The majority died to preserve the secret, for to look upon Miandrothe or its denizens and draw breath is to be a fated soul, but the Seers have decreed that some should be allowed to live. Among these are a handful of Inquisitors, who have kept the knowledge of Miandrothe's existence from the Imperium for reasons of their own. Some might safeguard the information to prevent a panic, and to stop the already beleaguered fleet of Port Lokhart from foolishly dashing itself to pieces on the craftworld's redoubtable defences. Perhaps others do so because they possess some level of understanding of the threats the Eldar guard against. A very few have even set foot upon Miandrothe and spoken with Mandr'thiel and its other Seers, and perhaps gained a glimmer of the horrors the Eldar are fighting to prevent.

STRIKING SCORPION

Striking Scorpions are amongst the most ferocious and canny of all Aspect Warriors, those Eldar immersed in the arts of war. They are masters of stealth; their psycho-reactive Aspect armour perfectly aligns with contours and movements, allowing Striking Scorpions to move with the stealth of an assassin in mere cloth. In their pursuit of the Path of the Warrior, Striking Scorpions hone their natural agility to move silently and unseen, just as they rely on the longevity and patience of the Eldar to lie in ambush for hours, days, weeks, or as long as it takes. These attributes leave Striking Scorpions as the obvious choice for missions to Imperial worlds, in which the craftworld must ensure that its deeds go unnoticed—or that there are no survivors.



STRIKING SCORPION (ELITE)					20	
H 6 01-10	WS	BS	S	48	44	45
AR 6 11-20	T	AG 7	INT	38	44	39
AL 6 21-30	PER 5	WP	FEL	43	39	28
B 7 31-70	IFL	—				
LR 7 71-85	LL 7 86-00					
LR 7 71-85	LL 7 86-00					
HALF 7	FULL 14	CHARGE 21	RUN 42	THREAT 16		
SHURIKEN PISTOL			CLASS PISTOL			
RNG 30M	RoF S/3/-	DMG 1D10+4 (R)				
PEN 3	CLIP 60	RLD 1 FULL	WT 1.2 KG	AVL VR		
SPECIAL: RAZOR SHARP, RELIABLE						
MANDIBLASTERS			CLASS PISTOL			
RNG 3M	RoF S/4/-	DMG 1D10+2 (E)				
PEN 3	CLIP 40	RLD —	WT —	AVL ER		
SPECIAL: RELIABLE, SHOCKING, TWIN-LINKED						
SCORPION CHAINWORD			CLASS MELEE			
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1D10+8 ^{4+SB} (R)				
PEN 3	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 4 KG	AVL ER		
SPECIAL: BALANCED, TEARING						

Skills: Athletics (Ag) +30, Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Parry (WS) +10, Stealth (Ag) +30

Talents: Ambidextrous, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged), Swift Attack

Traits: Unnatural Agility (3), Unnatural Perception (1)

Gear: Heavy Aspect armour, spirit stone

Scorpion Sting: As part of a Charge action, a Striking Scorpion may make an additional Standard Attack or Semi-Auto Burst action with his mandiblasters as a Free Action. This occurs once he reaches the target, but before he makes his melee attack. He suffers a -10 penalty on his Ballistic Skill test but also benefits from relevant modifiers for range as normal.

Scorpion Stealth: Due to his elite training, a Striking Scorpion does not suffer penalties to his Stealth checks from his heavy Aspect armour.

WINDRIDER

Mounted on their sleek jetbikes, Windriders attack with appalling swiftness, often able to surprise and obliterate an enemy before it even realises it is under attack. This suits them perfectly for missions the Eldar must complete quickly and covertly, but in which bloodshed is necessary.

WINDRIDER (TROOP)					13	
H 4 01-10	WS	BS	S	35	38	35
AR 4 11-20	T	AG 7	INT	32	41	35
AL 4 21-30	PER 4	WP	FEL	38	35	31
B 4 31-70	IFL	—				
LR 4 71-85	LL 4 86-00					
HALF 7	FULL 14	CHARGE 21	RUN 42	THREAT 9		
SHURIKEN PISTOL			CLASS PISTOL			
RNG 30M	RoF S/3/-	DMG 1D10+4 (R)				
PEN 3	CLIP 60	RLD 1 FULL	WT 1.2 KG	AVL VR		
SPECIAL: RAZOR SHARP, RELIABLE						
ELDAR SWORD			CLASS MELEE			
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1D10+4 ^{1+SB} (R)				
PEN 1	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 3 KG	AVL VR		
SPECIAL: BALANCED						

Skills: Athletics (Ag) +30, Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Operate (Surface) (Ag) +20, Stealth (Ag) +20

Talents: Independent Targeting, Skilled Rider, Sprint

Traits: Unnatural Agility (3), Unnatural Perception (1)

Gear: Eldar jetbike, Eldar mesh armour, spirit stone

Battle Focus: Once per round on his turn, a Windrider may move his Eldar Jetbike up to its Tactical Speed as a Free Action.



THE AWAKENING DEAD

Like the Askellon Sector itself, Craftworld Miandrothe has fallen from its greatest days. Even before Miandrothe first arrived in Askellon, other Eldar whispered that the craftworld was accursed. Indeed, even then, the mighty corridors and halls of Miandrothe were largely silent and empty. The millennia it has endured in Askellon's bounds have taken a further toll, despite the best prognostications of Mandr'thiel and the other Seers. As ancient enemies stir from their resting and hiding places across the sector, ever-bloodier battles face the craftworld, calling for ever-more-desperate measures. With each generation, more of the craftworld's youth—already so few in number—take the Path of the Outcast, many never to return.

Whether the Eldar of Miandrothe remain in Askellon by choice, or even because the raging Pandaemonium has cut off any avenue of escape, they continue to work toward their mysterious objectives across the sector. With the Eldar numbers dwindling even as their foes gather and grow in strength, Mandr'thiel must increasingly turn to the Spiritseers to rouse the craftworld's dead from their place in the Infinity Circuit, calling them once more into battle in the form of Wraithguards and Wraithblades. These ominously silent, towering wraithbone golems bear little resemblance to the lithe Eldar they were in life, but their loyalty to the craftworld remains as strong as ever. For missions where heavy resistance and fighting is expected, the durability and tenacity of these ghost warriors is critical to success.

ELDAR JETBIKE

Like all Eldar craft, these vehicles are grown from wraithbone, making them both lightweight and exceedingly resilient. They are astonishingly fast, able to cross battlefields in the blink of an eye, scything down foes in hails of deadly shuriken fire.

ELDAR JETBIKE		SKIMMER
FRONT: 18	SIDE: 18	REAR: 12
CRUISING SPEED: 250 KPH		TACTICAL SPEED: 45 M
MANOEUVRABILITY: +20	SIZE: HULKING	AVL: ER
CARRYING CAPACITY: 0	INTEGRITY: 16	THREAT: 14
CREW: DRIVER		
VEHICLE TRAITS: BIKE, ENHANCED MOTIVE SYSTEMS, SKIMMER		

WEAPONS

One Hull-mounted, forward facing twin-linked shuriken catapult:

TWIN-SHURIKEN CATAPULT				CLASS BASIC
RNG 80M	RoF S/3/10	DMG 1d10 + 3 (I)		
PEN 3	CLIP 180	RLD 2 FULL	WT 4 KG	AVL ER
SPECIAL: RAZOR SHARP, RELIABLE, TWIN-LINKED				

Eldar Aerial Superiority: When the operator of an Eldar jetbike successfully uses the Jink action, he may immediately move the vehicle up to 10 metres in any direction.



SPIRITSEER

Spiritseers are amongst the most feared of all Eldar to walk the Path of the Witch. Although all Seers have the capability to remove an Eldar's soul from the craftworld's Infinity Circuit and place it in a spirit stone to motivate a wraithbone construct, Spiritseers possess a particular affinity for this macabre task. When the Seer Council deems it necessary, a Spiritseer can lead the ghost warriors into battle, forging a psychic link that allows these grim spectres to see with unmatched clarity.

SPIRITSEER (MASTER)					26	
H ⁴ 01-10		7		WS	BS	S
AR ⁴ 11-20		7		42	44	38
AL ⁴ 21-30		7		T	AG 7	INT
B ⁵ 31-70		8		36	45	56
LR ⁵ 71-85		8		PER 7	WP 8	FEL
LL ⁵ 86-00		8		54	57	33
				IFL	61	
HALF 7	FULL 14	CHARGE 21	RUN 42	THREAT 18		
SHURIKEN PISTOL			CLASS PISTOL			
RNG 30M	RoF S/3/-	DMG 1D10+4 (R)				
PEN 3	CLIP 60	RLD 1 FULL	WT 1.2 KG	AVL VR		
SPECIAL: RAZOR SHARP, RELIABLE						
WITCH STAFF			CLASS MELEE			
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1D10+11 ^{2+PR+SB} (R)				
PEN 8 ^{2+PR}	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 5 KG	AVL UN		
SPECIAL: BALANCED, FLAME, FORCE, TWO-HANDED						

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag) +20, Forbidden Lore (Psykers, The Warp) (Int) +20, Parry (WS) +10, Psyniscience (Per) +30, Stealth (Ag) +10

Talents: Bastion of Iron Will, Resistance (Psychic Powers), Step Aside, Strong Minded, Warp Lock, Warp Sense

Traits: Psyker (PR 6), Touched by the Fates (2), Unnatural Agility (3), Unnatural Perception (2), Unnatural Willpower (3)

Psychic Powers: Conceal (see below), Dominate, Erasure, Forewarning, Mental Fortitude, Prescience, Telepathic Link, Terrify
 Conceal: Just as he resides in the netherworld between life and death, the Spiritseer bends the very light and shadow to his will, concealing Miandrothe's children from the eyes of lesser races.

Action: Half Action

Focus Power: Difficult (-10) Willpower test

Range: 10 metres x psy rating

Sustained: Free Action

Subtype: Concentration

Effect: This power affects the Spiritseer and a number of allies equal to PR. For the duration of the power, ranged attacks and Perception tests targeting affected characters suffer a penalty of -5 x PR. In addition, in a turn in which the character does not take an action with the Movement subtype, others cannot perceive him from more than five metres away unless they pass an Awareness or Psyniscience test with a penalty equal to 10 x the psyker's DoS when manifesting the power.

Gear: Rune armour, rune pouch, spirit stone

Spirit Mark: As a Full Action, the Spiritseer can make a Hard (-20) Psyniscience test. All allied Wraithguards, Wraithblades, and other wraithbone constructs within his WPB in metres receive a +5 bonus for each degree of success to Ballistic Skill, Weapon Skill, and Perception tests until the start of the Spiritseer's next turn.

WRAITHGUARD AND WRAITHBLADE

Wraithguards are shells of durable wraithbone animated by the spirit of a deceased Eldar. Though they lack the grace and dexterity of a living Eldar, they more than make up for it in raw strength and resilience. These indefatigable constructs wield devastating psychically-charged weapons known as wraithcannons that rend the very veil of reality, tearing the target apart with raw Warp energy or dragging it into that nightmarish otherworld. The most ferocious of Wraithguards are commonly known as Wraithblades. These vengeful spectres wield twin ghostwords, massive blades each imbued with a soulstone of its own, the Eldar spirit within guiding each swing with uncanny accuracy.

Wraithguards do not see with eyes of flesh and blood, but perceive a shadowy world of spirits and echoes, and are thus slow to react and to perceive their foes. However, with a Seer to guide them, Wraithguards see the souls of their foes as shining beacons—and more than adequate targets.

WRAITHGUARD/WRAITHBLADE (ELITE)					30	
H ⁴ 01-10		14		WS	BS	S 8
AR ⁴ 11-20		14		45	45	55
AL ⁴ 21-30		14		T 10	AG	INT
B ⁴ 31-70		14		58	33	30
LR ⁴ 71-85		14		PER	WP	FEL
LL ⁴ 86-00		14		28	45	10
				IFL	—	
HALF 4	FULL 8	CHARGE 12	RUN 24	THREAT 22		
WRAITHCANNON			CLASS HEAVY			
RNG 45M	RoF S/-/-	DMG 5D10 (E)				
PEN 6	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 18 KG	AVL UN		
SPECIAL: BLAST (1), FELLING (6), INACCURATE, RECHARGE, WARP WEAPON						
GHOSTWORD (2)			CLASS MELEE			
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1D10+10 ^{2+SB} (R)				
PEN 5	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 7 KG	AVL UN		
SPECIAL: ACCURATE, BALANCED, VENGEFUL (8)						

Skills: Athletics (Ag) +20, Parry (WS)

Talents: Ambidextrous, True Grit, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee)

Traits: Auto-Stabilised, Fear (1), Machine (4), Size (5), Undying, Unnatural Senses (30), Unnatural Strength (3), Unnatural Toughness (5)

Gear: Spirit stone

Wraithblind: A Wraithguard or Wraithblade rolls two dice for Initiative and discards the highest result.

Wraithsight: While is within 100 metres of an Eldar psyker, a Wraithguard or Wraithblade increases the value of its Unnatural Senses trait to 75 and does not apply the effects of the Wraithblind ability.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

Overview: During their pursuit of a dangerous heretic, the Acolytes find his accomplices and servants already slain by unknown alien weaponry. Investigating further, the warband discovers that a group of Eldar are also pursuing the same heretic for their own reasons. The Acolytes must decide whether to avoid the enigmatic aliens, work with them, or simply try to destroy them for the crime of being xenos. This template can easily be inserted into an ongoing adventure by changing the identity of the target to someone the Acolytes are already pursuing. How the adventure unfolds is certain to be coloured by the Acolytes' feelings toward aliens, and it can serve to introduce a new, if erstwhile ally, or even a deadly nemesis for the warband.

ACT I: UNEXPECTED AID?

The Acolytes travel to the hive planet of Snope's World (or any world of the Game Master's choice) in pursuit of the arch-sorcerer Nevra Heilos, a fallen scion of nobility and worshiper of the Dark Prince, who is himself pursuing the damnable text known as the *Ex Perfidia*. Although they do not know his ultimate intentions, they are doubtless unconscionable. Tracking Heilos to a crumbling estate high in the spires of one of the world's semi-abandoned hives, they must fight their way through a small but vicious hive gang hired to guard the surrounding grounds.

Inside though the Acolytes find someone or something has snuck in and beaten them to their target. Heilos' servants and apprentices lie dead, gruesomely shredded. Alongside injuries consistent with chain weapons, the dead have been sliced apart by some unknown weapon, and the Acolytes discover numerous ultra-thin discs, impossibly sharp and of unknown material. Of Heilos, there is no sign—nor any sign of the assailants.

ACT II: TO TRAP A HERETIC

As the Acolytes search for clues of Heilos' or the book's location and the nature of the attackers, and potentially research the nature of the clearly alien ammunition, they may learn they are not alone. A group of Striking Scorpions led by a Warlock (see page 414 of the *DARK HERESY CORE Rulebook*) named Phea'andral attempt to covertly monitor them to gauge their intentions.

The Eldar came to Snope's World for the same reason the Acolytes did. Farseer Mandr'thiel has foreseen that should Heilos obtain the *Ex Perfidia*, his actions will ultimately serve to further grow and aggravate the Pandaemonium—although the Eldar are very unlikely to share this with the PCs. However, the injured Heilos and a few of his apprentices managed to escape their ambush using dark magics.

Now, the Eldar search for the *Ex Perfidia*, which is buried in a forgotten private library somewhere in the spires of the hive. They intend to take the malefic tome in order to deliver it to Harlequins for safekeeping in the Black Library. Once they locate it, the Eldar plan to lay an ambush for Heilos.

If the Acolytes are observant and thorough, they might detect the Eldar's presence. Whether this leads to a tense parley, a chase, an ambush (on either side), or a pitched battle depends entirely on the Acolytes' actions. The Eldar do not attack the Acolytes unless they find some reason to, such as believing the warband is interfering in their own mission.

ACT III: RECKONING

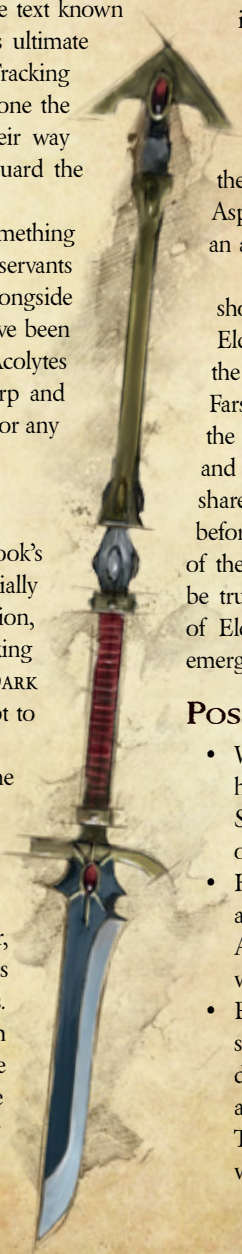
In a structurally unstable spire above the clouds, the *Ex Perfidia* lies amidst the mouldering books of an expansive private collection. Whether the Acolytes or the Eldar arrive first depend on how the warband prosecutes its investigation. Even after narrowing down the location, the first group to arrive must spend some time searching the stacks, allowing for the other group—or even Heilos—to arrive if they were close behind, and leading to a race or battle over the book through the colossal hall.

The Eldar are willing to work with the Acolytes to defeat Heilos, who eventually arrives with his apprentices and another group of mercenaries. After the heretic's defeat, the Eldar insist on taking the *Ex Perfidia*, and under no circumstances allow it to be destroyed. If the Acolytes give any indication from successful Forbidden Lore (Xenos-Craftworld Eldar) skill tests or other means that they believe the Eldar are from a craftworld operating within Askellian space, however, the xenos grow disturbed—this is something the Eldar cannot allow anyone to know. Phea'andral and the Aspect Warriors turn on the Acolytes, either immediately or in an ambush after leaving peaceably.

If, however, the Acolytes were particularly helpful or showed an unexpected level of respect and consideration for the Eldar, he might instead lead them to a hidden webway portal in the wastes outside the hive, and onto the craftworld itself so that Farseer Mandr'thiel can determine their fate. If she descries that the Acolytes can be trusted to preserve the craftworld's secrecy and that they will be of aid to it in the future, she might even share some manner of insight into the threats facing Askellon, before they are escorted through the webway to a destination of their (or her) choosing. However, if she decides they cannot be trusted, the Acolytes must battle their way through an army of Eldar and stumble blindly through the webway, potentially emerging anywhere in the sector—or beyond.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Warlock Phea'andral believes no good can come of the humans' interference, and leaves some of the Striking Scorpions behind to ambush the Acolytes while he and the others continue their search for the *Ex Perfidia*.
- Heilos manages to reach the library before the Eldar, and with the *Ex Perfidia* he opens a portal to the Warp. The Acolytes arrive to find the Eldar engaged in a pitched battle with foul Daemons—and losing.
- Farseer Mandr'thiel has foreseen that the Acolytes' fate is somehow tied to Mianthrothe. Until she ascertains more details, she orders Phea'andral and the Striking Scorpions to avoid harming the Acolytes, but also to avoid assisting them. The Eldar attempt to avoid the Acolytes entirely, even while working to complete the same mission.



KEEPERS OF DARKNESS—THE DARK ELДАР OF ASKELLON

“It was like a nightmare that you can’t wake from. They came from nowhere and in seconds half of us were gone...”

—Jessen Ral, one of the few survivors of the Massacre on Harron’s Hold

The first rumblings of Dark Eldar involvement in Askellon came from the far off world of Harron’s Hold, a minor colony on the very edge of Askellian space. This planet had little direct contact with the Imperium, only visited every few decades by the agents of the Adeptus Administratum to collect tithes. On their last routine outing to Harron’s Hold, they found the colony almost devoid of all life. The buildings and other structures were untouched, with food still on the table in many locations. After searching for hours, the team was finally able to locate a family hidden deep within a cellar, terrified beyond belief. They spoke of nightmarish forms arriving in the middle of the night, taking the townsfolk and disappearing as quickly as they came. A more detailed search revealed small amounts of blood and other signs of fighting, along with a few barbed shards that appeared to be a form of splinter ammunition common to the Dark Eldar. The family was relocated under the orders of a grim, nameless individual for further interrogation and examination concerning their encounter, while the colony was abandoned and “cleansed” from orbit out of precaution.

After the incident at Harron’s Hold, there were no confirmed Dark Eldar sightings or incidents for some time, leading most to believe that the loss of the colony was an isolated incident. Other populations, such as Kalto’s, had vanished throughout Askellon’s history, though, and there have been other incidents since Harron’s Hold, leaving many now to believe the Dark Eldar have been more active than previously believed.

Their presence in Askellian space is a mystery for xenos scholars, for they are known to hold any region prone to Warp storms in abject terror. To the Dark Eldar, to be trapped in a Warp storm is to suffer their very souls being torn apart by countless sets of infernal claws and devoured for all time by Slaanesh, their thirsting bane. Some hold that there are a very few who are in fact attracted to it. To beings who have fled Slaanesh for so many long ages and sated every dark urge imaginable, to daringly stand before the oncoming storm is perhaps the greatest thrill of their long lives. Some carry out slave raids and opportunistic attacks right at the leading edge of the Pandaemonium, descending upon frontier settlements and trapped void ships and delivering their captives not to safety, but into a brief existence of unbearable pain and degradation.

THE CRIMSON SERPENTS

The Kabal of the Crimson Serpent made its presence in Askellon known with a number of raids on shipping lanes and outlying worlds. Its then faded into the night, unseen for decades. The Kabal’s raid on Harron’s Hold provided something of great importance to the dark ones, something that would further their plans in this area for the future.

Now the Serpents have returned, ready to unleash their might on an unsuspecting sector. Their initial raids have yielded the information they sought; now their quest for ancient Eldar artefacts from before the Fall has begun. This is likely to bring them into conflict with a number of factions throughout the area, a fact that many within the Dark Eldar relish.

ANCIENT ENMITY

The differences between the Dark Eldar and their craftworld brethren have always run deep. The two factions have fought together on many occasions against common foes, but the differences in the core beliefs of each group are usually too great to overcome for any lasting interactions. This holds true for the Eldar factions operating in the Askellon Sector.

Both groups of Eldar have scoured the sector looking for any signs of lost technology. The Dark Eldar are intent on undermining their kin in all endeavours in order to gain access to these relics before they do, and have gone to great lengths to make this happen. They have even employed a number of human mercenaries to aid in their schemes, working through intermediaries to hide their involvement and presence. These individuals spread false information and cold trails for the Eldar of Craftworld Miandrothe to pick up, moving them away from any real leads the dark ones discover.

THE LORDS OF THE KABAL

The Crimson Serpents follow an organisational pattern similar to most Kabals, ruled with an iron fist by their Archon, Lord Kyre. Along with Haemonculus Ichthial Dross and a Succubus known only as Blood Dancer, the three have positioned their Kabal to leave the war-torn streets of Commorragh behind and move on to new, more fortuitous opportunities in the Askellon Sector.

ARCHON KYRE

A cold and calculating leader, Kyre exudes an air of power and authority wherever he goes. Tall for an Eldar, Kyre stands over two metres in height and is never without his trademark armour covered in a scale pattern representative of the Kabal's name. The hilt of his custom venomblade resembles a serpent with his mouth open, another nod to the Kabal. Kyre chose the serpent as his Kabal's namesake due to their stealthy and deadly nature, a fact he studied closely on the death world of Guleam. As a young, up-and-coming Dracon, Kyre found himself stranded on the death world with his fellow soldiers. The giant serpents that called the world home were able to strike without warning, slaughtering most of his warriors within a day. Only by utilising his cunning and skills did he survive, claiming the skull of one of the giant beasts for his own personal totem.

After returning to Commorragh, he quickly rose through the ranks of his Kabal, and within a year he had assassinated the previous Archon, assuming command with the help of the Haemonculus Dross. Anyone loyal to the former lord was dispatched in one night of blood and terror, and the Kabal of the Crimson Serpent was born.

Kyre's reputation amongst his fellow Archons in Commorragh was that of a madman, intent on pushing the boundaries further than any other. He commonly travelled across Askellian space to areas rife with Warp Storms and other Chaos incursions to confront the servants of Slaanesh head on, staring eternal devastation in the face. His history of daring raids on the most dangerous locales earned him a great deal of followers who were intent on pushing themselves to the outermost edge. In time, the other lords of Commorragh feared his exploits would bring ruin upon their city and moved to destroy him. When word of this reached Kyre, the cunning tactician simply moved his Kabal to a pocket realm outside of the city and focused his attention on new ventures.

HAEMONCULUS ICHTHIAL DROSS

The flesh shaper known as Ichthial Dross is a terrifying sight. Four arms frame the frail, emaciated body of the master Haemonculus, who is the closest advisor to Archon Kyre. With these arms he shapes and crafts numerous monstrosities to fill the armies of the Kabal, and designs fiendish upgrades for many of the other members of the Serpents. Dross is a cunning and conniving individual who helped Kyre rise to power within the Kabal. The Haemonculus considers himself the true power in the Crimson Serpents, something Kyre finds amusing. The Archon lets Dross have his delusions of grandeur as he knows he relies greatly on what the dark one does bring to his power base.



THE VOORISH GATE

The Dark Eldar use webway portals extensively in their raids, enabling them to appear and disappear with amazing speed and stealth. Commanders use smaller, easily moved portals to grant their personal transports and minions access to the webway, but larger, more permanent devices are needed to bring ships and other assets forth from Commorragh.

In the Askellon Sector, the Dark Eldar have established several portals, some in the depths of its space, others upon the surface of its worlds. The greatest of these is the Voorish Gate. A massive edifice of jagged crystal, it allows them to move back and forth between their city and Askellian space to launch their raids.

The gate floats in an otherwise empty region between Port Aquila and the Rosenkreuz Cluster, and uses a phase generator to keep it hidden should any vessels venture out of the Warp near it. The power required for this feat is staggering, and the Dark Eldar appear to have tapped into a nearby quasar to draw the resources needed. If this power feed is disrupted, the gate would become visible, and could expose the Dark Eldar to retaliation and attacks in their own lairs. Most of those captured by the Dark Eldar pass through the impossible angles and planes of the Voorish

Gate never to return, their soul screams echoing through the webway before cutting off abruptly as the gate closes behind.

Dross is particularly keen to locate a long lost Eldar artefact known as the Soul Shaper. This ancient device is believed to be a particularly powerful conduit for transferring souls into Spirit Stones. The Haemonculus is fascinated by this technology and dreams of using it to fashion a new form of creature for the Kabal's armies. He pursues any leads on this device with zeal, and his desire to recover this artefact has cost many of his disciples their lives—something Dross cares little about.

BLOOD DANCER

To keep his warriors in top fighting condition at all times, Kyre employs Blood Dancer's skills. The Succubus is a master of all forms of combat, and her Wyches of the Cult of Sensational Pain are feared throughout Commorragh and hundreds of battlefields.

Blood Dancer is also the consort of Archon Kyre and privy to many of his deepest, darkest plans and secrets. Her loyalty to the archon is absolute, a rarity among the Dark Eldar. Over the years, the Succubus has unearthed many traitors and threats to the Kabal, threats that were never heard from again.

THE DARK ELДАР OF ASKELLON

The profiles below are representative of the Dark Eldar within the sector. While they are presented in a basic format, they can easily represent anything from the Kabal of the Crimson Serpent or new, unique Kabals.

ARCHONS

The xenos warlords of the Dark Eldar are truly terrifying sights to behold. Tales of Archons slaughtering entire companies of soldiers in combat are commonplace throughout the armies of the Imperium, and Inquisitors marvel at their plots and schemes, playing out over decades or even centuries.

Archons are masters of devious plans and layers upon layers of cunning. They are honed in a society where death lurks around every corner and there is always someone looking to improve his position at another's expense. The tactics of Archons are extreme in all aspects of their implementation, and many would easily sacrifice an entire world's population simply to achieve their goals.

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +20, Awareness (Per) +30, Charm (Fel) +10, Command (Fel) +30, Deceive (Fel) +30, Dodge (Ag) +20, Interrogation (WP) +30, Intimidate (S) +30, Parry (WS) +20, Scrutiny (Per) +30, Stealth (Ag) +10, Tech-Use (Int)

Talents: Ambidextrous, Blade Master, Blind Fighting, Combat Master, Disarm, Killing Strike, Lightning Attack, Strong Minded

Traits: Dark-sight, Touched by the Fates (3), Unnatural Agility (3)

Gear: Ghostplate armour, grisly trophies

Ghostplate: The cunningly constructed armour favoured by many Archons includes an integrated force field, operating by principles beyond the grasp of the Adeptus Mechanicus. An individual wearing Ghostplate benefits from a force field with a Protection Rating of 20 that Overloads on a result of 1-5.

Master of Pain: An Archon who scores three degrees of success or higher in a Ballistic or Weapon Skill test gains the Crippling (X) quality for the attack, with X equal to the number of degrees of success.

ARCHON (MASTER)					25
H ³ 01-10		WS		BS	S
7		65		65	40
AR ⁴ 11-20	AL ⁴ 21-30		T	AG ⁹	INT
8		44		66	55
B ⁴ 31-70		PER		WP	FEL
8		58		57	41
LR ⁴ 71-85		LL ⁴ 86-00		IFL	
8		8		61	
HALF 9	FULL 18	CHARGE 27	RUN 54	THREAT 30	
BLAST PISTOL			CLASS PISTOL		
RNG 20M	RoF S/-		DMG 2d10+7 (E)		
PEN 4	CLIP 6	RLD 3 FULL	WT 1.5 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: LANCE					
VENOMBLADE			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —		DMG 1d10+12 ^{S+SB} (E)		
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 3 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: FELLING (2), TOXIC (2)					
ELDAR PLASMA GRENADE			CLASS THROWN		
RNG 12M ^{3+SB}	RoF —		DMG 1d10+8 (E)		
PEN 8	CLIP 1	RLD —	WT .5 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: BLAST (4), SHOCKING					



SUCCUBUS

To become a Succubus, a Wych Cult member must prove herself time and again in both the arenas of the Dark Eldar and against foes in a realspace raid. Only by defeating everyone and everything that comes before her can one be elevated to the this dread title.

Within the Wych Cults, a Succubus stands as a warrior lord second to none. She determines who her minions fight for and what Kabals they lend their talents to. At times, certain Cults form particularly strong bonds with a particular Kabal, waging war with them exclusively. When this relationship proves exceedingly profitable for a Kabal, rivals go to great lengths in an attempt to win over a Wych Cult to their own side, a process that begins and ends with the Succubus. Those Kabals that are unsuccessful in swaying these fanatical killers to their way often do not last long, as the Succubus deems them unworthy of continued existence.

SUCCUBUS (MASTER)					20
H ² 01-10		6		WS	76
AR ³ 11-20		7		BS	55
AL ³ 21-30		7		S	40
B ³ 31-70		7		T	42
LR ³ 71-85		7		AG ¹⁰	76
LL ³ 86-00		7		INT	40
				PER	50
				WP	65
				FEL	54
				IFL	31
HALF 10	FULL 20	CHARGE 30	RUN 60	THREAT 25	
SHARDNET					CLASS MELEE
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+9 ^S +SB (R)			
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 4 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: SNARE (2)					
IMPALER					CLASS MELEE
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+9 ^S +SB (R)			
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 3 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: TOXIC (2)					
ELDAR PLASMA GRENADE					CLASS THROWN
RNG 12M ³ +SB	RoF —	DMG 1d10+8 (E)			
PEN 8	CLIP 1	RLD —	WT .5 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: BLAST (4), SHOCKING					

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +30, Athletics (S) +20, Awareness (Per) +20, Charm (Fel), Command (Fel) +10, Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag) +20, Intimidate (S) +10, Parry (WS) +20, Scrutiny (Per) +10, Sleight of Hand (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +30

Talents: Ambidextrous, Battle Rage, Blademaster, Blind Fighting, Catfall, Combat Master, Deathdealer, Devastating Assault, Disarm, Frenzy, Killing Strike, Leap Up, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee), Unarmed Specialist, Whirlwind of Death

Traits: Dark-sight, Touched by the Fates (2), Unnatural Agility (3)
Gear: Tokens and trophies taken from defeated enemies, bodysuit, 4 doses of combat drugs (of any combination)

Mistress of Death: Whenever a Succubus kills a Master level NPC or a Player Character, she regains one Fate point spent earlier in that combat encounter.

COMBAT DRUGS

The Haemonculi of Commorragh never cease in their search for new and dreadful concoctions that push the limits of flesh and sanity alike. Many elite Dark Eldar carry these combat drugs into battle, increasing their already inhuman abilities to terrifying heights.

If a Dark Eldar uses any of the combat drugs listed below while under the effects of a previous dose (or anyone else attempts to imbibe these or any other drug tailored for Dark Eldar physiology), he must make a Hard (-20) Toughness test. If he fails, the drug has no effect and he suffers 1d10 Energy damage ignoring armour and Toughness bonus, and gains 1d5 Corruption points. These drugs have an Availability of Extremely Rare to any outside of the Dark Eldar, and have a duration of effect of 2d5 rounds.

BLOOD RAGE

A Dark Eldar who imbibes this drug gains the Unnatural Strength (1d5) and Brutal Charge (5) traits.

SPEED OF THOUGHT

A Dark Eldar who imbibes this drug counts as rolling a 10 on all Initiative rolls and increases the value of his Unnatural Agility trait by 1d5.

ENHANCED METABOLISM

A Dark Eldar who imbibes this drug gains the Regeneration (4) and Undying traits.

ETERNAL HATRED

A Dark Eldar who imbibes this drug grants his melee attacks the Vengeful (7) quality.

HAEMONCULUS

Beneath the streets of Commorragh, there reside the laboratories and torture chambers of the Haemonculi. Known by many names—Flesh Shapers, Lords of Torment, Masters of Pain, and many more—these twisted individuals are masters of life and death, a fact that gives them great sway across Dark Eldar society. Their arcane sciences have saved many Archons from the grip of death, a fact the Haemonculi use to their advantage.

The Wracks, Grotesques, and other horrific fabrications of the Haemonculus are valuable additions to the armies of the Kabals, and many of the dark ones barter their services in return for a steady stream of slaves and future test subjects. Warriors that displease an Archon often find themselves given to a Haemonculus for “reconditioning” to make them more useful subjects. At other times, certain Dark Eldar feel the call and give themselves over willingly, to achieve a new, higher form of power from pain. A Haemonculus sometimes travel with Dark Eldar raiding parties to claim slaves and subjects for these fiendish experiments, often trading his services and those of his wretched creations for first pick of those captured.

HAEMONCULUS (MASTER) 27

H 01-10	6	WS	BS	S
AR ¹ 11-20	7	54	57	38
AL ¹ 21-30	7	T ⁶	AG	INT
B ¹ 31-70	7	45	47	59
LR ¹ 71-85	7	PER	WP	FEL
LL ¹ 86-00	7	54	48	39
			IFL	31

HALF 4 FULL 8 CHARGE 12 RUN 24 THREAT 30

STINGER PISTOL CLASS PISTOL

RNG 30M	RoF S/--	DMG 1d10+1 (R)
PEN 3	CLIP 4	RLD 2 FULL
WT 1.5 KG	AVL NU	

SPECIAL: FELLING (4), RAZOR SHARP, TOXIC (4)

FLESH GAUNTLET CLASS MELEE

RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+9 ^S +SB (R)
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —
WT 2 KG	AVL NU	

SPECIAL: FELLING (4), TOXIC (2)

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Deceive (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag), Interrogation (WP) +30, Intimidate (S) +20, Medicae (Int) +30, Parry (WS), Scrutiny (Per) +20, Sleight of Hand (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag), Tech-Use (Int) +20

Talents: Ambidextrous, Catfall, Leap Up

Traits: Dark-sight, Multiple Arms (4), Unnatural Toughness (2)

Gear: Robes, assorted phials and implements of torture and surgery

Knowledge of the Flesh: When a Haemonculus scores three or more degrees of success on a Weapon Skill test, he may choose to inflict a precision injury. If he does so, the attack inflicts no damage, but the target suffers a 1d5 Rending Critical Effect to a hit location of the Haemonculus' choice.

WRACKS

Serving as assistants and bodyguards to their Haemonculi masters, Wracks are Dark Eldar who have been dissected and altered before being put back together into their new form. Some do this in hopes of escaping their wretched existence, while others have reached a level where no other punishment and pain can satisfy their dark desires, and so they turn to the Haemonculi to provide them with new experiences. Wracks are armed with a dizzying array of blades, claws, poisoned needles, and even more exotic, alien weaponry.

WRACK (ELITE) 18

H ² 01-10	7	WS	BS	S
AR ² 11-20	7	43	40	36
AL ² 21-30	7	T ⁵	AG	INT
B ² 31-70	7	44	41	33
LR ² 71-85	7	PER	WP	FEL
LL ² 86-00	7	36	40	25
			IFL	—

HALF 4 FULL 8 CHARGE 12 RUN 24 THREAT 15

LIQUIFIER GUN CLASS BASIC

RNG 20M	RoF S/--	DMG 1d10+2 (E)
PEN 2D5	CLIP 6	RLD 2 FULL
WT 5 KG	AVL VR	

SPECIAL: SPRAY, CORROSIVE

POISONED BLADE CLASS MELEE

RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+6 ^S +SB (R)
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —
WT 1 KG	AVL RA	

SPECIAL: TOXIC (2)

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag) +10, Interrogation (WP) +10, Medicae (Int) +20, Parry (WS)

Talents: Blind Fighting, Killing Strike, Frenzy, Hardy

Traits: Dark-sight, Fear (1), Natural Armour (2), Unnatural Toughness (1)

Gear: Tattered robes, hooks, scars

Horrific Experiments: Wracks are each manifestations of the sick and twisted mind of their Haemonculus master. To reflect this insanity, GMs should include additional traits and even mutations as desired to customise these creatures for an adventure.

GROTESQUES

Grotesques are hulking, monstrous creations with incredible strength and weaponry, horrors that the Haemonculi often use as shock troops to break enemy lines. Unlike Wracks, none join the ranks of the Grotesque willingly. Most who undergo the long, excruciatingly painful process of transformation are captured slaves of Dark Eldar raids or other subjects who have displeased their Archon. The subjects are injected with all manner of drugs and elixirs that stimulate bone and muscle growth, as well as alter the overall make-up of the being into a hardier, much larger creature. After the body modifications are complete (sometimes taking years) the Grotesques are fitted with horrible metal claws and other weapons, including tubes capable of spraying acid or other ichor onto their enemies.

GROTESQUE (ELITE)					40
H ¹ 01-10	9	WS	BS	S	
AR ¹ 11-20	9	50	38	70	
AL ¹ 21-30	9	T ⁸	AG	INT	
B ¹ 31-70	9	60	30	24	
LR ¹ 71-85	9	PER	WP	FEL	
LL ¹ 86-00	9	30	48	25	
			IFL		—
HALF 4	FULL 8	CHARGE 12	RUN 24	THREAT 20	
LIQUIFIER GUN			CLASS BASIC		
RNG 20M	RoF S/--	DMG 1d10+2 (E)			
PEN 2D5	CLIP 6	RLD 2 FULL	WT 5 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: SPRAY, CORROSIVE					
IMPLANTED BLADE			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+15 ^{8+SB} (R)			
PEN 3	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 6 KG	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: TEARING					

Skills: Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag) +10, Parry (WS) +10

Talents: Battle Rage, Blind Fighting, Die Hard, Iron Jaw

Traits: Dark-sight, Fear (1), Natural Armour (1), Size (5), Stuff of Nightmares, Unnatural Toughness (2)

Gear: Blood and ichor stained bodysuit

Horrific Experiments: Grotesques are each manifestations of the sick and twisted mind of their Haemonculus master. To reflect this insanity, GMs should include additional traits and even mutations as desired to customise these creatures for an adventure.

INCUBI

The most skilled warriors of the Dark Eldar become Incubi, the bodyguards and elite soldiers of the Kabals. Warriors without equal, Incubi venerate Khaine, the Eldar god of murder and bloodshed, and are some of the only Dark Eldar to venerate any of the old gods. Under the watchful eyes of the temple's masters, Incubi don their horned, ornate war suits and clash with one another to hone their skills to perfection and rise through the ranks. Utilising double-bladed weapons known as klaives, aspirants battle to reach a level where they can duel a full-fledged Incubus.

If they are successful, they claim his wargear for their own. After reaching this level, the newly-crowned Incubus then seeks out an Eldar Aspect Warrior in single combat to defeat and claim its Spirit Stone. This stone is then defiled in a dark rite, creating an arcane item known aptly as a tormentor.

Incubi are pure mercenaries and willing to fight for any Archon who pays their fee. While not possessing a sense of honour in the same way humans would define the term, the Incubi are considered trustworthy once they have entered into a contract. Their savage brutality has won the day for many Archons, and all the Lords of Commorragh are anxious to employ Incubi in their ranks.

INCUBUS (ELITE)					16
H ⁴ 01-10	8	WS	BS	S	
AR ⁴ 11-20	8	59	44	45	
AL ⁴ 21-30	8	T	AG ⁸	INT	
B ⁴ 31-70	8	45	57	35	
LR ⁴ 71-85	8	PER	WP	FEL	
LL ⁴ 86-00	8	37	39	30	
			IFL		—
HALF 8	FULL 16	CHARGE 24	RUN 48	THREAT 11	
KLAIVE			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+16 ^{12+SB} (E)			
PEN 8	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 8 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: POWER FIELD					



Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S) +20, Parry (WS) +20, Scrutiny (Per) +10, Stealth (Ag)

Talents: Ambidextrous, Catfall, Combat Master, Crushing Blow, Disarm, Keen Intuition, Killing Strike, Step Aside

Traits: Dark-sight, Unnatural Agility (3)

Gear: Incubus armour

Master of the Klaive: Once per round, when an Incubus inflicts Critical damage on an Elite or Master opponent (or a PC), he may make a melee Standard Attack action against another foe in range as a Free Action.

MANDRAKE

Mandrakes feed on the essence of life, existing in both a shadow dimension and realspace and emerging from the shadows to claim their victims. Their bodies are covered with glowing runes and veins burning with cold fire, which grow brighter as they feed.

Archons seek out Mandrakes to use in both their political games and to accompany them on raids. Mandrakes often command high prices for their services, asking for slaves most often. Other times these strange creatures might ask for something impossible—such as an unknown sound or long forgotten phrase or even the memory of a single scent.

MANDRAKE (ELITE)					14
H ⁻ 01-10	4	WS	BS	S	7
AR ⁻ 11-20	4	48	44	52	
AL ⁻ 21-30	4	T	AC 8	INT	
B ² 31-70	6	45	58	33	
LR ² 71-85	6	PER	WP	FEL	
LL ² 86-00	6	33	40	35	
		IFL			—
HALF 8	FULL 16	CHARGE 24	RUN 48	THREAT 10	
MANDRAKE BLADE			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+14 ^{7+SB} (R)			
PEN 3	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 4 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: CRIPPLING (3), TEARING					

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S) +20, Parry (WS) +10, Stealth (Ag) +30, Survival (Per) +10

Talents: Ambidextrous, Catfall, Combat Master, Crushing Blow, Disarm, Keen Intuition, Killing Strike, Step Aside

Traits: Dark-sight, Daemonic (2), Phase, Unnatural Agility (3), Unnatural Strength (2)

Gear: Robes, runic tattoos

Frozen Flame: A Mandrake that has slain a living being within the past 24 hours can use the Baleblast attack.

BALEBLAST					CLASS BASIC
RNG 50M	RoF S/3/-	DMG 1d10+6 (E)			
PEN 4	CLIP —	RLD —	WT —	AVL —	
SPECIAL: CRIPPLING (3), CORROSIVE					

Nightstrider: As a Full Action, a Mandrake can slink into one shadow only to emerge from another within 16 metres, filling the air within 10 metres around it with an icy chill. After moving, it makes a Challenging (+0) Opposed Stealth test against any characters within that range; those characters who fail cannot detect the Mandrake until it attacks in melee combat.

Shadow-dweller: Whenever a Mandrake successfully Dodges an attack, it can immediately gain the Incorporeal Trait until the beginning of its next turn.

KABALITE WARRIORS

The mainstays of the Kabalite armies, these Dark Eldar live their lives in a state of perpetual warfare. When not on the battlefield, they constantly face threats from other Kabals and at times from within their own ranks. These constant threats enable Kabalite Warriors to be masters of the craft of death, ready to spread pain and destruction on any who stand against them and their masters.

Kabalite Warriors are garbed in tight-fitting bodysuits layered with interlocking armour plates. The suits of armour have hooks and cables that attach to the nerve fibres of the wearer, enhancing sensory receptions—especially those for pain—extraordinary levels. Every sensation warriors experience is conveyed to the wearers, amplified tenfold.

These are often the most common Dark Eldar encountered by an Inquisitor and his Acolytes. Some Warriors might even strike out on their own as mercenary raiders. These rogues often sell information to the highest bidder, including secrets that many of the Kabals would rather stay buried deep within the webway.

KABALITE WARRIOR (TROOP)					14
H ³ 01-10	7	WS	BS	S	
AR ³ 11-20	7	48	45	37	
AL ³ 21-30	7	T	AC 8	INT	
B ³ 31-70	7	41	58	41	
LR ³ 71-85	7	PER	WP	FEL	
LL ³ 86-00	7	40	39	36	
		IFL			—
HALF 8	FULL 16	CHARGE 24	RUN 48	THREAT 8	
SPLINTER RIFLE			CLASS BASIC		
RNG 80M	RoF S/3/5	DMG 1d10+2 (R)			
PEN 3	CLIP 180	RLD 2 FULL	WT 2 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: TOXIC (2)					

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S) +20, Parry (WS), Sleight of Hand (Ag), Stealth (Ag)

Talents: Combat Master, Hard Target, Leap Up

Traits: Dark-sight, Unnatural Agility (3)

Gear: Trophies and totems, 4 clips for splinter rifle, xenos armour
Power through Pain: At the end of any turn in which a Kabalite Warrior has inflicted damage on an opponent that is not mitigated by Toughness or protective devices, as a Free Action he can immediately move a number of metres equal to his Agility bonus.

WYCH CULTS

The Hekatarii, as the Wyches of Commorragh refer to themselves, are skilled killers without peer in Dark Eldar society. Predominantly female, the Wych Cults make killing an art form, bringing an inhuman grace to their slaughter. The cults maintain bloody gladiatorial arenas throughout the cities of the Dark Eldar, where they hone their craft while putting on elaborate shows for the masses. The Kabals watch these spectacles with great interest, always looking for the best to join their ranks on their raids against the outside world.

All Wyches take great pride in their beauty, and consider battle a chance to show off their art and appearance. Their skin-tight bodysuits have very little armour and often have large areas of exposed flesh. The Wyches consider their skill to be more than adequate to keep them alive, and that armour would simply slow them down.

Wyches use many varieties of potent combat drugs and other stimulants to enhance their mind and bodies in battle. These drugs allow them to reach new heights of skill, spinning and flipping their way through battle lines even when massively outnumbered. The dance of death performed by a Wych is a terrifyingly beautiful sight, with few if any survivors.

When Wyches enter battle, each is equipped with either a pair of razorflails, or a pair of hydra gauntlets.

RAIDER TRANSPORT

Dark Eldar use these fast, manoeuvrable vehicles to carry their forces into battle. Though lightly armoured and gunned, Raiders allow Dark Eldar to easily leap into combat, the better to gather slaves and inflict pain.

RAIDER TRANSPORT		SKIMMER
FRONT: 24	SIDE: 24	REAR: 20
CRUISING SPEED: 130 KPH		TACTICAL SPEED: 21 M
MANOEUVRABILITY: +10	SIZE: HULKING	AVL: ER
CARRYING CAPACITY: 10	INTEGRITY: 35	THREAT: 15
CREW: PILOT, GUNNER		
VEHICLE TRAITS: ENHANCED MOTIVE SYSTEMS, OPEN-TOPPED, SKIMMER		

WEAPONS

One turret-mounted dark lance:

DARK LANCE		CLASS BASIC
RNG 200M	RoF S/--	DMG 2D10 + 14 (E)
PEN 5	CLIP 100	RLD 3 FULL
WT 10 KG		AVL ER
SPECIAL: LANCE		

Flickerfield: A Reaver is equipped with advanced shielding that cause it to appear as if it is flickering in and out of existence. When firing at this vehicle, the attacker suffers a -20 penalty on his Ballistic Skill tests.

WYCH (ELITE)					13
H ¹ 01-10	5	WS	BS	S	
AR ² 11-20	6	48	44	52	
AL ² 21-30	6	T	AC 8	INT	
B ² 31-70	6	45	58	33	
LR ² 71-85	6	PER	WP	FEL	
LL ² 86-00	6	33	40	35	
		IFL			
HALF 8	FULL 16	CHARGE 24	RUN 48	THREAT 10	
RAZORFLAIL (PAIR)				CLASS MELEE	
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1D10+11 ^{6+SB} (R)			
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 2 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: FLEXIBLE					
HYDRA GAUNTLET (PAIR)				CLASS MELEE	
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1D10+9 ^{4+SB} (R)			
PEN 0	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 2 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: TEARING					

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S), Parry (WS) +10, Sleight of Hand (Ag), Stealth (Ag) +10

Talents: Ambidextrous, Assassin Strike, Leap Up, Sprint, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee)

Traits: Unnatural Agility (3)

Gear: 4 doses of combat drugs, bodysuit

Stylish Death: A Wych gains a +10 bonus to Weapon Skill tests against any enemy she has not attacked since the beginning of her last turn.

SCOURGES

Sailing into battle on flesh-crafted wings grafted to them by the Haemonculi, Scourges are assassins and messengers of the Kabals able to gain access to areas others cannot. In Dark Eldar society, Scourges occupy a vital role, carrying missives between factions; it is said that killing a Scourge is a serious crime in Commorragh. On the battlefield, Scourges are deadly sights to behold. Dropping in from on high, they bring a remarkably powerful array of infantry weapons against a foe, and can quickly disrupt an enemy's line. Scourges are found with many raiding parties, and are often encountered by Acolytes as advance scouts of a Dark Eldar force.

SCOURGE (TROOP)					12
H ⁴ 01-10		WS		BS	S
8		44		44	50
AR ⁴ 11-20	AL ⁴ 21-30		T	Ag 8	INT
8	8		45	55	36
B ⁴ 31-70		PER		WP	FEL
8		42		40	29
LR ⁴ 71-85	LL ⁴ 86-00		IFL		—
8	8		—		—
HALF 8	FULL 16	CHARGE 24	RUN 48	THREAT 14	
SHARDCARBINE					CLASS BASIC
RNG 60M		RoF S/3/5		DMG 1d10+2 (R)	
PEN 3	CLIP 150	RLD 2 FULL	WT 3 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: STORM, TOXIC (1)					
POISONED BLADE					CLASS MELEE
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1d5+8 ^{3+SB} (R)	
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 1 KG	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: TOXIC (2)					

Skills: Acrobatic (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Deceive, Dodge (Ag), Inquiry (Fel) +10, Scrutiny (Per), Stealth (Ag)

Talents: Acrobatics, Assassin Strike, Bulging Biceps, Catfall, Hip Shooting, Leap Up, Preternatural Speed, Quick Draw

Traits: Dark-sight, Flyer (8), Unnatural Agility (3)

Gear: Armoured bodysuit, various grisly trophies

Deadly Dive: A Scourge adds half his Agility bonus (rounded up) to damage he inflicts against Surprised opponents.

REAVERS

Dark Eldar are able to process sights and sounds on a level unknown to humans. These abilities allow them to pilot vehicles such as jetbikes with amazing skill and precision. Reavers begin their careers racing their bikes through the spires of the Dark City, engaging in death-defying races for thrills. From there, these races escalate into more deadly competitions where pilots battle one another, spilling each other's blood in grim spectacle for the patrons in the Wych Cult Arenas below. Reavers try to slaughter their foes with precision strikes, always looking to perfect their kills for greater glory and recognition.

When they join the Kabals on their raids, Reavers are able to confound their opponents with their dizzying speeds and insane manoeuvres. These Dark Eldar often employ chains and other instruments to capture enemy combatants on the battlefield. Snatching their prey and scooping up their flailing bodies, Reavers drag them screaming into the air as they are spirited away for future tortures.

REAVER (TROOP)					12
H ⁴ 01-10		WS		BS	S
7		48		49	35
AR ⁴ 11-20	AL ⁴ 21-30		T	AC 9	INT
7	7		37	66	33
B ⁴ 31-70		PER		WP	FEL
7		34		33	35
LR ⁴ 71-85	LL ⁴ 86-00		IFL		—
7	7		—		—
HALF 9	FULL 18	CHARGE 27	RUN 54	THREAT 15	
SPLINTER PISTOL					CLASS PISTOL
RNG 30M		RoF S/3/-		DMG 1d10+2 (R)	
PEN 3	CLIP 120	RLD 2 FULL	WT 2 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: TOXIC (1)					
POISONED BLADE					CLASS MELEE
RNG —		RoF —		DMG 1d5+6 ^{3+SB} (R)	
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 1 KG	AVL RA	
SPECIAL: TOXIC (2)					

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag), Parry (WS), Operate (Surface) +20, Tech-Use (Int) +10

Talents: Ambidextrous, Catfall

Traits: Dark-sight, Unnatural Agility (3)

Gear: Reaver Jetbike, xenos armour, assorted totems and trophies

Screaming Death: A Reaver can choose to suffer 1 to 5 wounds (ignoring Toughness bonus and armour) to automatically succeed on an Operate test when using his jetbike, with a number of degrees of success on the test equal to the number of wounds he chose to suffer.

REAVER JETBIKE

Reavers fly into combat aboard finely crafted jetbikes, each vehicle as quickly lethal as its rider. These bikes include not only vicious splinter rifles but also deadly blades to slice apart enemies with each roaring pass.

REAVER JETBIKE		SKIMMER
FRONT: 16	SIDE: 16	REAR: 12
CRUISING SPEED: 230 KPH		TACTICAL SPEED: 40 M
MANOEUVRABILITY: +20	SIZE: ENORMOUS	AVL: ER
CARRYING CAPACITY: 0	INTEGRITY: 15	THREAT: 14
CREW: PILOT		
VEHICLE TRAITS: BIKE, ENHANCED MOTIVE SYSTEMS, SKIMMER		

WEAPONS

One Hull-mounted splinter rifle with a forward facing arc:

SPLINTER RIFLE		CLASS BASIC
RNG 80M	RoF S/3/5	DMG 1d10 + 2 (R)
PEN 3	CLIP 210	RLD 3 FULL
WT 2 KG		AVL ER
SPECIAL: TOXIC (2)		

Blade-Vanes: Reaver Jetbikes are armed with deadly curved vanes that function as a Melee weapon when making Hit & Run Attacks. Due to the nature of this weapon, the rider does not add his Strength Bonus to the damage when making these attacks.

BLADE-VANES		CLASS MELEE
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10 + 7 (R)
PEN 4	CLIP —	RLD —
WT —		AVL ER
SPECIAL: UNWIELDY, HIT & RUN ATTACKS ONLY		

SSLYTH

The four-armed warriors known as Sslyth are employed by Archons in need of exceptional and reliable warriors. No one knows where these snakelike aliens originated, but at this point they seem to be wholly subservient to the Dark Eldar. No trace of the creatures' individual culture or history has ever been discovered, and many members of the Adeptus Mechanicus believe that the aliens were conquered long ago and that all traces of their society were destroyed.

In combat, Sslyth are potent with melee and ranged weapons, and are usually employed as the direct bodyguards of the Archon. Some, though, can be found operating as mercenaries across Askellon, even within the warbands of Radical Inquisitors.

SSLYTH (ELITE)						18
H ² 01-10	7	WS	BS	S		
AR ⁴ 11-20	9	45	45	55		
AL ⁴ 21-30	9	T	AC	INT		
B ⁴ 31-70	9	52	48	31		
LR ² 71-85	7	PER	WP	FEL		
LL ² 86-00	7	38	23	32		
		IFL				
HALF 3	FULL 6	CHARGE 9	RUN 18	THREAT 12		
SHARDCARBINE						CLASS BASIC
RNG 60M	RoF S/3/5	DMG 1d10+2 (R)				
PEN 3	CLIP 150	RLD 2 FULL	WT 3 KG	AVL ER		
SPECIAL: STORM, TOXIC (1)						
SPLINTER PISTOL						CLASS PISTOL
RNG 30M	RoF S/3/-	DMG 1d10+2 (R)				
PEN 3	CLIP 120	RLD 2 FULL	WT 2 KG	AVL VR		
SPECIAL: TOXIC (1)						
XENOS BLADE						CLASS MELEE
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+14 ^{9+SB} (R)				
PEN 2	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 3 KG	AVL VR		
SPECIAL: BALANCED, RAZOR SHARP						

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S), Parry (WS) +10, Stealth (Ag) +10, Survival (Per)

Talents: Ambidextrous, Combat Master, Die Hard, Jaded, Sprint, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged)

Traits: Crawler, Multiple Arms (4), Natural Armour (2 All), Size (5)

Gear: 2 ammo clips for each weapon, assorted totems and charms, xenos armour pieces

Scent of Blood: Sslyth are excellent trackers, and after fighting an opponent in melee combat gain a +20 bonus to Perception-based tests to detect that opponent, as well as the Unnatural Senses (60) trait for the purposes of finding character.

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: NIGHT'S DARK MASTERS

Overview: The Acolytes are sent to investigate the disappearance of a colony's population. While there, the PCs discover remnants of a cruel Dark Eldar attack on the world and must follow these clues in hopes of locating the missing colonists. This template can be introduced between adventures in a campaign, and offer the players opportunities for investigation as well as combat with the deadly xenos who lurk in the darkness.

ACT I: THE REMNANTS OF HELL

The Acolytes are tasked to investigate Goral, a frontier planet along the Spinward edge of the Stygies Cluster that a passing Rogue Trader reported devoid of inhabitants. The Trader refrained from landing, preferring to ensure his own safety, but alerted others to the situation. Word reached the PCs' Inquisitor, and as this was the third such incident in the region he has tasked his Acolytes with investigation. Alternatively, the Acolytes might learn of this matter from scuttlebutt while aboard a transport ship, or in conversation with a Rogue Trader or merchant prince bemoaning the recent losses to his colonies.

When the Acolytes arrive, they find a scene of utter chaos. Bloodstained buildings and horrid scenes of torture and slaughter litter the colony. Once the PCs delve deeper into the horrors, they find traces of the Dark Eldar involvement—spilled toxins, splinter shards in walls, a broken Wrack blade, and other telling signs. The Acolytes also make a startling discovery—the colony's Astropath, Palla Kalinth, survived the raid, hidden in a secret room deep in a basement. The Astropath reveals that she could sense the Dark Eldar, and the amplified screams of the dying and tortured were burned into her mind. She can still sense the surviving members of the colony, and is convinced she can lead the Acolytes to them.

ACT II: INTO THE DEN OF DARKNESS

Setting off from Goral, the Acolytes pursue the Dark Eldar to a desolate moon at the edge of the system, one that the raiders are using as a base. A Haemonculus allied with the Crimson Serpent Kabal, Ammon Crylle, has set up laboratories here to create new, hideous beasts and conduct experiments on his captured slaves—the colonists. The complex features a series of existing tunnels and caves carved into the moon, possibly constructed by some other alien race. Guards can consist of Wracks, Grotosques, Warriors, and even Sslyth are scattered throughout the complex to protect Crylle and his twisted work.



The surviving colonists are being held in an inner chamber, and it should take the PCs some effort to find them, using navigation skills, technological aids, and even psychic powers where possible. The Acolytes might be forced into a minor skirmish in their efforts to free the colonists, but even once they unshackled the prisoners, are still not free of the Haemonculus. Crylle had already implanted alien glands and chem-dispensers into their flesh as part of his experimentations, carefully hidden under melded, numbed skin. The GM can have any of the colonists collapse in agony during the rest of the adventure, then rise as horrid monstrosities filled with bloodlust and rage. These transformed humans can be represented using any of the mutant profiles from the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, or even as Chaos Spawn if desired.

ACT III: CAT AND MOUSE

The Acolytes and any survivors might try to escape the moon, but the Dark Eldar are eager to capture new slaves. The GM can have the xenos use collapsed tunnels, surprise attacks, and other means to harass and lead the PCs away from the surface. The tunnels are a maze of passages that twist and turn, providing numerous locations for the Haemonculus's creatures to ambush the PCs. Alternatively, if the PCs managed to dispatch many of the Dark Eldar whilst freeing the colonists and are feeling confident, the Astropath can stress a growing Warp-rift deeper within the moon, and lead the Acolytes towards the moon's core.

In either path, the Acolytes find their way into Crylle's main laboratory, a place steeped in dripping blood and torn flesh. Here there should be an epic, pitched battle; this could even be three-sided, as transformed colonists begin attacking anyone be they human or alien. Crylle is quite willing to sacrifice his guards to ensure his work survives, but slips away should the combat begin to turn against him. He leaves behind many hints of other facilities across the sub-sector and beyond, plans for other, even more hideous experiments, and the knowledge that the Acolytes should expect to encounter him again in a Nemesis role.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS:

- Astropath Kalinth is overcome by her visions, weakening her defences against the predations of the Warp. The Acolytes must now deal with a daemonic incursion before they can deal with the Dark Eldar.
- Deep within the moon is an ancient webway portal, only revealed during the battle in Crylle's laboratory as a section of rock is blasted away. Others Eldar are sure to try and claim it for themselves—and also ensure no human remains who might know of its existence.
- Crylle set this entire raid as an elaborate trap. Perhaps one of the PCs has a hidden destiny that the Haemonculus is aware of and wants to twist to his own ends, or he seeks to use the Acolytes as bait to lure their Inquisitor into his alien clutches.

CHILDREN OF THE LAUGHING GOD

"They might wear the garb of jesters, but trust me—when they are around, no one is laughing."

—Rogue Trader Lady-Captain Hesiah Luftius

The Eldar Harlequins are followers of the Eldar trickster deity *Cegorach*, the Laughing God. They serve no single faction of Eldar, but instead dwell in the shattered corners of the webway, wandering from world to world through the interspatial tunnels, visiting craftworlds, Exodite worlds, and even the Dark Eldar's mirror realm of Commorragh as they will. Such freedom to roam is a symbol of the great importance placed on the Harlequins' role in Eldar society—they emerge from the webway unbidden, staging spellbinding artistic performances and treating with their kin on the eve of terrible battles or other momentous events. They are guardians of ancient knowledge, stored within the vast repository of terrible lore known as the Black Library—the location of which is one of the most closely guarded secrets in the galaxy. The Harlequins embody an age-old enigma that has haunted the Eldar since the fall, for they alone know how to deny Slaanesh, and keep their souls burning bright.

Harlequins form travelling bands of warrior-troubadours, whose carefully constructed masques and impressive displays of ritualised mime and acrobatics tell the many strange stories of Eldar mythology. They dress in exotic, multi-coloured costumes, brightly patterned to represent figures from Eldar mythic cycles. They never reveal their faces, but instead conceal them beneath shifting masks known as the *agaith*, or "false face," which can assume myriad images at the will of the wearer. In battle, Harlequins draw no delineation between art and war—each pinpoint thrust of a blade, each somersault to avoid an enemy blow, and each whipcord kick to the throat is an act of worship to the Trickster God. It is said that Harlequins' masks reflect their enemy's worst nightmares, causing all who oppose them to quail in terror.

Even to other Eldar, Harlequins are capricious and unknowable, serving some shrouded agenda for the sake of the entire race, and yet bearing the burden alone, making decisions that even most Farseers would shy from. Given the dangerous and worrisome nature of the Askellon Sector, it is little surprise that Harlequins have visited Craftworld Miandrothe a disproportionate number of times, meeting in secret with its Seer Council, and performing myriad dances to prepare the Guardians of that craftworld for forthcoming trials. More often than not, when a Harlequin troupe leaves Miandrothe, it is with a single new recruit for its ranks. Such is the status of Harlequins amongst Eldar society that none would ever question the role they have played in the increased activity of the Dark Eldar in the sector. Though the two Eldar creeds may never be at peace, all know that Harlequins walk between both worlds, for the good of all in the never-ending battle against Chaos.

To Inquisitors operating in Askellon, Harlequins have proven both a hindrance and a help over the centuries. They are first mentioned in the *Lay of Askellios* as capricious "painted dancers," who came to the aid of Valerius in a battle against Daemons of the Warp. The Harlequins and the saint would later come to blows over ownership of several scattered artefacts in the wake of the battle, fighting Valerius to a standstill before escaping with fully half the cache, leaving him to fire the remainder into the heart of a star and destroy them utterly.

Many times since the Harlequins have returned, usually when Askellon has been in the grip of peril from the Ruinous Powers. Sometimes, troupes of Harlequins have fought alongside Askellian forces against gibbering hordes of Daemons or obscene cults. Other times, they have acted alone, ignoring warring factions on all sides whilst carrying out some purpose of their own. There are many records of Harlequins appearing alongside Eldar pirates, or even slavers, terrorising Imperial forces or merchant fleets. If they treat with humanity at all, it is in secret. Often it is through servants of the Inquisition, a select few of whom have even been allowed access to the Black Library over the millennia. Whether Harlequins can be called friend or foe to Mankind, however, is a matter for debate—to many, including even those Inquisitors who might deal with them, they are not to be trusted.



HARLEQUIN PLAYER

The backbone of any Harlequin force, and the most numerous of the Harlequins, Players are graceful and skilful combatants, with training and prowess far beyond that of a mere Guardian or even Aspect Warrior. When fighting together, Players become a glorious, choreographed chorus line of death, their domino fields creating a blur of colour and motion that is both beautiful and painful to behold. Amidst the confusion, they stab at their foes with the deadly Harlequin's Kiss, liquefying their enemies' innards before the unfortunate victim can land a blow in return.

HARLEQUIN PLAYER (ELITE) 12				
H ² 01-10	5	WS	BS	S
AR ² 11-20	5	60	45	38
AL ² 21-30	5	T	AG 8	INT
B ² 31-70	5	36	57	42
LR ² 71-85	5	PER 7	WP	FEL
LL ² 86-00	5	54	59	36
			IFL	—
HALF 8	FULL 16	CHARGE 24	RUN 48	THREAT 14
SHURIKEN PISTOL		CLASS PISTOL		
RNG 30M	RoF S/3/-	DMG 1d10+4 (R)		
PEN 3	CLIP 60	RLD 1 FULL	WT 1.2 KG	AVL VR
SPECIAL: RAZOR SHARP, RELIABLE				
HARLEQUIN'S KISS		CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+8 (R)		
PEN 10	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 1 KG	AVL ER
SPECIAL: FELLING (4), TEARING				

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +20, Awareness (Per) +20, Charm (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag) +20, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) (Int), Scrutiny (Per), Sleight of Hand (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +20

Talents: Ambidextrous, Combat Master, Hard Target, Leap Up, Preternatural Speed, Step Aside, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged)

Traits: Unnatural Agility (3), Unnatural Perception (2)

Gear: Flip belt, Harlequin mask, holo-suit, colourful light Eldar mesh armour

Dancer of Death: When a Harlequin Player uses the Disengage action, he can move a number of metres up to twice his Agility bonus in the Half Action to leave melee combat.

Troupe Master: Every Harlequin troupe is led by a Troupe Master (Eldar: *athair*, meaning "Avatar"), who dances the role of the Laughing God during performances. In battle he directs the Players; in parley he speaks for them. If the Players are gathered into a troupe, a single Harlequin Player should be upgraded to a Troupe Master through adding three ranks in the Command skill and using the following profile and weaponry.

HARLEQUIN TROUPE LEADER (ELITE) 17				
H ² 01-10	5	WS	BS	S
AR ² 11-20	5	67	48	38
AL ² 21-30	5	T	AG 8	INT
B ² 31-70	5	36	57	42
LR ² 71-85	5	PER 7	WP	FEL
LL ² 86-00	5	54	59	36
			IFL	—
HALF 8	FULL 16	CHARGE 24	RUN 48	THREAT 19
SHURIKEN PISTOL		CLASS PISTOL		
RNG 30M	RoF S/3/-	DMG 1d10+4 (R)		
PEN 3	CLIP 60	RLD 1 FULL	WT 1.2 KG	AVL VR
SPECIAL: RAZOR SHARP, RELIABLE				
ELDAR POWER SWORD		CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+8 ^{S+SB} (E)		
PEN 5	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 3 KG	AVL ER
SPECIAL: BALANCED, POWER FIELD				

HARLEQUIN ARMOURY

The following items are unique to the enigmatic Eldar Harlequins, and should be considered Extremely Rare.

CREIDANN GRENADE HARNESS

This multi-launcher harness is used both in performance and war, sending short-ranged volleys of hallucinogen grenades into the midst of the enemy and adoring audiences alike.

HARLEQUIN MASK

The "false face" mask presents an ever-shifting visage to all who look upon it, concealing the Harlequin's true face so that none—even he—knows the Eldar from the performer. A Harlequin mask is an Eldar light mesh helmet, with a sealed visor combining the effects of a respirator and photo-visor.

FLIP BELT

The flip belt, or *geirgilath*, allows the user to manipulate gravity, moving with astounding grace. The user ignores penalties for Difficult Terrain and can re-roll any failed Dodge test (but cannot re-roll a failed re-roll, per page 22 of the DARK HERESY CORE Rulebook) In addition, a character wearing a flip belt ignores the penalties for firing a heavy weapon without bracing.

HOLO-SUIT

The holo-suit generates a scintillating "domino field" (Eldar: *dathedi*), projecting multiple images of the user. This is treated as a Force Field with a protection rating of 35 that cannot be overloaded.

DEATH JESTER

Though most Harlequins prefer the graceful mastery of close combat, the *margorach*, or “Death Jesters,” carry lethal shuriken shrieker cannons into battle. Death Jesters stand somewhat aloof from other Harlequins, and even from each other. They are renowned for their morbid sense of humour—something not often considered an Eldar trait, but one that is appreciated in the dark halls of Commorragh. Their costumes are adorned with skulls, while the death’s head mask is worn as a grim reminder of their role in the dance—the role of death.

During a performance, the Death Jester performs daring feats of escapology and death-defying stunts, while “slaying” the Players who dance around him. In battle he delivers his grim punchlines with relentless volleys from his cannon, felling real enemies with the same ease as those in the Dance Without End.

DEATH JESTER (ELITE)					18
H ² 01-10	5	WS	BS	S	
AR ² 11-20	5	67	56	42	
AL ² 21-30	5	T	AG 8	INT	
B ² 31-70	5	36	55	45	
LR ² 71-85	5	PER 7	WP	FEL	
LL ² 86-00	5	55	62	30	
		IFL			
HALF 8	FULL 16	CHARGE 24	RUN 48	THREAT 17	
SHRIEKER CANNON			CLASS HEAVY		
RNG 150M	RoF S/-8	DMG 1d10+5 (R)			
PEN 4	CLIP 160	RLD 1 FULL	WT 14 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: RELIABLE, TOXIC (3)					
HARLEQUIN'S KISS			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+8 (R)			
PEN 10	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 1 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: FELLING (4), TEARING					

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +20, Awareness (Per) +20, Charm (Fel) +10, Command (Fel), Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +20, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) (Int), Scrutiny (Per), Sleight of Hand (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +20

Talents: Combat Master, Hard Target, Leap Up, Marksman, Nowhere to Hide, Preternatural Speed, Step Aside, Swift Attack

Traits: Autostabilised, Fear (1), Unnatural Agility (3), Unnatural Perception (2)

Gear: Flip belt, Harlequin mask, holo-suit, spectral light Eldar mesh armour

Inescapable Doom: A Death Jester ignores the normal -20 penalty to his Ballistic Skill imposed for firing at a target who had performed a Run action the current or previous turn.



GM GUIDANCE: USING HARLEQUINS

Harlequins are extremely deadly combatants, but they can act as much more for a Game Master looking to add additional elements of mystery and subtle dangers to his campaign. They should appear as majestic and capricious creatures, to be encountered singly, in troupes, or with other Eldar—or not at all, their presence only hinted through the remains of their victims. Their motivations might never be revealed; though they desire the restoration of their race, their ways are mysterious even to their fellow Eldar. To deal with Harlequins should be a tense and perilous encounter even when outside of combat, for these lithe dancers are full of guile and trickery, ever prepared to employ any devilish tactic in order to serve their goals. These goals can encompass elements of Ordo Hereticus or Ordo Malleus themes as well, for wherever there is the threat of Chaos, from those who worship the Ruinous Powers to the actual Daemons of the Warp, there is cause for Harlequins to act. When added to a campaign, they can strengthen elements of suspicion and mistrust as Acolytes can never be certain what guides these enigmatic aliens, and to what extent the Harlequins are secretly directing their actions—of the actions of the warband's Inquisitor.

SHADOWSEER

Shadowseers, or *esdainn*, are specialist psykers whose abilities are centred around confusion and fear. They add to the potency of their performances by releasing programmed hallucinogens from their *creidann* grenade launcher harnesses. During the masques, Shadowseers act as storytellers, projecting scintillating phantoms that dance and duel in the air above the spectators' heads. In battle, these gifts imprint visions of unholy terror on the enemies' minds, or mask the presence of the Harlequins from mortal senses entirely.

As narrators in the Dance Without End, the Shadowseers' role is one of obfuscation, and they often take the form of the faceless storyteller or wizard. Their Harlequin masks are often blank, revealing no glimmer of the personality beneath. They are renowned for reading the paths of fate, using their troupe's performances to send hidden messages to individuals in the audience, pushing them towards some deed that may one day shape the fate of an entire craftworld, system, or sector. Shadowseers understand that a whisper in the right ear can have great repercussions, just as a tiny stone thrown into a pool can send ripples far and wide.

SHADOWSEER (MASTER)					20	
H ² 01-10		5		WS	BS	S
AR ² 11-20		5		61	45	38
AL ² 21-30		5		T	AG 8	INT
B ² 31-70		5		38	57	59
LR ² 71-85		5		PER 8	WP 8	FEL
LL ² 86-00		5		60	67	44
				IFL	56	
HALF 8	FULL 16	CHARGE 24	RUN 48	THREAT 38		
SHURIKEN PISTOL			CLASS PISTOL			
RNG 30M	RoF S/3/-	DMG 1D10+4 (R)				
PEN 3	CLIP 60	RLD 1 FULL	WT 1.2 KG	AVL VR		
SPECIAL: RAZOR SHARP, RELIABLE						
GRENADE HARNESS			CLASS BASIC			
RNG 15M	RoF S/3/-	DMG —				
PEN 0	CLIP 6	RLD 2 FULL	WT 3.5 KG	AVL ER		
SPECIAL: BLAST (6), HALLUCINOGENIC						
FORCE STAFF			CLASS MELEE			
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1D10+9 ^{PR+SB} (I)				
PEN 8 ^{2+PR}	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 2 KG	AVL ER		
SPECIAL: FORCE, TWO-HANDED						



THE BLACK LIBRARY

Said to be tended by the oldest and wisest of Farseers, and protected by the Harlequins, the dread Black Library of Chaos—to give it its full title—is the greatest repository of knowledge of the Ruinous Powers in the galaxy. Existing deep within the webway, where even the most experienced of Eldar cannot find it, the Black Library is a dark craftworld, supposedly created by the Laughing God to record all of the forbidden lore of Chaos. Within its endless vaults lie secrets and treasures from before the Fall, along with other fell texts, such as the Books of Lorgar and Magnus. Enclosed within near-impenetrable psychic barriers, the Black Library is watched and maintained by its Guardian-Scribes, who collate and transcribe every scrap of lore—a task they have carried out since the Fall. There are few in the galaxy who even know of the Black Library's existence, and fewer still who are allowed to enter: its doors only open for those who have mastered the Chaos within themselves, and small indeed is the number of souls who can lay claim to this feat.

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +20, Awareness (Per) +20, Charm (Fel) +10, Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +20, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology, Psykers, The Warp) (Int) +20, Psynsciennce (Per) +30, Scrutiny (Per), Sleight of Hand (Ag) +10

Talents: Ambidextrous, Bastion of Iron Will, Hard Target, Leap Up, Preternatural Speed, Step Aside, Strong Minded, Warp Lock, Warp Sense

Traits: Psyker (PR 6), Touched by the Fates (2), Unnatural Agility (3), Unnatural Perception (2), Unnatural Willpower (2)

Psychic Powers: Mental Fortitude, Terrify, Veil of Tears (see below), Winding Fate

Veil of Tears: The Shadowseer obfuscates his troupe from the minds of the enemy, so that their presence is all but forgotten and their path masked from sight.

Action: Half Action

Focus Power: Ordinary (+10) Willpower test

Range: 10 metres x psy rating

Sustained: Free Action

Subtype: Concentration

Effect: All characters, including the user, within range of the power count as being obscured by smoke: an enemy suffers a -20 penalty on his Ballistic skill test to fire at them, and they gain +10 on Stealth tests.

Gear: Flip belt, Harlequin mask, holo-suit, colourful light Eldar mesh armour

Face of Fear: Shadowseers use their mental powers to channel the images of a foe's greatest nightmares onto their masks, causing their enemies to collapse in terror. While in melee combat with an opponent who can see him, a Shadowseer counts as having the Fear (2) trait against that character.

SOLITAIRE

Solitaires, or the *arebennian*, stand outside the masque, and roam the universe alone, sometimes joining a troupe for a single performance of special import, or arriving on a battlefield to assist the Eldar for some unknown purpose. On their travels they often recruit those Eldar they consider worthy into the Path of the Harlequin. They are the only Harlequins who can play the role of Slaanesh in the great masterwork known as The Dance—any other who attempts it is likely to be driven mad by the experience.

It is said that Solitaires have been touched by the Great Harlequin, and thus have his insight into the fall of their race, and even the very nature of the universe. The chilling truth is that their souls are not protected by the Laughing God as are those of their kin, through the use of spirit stones or other means. Instead, they are fated to be consumed by Slaanesh upon their death. The role they play in the Dance Without End, however, is so vital that all Solitaires choose this path willingly, forfeiting their very souls in exchange for the greatest honour an Eldar may possess. This honour comes at a terrible price, and Solitaires distance themselves from other Harlequins, as even to speak with them may bring the curse of She Who Thirsts upon them. To see Solitaires outside The Dance, even when they fight by one's side in battle, is considered an omen of ill-fortune that cannot be mitigated.

The knowledge and uncanny powers of the Solitaires make them singularly suited to the role, for they project an aura that is anathema to psykers and Warp-entities alike. They conceal their presence from Slaanesh every moment of every day, at great physical and mental toll, and yet still they fight, and still they dance.

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +20, Awareness (Per) +20, Charm (Fel) +10, Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +20, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) (Int), Parry (WS) +20, Scrutiny (Per), Sleight of Hand (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +20

Talents: Ambidextrous, Combat Master, Deny the Witch, Hard Target, Leap Up, Lightning Attack, Never Die, Preternatural Speed, Step Aside, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged), Two-Weapon Master (Melee, Ranged)

Traits: Resistance (Psychic Powers), Touched by the Fates (2), Unnatural Agility (3), Unnatural Perception (2)

Gear: Flip belt, Harlequin mask, holo-suit, colourful light Eldar mesh armour

Soulless Terror: In addition to his other talents, a Solitaire has the following talents from the Untouchable elite advance (see page 92 of the DARK HERESY CORE Rulebook): Bane of the Daemon, Daemonic Anathema, Null Field, Psychic Null, Soulless Aura, Warp Disruption

SOLITAIRE (MASTER)					20
H ² 01-10	5	WS	BS	S	
AR ² 11-20	5	80	66	38	
AL ² 21-30	5	T	AG 9	INT	
B ² 31-70	5	36	69	77	
LR ² 71-85	5	PER 8	WP	FEL	
LL ² 86-00	5	60	79	18	
			IFL		
			66		
HALF 9	FULL 18	CHARGE 27	RUN 54	THREAT 38	
SHURIKEN PISTOL			CLASS PISTOL		
RNG 30M	RoF S/3/-	DMG 1d10+4 (R)			
PEN 3	CLIP 60	RLD 1 FULL	WT 1.2 KG	AVL VR	
SPECIAL: RAZOR SHARP, RELIABLE					
POWER SWORD			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+8 ^{S+SB} (E)			
PEN 5	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 3 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: BALANCED, POWER FIELD					
HARLEQUIN'S KISS			CLASS MELEE		
RNG —	RoF —	DMG 1d10+8 (R)			
PEN 10	CLIP —	RLD —	WT 1 KG	AVL ER	
SPECIAL: FELLING (4), TEARING					



INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE: DANCE OF TREACHERY

Overview: In recent years, rumours have spread of an enigmatic Harlequin in the sector. Clad in a mirror-polished raiment akin to liquid metal, this mysterious “Silver Coryphée” is thought by many to be the first Solitaire ever sighted in living memory. While visiting Vesuna Regis on Juno, the Acolytes hear rumours of a possible xenos presence in the city, which they believe to be none other than the Silver Coryphée himself. Investigating these rumours, they are thrust into a web of corruption which forces them to choose a side and challenge their beliefs.

This is largely an investigative sub-plot, which can be incorporated into any scenario when the Acolytes land at Vesuna Regis (though the Game Master may, of course, adjusted the location as desired). It could be introduced at the conclusion to a scenario when the Acolytes are taking well-earned rest, or at some other point the GM deems suitable.

ACT I: GHOST DANCE

While staying in Vesuna Regis, the Acolytes hear rumours of a ghost that haunts the great Mausoleum Sanctus, a vast sunken graveyard that lies forever in the shadow of the Basilica of Valerius Risen. From snatches of information provided by frightened pilgrims, Ecclesiarchy novitiates, and local beggars, the Acolytes learn that this ghost is tall and lithe, of shimmering silver, and dances between the grave-markers at night with extraordinary grace, before vanishing into the catacombs. An emissary of the basilica’s cardinals also informs them that strange disturbances have been reported of late—ground tremors, the desecration of martyrs’ graves, and tampering with the great seals that divide the catacombs from ancient, possibly xenos, ruins beneath—and requests their discreet aid in resolving the matter.

ACT II: THE SOLITAIRE’S QUEST

The Acolytes likely wish to see this “ghost” for themselves, staking out the Mausoleum Sanctus by night to see what happens. Eventually they catch a glimpse of a silver figure, almost dancing through the avenues of graves. Upon closer inspection, they can recognise the figure as an Eldar, and a strange one at that. Any psykers in the party are filled with a sense of dread and have their powers diminished at the xenos’ presence. They may confront the alien, or follow it into the catacombs and, ultimately, into a labyrinth of xenos ruins of unknown design.

If the Acolytes treat with the Eldar, they discover that he is a Harlequin—and not just any Harlequin, but the Silver Coryphée, a Solitaire of legend. The Silver Coryphée’s quest is to track down a series of powerful artefacts scattered across the sector long ago, by a xenos race whose name cannot be uttered. This race worshipped the Dark Gods, and was once at war with the Eldar during the time of the Fall. The Chaos-tainted artefacts were used to harvest Eldar souls, absorbing them from spirit stones and consigning the Eldar to a fate worse than death. The Silver Coryphée wishes to rescue these souls, but does not reveal anything about their final destination: Craftworld Miandrothe.



However, the artefact—which should be in the catacombs of Juno—is not here, and after some research the Acolytes discover it has been taken by a treasure-seeking human. If it is not found, the repercussions will be dire, for all Eldar within the sector have already learned of its existence, and plan to reap bloody vengeance on humans throughout Juno’s system if the Silver Coryphée cannot bring a less violent resolution.

ACT III: FRIEND OR FOE?

Depending on which NPCs the Acolytes have encountered so far, the Game Master may choose to have the artefact in the possession of a corrupt official, about to be sold by a Faceless Trader, or even claimed by a Rogue Trader. The artefact may well have already been shipped off-world—it is not necessary for the Acolytes to find it straight away, and the GM may wish the trail to run cold for now and allow the Acolytes to pursue the item as a side quest during their other pursuits. What is important is that the Acolytes learn of an impending war between humans and the Eldar, and make a friend—or enemy—of the Silver Coryphée.

At the GM’s desire to best fit any ongoing campaign plans, the Silver Coryphée eventually tracks down the Acolytes. If they have not yet found the artefact, they must choose whether to help the Solitaire or refuse him. If they have the artefact, they must decide whether or not to hand it over. Askellian Tech-Priests who study xenos devices, for example, would pay greatly to examine this powerful relic. Compliance may earn the Acolytes the Silver Coryphée’s favour, which manifests later, probably when they least expect it. Betrayal, on the other hand, may bring down the wrath of the Harlequins, or simply presage some terrible future event, when either the Eldar arrive in force against Askellon’s ruling system, or the artefact itself falls into the wrong hands.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- One (or several) of the many recidivist cults or agents of Chaos operating on Juno learns of the Acolytes’ investigation and tries to thwart them—the artefact itself should prove a mighty offering to Slaanesh, while the thwarting of the Harlequins in and of itself is seen as a victory.
- Eldar Corsairs step up attacks on Faceless Trading vessels in the system in order to find and retrieve the artefact. The Acolytes are forced to take sides, choosing between humans they know to be corrupt, and xenos they know to be murderous and untrustworthy.
- The cardinals of the basilica learn of the Acolytes’ investigation and denounce them as heretics who are in league with the alien, unless they prove otherwise. This is seen by the Askellian Ecclesiarchy as further evidence that the Emperor has abandoned Askellon, and could prove catastrophic for future dealings on Juno.

RUNNING XENOS NPCs

“Aliens must be eradicated from our worlds, purged from the galaxy, destroyed wherever they appear. However, on occasion, they can be a useful tool...”

—Inquisitor Taarn

The Ordo Xenos is devoted to protecting Mankind from the threats of the alien, but situations are rarely simple enough to be reduced to destroying a single target or fighting an obvious enemy. Sometimes, for an Inquisitor to oppose a menace from another species, he needs information or aid that can only come from within the ranks of their foes.

SPEAKING WITH ALIENS

GMs can use xenos NPCs to provide new tools and opportunities to their players. An alliance of convenience with an Eldar Corsair might lead to information lost for millennia, or Kroot mercenaries might be able to provide backup against a threat that would be alerted by the mobilising of Imperial resources. Even as enemies, aliens are not always best confronted with boltgun and flamer. Non-combat interactions with xenos provide new depth to an investigation or adventure, but they can also be difficult for the GM to use without undermining the inherent danger of non-human species. Xenos NPCs are best when they strike a balance between the useful and the dangerous, providing new assets at a great cost or risk. Furthermore, there should be an air of uncertainty in dealings with other species, who do not think, feel, or value as humans do. The sections that follow provide recommendations on how to bring out the inhuman side of alien NPCs to best enhance the atmosphere of an adventure.



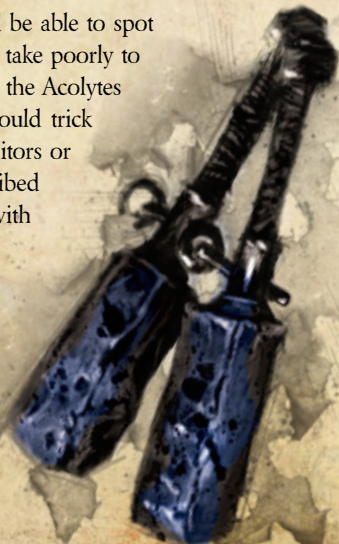
ORKS

“The Orks are the pinnacle of creation. For them, the great struggle is won. They have evolved a society which knows no stress or angst. Who are we to judge them? We Eldar who have failed, or the Humans, on the road to ruin in their turn? And why? Because we sought answers to questions an Ork wouldn’t even bother to ask! We see a culture that is strong, and despise it as crude.”

—Uthan the Perverse, Eldar Philosopher

The idea of a non-violent encounter with an Ork is a difficult one to grasp, for a variety of reasons. Ork minds are incredibly simple, tending to direct actions along the path of least resistance until they find an excuse to hit someone. However, despite this narrow focus, Orks are not significantly less intelligent than average humans and can possess a brute cunning that can catch humans by surprise. Their single-minded interest in violence and loud noises simply means that most Orks find an easy path to their goals early on in any decision-making process, and do not need to think much in order to become satisfied. Orks with a longer-term view do exist—Warbosses, Kaptins, and other leaders who are willing to put aside short-term pleasures to find a really good scrap later on. Their goals are rarely more complex than the Boyz serving them, but they have an awareness of scope and magnitude that allows them to sometimes postpone immediately satiating their desires. From the perspective of an Inquisitor or his Acolytes, this means that these relatively far-sighted Orks are open to being manipulated or redirected, options which generally cannot be employed against the rank and file of a greenskin horde.

For GMs, this has certain important implications. The first is that adventures involving Orks can be more complex than a simple combat scenario, provided the Acolytes can find a way to approach the upper ranks of an Ork group. This does not need to mean making contact with the actual leader, as few Warbosses are without a number of ambitious Nobs, ready to challenge their authority when given an excuse. Acolytes can rely on an ambitious Ork’s interest in truly grand mayhem to tempt him into starting an internal conflict, or to turn him in the direction of a more impressive threat than his current target. However, the GM should also remember that an Ork with ambition is also likely to be an unusually intelligent example of his kind, capable of incredibly devious cunning within his area of expertise. Such an Ork may well be able to spot an obvious trick, and is likely to take poorly to the attempt. Potentially worse for the Acolytes is the possibility that the Ork could trick them in turn. In the past, Inquisitors or other Imperial figures have bribed Orks into mercenary work with shipments of weapons, only to see the weapons immediately turned on them once payment has been made.



ELDAR

“Askellon is an old sector, and a proud one. It has a heritage dating back over ten thousand years. So I hope you can appreciate that when I say the Eldar are older and more arrogant than you can imagine, I do not do so lightly.”

—Rogue Trader Diana Holte,
briefing her retinue before receiving an Eldar emissary

Adventures involving Eldar characters typically revolve around themes of deception and manipulation. Members of this ancient race act according to their own agendas and for their own causes first and foremost, seeking to use all non-Eldar as pawns or worse in an attempt to stave off their encroaching extinction. The Eldar have made common cause with the Imperium against greater threats in the past, but such arrangements are never more than temporary alliances of convenience. The actions of the Eldar are always positioned to manoeuvre their allies and foes alike into positions more advantageous for the long-term prospects of their species—a view they can easily take, given their incredible lifespans. The divinations of the craftworld Farseers take this concept to the extreme, allowing them to shape the events of the future by taking seemingly unrelated actions in the present. In desperate straits, the Farseers might even sacrifice Eldar lives to achieve a great victory foreseen later on, but it is more common that other, lesser species—such as humans—pay the price for their goals.

Even Eldar without such foresight are capable manipulators, thanks to their lifelong immersion in a culture which relies on layering meaning within meaning to even speak its native tongue. When one of their species speaks, even to deliver a verifiably true statement, it is usually a message couched within layers of metaphor, double meaning, or outright deception. This can be difficult for the GM to portray, but some preparation before scenes involving the Eldar can go a long way. A good technique could be to make a list of different facets of the conversation, such as what the Eldar wants from the PCs, what he is willing to reveal to them, and what he wants them not to learn. The GM can then focus on guiding the conversation with these principles in mind. If a little extra time to prepare a properly cryptic statement is needed, do not hesitate to pause—the Eldar are swift thinkers, but they also can spare the time to carefully consider their words.

An important additional consideration for GMs portraying Eldar characters is that the ancient race does not draw divisions between things in the same way that the Imperium might. Not only might they fail to recognise the differences between “petty” human concerns that pass by them in a relative eyeblink, but they divide their own culture in ways that are completely arcane to outside observers. From the variable pronunciation of a word in their native tongue to the slight variations of shade in the colours of ritual garb, a world of meaning can be hidden in nuances that humans cannot hope to understand. The GM can use this to allow the Eldar to communicate ideas to each other secretly, or as a way to play up their seeming capriciousness when they act on reasoning that seems opaque to the Acolytes.

This strange approach to the divisions of their culture applies even where the players might think there is a clear distinction. Exceedingly few humans recognise a difference between the cultures of craftworld dwellers, roaming Corsairs and Rangers, brightly garbed Harlequins, or the depraved raiders of Commorragh. Some of this is due to simple xenophobia, but there is far more to it than that. Every Eldar culture with which the Imperium has dealt makes a habit of deception and manipulation to serve its own ends, usually to the detriment of Mankind. Even uneasy alliances against the forces of Chaos or other shared foes usually end in the Eldar betraying or abandoning their allies as soon as the mutual threat has ended and the Eldar have achieved their goals. Given this, it is hardly a surprise that the Imperium views any apparent distinctions in equipment, tactics, or aesthetic choices as probable ploys to confuse outside observers. This assumption is reinforced by the incredible arrogance of the species, which values a single Eldar life—no matter its affiliation—over that of millions of humans. To these aliens, a member of a different Eldar cultural group is a peer of some degree, a position which they would never grant to any human. In turn, most Imperials assume that the difference between Eldar is not between Craftworld Eldar and Dark Eldar, but between the reservedly treacherous and the gleefully treacherous—and they are not entirely wrong.



KROOT

“You have paid us for our service, Imperial, but we are who we are. If you would deny us our meal, then we would be forced to leave your service. We would, of course, return your payment—but then we would kill you, and we would have our meal anyways.”

—Horgok, Kroot Shaper

In many ways, Kroot culture is almost the exact opposite of Imperial ideals. The Imperium teaches that the form of Man is sacred, that change is perilous, and outside contact is a form of contamination. The Kroot actively seek to reshape their forms, embrace new technologies, and draw on other species for the resources to achieve both of these goals—as employers, and as prey. This is doubly anathema to Imperial thinking, as it not only advocates a policy of change and turmoil, but risks the Kroot taking in some of the holy gene-sequences of Mankind for their own ends.

And yet, despite the philosophical opposites that the two cultures embody, the Kroot are one of the species that authorities in Askellon most consistently tolerate. The basis for this puzzling relationship lies in pure pragmatism. For their part, the Kroot are a practical species, and in most circumstances would rather be paid to fight than fight without being paid to do so. While they hold their ideals of advancement sacred, the Kroot are flexible in most other respects. They only object to being denied their feast, and even then, a simple solution presents itself—kill the employer once the business arrangement is ended, and add him to the meal.

The Askellian elite, in turn, tolerate the Kroot more readily than other species because the Kroot's behaviour makes them a low priority target among myriad xenos threats. Much of the Kroot population dwells aboard their massive void-bound Warspheres instead of contesting habitable worlds, and the Kroot themselves are willing to assist in the eradication of other species. In essence, typical Askellian across the sector policy regarding the Kroot can be summarised thusly: “Kill them last.”

For GMs, this means that the Kroot can be an excellent way to incorporate xenos characters into adventures without making them an immediate threat. Kroot encountering the Acolytes are more likely to be looking for work than conflict, raising the question of whether the Acolytes are willing to risk resources and danger to cleanse the Kroot simply over principle. Similarly, Kroot can be included on Imperial worlds where a local authority has contracted them, without needing to change the tone of the setting into a wartime narrative. But for all the ease with which Kroot can be included, they are still aliens, and man-eaters at that. The Kroot are an excellent way for the GM to raise the issue of Radicalism, or to prime the players to encounter more bizarre menaces.

THE MANY MASKS OF THE XENOS

“Though the alien may seem to come in a million forms from as many worlds, in truth, it has but one nature. It exists to bedevil Mankind and to contest our rightful dominion of the stars. So do not speak to me of unknown enemies and secret stratagems. Our task here is to root out this filth, and we shall do it by bolt and flame.”

—Colonel Garrett Nafth,
of the 331st Valhallan “Ork Hunters”

Threats to the Imperium do not come solely from the known, powerful alien empires. Across the Askellon Sector, countless threats lurk between the stars. These minor powers are petty things compared to the vast expanse of the Emperor’s domain, the enigmatic power of the Eldar, or the fury of an Orkish horde, but they are often capable of devastating or corrupting whole systems nonetheless. Inquisitors must be ever vigilant for the signs of a new alien race that has been discovered, or which is gaining new strength and influence. These threats can come in many forms, from attempts to pollute new worlds with alien colonisation, infiltration of Imperial frontier worlds, or outright war. The infinitely variable capabilities of alien species means no single response can work in all situations—species with shape-changing or chameleonic properties are an entirely different sort of threat than Warp-proficient telepaths, for example.

Fortunately, for a Game Master interested in using a xenos threat, whether a new or minor species, or a galaxy-spanning threat like the Eldar, there are a few universally relevant tools that can help the GM deliver an effective narrative, despite the vast array of possible details. The most important thing when developing a xenos threat to use in a **DARK HERESY** game is to determine its role in the narrative. The more typical investigative mode of play works best with alien species that are capable of infiltration or covert action, while a more socially-focused game might be interested in exploring the risks of contact with a seemingly “safe” or nonthreatening culture. Once the GM knows what kind of narrative role the xenos threat plays, he can develop the adventure normally. An alien antagonist does not actually require an entirely different adventure-writing process than a human one. Instead, the GM needs to filter the alien character’s involvement through the lens of its inhuman perspective.

The ability to portray the alien nature of a character from another species is the key to effective use of xenos in adventures. For example, one of the key questions of writing a good antagonist is to determine the character’s motivation—something that may be radically different for an alien than for a human. A Kroot character’s behaviour should be heavily shaped by his need to feed on new flesh, while an Eldar is sure to keep the survival and supremacy of his own culture at the forefront of his mind at all times. Any actions they take should be shaped by these priorities.

More overt methods of depicting their detachment from human norms are also possible, and can be effective tools, as well. A xenos character can be described across all the senses, from a rank or beguiling odour, to unusual posture, or body language that hints at unknowable moods. Negotiations with an Ork might be marred by the need to keep from gagging at its foul breath, or the seemingly innocuous words of an Eldar Ranger might be marred by the way he continually scans the distance, possibly searching for an unknown sign. By emphasising aspects of a character most people do not consciously address, the wrongness of a particular alien can be conveyed all the more effectively. These details are best used if the xenos do not seem to acknowledge them in any way—the Ork has presumably been unable to smell anything more pleasant over his own stench, while the Eldar might simply be engaging in a habit built over centuries of wandering. These behaviours might or might not be the result of conscious action or intention, but it becomes almost impossible for the outside observer to be certain at the critical moment.



TRAVELLING IN SPACE

"It is the great paradox of the Imperium that the hungering dark beyond our worlds is also its only hope of salvation. Well, one of the great paradoxes. There are a few."

—Boehm Melasc, Navis Nobilite princeling

Travel in the 41st Millennium is the province of an elite few, even when the trip is from one district of a hive city to another. Most Askellians live and die without going far from their home or station of work. To move between worlds, then, is an almost unimaginable privilege for those used to a planet's surface. The voidborn and the crew of those vessels that ply the distances between stars live in this state constantly, but for them, the situation is reversed, and they can see almost nothing but the corridors of their native ship. The passengers which a ship's crew might ferry are considerably more capable of appreciating the marvels of space travel than the crew themselves, if only for having something against which to contrast it.

And yet, for all its wondrousness and convenience, space travel is often viewed with dread and superstitious awe. The vessels in the Imperium's service, from lowly transports to mighty battleships, rely upon technologies more subject to rote operation and prayer than any sense of comprehension; the failure of any one system can quickly spell doom for the entire ship-borne population. Furthermore, while travel within a system is relatively safe—concerned only with asteroids, gravity riptides, piracy, and equipment failure—true interstellar travel requires traversing the perilous currents of the Warp.

Given the majesty and the horror of void travel, the GM should take care to ensure that the Acolytes' journeys are never boring. Of course, the GM should not feel obligated to make such a production of travel between the stars that he overshadows whatever adventure waits at their destination, either. Instead, the focus should be on making the journey a part of the adventure in its own right. Ensuring a voyage through the Immaterium comes alive relies on several different elements, including the extended time such a journey involves, the richness of a voidship setting, and the perils of the Warp.

TO WALK BETWEEN WORLDS

Travelling between different stars is not a casual endeavour. Once a ship translates into the Immaterium, it is able to make incredible journeys at unimaginable speeds, but given the vastness of interstellar distances, even this may take a long time. The amount of time a journey takes within the Warp depends on a number of factors, but the most crucial of these is the reliability of the route that the vessel traverses. Some routes have been carefully mapped by many centuries of traffic, while others are chaotic messes, ignored or avoided by most.


Within the Askellon Sector, Warp routes are typically placed into one of four categories. The Grand Processional is a single route of incredible size that runs swiftly and reliably between the sector's most prominent worlds. Tributary paths are much more common and connect more systems, but run more slowly and with reduced stability. Lesser routes cobweb across Askellian space in networks of tenuous and barely charted paths, and are used only if no other passage is known. Uncharted paths are just that, perhaps the first time any vessel has attempted using the route or one that has not been employed for so long that no one knows its status. Their only constant in these routes is in the high uncertainty of the duration (and possibly, also the point of emergence).

When the Acolytes are travelling on an Askellian Warp route, consult **Table 3-1: Expected Warp Route Durations** to determine the expected travel time. A journey from one Grand World to another is always along the Processional, but any journey involving a Tributary or Low World always involves travel along other, less reliable routes. When constructing a lengthy path to another system, it is possible for it to contain segments along differing routes, and so each segment would contribute times to the overall duration.



Table 3-1: Expected Warp Route Durations

DESTINATION	WARP-ROUTE EMPLOYED			
	Grand Processional	Tributary Path	Lesser Route	Uncharted
A nearby system	2–3 days	7–15 days	10–15 days	1d10 days
Within same sub-sector	5–10 days	20–30 days	15–30 days	3d10 days
Within nearby sub-sector	15–25 days	1–2 months	2–3 months	1d5 months
The far side of the sector	30–40 days	2–4 months	4–7 months	2d5 months



When the Acolytes travel to another system, they could be purchasing berths as normal passengers on a regularly scheduled crossing, or they could perhaps be actively planning and plotting out the journey's route. If they choose to try the latter, such as if the captain is an ally or they need to travel outside of normal travel schedules, they can use a variety of skills to improve their voyage.

To help plot the most effective route to their destination, skills such as Scholastic Lore (Askellon Sector), Forbidden Lore (The Warp), Navigate (Warp), and Trade (Astrographer) can be attempted as they prepare to depart. The Game Master can assign difficulties based on the circumstances of the journey, the current location, and the vessel available, and adjust the duration based on the successes (and failures) gained on any tests. The Acolytes might also make use of a map for the route, especially useful for travel to a new or long-lost system; the quest to find the map might make for an adventure in its own right. It could even be possible for an excellently planned and plotted route using the finest charts to shorten a trip along a Tributary Path to the duration of a Grand Processional voyage of similar distance.

The GM should feel free to apply modifiers to the expected durations also based on the route; those along the Grand Processional might have little to no change, due to the reliability of this ancient passage, while those along uncharted or poorly mapped routes might vary wildly to possibly double the expected time. Other factors that could affect a journey might be unexpected Warp storms, favourable Warp currents, devout pilgrims who constantly chant prayers to calm the Immaterium, or nascent psyker eruptions that can roil the Sea of Souls.

Of special note is of course the Askellon Sector's infamous Pandaemonium. This Warp storm could erupt at any moment, dimming the blessed light of the Astronomican or bedevilling any vessel the Unending Storm captures in its ethereal talons. The GM can even work this into encounter plots, as the storm often appears to display near sentient behaviour and could respond to the actions and plans of the Acolytes or their foes during an investigation. The GM is encouraged to explore all these aspects and more to make travel through the Warp not just a trip but an adventure.

A REALM WITHIN THE VOID

It would be a mistake to think of a spaceship as a mere vehicle, a simple conveyance for getting from one world to another. Even the smallest is crewed by hundreds of toiling deckhands, while the complement of a Warp-capable craft can number in the tens of thousands. Although the crew of a space ship is bound to attend their duties, with even the elite bridge officers being occupied by vital tasks that dominate their time, the necessities of human life inevitably turn a ship into something resembling a city. In the case of the largest battleships and bulk cruisers, this can be the case in fact, where the crew in the depths of the ship might never know for sure whether they live and work in a planetbound hive or if they are travelling through the void.

For the GM, this means that a spacegoing vessel is a location rich in potential narrative uses, full of as many possible characters and stories as any planetary settlement. The concerns of a ship's crew are likely to be different than their groundside counterparts, but even exotic concerns such as air quality, extremes of rationing, and the maintenance of arcane machinery are not unknown on many Imperial worlds. Perhaps the greatest difference between a ship's crew and a city's population is the former's intimate familiarity with Warp travel—no small change, of course, and one that could easily draw an Inquisitor's attention.

The customs and characters of a space ship can be used either as an accent to or transition between planetbound adventures, or they can be made into an adventure in their own right. In the former case, the Acolytes might encounter new contacts, resources, or threats on their journey that they must harness or deal with before their destination. These encounters could also foreshadow future events on the planet to which the vessel travels. In the latter case, the Acolytes might have to board a ship with the intent of dealing with some circumstance on the vessel itself, and with the destination only a secondary concern. In this case, the journey might even act as a timer of sorts, requiring that the Acolytes complete their investigation before the ship makes port and discharges them.

IMPOSSIBLE ODYSSEYS

To travel between the stars in the 41st Millennium is to abandon one's notions of what is possible. The sheer scale of an Imperial starship already boggles the minds of many humans, but the distances crossed in an interstellar journey are almost beyond comprehension, involving measurements so large as to be meaningless in reference to anything a human could directly experience. But most of all, the bounds of the possible are tested by the journey through the Warp, a realm where madness is the only law. Warp-travelling vessels are ostensibly protected by Gellar Fields, ancient technological devices that project a bubble of reality around the ship to guard it in this hellish realm. However, even when the Gellar Field is functioning flawlessly, the mood on a ship during Warp travel is often restive and filled with apprehension. The ship's chapels are invariably packed during such journeys, and even the most minor incidents of bad luck are often treated as a sign of impending doom.

When the Gellar Field wavers, even for the merest fraction of an instant, things become much worse. At best, insanity begins to take hold on those onboard, filling their dreams and waking hours alike with visions of horror and despair. Ominous whispers might fill the air, or lights flicker despite a steady flow of power. Given the volatile mood the crew is likely to possess, this is a problem in itself, but it pales before a true breach of the Gellar Field, which allows the daemonic inhabitants of the Warp access to the ship or the souls of the crew.

The Game Master can use the terrors of the Warp in several different ways. The first is to use it as a narrative tool to set the mood, detailing the crew on edge, and perhaps complicating dealings with them due to their fraying nerves. There is no need for a Gellar Field failure to make a journey in the Empyrean complicate an investigation. However, if the GM desires something more dramatic, the influence of Warp-taint can take many forms. It could be subtle, distorting a witness's perception of reality or motivating the crew to irrational acts, or it can be overt, with unnatural threats springing into being aboard the ship.

However, the more overt a threat used by the GM, the more attention is necessary to put upon it. Daemonic incursions are matters of dire import, even if the Daemons or possessed unfortunates are defeated. Their taint can linger, and suspicion of contamination could settle upon any present. Using a direct breach of the Gellar Field should be reserved for adventures primarily focused on the daemonic or the Warp. This does not make them solely a matter for the Ordo Malleus, as no Acolytes can choose all the threats they must face, but it does mean that the campaign must generally take a certain direction for a time.

TRAVEL WITHIN A SYSTEM

Travel through realspace to other planets or destinations within a system is often much more reliable than through the Warp, so long as the vessel's plasma drives maintain thrust. Though durations can vary, typically voyaging from one planet to another is a matter of a few days, and venturing outwards to the far edges of a system (typically needed before a ship can safely translate from realspace into the Immaterium) can take roughly a week.

While usually not as perilous as travel through the Warp, voyages within a system can offer threats of other natures. Though there are likely few dangers from daemonic incursions, attacks from pirates and xenos raiders are much more possible. Asteroids, comets, and other stellar debris can act as cover—from behind which all manner of enemies can lay in wait—and careful captains always keep an eye on their augur arrays for signs of predators.

REMNANTS OF THE XENOS

“The taint of the alien does not end when their species is merely exterminated. Every trace of their foul culture and unconsecrated technology must also be ground to dust. Even then there can be no rest, lest their inhuman flesh somehow return to contaminate our stars.”

—Apollonia Flynne, Ordo Xenos Inquisitor

Askellon was founded upon the backs of alien civilisations. Ancient ruins, dark monoliths, caches of strange tech, and even the bones of unidentified creatures litter its worlds. Before the eye of the Inquisition turned upon Askellon, the early colonists blithely made use of these wondrous technologies. Cities were built upon the solid foundations laid eons ago by mysterious beings. Psykers drew power from eldritch crystals, which were harvested from some worlds like crops. Enemies were slain with elegant weapons of alien design. Even now, the sector’s most important strategic base of the Imperial Navy, Port Lokhart, is a structure of unknown alien origin. Indeed, the Vaxian Aftermath has revealed to the Imperium that there are more aliens in the Askellon Sector than were previously dreamt of, both catalogued and unidentified. It was only a matter of time before Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos began to make their way to Askellon in greater numbers, to discover the alien threats that the Imperium faces in this vast frontier and to destroy them.

GENERATING XENOS REMNANTS

This section is designed to enable the Game Master to generate mysterious xenos hooks, clues, artefacts, or trails “on the fly” during an adventure. It is particularly of use when crafting homebrew scenarios and campaigns, although often a GM may find that the Acolytes seem intent on pursuing an aspect of a pre-written scenario that has not been described in detail. When stuck for inspiration on how to facilitate the party’s investigation, the GM can turn to these rules to generate a new threat, reward, or avenue of investigation.

To this end, what follows is a set of xenos remnants tables—ruins, artefacts, biological traces, and forbidden knowledge—primarily for use in Ordo Xenos-themed adventures, but useful in DARK HERESY games of all types. The tables can also be used as a menu of ideas for xenos remnants with which to populate moments where the action lags, or to inspire entire adventures. The remnants provided use general terms, allowing them to be used in almost any situation. Some of the remnants call for the involvement of NPCs—if these are not present in the current adventure already, then the GM should feel free to change them to fit existing characters in his narrative, or to make up new NPCs that better suit his ongoing campaign and more easily weave the discovery of these mysterious remnants into the story.

SELECT A REMNANT TYPE

As with the all the remnants presented later, the Game Master may simply choose the type of alien encounter he wishes to generate for his players. For example, if the adventure up to that point has been focussed on the activities of a smuggling ring, the GM may want to use the Alien Artefacts table to work out what prized and heretical item everyone is so keen to acquire. Likewise, if the adventure has focused on hunting an NPC, then perhaps the GM would prefer to generate a set of Ancient Ruins to where the Acolytes’ quarry may have fled. However, to create a truly random xenos remnant to entice the players, the GM should simply roll a d5 on Table 3–2: Remnant Type.

Table 3–2: Remnant Type

1d5 ROLL	RESULT
1	The remnant is a long-abandoned xenos ruin, voidcraft, or settlement. Roll on Table 3–3: Ancient Ruins (see page 136).
2	Such remnants are archaicotech items of unknown origin and deadly power. Roll on Table 3–4: Alien Artefacts (see page 137).
3	Fossils, corpses, spores, and alien mutation are examples of this remnant type. Roll on Table 3–5: Xenobiology (see page 138).
4	These remnants represent alien information, myths, and lore that are best left unknown. Roll on Table 3–6: Forbidden Knowledge (see page 139).
5	Terror from the Past: Pick one of the tables, or roll twice and combine aspects of both remnants into a new one.

DETERMINE SPECIFIC REMNANT

Once the remnant type has been determined, simply find the table that corresponds to that type and roll a d5 to work out the specifics. Most of the remnants detailed here are designed so that the Game Master may incorporate them into his scenario’s narrative as he sees fit, using his own NPCs as antagonists or allies. Each remnant is also accompanied by an example plot seed—a suggestion of how to incorporate the remnant into a scenario, or even to hinge a scenario around the remnant’s discovery. As always, the GM can simply pick out a specific xenos remnant rather than roll, especially if he does not feel that the generated remnant fits his adventure or there is a remnant that perfectly matches his campaign plans.

Table 3–3: Ancient Ruins

1d5 ROLL RESULT

The Executioner's Heart: An underground facility of Eldar design, the Executioner's Heart is unlike anything previously found in the sector. The wraithbone halls extend beneath the surface like vast tree roots, providing conduits for extraordinary amounts of energy. The entire complex seems to focus this energy downwards into the planet's core, projecting a holo-field into some cavernous hollow far beneath the surface.

- 1 Plot Seed: The agri-world Thalamon in the Stygies Cluster has long been known to the Inquisition as a former Eldar maiden world, though this knowledge is kept from the populace. When a chance excavation unearths a functioning Eldar webway gate, the Acolytes are ordered to investigate. The subterranean facility is projecting a holo-field over a mile beneath the planet's surface, where it appears to be keeping something imprisoned. Investigating or tampering with the Executioner's Heart not only leads to a conflict of interest with the nearby Adeptus Mechanicus enclave, but also draws unwanted attention from the sinister Eldar known as Harlequins.

The Anathema Wreck: The millennia-old wreckage of a pre-Imperium voidcraft has been discovered in the heart of a steaming jungle. Whether the craft is human or alien—or a Warp-tainted melding of both—is uncertain, but it can be ignored no longer.

- 2 Plot Seed: The jungles of the lush world are filled with alien beasts, including large, ape-like creatures that appear perfectly peaceful. When a group of these apes is seen acting peculiarly—almost intelligently—security forces discover that the apes seem to revere some sort of ancient ruin in the depths of a thousand-mile-wide jungle. This ruin is actually a crashed spacecraft, long avoided by the superstitious citizens. Some postulate that the craft is perhaps the origin of the apes—once-civilised aliens now devolved from their old form, and yet still protecting technology that they no longer know how to use. The Ordo Xenos has heard such whispers, and is determined to quell the rumours.

The Bone Labyrinth: A vast structure stretches unfathomably into the bowels of a planet, the walls of its subterranean chambers made of a material unknown even to the Cult Mechanicus agents who have examined it. The very ground thrums with power from an unidentifiable source.

- 3 Plot Seed: An Explorer group entering the deeps caverns below the shrine world of Thaur has met with calamity. First, they were assailed by a horde of tiny, spider-like automata, made of the same strange material as the structure they defended. Then, more horrifying still, they were attacked by shambling corpse-golems, made from the remains of the blessed martyrs and saints of Thaur, animated by blasphemous eldritch energy. The Adeptus Mechanicus and the Eulogus Askelline bicker over what should be done about this new blasphemy, and who should do it. It can surely be no coincidence that a shadowed cult, believed to worship dark gods and alien avatars, has stepped into the light preaching of the end of humanity on the bone-world.

The Argent Hulk: A massive, cylindrical silver vessel drifts dead and silent through the Cyclopia Sub-Sector. The technology used in its construction defies the understanding of even the Adeptus Mechanicus.

- 4 Plot Seed: The haphazard trajectory of this drifting hulk is picked up by the sensors of Port Aquila, and an Imperial Navy expeditionary squadron is sent to investigate. Though the silver ship appears untouched, its innards have been twisted and changed by its time in the Warp, and as well as ancient xenos treasures, it almost certainly contains dangers, too. When it is boarded by agents of the Imperium, they discover that whichever ancient race built this vessel has long since died out—but what killed them is still aboard and hungry.

The Sunken Bastion: A labyrinthine, fortified structure of black rock, sited deep beneath a world's largest ocean, the sunken bastion has proved almost impenetrable until now. The Adeptus Mechanicus within Askellon believes it to be an ancient fortress of a long-dead race, and that limitless treasures lie within.

- 5 Plot Seed: A penitent-labour crew dug up and accidentally activated a strange device resembling a shard of obsidian, triggering massive earthquakes and strange phenomena across the planet Aventine. When the Acolytes try to examine the artefact, it throbs with dark energy, and a black city of strange design rises from the ocean, forming a blasphemous island of alien secrets. Its massive walls are protected by automated xenos weaponry, and its halls are full of traps and strange, wraith-like shadows of a bygone era. Smugglers, pirates, and fortune-seekers take skiffs out to the strange island, while the Magi Xenobiologists try to hold back the tide and claim the discovery for their own.

Table 3-4: Alien Artefacts

1d5 ROLL RESULT

The Tetrodragoman: A small piece of bio-engineered xenos tech, this insect-like device could easily be mistaken for an ornate vox-link. However, this semi-sentient device instead latches its tiny limbs to the user's flesh, and feeds its antennae into his ear, patching directly into his neural cortex. With the tetrodragoman in position, the user has the uncanny ability to understand—and be understood by—virtually any xenos race and even, it is whispered, the sentient denizens of the Warp.

1

Plot Seed: A Rogue Trader has recently come into possession of a tetrodragoman, and is using it to facilitate unbridled success in his dealings with lesser xenos races around the Askellian Low Worlds and beyond. Rumours persist that he is treating with the enemies of the Imperium. With no barrier between himself and the unknowable minds of the alien, he is almost certainly open to corruption, both from enemies within and without. Some Inquisitors might seek the item out to better communicate with xenos races, while others might seek its destruction for the same reason.

The Argonite Cache: A collection of thirteen strange weapons of alien design, these look like little more than simple grey rods. However, when used correctly they unleash a powerful sonic blast capable of shaking fortifications to their foundations. Worse, when the weapons are used in close proximity to each other, their power is increased exponentially.

2

Plot Seed: A Rogue Trader has arrived on Desoleum, engaged in a major deal to sell exotic weapons to the Consortium. The Acolytes have been tracking this cache of alien weaponry for some time, as they have been linked to several heretical crimes across the Cyclopia Sub-Sector. The Rogue Trader maintains he has a legal right to sell the shipment, and some members of the Consortium seem willing to defy the Inquisition in order to obtain them.

The Hellgrammatic Ward: Resembling a fist-sized lump of coal embedded within a rune-etched golden ring, this potent alien talisman is capable of unleashing a city-sized field of aetheric fire, which nullifies Warp-routes and sears the minds of psykers who try to penetrate it.

3

Plot Seed: Long-held in the collection of a chancellor of Vesuna Regis, it is said that the ward was once used during a psyker uprising centuries ago, but has lain dormant since that fateful day. Scholars have visited the chancellor in secret over the years, trying to crack the forgotten code to unlock the power of the ward, and finally one such logister has succeeded. Word spread quickly that the ward, the so-called Hammer of Witches, was active once more. Now, the chancellor has been assassinated, and someone has stolen the ward.

The Sabre Sanctus: Once wielded by Zephrael Grym, an honoured hero of Askellon's ancient past, the Sabre Sanctus is now little more than a broken shard atop an ornate hilt. It is said that, during the sector's founding, the sabre was broken in a duel against a Daemon Prince Z'zanar'rh. The tale relates that the gleaming blade crackled with the power of the Emperor himself, dispatching the foul Daemon back to the Warp before shattering with the effort.

4

Plot Seed: A blessed relic-blade, long broken, hums with power as its blade regrows organically from its hilt. Unbeknownst to all but the most learned of the Ordo Xenos, the Sabre Sanctus is not a human-forged weapon at all, but a C'tan phase blade of unknown provenance, gifted to Zephrael Grym in a time before such things were forbidden. The blade has lain dormant for centuries, and it does not bode well that it has activated now.

The Adseculae Secretion: Some aliens have managed to preserve the essence of their race long after they have physically died out. One such race, whose name has long been forgotten, lives on in a form of psychically attuned primordial ooze, contained within strange crystalline pendants. The Ordo Xenos theorise that these devices are similar in nature to Eldar spirit stones. The ooze displays a parasitic tendency once exposed, however, and slowly transforms lesser life-forms into whatever blasphemous form it once took.

5

Plot Seed: In Desoleum's Hive Suzzum, a noted smuggler's henchman has gone berserk, killing dozens of people in a murderous spree and escaping off-world. The smuggler had come across an artefact of unknown design and used it on someone else to determine its true power (and value), with disastrous consequences. The artefact attached itself to the man, boosting his speed and strength, and gifting him psychic powers at a cost to his sanity. The man is being guided by a malign alien force, and must be apprehended before he can transform others in this way.

Table 3–5: Xenobiology

1d5 ROLL RESULT

Euclidean Arachnids: Beneath the surface of a moon lies a dormant menace—a species of metalloïd-skinned arachnids that once “terraformed” the surface for some unknown master. The by-product of their industry is vast forests of polished black crystal formations, which themselves are much sought after by the Adeptus Mechanicus.

1 **Plot Seed:** Though the world of Gamma Euclid 13 has long been thought too dangerous to fully explore, its fourth moon, Euclides Epsilon, has provided a stable base for Adeptus Mechanicus expeditions. The excavators have recently discovered a vast forest of smooth, black crystal formations, pulsing with electromagnetic radiation, and containing crystalline compounds of pure dark matter. The mining operation began in earnest, only to be halted by an attack from the depths of the moon. Beneath the dark forests, something has woken up.

Hairethic Spore: Some sentient lifeforms do not rely on technology or even regular biology to enact their will. Aliens such as the ancient Ak’Haireth, a gestalt collection of fungal spores, proved deadly opponents for the human settlers of Askellian space many millennia ago. Similar lifeforms still exist out there in the cold void of space, lying dormant in forgotten catacombs, or drifting silently aboard otherwise empty space hulks.

2 **Plot Seed:** What looks like an ancient spacecraft has been found buried in a glacier in Vanth’s polar wastes. An Explorer team searched the wreckage, discovering a host of strange alien technology, but no sign of its creators. Unfortunately, they also released an intelligent alien spore into the air, which has now begun to alter the biological make-up of all it contacts, slowly feeding off their bodies and spreading like wildfire. The spore seems able to control the will of its hosts whilst devouring them from the inside—it is hard to tell friend from foe, but the spore must not be allowed to reach the wider populace.

Oathdust: This glowing green powder is made from the ground remains of an ancient, Chaos-worshipping, alien race. It has proven to be a mind-altering drug capable of gifting limited psychic prowess to normal humans, and sending psykers on a dangerous journey into the domain of the Prince of Pleasure.

3 **Plot Seed:** An illicit new drug has taken Hive Desoleum by storm, and the Apex-dwellers have become enamoured with it. As a result, an insidious cult of decadence and hedonism has been ushered in amidst Desoleum’s hierarchy. However, when the Acolytes track down the drug factory, they discover that it is manufactured from the unearthed bones of long-dead aliens, unearthed out in the Desoleum wastelands surrounding the hives.

The Laran Simulacra: Across the Askellon Sector, parents frighten unruly children with tales of doppelgangers, who can take the form of a trusted mentor or best friend, and yet who steal children away in the night. Such instilled paranoia in the young is often a useful survival mechanism on frontier and hive worlds alike.

4 **Plot Seed:** The Acolytes learn of a crumbling tomb unearthed on an Askellian world, containing evidence of an alien race. When they reach the planet, they are thrown into a wild tale of ancient curses, discovering that several of the xeno-archaeologists who uncovered the tomb have died in grisly circumstances. Upon investigating the tomb themselves, they work out that the ancient aliens were shapeshifters, and possibly never left the planet.

The Church of Dracolith: The Dracolith are an alien species that few know much about, and yet they crossed swords with Askellian forces many times in centuries past before being cleansed in a War of Purgation. Indoctrinating weak-willed men into their blasphemous “church,” this insidious race raised heretical cults across the sector, putting them at diametric odds with the Ordo Xenos. Though extinct, the race still has living artefacts to corrupt humans in Askellon, a region the Dracolith held as their own domain.

5 **Plot Seed:** A backwater colony world in the Rubicon Sub-Sector enjoys unprecedented bounty. The world was once a desert, but now verdant forests spring from a hidden valley, which is worshipped by a growing cult. Beneath the valley, in an ancient temple of alien design, a strange crystalline being sleeps. The presence of human settlers has awoken it and transformed the world. In exchange for its favour, the primitive settlers have begun to bring the creature tribute—but the alien surely has other plans for this world.

Table 3–6: Forbidden Knowledge

1d5 ROLL RESULT

The Muhlarian Shard: An onyx data-crystal, shaped like a pyramid, the Muhlarian shard has been psychically imbued with the sum total of knowledge from an ancient starfaring race.

1 Plot Seed: A xenos savant, studying ancient ruins on the surface of Cel, returns from his work with strange knowledge and an unsettling aura about him. Agri-labourers flock to him, and soon he becomes a cult leader, promising enlightenment and power to his true followers. But his knowledge comes from a strange black crystal—an artefact of great power—which beams arcane lore from a forgotten civilisation directly into his mind. His powers grow daily, but contact with the crystal is dangerous for all.

The Library of Ogragon: One of seven libraries of forbidden lore thought destroyed as Askellon embraced Imperial rule, the Library of Ogragon is a massive alien shipwreck, bearing confounding knowledge of the Warp and space-faring technology that would rival even that of the Eldar. It has been chanced upon several times during its long, directionless voyage—though none have ever lived to tell of it.

2 Plot Seed: Far from the main trade routes of the Asphodel Depths, a Rogue Trader chances on a wrecked alien ship, drifting listlessly on interstellar winds. Boarding the vessel, his crew discovers a vast repository of strange tomes and data-crystals of unknown origin. Almost immediately, the ship comes under attack from Eldar Corsairs, seeking to acquire the ancient knowledge for themselves. The Rogue Trader is able to send out a distress signal, before discovering that he and his crew are not alone aboard the floating library.

The Shield Codex: In the depths of the galaxy, things older and stranger than any alien encountered lurk, unaware of the spread of mankind, or biding their time for attack. One such race has found its way into the Askellon Sector, following a path transmitted by an ancient beacon, planted millennia ago. If the beacon does not transmit the correct response, the alien fleet knows that their colony is gone, and that the usurpers who occupy the world must be destroyed.

3 Plot Seed: A Deathwatch Kill-team has been sent to the bowels of Hive Kyvos to assassinate the leader of a pro-alien cult, who is reputedly trying to repair an ancient alien beacon to summon the attention of his inhuman overlords. Unknown to the Deathwatch, the cult has already been infiltrated by Acolytes of the Ordo Xenos, who have identified the beacon as the only means of turning away the aliens who even now travel towards Desoleum. The destruction of the beacon could mean war for Desoleum, but can the truth come out before it is too late?

The Sword of the Vyghh: Hidden across the galaxy are many ancient devices of terrible potency, and one such supposedly lies deep within the Stygies Cluster. Constructed many millennia ago by enemies of the Eldar, and lost during the terrible War in Heaven, it is said that whosoever controls this weapon can destroy an entire craftworld in the blink of an eye, condemning the souls within to a fate worse than death.

4 Plot Seed: Amidst the excavated ruins of a xenos city, an Explorator team unearths a massive observatory, mostly intact, with a strange hololithic map of the galaxy spinning in the air within. When the controls are touched, the map pinpoints an obscure planetoid in the Stygies Cluster. When word of this discovery gets out, Rogue Traders, Faceless Traders, and Acolytes alike flock to the observatory, and the race is on to find the supposed alien treasure. What no-one knows, however, is that the treasure is actually a weapon designed to issue final sanction against the Eldar, and the mysterious warriors of Miandrothe will stop at nothing to prevent it falling into human hands.

The Sulacus Chronodex: Bound in living chitin that continually festers, matures, and regenerates, this alien tome was once thought to be a ritual book of Nurgle, and was locked away in the Black Library for several millennia. However, the tome, written in an elegant hololithic Eldar hand, actually contains knowledge gathered from another, more furtive species—knowledge concerning the nature of Chaos, and many secrets of the past, present, and future. Stolen, it is said, by a Radical Inquisitor, the book has since been lost in the Askellon Sector, where its many secrets lie dormant.

5 Plot Seed: The Chronodex has found its way into the hands of a powerful psyker. It details secrets that no man was ever meant to know, supposedly changing as the paths of fate are altered by the actions of the reader. Last seen headed for Juno, it can only be surmised what would happen if the tome interacted with the untamed psychic energy surrounding the Bleak Pits. Now the race is on, as the Ordo Xenos, Ordo Hereticus, and mysterious servants of the Black Library all seek the book's return or its destruction.

XENOS INVESTIGATIONS

“The alien is an abomination, a stain upon the stars—unfit to share Mankind’s galaxy. It is our most hallowed, sacred duty to correct this unforgivable error.”

—Inquisitor Vardin, following the Treaty of Ghallex, and prior to the Ghallex Massacre

Of all the Ordos, it is perhaps the function of the Ordo Xenos that has the greatest antiquity, for surely the alien hunters have served humanity for ages untold. While the threat of Chaos was revealed in the dark days of the Horus Heresy, leading to the stewardship of the Ordo Malleus, and the Age of Apostasy spawned the Ordo Hereticus, aliens have been constant foes since man first stepped beyond the solar system of his birth.

The following pages provide additional tips for GMs in devising adventures involving Ordo Xenos themes, including insight into the kinds of clues Acolytes could uncover, tools they might employ, and some of the major themes of such investigations.

DESIGNING XENOS ADVENTURES

Each Ordo Xenos investigation is unique, and so too is each DARK HERESY adventure a singular experience. However, when developing adventures and campaigns for Acolytes of an Ordo Xenos Inquisitor—whether they realise their master’s affiliation or not—there are certain aspects that are likely to arise. These might include any of the many attributes of an adventure, from NPCs, to locations, to moral considerations. Of course, certain elements might present more strongly in one adventure over another, but GMs can also reinforce the major themes of their own campaigns with repeating motifs, from NPCs and Nemeses the Acolytes meet once and again even in surprising circumstances, to subtle symbolism and hints of alien influence.

No two Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos operate in quite the same fashion, and the same is true of their Acolytes. Some warbands might purge the alien with bolter and plasma wherever they find it, while others prefer to study a species, gauging what true threat—if any—it poses to humanity. Whatever method the Acolytes employ, it is certain to have its advantages and disadvantages, earning them both the favour of allies and the enmity of rivals.

EXPLORERS AND EXPATRIATES

Perhaps of all the Ordos, Inquisitors and Acolytes of the Ordo Xenos are likely to encounter the widest variety of strange and unusual NPCs, both as enemies, allies, and simple curiosities. Aliens are—thankfully—rarely found on the worlds of the Imperium, unless an invasion has already begun. Even many scholars on the subject have never encountered a live xenos, or even a dead specimen. To find first-hand knowledge of xenos, Acolytes must turn to those individuals who travel beyond the bounds of the Imperium, from Adeptus Mechanicus Explorators to Rogue Traders and other such voyagers. Being removed from the wider Imperium for often years at a time—if not their entire lives—such NPCs are likely to hold highly eccentric and unorthodox views. Although some might seek to eradicate any xenos they encounter, many view such a course as putting themselves and their crew at unnecessary risk, a misuse of time and resources, or even a senseless waste of potential resources, trade, and knowledge. For Acolytes of a more Puritanical bent, dealing with such individuals might be a challenge, and some might even consider them heretics, just as worthy of cleansing fire as the xenos they tolerate.

As well as humans who truck with non-humans, some Acolytes of the Ordo Xenos might find cause to meet or even ally with aliens. Although many xenos are just as hostile to the Imperium as it is to them—or more so—others have no qualms about working with humans, and even welcome the chance to broaden their horizons by meeting what are, to them, aliens. Such xenos contacts, sources, and allies could be almost anything the GM might conceive, from perfidious Eldar pursuing their own ends, to Kroot mercenaries, to sentient crystals that communicate through scent and colour. Whether the Acolytes see them as valuable allies, tools to be used and discarded, or inevitable traitors to watch closely is, of course, up to them.

DESOLATE WORLDS AND FORGOTTEN DEMESNES

More so than any other faction, the work of the Ordo Xenos is likely to take Acolytes beyond civilised worlds, and even beyond the bounds of the Imperium itself. An Inquisitor's remit knows no limits, and so the work his servants do must not allow any hindrance from borders. Whether searching ancient ruins below a hive city, travelling to unexplored worlds within the Askellon Sector, or seeking a forgotten human world in the depths of Wilderness Space, Acolytes might find themselves far from the Imperium, in more ways than one.

When exploring dead worlds, visiting alien colonies, traversing the void between systems, or even exploring an alien structure leagues away from the closest human settlement, the PCs can truly rely only on themselves. Aid might take days or months to arrive, assuming it is a possibility at all, and the Acolytes might have to carefully ration ammunition and supplies.

Some Inquisitors and Acolytes seek to uncover xenos threats before the alien can attack the Imperium, and such individuals might spend years exploring beyond the Imperium for signs of any new enemy. Acolytes might also travel to a non-Imperial world, following up on rumours heard at a spaceport tavern or coordinates found in the data-pools of a derelict voidship.



INTRUSION AND SUBVERSION

Although xenos within the Imperium are rare, they are far from unheard of. Aliens steal into the depths of hive cities, haunt the holds of voidships, and even walk amongst the masses in disguises of pilfered skin. The threats posed by aliens to the worlds of Man are innumerable. Some beasts prowl the shadows and drag victims away to unspeakable fates, others might rampage through the streets, demolishing habs with strange powers or sheer might. Some can even subvert via genetic corruption or telepathic control. While Imperial citizens might know of the alien menaces on far-off battlefields, for such threats to lurk in the regions of supposed security can lead to terrified mobs—and so great efforts are often put not just into suppressing such threats when they arise, but also suppressing any knowledge that they existed.

An even wider-ranging threat in the Askellon Sector is the presence of xenos artefacts. Ignorant scholars and morally bankrupt smugglers bring objects of alien origin onto the worlds of Askellon, from weapons wrought by xenos hands to the ossified remains of the makers themselves. Such artefacts can be every bit as dangerous as living aliens. Strange xenos technologies can tempt the disciples of the Adeptus Mechanicus away from the true path of the Omnissiah, while other artefacts might contain deadly microorganisms, or impossibly alien psychic resonances that blast the minds of the unwary.

ORDO XENOS THEMES

In addition to the core themes of DARK HERESY, certain motifs are especially appropriate to the work of the Ordo Xenos. By keeping these in mind, Game Masters can better bring to life the darkness of the 41st Millennium and the full dangers of the Acolytes' work.

CONFLICT AND PARADOX

The Imperium holds that ignorance is a virtue and hatred is the Emperor's greatest gift to Mankind. Yet so often, Inquisitors and their Acolytes must forgo these virtues, perhaps sacrificing their own purity for the good of the human race. This is particularly true for the servants of the Ordo Xenos, who so often must undertake research and seek understanding of the foe in order to combat it. This dreadful knowledge can weigh heavily on the faithful, who must grapple with the dreadful truth that, although the Imperium teaches the human race is superior to all forms of life, certain evidence exists to the contrary. Is Man truly inherently superior, even though the Eldar is so much longer lived and possessed of such preternatural speed and grace? And what of the Genestealer, that strange creature that absorbs the best traits of other species to create an ever more perfect predator, or even the Kroot who can guide their own evolution?

Although Imperial citizens are taught from birth to hate and shun the alien, the work of Ordo Xenos Inquisitors brings their Acolytes into close proximity—and not always for violence. Some aliens simply cannot be fought in certain situations, while others can provide invaluable assistance against other aliens that pose a clearer and more pressing threat. For many Acolytes, working alongside non-humans is a horribly distasteful notion, even when they have no other choice. In order to defeat the alien, one must sometimes seek its aid.

PURITY AND DEVIANCY

A sacred principle of the Imperium is that Man's form is divine, made in the image of the Emperor Himself. The alien, therefore, is an abomination—a thinking, non-human creature. Even more disturbing are the many xenos races that superficially resemble Man, with a humanoid, bipedal form. Eldar, Orks, and countless others represent mockeries of the holy form of Man, perverse creations of nature that cannot be allowed to exist.

The most horrible of all are those aliens that can corrupt and debase humans themselves, polluting the bodies and even genetic code of humanity, such as the terrible Genestealer. Perhaps even more disturbing is the thought that some hereteks and xenophiles purposefully seek the hybridisation of Man and xenos. Purveyors of such perversities are surely amongst the foulest of all heretics.

MANIFEST DESTINY

It is the divine right of Mankind—and Mankind alone—to rule the galaxy uncontested. For nearly all Imperial citizens, this is a basic fact that goes without question, and this is true for most Acolytes. This theme can arise in two fundamental ways. Either the Acolytes face a clear alien threat they must cleanse, reinforcing this notion and making them part of Mankind's eternal war for dominion of the stars, or they face the prospect of allowing aliens to live—or even allying with them—whether to avoid risking their own lives needlessly, to stop a greater threat, or for some other reason.

TOOLS OF THE ALIEN HUNTER

To locate and defeat the alien menace, Inquisitors and Acolytes rely on certain tools, whether they be physical weapons, intangible resources, or even the promise of their influence.

Blade and Bolt: While the enemies of the Ordo Hereticus have many of the same frailties as all humans, and will is the greatest weapon against the blasphemies facing the Ordo Malleus, the Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos and their Acolytes face deadly foes armed and armoured with strange physiologies, or esoteric and advanced technologies—or both. To defeat these enemies, Acolytes must arm and gird themselves appropriately: toxic ammunition to bring down gargantuan beasts, power armour and force fields to defend against potent alien attacks, and heavy weapons to penetrate advanced xenos armour.

Knowledge: The alien can manifest a staggering array of forms, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. To defeat their foe, Acolytes must often possess some understanding of it, lest they leave themselves vulnerable, attack with useless weapons, or even strengthen the enemy. Gaining such knowledge is often the first task a warband must undertake when facing a new threat. Finding it might require delving into archives and speaking with experts on the established enemies of mankind, while the appearance of a previously unknown species requires the Acolytes to earn such knowledge themselves, whatever the cost.

The Death of a World: An Inquisitor and his Acolytes cannot be everywhere, and sometimes they fail to halt an alien incursion or infestation in its early stages. Although conscionable under only the direst of circumstances, a full-blown xenos infection, a corrupted populace, or a successful alien assault all might leave a planet beyond salvation. In many such cases, the only option open to an Inquisitor is to invoke the ultimate sanction, Exterminatus. The xenos threat must be contained, and if all else fails, a world must die. This is not a question—it is a harsh truth.

CONSORTING WITH XENOS

The sacred charge of the Ordo Xenos is to protect humanity against the alien menace. Yet, there are those Inquisitors and their servants who believe the best—even the only—way to fulfil their charge is by utilising the xenos itself. For some, this means taking up the weaponry and other strange technologies of the alien. For others, treating with aliens, even enlisting their aid, might be the clear course to ensure humanity's future. There are many reasons an Inquisitor or Acolyte might take this path, and many approaches to doing so. One might view it as a grim necessity, praying for a day when all xenos and their works might be cleansed from the stars. Some truly Radical individuals believe that not all aliens are a threat to Mankind, and that humanity can coexist with others.

The decision to consort with aliens is never undertaken lightly, but the reasons for doing so are as varied as Inquisitors themselves. In some cases, the decision comes after years of deliberation and internal debate. For others, it is a split-second choice, a necessity to avert some catastrophe. Depending on the situation, an Inquisitor or Acolyte might find himself fighting alongside xenos against a common foe, engaged in a fruitless battle against a potential xenos ally, or even trespassing on a planet claimed by some alien race. In other cases, an Inquisitor or warband might commit time and resources to seeking out xenos allies or hirelings.



In a **DARK HERESY** campaign, Acolytes might find themselves with the opportunity to work—or at least communicate without violence—with aliens. In some cases, they might even attempt to achieve cooperation with xenos who originally confronted them as enemies. In such situations, good roleplaying and successful Interaction skill tests are the primary means to secure alien assistance. Possible complications might stem from a lack of common language, or even misinterpretations and etiquette. GMs should consider such issues and modify tests accordingly.

Acolytes might also specifically seek out the assistance or tools of aliens. The Radical use of alien mercenaries and other aids starting on page 69 provide Availabilities and guidelines for the effects of enlisting the services of aliens and those who treat with them, but, as with other Requisition tests for potent tools or those with strong narrative implications, acquiring the services of alien support should not be a simple matter of rolling dice. Making contact with aliens, even those in the practice of selling their services to human clients, is an involved affair, often requiring interactions with several depraved criminal—or worse—intermediaries. Whether the steps to obtain such services are handled narratively, played out in detail, or even form the basis for short adventures in their own right depends on the preferences of the GM and players and the focus of the ongoing narrative.

Inquisitors and their Acolytes are not the only servants of the Emperor who might enlist the aid of aliens for the good of the Imperium. Desperate planetary rulers and beleaguered Astra Militarum commanders might both enlist the aid of alien mercenaries in order to combat an insurmountable foe, either seeking special dispensation from the Adeptus Administratum or attempting to conceal their unwholesome deed. Rogue Traders are doubtless the most likely servants of the Throne to truck with aliens, as making contact with new species is an important part of the duties and responsibilities that come with their Warrant. Some Rogue Traders even include sanctioned xenos amongst their crews—aliens permitted to pass within the bounds of the Imperium by the Adeptus Administratum, so long as they remain under the watchful eye of the Rogue Trader.

Although most citizens of the Imperium fear and hate xenos in equal measure, some might have contact with aliens. Colonists cut off from resupply might have no choice but to turn to xenos assistance, while it is not unknown for settlers of frontier worlds and on the edges of Wilderness Space to openly trade with aliens. Particularly in the Askellon Sector, when the waxing of the Pandaemonium can often cut off communication and Warp travel, some worlds might have no choice but to accept an offer of aid from alien species—though it might damn them in the process.

XENOS CLUES AND LEADS

Clues encompass all of the evidence Acolytes collect during an investigation, the details necessary to root out and eliminate threats to humanity. As described on page 280 of the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook, clues can be broadly divided into three broad categories—physical, informational, and correlational, as well as the rarer category of unnatural. Clues are utterly vital to the work of an Acolyte. Without clues, an Acolyte cannot track down Mankind's enemies or uncover—and foil—their plots.

The clues found in each investigation are unique, but within each broad category, it is possible to identify certain subcategories. In particular, certain types of clues are either unique to or particularly relevant to Ordo Xenos investigations. GMs can keep the following types of clues in mind as an aid when developing their own mysteries, and players might find the information useful when prosecuting investigations.

LOOK NOT UPON THE ALIEN: PHYSICAL CLUES

Physical clues are often the first sign that something is amiss, as well as the most damning. Other types of clues may be open to interpretation, but a physical clue is a sure sign of an alien presence. The presence of a physical clue might launch an investigation, or provide proof that a previously unclear threat is alien in its nature. Many such clues pose a danger on their own, from caustic alien blood to unstable, inhuman technology, and keeping the clue from causing further damage might be just as important as the information it provides.

SPOOR OF THE ALIEN

By their very nature, aliens are utterly inhuman, and this often means a biology that stands out in some way or another. Trails of mucus, strangely coloured blood or other fluids, scales, claw marks, even spores—all might be signs of an alien presence. In some cases, such alien traces might be enough to identify the type of alien involved, while others are only sufficient to point to an inhuman presence. Some xenos remnants are dangerous or infectious, and the Acolytes' first order of business upon finding them must be to contain or even destroy the valuable clue.

GENETIC CORRUPTION

Amongst the most disturbing of all clues is the sign of xenos contamination of a human population, whether it be a single individual or an entire settlement. Certain alien creatures are able to infect humans with xenos genetic material, altering them at a fundamental level. Alien parasites might burrow into a victim and influence him through manipulations of the brain or nervous system, while the dreaded mind-mould of Temperance produces a terminal infection as part of its horrible life cycle. Most terrible of all are those mad surgeons, gene-sculptors, and hereteks who intentionally meld human and xenos flesh through forbidden gene-splicing or tissue grafting, creating abominations utterly unfit to be allowed to exist.

Often, informational or correlational clues lead to the discovery of clues of genetic corruption. While some xenos-human hybrids or infections are clear, others are subtle or completely invisible. Only by following up on rumours of strange behaviour or subtle physical deformities can an Acolyte come to the truth. Actually obtaining the clue, however, might require a thorough vivisection.

WORKS OF THE ALIEN

Objects and artefacts of xenos origin can provide a clue to the presence of xenos, smuggling, or xenophilic activity, and many pose a danger in their own right. Strange ammunition or armour fragments might speak to a skirmish involving aliens, while the presence of technology could lead to heretics engaging in trade with xenos. Some xenos artefacts remain from races that died out aeons ago, yet these profane objects still pose a moral, or even physical, danger to humanity. While such artefacts are rarely seen openly within the Imperium, some nobility might secretly flaunt private collections of the forbidden to impress their peers. Discovering the presence of an alien object might launch an investigation, but with the Acolytes uncertain as to whether human heretics or the aliens themselves are the threat.

SPEAK NOT UNTO THE ALIEN: INFORMATIONAL CLUES

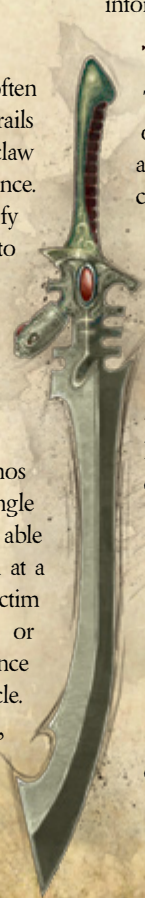
Acolytes of the Ordo Xenos must often delve deep into an investigation before seeing any physical sign of an alien presence. In the earlier stages of an investigation, they must rely on informational clues to point them toward their inhuman targets. Once the aliens are revealed, the Acolytes might depend on key information to destroy them or halt their plots.

TOLERANCE AND TREACHERY

The enemies of the Ordo Xenos are not only aliens. All too often, human heretics collaborate with or even worship xenos, and must be dealt with. Of course, xenophiles know well to conceal their heresies, and concerted investigation is necessary to discover rumours of blasphemous mutterings, tales of strange jewellery or shrines, and even whispers of inhuman visitations. Once the Acolytes uncover such heretics, excruciated confessions or mad boasting might provide the necessary information to find the xenos responsible.

ANCIENT LORE AND NEW DISCOVERIES

In order to find and defeat xenos threats, Acolytes must often obtain vital information on the nature of the foe. Clues to xenos physiology, goals, armaments, and technology can all be necessary to the successful prosecution of an investigation. Such clues range from ancient Imperial Guard battle reports, to proscribed bestiaries and the journals of heretics, to the binaric cants of a revered Magos Biologis. Acolytes might also discover new information on their own initiative. This is most likely to occur as a result of further scrutinising physical clues, such as inspecting the microscopic engravings on an artefact, or performing a necropsy on a xenos specimen.



LISTEN NOT UNTO THE ALIEN: CORRELATIONAL CLUES

As in other types of investigations, correlational clues are often those that bring the heresy into focus, illuminating the significance of other clues. Such discoveries might even reveal the presence of the alien where none were previously suspected.

INFLUENCE AND DOMINATION

Amongst the greatest alien perils are influence and domination. Through psychic manipulation, chemical or biological stimulations, and technological means, many alien races possess the means to influence the behaviour of humans or utterly subjugate their wills. The discovery of such activity might provide the impetus for an investigation, a lead as to the identity of those responsible for a heresy, or even a hint as to how to combat it. However, it can also be very difficult to detect, requiring the Acolytes to collect a number of informational or physical clues before coming to the realisation. Acolytes might discover the presence of alien influence by observing the behaviour of the afflicted or hearing of it from others, witnessing the act, or by somehow breaking the influence—possibly quite by accident. Particularly brazen aliens might even reveal their presence by speaking through human meat puppets.

PATTERNS AND SIGNS

Patterns of strange activity are often a clue to a xenos presence or xenos influence. Such influence might be ongoing, or the lingering effects of contact in the distant past. Signs of an immediate threat include strange lights, electromagnetic phenomena, disappearances, and strange behaviour amongst the locals, and countless other incidents depending on the nature of the xenos. Clues of past xenos influence include unusual customs and architecture, disturbing variants of the Imperial Creed, inexplicable linguistic deviations, unidentifiable technology, and even patterns of dress. Such clues might point to a pre-Imperial, possibly benign, contact with aliens, or lead to an ongoing heresy.

EMBRACE NOT THE CORRUPTION OF THE ALIEN: UNNATURAL CLUES

Unnatural clues are those that come from beyond reality as humans know it or that are obtained through means outside the physical world. Most can be considered a type of informational clue, although the aftereffects of these manifestations might be thought of as a physical clue.



TOUCH OF THE WARP

Humans are not the only race vulnerable to the corruption of the Warp and the Dark Gods. The Ruinous Powers have dwelt in the Immaterium since time before time, and entire races of wretched xenos worshiped Daemons or the Chaos gods themselves long before the dawn of Mankind. Such races leave relics tainted both with the psychic echoes of the aliens that created them and by the Warp. And just as the Dark Gods plague humanity, so do xenos continue to fall under their sway. Although the presence of psychic activity might seem to indicate malefic cabals or even the actions of Daemons, Acolytes of the Ordo Xenos must always consider that it might lead to corrupted aliens or their tainted artefacts. Conversely, the presence of Warp corruption amongst a xenos civilisation could be a sign of daemonic activity.

UNFATHOMABLE TECHNOLOGIES

Although some might argue otherwise, the advanced technologies of some xenos races are so beyond human comprehension as to effectively be unnatural. Such devices can break the very laws of physics on a fundamental level, requiring Acolytes to approach an investigation in a similar way as they would one involving the psychic powers and the influence of the Warp. Indeed, Acolytes might initially mistake the reality-bending effects of alien technologies for Warpcraft. Once the influence of Chaos is ruled out, a warband can likely conclude that the foe can only be xenos in nature. Radical Inquisitors and Acolytes might find such clues useful for more than information, acquiring alien technologies to use for their own purposes. Using unfathomable scrying devices or other tools to obtain information is, itself, an unnatural clue.



ENEMIES WITHOUT™

Ever since the Imperium began its rightful conquest of the stars, it has faced rampaging Orks, devious Eldar, and other deadly xenos species. These are the Enemies Without: the vile aliens that the Inquisitors of the Ordo Xenos and their Acolytes must combat to ensure humanity's survival amidst a hostile galaxy.

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This supplement for DARK HERESY SECOND EDITION also contains:

- New Acolyte creation options from death worlds to Rogue Trader fleets.
- Gazetteers for new locations including the mysterious Webway of the Eldar races and new alien menaces such as the rapacious Tyranids.
- New rules for extended researches, Warp travel, generating ancient alien civilisations and their lethal relics, and crafting xenos-based adventures.

ERADICATE THE ALIEN!

The DARK HERESY
SECOND EDITION Core Rulebook
is required to use this supplement.

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